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Chair

Mr. Mark Warawa

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC)): I call the meeting to order. I want to welcome everyone to our 48th meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development as we study urban conservation.

Before we hear from the witnesses, though, I want to say to the committee that at the last two meetings I've permitted motions to be introduced, and that's caused the meetings to be delayed. I'd ask members to introduce their motions at the end of the meeting. Let me know ahead of time and we will slot enough time at the end of each meeting to deal with motions.

Today we have no legal motions. We have two notices of motions that have not met the two sleeps requirement. If the authors of those motions want to introduce them, we could deal with them at the soonest next Monday. Please give me enough time so that we can allow 15 to 30 minutes, whatever is necessary, at the end of the meeting.

In the future, I won't be recognizing people and giving them the floor to introduce motions. We'll deal with that toward the end of the meeting. Thank you for your patience on this point.

I want to welcome the witnesses. We will hear first from Ms. Andreeff, who is with the Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment.

Ms. Monica Andreeff (Executive Director, Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment): Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. I am honoured to be here.

My name is Monica Andreeff and I am the executive director of the Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment, AMPPE.

We're a non-profit association that advocates for a balance between sustainable tourism, ecological integrity, visitor experience, and education in Canada's mountain parks. Our members include ordinary skiers, hikers, and cyclists, as well as tourism businesses, ski areas, and hotel operators.

For 18 years AMPPE has been the voice of balance, speaking for Canadians who want the opportunity to enjoy national parks. We are based in Banff, where Canada's first national park was created more than 125 years ago.

The Canada National Parks Act states that parks are "dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment". It's

clear that national parks were created and protected for future generations of Canadians to use and enjoy. The intention was not to protect parks from Canadians.

However, as the cultural landscape of Canada shifts, national parks are in danger of becoming irrelevant to new Canadians, technology-centred youth, and people who live in urban areas. Visitors no longer want to simply drive through parks, take a snapshot, and continue driving. People need to connect with the wilderness through outdoor adventure activities that give them meaning and form a lasting impression. Otherwise, Parks Canada is at risk of becoming irrelevant to its core funding base, Canadian taxpayers.

Parks Canada is changing and moving in the right direction with learn-to-camp programs for new Canadians and youth-oriented visitor projects. There are volunteer programs in Banff and Jasper national parks to introduce hundreds of Canadians and international visitors to local conservation projects, wildlife monitoring, and assorted research programs every summer.

Parks Canada has also approved guidelines for new recreational activities so that they can be pursued in a way that enhances conservation and culture. Banff Mount Norquay's proposed via ferrata will provide an entry-level mountaineering program that is safe for all ages and abilities. Via ferrata is extremely popular in Quebec and Europe, and it's an exciting outdoor activity that can be combined with education about the conservation of this unique wilderness environment.

The Brewster glacier discovery walk, which is slated to open next year, is located on the highway between Lake Louise and Jasper. It will be a fully accessible interpretive walkway that provides stunning views and teaches people about glaciology, global warming, aboriginal culture, and the early exploration of the Canadian Rockies.

It's an uphill battle to balance recreational use and visitor experience with protecting the wilderness and wildlife, but progress is being made. Unfortunately, Parks Canada faces constant and unjustified criticism from a small vocal minority more concerned about exclusion rather than inclusion.

These critics are interested in limiting people's use and widespread public enjoyment of these national recreation areas. Unfortunately, these tactics erode public support for national parks, which are important to Canadian identity and a symbol of our nation respected around the world.

AMPPE believes there is no place for elitist points of view in national parks. Not everyone can hoist a heavy backpack and go camping in the wilderness for three or four days. New Canadians may not have the skill set and it's almost impossible for families with small children. It's not just one national park for one type of Canadian. We need to provide a wide range of activities for all kinds of people—old, young, disabled, urban, and new Canadians.

Banff and Jasper have great value in being among the most accessible and most visited national parks in the country. They provide excellent visitor services, recreational opportunities, and amenities in two small communities, unlike more remote national parks that might see a few dozen people in a week.

● (1540)

Banff and Jasper national parks have millions of visitors each year, being located close to large urban populations in Edmonton and Calgary, similar to the tremendous prospects for Rouge national park.

The goal of connecting urban Canadians with conservation is to foster an understanding of human impacts and how you can manage urban life differently. It can inspire appreciation of, visits to, and support for larger protected areas, such as national and provincial parks. Young urban dwellers can become energized about nature, so they see it as relevant to modern life and it may help them engage and become passionate about conservation.

To examine urban conservation practices in Canada, one might start with a look at the two unique national park towns of Banff and Jasper, which are located within a UNESCO world heritage site. They are models for environmental management, sustainable development and tourism, and reflect the fundamental practices of national parks. Banff and Jasper recognize, protect from development, and in some cases, enhance environmentally sensitive areas within the fixed town boundaries.

Both towns have superb environmental sustainability plans and introduce environmental education and interpretive opportunities for visitors and residents.

Banff's environmental protection district is land that is capable of supporting a diversity of native wildlife and does not allow for any human development. Protected wildlife corridors stretch 500 metres wide around some neighbourhoods.

The town of Canmore, a community bordering Banff National Park to the east, is not subject to national park regulations, yet it engages in ongoing dialogue with conservation organizations on wildlife corridors and ways to protect these areas during the planning application review.

Canmore has established an urban growth boundary which identifies areas of ecological importance. The municipal land use bylaw identifies three zones of protected space: natural park district, environment district, and wild lands conservation district. The federal government can play an important role in encouraging urban conservation through funding assistance and legislation to maintain and protect those areas that do not directly contribute to the municipal tax base.

Parks Canada is mandated to protect the ecological integrity of Canada's iconic national parks, but this mandate needs to be balanced equally with visitor experience and education.

Not all national parks are created equal, and national parks near large urban populations such as Banff, Jasper, and now Rouge, can play a special role in fostering a culture of conservation. They are heavily visited by populations from cities and therefore the mandate to educate and provide sought-after activities should be paramount. People come to do and not just to see.

People who engage with national parks through high-quality visitor experiences and recreational opportunities will adopt the philosophy of urban conservation over time. Success will be determined by balancing the challenges of use and protection.

In conclusion, changes are needed to the National Parks Act and Parks Canada's mandate to recognize the importance of visitor experience and education, and ensure that it is balanced equally with ecological protection. The Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment encourages the committee to give consideration to this suggestion and the future relevancy of our national park system for Canadians.

Thank you for your time.

● (1545)

The Chair: Ms. Andreeff, thank you so much for the testimony.

We'll now hear from the City of Calgary and we have Ms. Charlton and Mr. Manderson. You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Anne Charlton (Director, Parks, City of Calgary): Good afternoon. I am Anne Charlton. I am the director of parks for the City of Calgary. With me today is Chris Manderson, who is the portfolio lead of natural areas and biodiversity within our business unit.

We're delighted to be here this afternoon. We hope what we have to say will be a valuable contribution to the work you're doing on urban conservation.

We had to give a lot of thought to what to say in 10 minutes. We are a parks department. We could talk to you about this all day, but what we have done is woven through three constructs in what Chris is about to say, that of triple bottom line, resiliency, and complexity. We'll illustrate these through the challenges and interrelated best practices that we're involved in.

Chris.

Mr. Chris Manderson (Natural Area Management Lead, Parks, City of Calgary): Thank you.

For a bit of context, we manage about 9,000 hectares of parks within the city itself. Fully 50% of that is considered to be natural environment parks.

Some of the signature parks within our system are places like Nose Hill, which is the largest urban natural area in a municipality in the country. The Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, which was originally founded as a federal bird sanctuary, is the cornerstone of our environmental education program and is still an important migratory sanctuary in the downtown core as well.

In terms of natural area management within the context of a large urban centre, our understanding of what's needed has certainly changed. Quite clearly, what we do as a parks department has changed significantly as well. Conservation in the context of urban development is certainly a challenge and is certainly different from larger park management itself. We deal with issues like permanent impacts and loss that come with development.

We deal with the fact that in a lot of cases the support systems for critical ecological areas are all quite often impaired or significantly changed. Invasive species are a dominant issue for us in terms of management. Ultimately we deal with an inevitable transition with respect to biodiversity. We see a homogenization of ecosystems and species in many respects.

Our parks department is about 100 years old. We've managed natural areas explicitly for the past 30 or so years, so through the experience we've had, we've learned a number of things that are quite important to bring to bear.

One is the issue of design. We as a municipality are constantly challenged with how to design and maintain functional, viable, and sustainable natural environments in a city core. We recognize that natural environments are integral to the city. They are not something you put behind a fence. They are something you have to weave within the fabric of the city itself.

There is the issue of management. They are often seen as low-cost or even no-cost options for a park system, when we would say the opposite is true. They have costs and need to be managed as such.

We are struggling with a number of issues that are beyond our control. Climate change is one of them. Within the context of southern Alberta, we're in a water scarce region. We need to plan for and learn to adapt to the inevitable changes that will come in the future.

We are looking at the issue of ecological goods and services. We see that as an excellent way to address the value of these systems within the city itself. We think we have a good handle on water and wetlands, but we're starting to say we need to think about the park system itself. The urban forest and all of that is part of the city's critical infrastructure.

The city itself has a fairly strong history of advocacy and protection for natural areas. Some of it stretches back nearly a century. Some of the things we have done which we think are examples of best practices are things like our wetland conservation plan, which is one of the first wetland policies for a municipality in Canada. It is perhaps one of our more interesting success stories in that it introduced a mechanism that allows for compensation and mitigation for loss of wetlands. We found that to be a tremendously valuable tool to do a couple of things: to raise the value and the importance of wetlands within the context of decision-making in the

city, but also to give us the tools to plan and mitigate and ultimately conserve wetlands in a more sustainable landscape.

We've done some of these things through the lens of things like imagine Calgary. In 2005, the city embarked on a conversation with 18,000 Calgarians. We asked Calgarians what they thought the city should be like in 100 years. The answers we got were fairly interesting. They spoke a lot of connections. They talked a lot about conservation. We heard quite clearly that Calgarians value their natural environment. This is not just within the city itself, but also beyond. Regionally these are important landscapes to us.

That document has shaped some of the policy and some of the direction the City of Calgary is now embarking on. Our municipal development plan, which is our statutory plan that guides us through the next 60 years, has worked in some of those concepts and policies of conservation, biodiversity, green infrastructure, and protection within the context of a growing and denser city.

Last year our city council elected to sign the Durban commitment for biodiversity, which makes us the third Canadian city to sign on to a commitment to make biodiversity a central plank of what we do. Behind Edmonton and Montreal, we now join about 50 cities worldwide that are saying biodiversity and conservation should be an important part of what we do in providing municipal service.

●(1550)

We're doing things like environmental education, with the recognition that we need to promote environmental literacy among Calgarians. We need not only to give them the knowledge to understand what's important and why these things are valuable to us, but also to give them the incentive to act and to have stewardship over what we own.

We look at it from the cultural perspective, as well. We have cultural landscapes that we've been restoring in the City of Calgary, and that, to us, is yet another way to tie us to the landscape. Ultimately, that's what we think we try to do in the parks department.

Some of the other things we're doing, which are perhaps of interest to the committee, are things like invasive species management. This is a big issue for us. Calgary has developed an early detection rapid response model that has taken off regionally. In fact, it now involves all three levels of government. We coordinate a monitoring program within the Bow River Valley, which now involves local municipalities, the Province of Alberta, and Banff National Park. We think it is a good model which shows collaboration and cooperation within the region.

One of the questions you asked in your terms of reference is what the federal rural and urban conservation would be. I'll close with three things that we thought we would bring to your attention.

We need more conversations with local authorities. As a municipality that delivers on the front lines on a number of outcomes related to the environment, we would welcome any opportunity to build bridges and collaborate. We need your expertise, and we can help deliver some of those outcomes. There's recognition that implementation of some of these programs in conservation is inherently local. National and international leadership in conservation would require effective local implementation. Finally, we need a recognition that urban conservation itself is a critical part of the urban infrastructure. We would look for examples and opportunities to include ecosystem management as part of the infrastructure granting programs.

We'd be happy to answer any questions when the time comes.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you so much.

Next we'll hear from Tree Canada. We have Mr. Michael Rosen and Ms. Dobbie.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Rosen (President, Tree Canada): Thank you very much.

Hello everyone. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. My presentation will be in English, but if you have any questions in French, I will be very happy to answer them in French.

[English]

Please note that I'll be sharing my time with Ms. Dorothy Dobbie.

I want to start by thanking you, Mr. Chair, and all the honourable members of the committee, for letting us speak to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

My name is Michael Rosen, and for the past five years I've been president of Tree Canada. I'm here with Dorothy, who is the past chair of Tree Canada. Some of you may recognize her as a former member of Parliament from Manitoba.

Tree Canada is a not-for-profit organization that is committed to creating greener healthier communities by encouraging planting and the care of trees where Canadians live, work, and play. We're one of the only organizations that represent urban forests on a national level.

Can you imagine your community without any trees? Trees define your community. They make our lives as Canadians that much more liveable.

Tree Canada has planted more than 78 million trees, greened 530 schoolyards, and helped the urban forest programs of over 490 communities across the country, leaving a legacy that will benefit all Canadians. We manage over 300 tree planting events each year. We've probably held a planting event in every riding that you members represent. On our website, for instance, we have a wonderful picture of the Elmwood—Transcona riding.

● (1555)

[Translation]

I am very happy to say that we were in the Beauharnois—Salaberry riding two weeks ago, with CSX, a rail transportation company.

[English]

When we began in 1992, we were very reliant on the Canadian Forest Service and Natural Resources Canada for our funding. We're very proud that 20 years later we're 100% privately funded and we're growing every year.

We have teamed up with some of the best funding partners in Canada: Shell, TD Bank, TELUS, and Home Hardware, to name a few, all of whom share our vision of an urban forest strategy. You may be asking yourself: What is an urban forest, let alone an urban forest strategy?

The urban forest is the forest where we all live, work, and play. It's in our backyard, our front yard, in our ravines, in the mall parking lots, and in our parks. It's by the river, by the office building. It's by the post office; it's on the street corner.

Today, more than 80% of Canadians live in the urban landscape. The trees and plants of this landscape are for many Canadians their deepest connection to nature.

Whose job is it to nurture these living green giants of our cities? In Canada, more often than not, it's the municipality's responsibility. At the provincial and federal levels, few laws or regulations govern the urban forest, except in the case of specific problems, insect outbreaks, or threats.

Many communities have professional foresters. Some work with agencies to manage public spaces, but in many cases the person in charge of maintaining the hockey rink or the golf course is in charge of the community's trees.

The new norm is for municipalities to receive funding for their urban forest projects from not-for-profit organizations like the Tree Canada Foundation, and programs like TD Green Streets that we've developed with TD Friends of the Environment. Why is this? Where is the government's involvement?

Would you believe that Canada is the only G-8 country without a federal urban forest presence or program? For example, the United States, our largest trading partner, and closest fossil fuel polluter, has for some time understood the importance of an urban forest conservation strategy.

In 2011 President Obama announced that he wanted to engage more communities in urban forestry and budgeted \$36 million to implement an urban forest strategy.

I am not saying that Canada is doing nothing. The Canadian Forest Service has been a world leader in combatting the emerald ash borer. It's a destructive insect that was first detected in Canada in 2002, and it has killed thousands of ash trees.

Recently we held our 10th Canadian Urban Forest Conference in London, Ontario. We brought together 400 foresters and community people who work all across Canada to share their knowledge and their research.

Coming out of this was a number of initiatives to help our forests. Many municipalities are only now developing an inventory of what they have in their communities. To do this, they have to have some technical background. With the support of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, through the leadership of the chief of the forest service, Thomas Tidwell, some municipalities are actually conducting what they call i-Tree analyses. It's a software suite that allows municipalities to evaluate the trees in their communities.

At our urban forest conference this year, to everyone's surprise, Chief Tidwell launched i-Tree Canada. Yes, our American government counterpart created a software for Canadian municipalities.

All is not negative, though. I am proud that our government has made the courageous and historic decision to make Rouge Park Canada's first national urban forest. It is a great first step, but it really is a small first step.

The Government of Canada must commence a dialogue on a national urban forest strategy or it will continue to fall far behind its international partners and prejudice the environmental health of Canadians.

I would like to turn it over to Ms. Dobbie.

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie (Past Chair, Board of Directors, Tree Canada): That brings up the question: why is this important and what do trees do? I like to refer to them as trees, rather than the urban forest, because that brings it right home. It's something you know.

Why are trees important to our environment? Well, it's pretty simple. First of all, they clean the air of pollutants. When we're thinking about carbon dioxide in the air, gas emissions, things like that, even dust, trees do a tremendous amount to make that air fresh and clean. They also clean up groundwater. They remove pollutants.

We did a little study in Manitoba on Broadway Avenue, one of our iconic streets. We tested over a period of years what was happening to the salts that were put down to de-ice the streets. We discovered that the trees had actually removed these pollutants from the ground and stored them in their leaves and their wood and so on. In doing that, in some cases they actually changed the composition of some pollutants.

Trees are incredibly important to the environmental health of our communities.

They also conserve energy. If you have a big home-heating bill, you can save as much as 20% by planting the right kinds of trees around your location. They reduce the effects of radiation from the sun and they obviously provide shade, cooling, and wind protection.

They retain water in the soil, 2% to 7% of water that would simply run off into the sewers. As I said before, they transform a number of the contaminants that are in the soil.

They also return clean air to the environment. They drink up carbon dioxide and they breathe out good, fresh oxygen and moisture into the air. This also helps with cooling.

Another interesting thing is studies show that children with ADD function better after being involved in activities in green settings. The greener a child's play area is, the less severe his or her attention deficit disorder symptoms are.

I want to tell you why that is. It isn't just trees. It's the whole environment around us. Apparently, there's something called "happy bacteria" in the soil. It's mycobacterium vaccae. It used to be said that we had to eat a peck of dirt before we die. Well, it's true, because what this bacterium does is it actually triggers serotonin in your gut and it makes you feel happy.

When you're in a green environment where trees and the earth are part of it, you and your kids are going to be healthier. Everybody is going to be a heck of a lot happier and smiley. Also, having enough happy bacteria saves you from things like asthma. Listen to me, because I'm suffering from asthma today, and as I said, it helps kids who have ADHD.

Trees buffer noise. They create a habitat for urban wildlife. They increase property values by 37%, according to our notes, but I think that in some cases it's even more than that.

While we're talking with the federal government, it's interesting for you to know that Tree Canada was started, as Michael said, by an act of Parliament. We actually had a forestry minister at the time, Frank Oberle. He was with us at the urban tree conference in London two weeks ago to help us celebrate what he started and what has become so important over those years.

There is a role for the federal government to play in this, and I think it's one that we'll be looking forward to hearing more about in the future.

Thank you.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Mr. Michael Rosen: I just have one piece for the conclusion. Is that okay?

The Chair: If it's short.

Mr. Michael Rosen: It's 30 seconds.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Rosen: Thank you.

Thank you, Dorothy. I appreciated that.

I want to reiterate the importance of urban conservation, especially the benefits of an urban forest strategy. If you want to think of a role for the federal government, I will tell you that municipalities are eagerly awaiting leadership from their federal and provincial counterparts. Many want to catch up to our municipal cousins in the United States. We need to recognize our urban forests as a piece of green infrastructure, if you will. We really do believe that the federal level has an important role in this.

Thank you so much for listening to us.

The Chair: Thank you again.

From Trees for Life, we have Mr. Cullen.

You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Mark Cullen (Chair, Trees For Life, Urban Tree Coalition): Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Hello, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much.

[English]

I appreciate very much the opportunity to come and speak to this distinguished committee. I, too, hope that I have something of value to add to your valuable work, your great work.

I'm pleased that I'm speaking on the heels of those three presentations because they were all excellent. Especially pertinent to my message, I think, is what you've heard from Tree Canada.

The people I represent, Trees for Life, the Urban Tree Canopy Coalition, is made up of members who are all not-for-profit organizations dedicated to the planting, maintenance and celebration of our urban trees. One of our valuable members is Tree Canada, of course, so it's great to see them here at the table today.

What I want to say may shed a different light on the same subject. The subject, of course, is the value of our urban tree canopies, with the emphasis on "urban". I want to put a finer point on a couple of points that were made, especially with regard to four things.

The first would be health and wellness. I think everyone in this room knows there are ecological benefits to a healthy urban tree canopy. Intuitively we know that. Now we have some facts to deal with. But in terms of health and wellness, we now have quantifiable evidence that cancer, diabetes, lung disease, ADHD in children, are all reduced, and in some cases minimized, when people live in the environment of a healthy urban tree canopy. The quantification comes from a compilation of studies, over 200 of them, including university papers, that were published by Trees Ontario. They can be found on their website if you wish to look for them. We now have evidence of things we thought were true for generations, and now we know they're true.

Another would be the economic benefits of a healthy urban tree canopy. The economic benefits are many. You heard about some from Dorothy. I want to put a finer point on the issue of tourism. I want you to imagine a city that you enjoy travelling to, other than your own city, whatever that might be, if you happen to live in a city or the city of Ottawa. Outside of those obvious examples, is there a city that you like to travel to from time to time? I want you to imagine that city and get a snapshot in your mind of that city and then strip it of its urban tree canopy. Strip the trees out of that postcard image in your mind, and what have you got? We know what you've got. You've got asphalt. You've got steel. You've got cement. You don't have a very beautiful city. You don't have a liveable city.

What we're here today to talk about and to emphasize is that when we have a healthy urban tree canopy, we have a liveable city. We have space that people want to migrate to and want to live in.

We know there are lots of economic benefits beyond tourism. In Ontario, for instance, there is over 100,000 permanent, full-time jobs in the area of horticulture in the private sector alone. You could add another 30,000 in the public sector. Many of them—not all, granted, but many of them—are directly associated with the urban tree canopy.

We also know that real estate values increase by over 30%. For example, Manhattan has the most expensive real estate in the world. There is a condominium project on the south side of Central Park overlooking a beautiful tree canopy. If you stripped the tree canopy out of there and, of course, the green space, I don't think you'd have the same kind of value at all, or desirability.

There are all kinds of economic reasons why the federal government really should be focusing some attention on helping the organizations that are currently committed to enhancing our urban tree canopy. That's the group I represent, the people who are already doing the work. We're not doing new work. We're merely organizing them so that together they can do more.

Another reason I think the federal government needs to focus on the urban tree canopy is the societal benefits of a healthy urban tree canopy. It's a fact that vehicular traffic on a well-treed street, a mature street, slows down. We also know that pedestrian traffic picks up. We know that kids come out of the houses and start playing out of doors—God forbid, maybe a little ball hockey. We know that there are all kinds of other societal benefits to having a healthy urban tree canopy.

● (1605)

Finally, I want to mention the ecological benefits, which Dorothy has already touched upon. We know about the sequestering of carbon. We know about the very efficient production of oxygen, more so by a tree than anything man has created. We know that toxins in rain water are filtered. There are all kinds of other ecological reasons we need to encourage, at every opportunity, the development and enhancement of our urban tree canopy.

In a city like Toronto, there is a 17% tree canopy. In the 1960s it was over 40%. It's been in steady decline ever since. In spite of the best efforts by some good people, it continues to decline. It's not just happening in Toronto; it's occurring in every urban centre across the country.

The emerald ash borer is going to affect 8.5% of the Toronto tree canopy. It's going to affect more than 20% of the Ottawa tree canopy. You should be thinking very hard about what you can do to contribute to the sustaining of our urban tree canopy where the ash is concerned. By the way, Dr. Sandy Smith, the dean of the faculty of forestry at the University of Toronto, has signed a document that says it costs less to save a mature ash than it does to cut it down and replace it. Think about that.

In conclusion, I merely want to say that the purpose of Trees for Life, the Urban Tree Canopy Coalition is to take this discussion that we have about urban infrastructure, which could include public education and police protection and fire protection and storm water sewer management and sanitary sewers, and elevate trees so that they're a part of that discussion, so that, as one councillor in Toronto said to me, "Trees are not a nice to have; they're a must have." That's where we'd really like to go with this conversation.

Thank you.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before we begin our seven-minute rounds of questioning, I'll just remind the witnesses and members of the committee of the scope of the study. The seven points are: One, what is urban conservation? Two, what could be the goals of connecting urban Canadians with conservation? Three, what are the best practices in Canada? Four, what urban conservation initiatives are currently in use and what are the best practices or challenges? Five, what are the economic, health, biodiversity, and social benefits associated with urban conservation? Six, how would you define a protected space? Seven, what is the role of the federal government?

With that in mind, that's the scope, Mr. Woodworth, you have the first seven minutes.

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here.

Let me say at the outset that you probably don't have to convince me of the benefits of trees, and I'll accept just about everything that's been said in that respect. Having said that, my challenge is to ensure that my personal enjoyment of trees can somehow be legitimately transferred into appropriate federal government action, so that's the direction I'm coming from.

I'd like to begin by asking Mr. Manderson about something. A particular concern that I have in this study is that in Canada, which is a young and growing nation, we have been expanding urban areas. Probably there is no better example of that than Calgary. I wonder if you could assist me in telling me how Calgary manages the preservation and protection and access to natural areas as the city grows and expands, as its footprint, I assume, gets larger.

For example, have you done an inventory of the lands surrounding Calgary with a view to determining what must be protected and what you would like to protect? Maybe you could describe for me the approach that Calgary takes.

Mr. Chris Manderson: Certainly. The quick answer is yes, we have done extensive inventory work. Calgary is a large city of 1.1 million people within a larger, more rural context of several municipalities.

Regional planning is something that's being looked at, at the provincial level. The City of Calgary has been an active participant in setting local thresholds and targets for conservation and protection. We work within that realm but also within the context of where most of the urban development is in Calgary itself.

We make use of the legislation available to us. Primarily it's our provincial planning legislation. We use that to identify and set aside any significant areas.

To be blunt, it involves a lot of creativity because the acts that we work with really talk about undevelopable land. We have some powers to look at things like water conservation or conservation of wetlands and aquatic areas. We make use of that to the best of our ability, to at least identify them, get them mapped, and make sure that's an element of the discussions that we have with the development industry when we start to build.

My view is that they are not necessarily polar opposites. I think you can do good, wise development and still protect natural areas; in fact I think you have to.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: You've touched on something else I wanted to ask. When you mentioned discussions with the development industry, you also mentioned regional planning. What organizations or players, or levels of government, do you think need to be involved in that expansion or preservation planning? There would be the local development industry and regional municipal authorities, but is there anybody else that should be involved in that?

• (1615)

Mr. Chris Manderson: Certainly within the context of what we do in Calgary, we see a role for the provincial government. We work a lot with them in land use planning and those sorts of things.

I would suggest that when you look at some of the broader targets that Canada may have, I'm thinking of our being a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, for example. I think there's a leadership role you could play in terms of helping local authorities, and also in the work you do with provincial governments on setting targets for conservation. I think there's a role there.

The big one for us, really, is working with the province and dealing with issues like water management and habitat conservation.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you.

I want to switch gears and ask Ms. Charlton about existing parks and green spaces.

We had an excellent conversation a day or two ago about the need for accessibility to those parks. Could you give us, if you're able to, some information about the number of visitors Calgary parks or green spaces have, what the trends, if any, have been, and what you do to make sure that those are accessible to Calgary and area residents?

Ms. Anne Charlton: Yes, partially.

We do a significant amount of research. It tends to be more qualitative in talking to Calgarians. We've been doing some research on customer segmentation. We work with Tourism Calgary.

Some of our larger sites....many of you may have been to the Calgary Stampede. There are almost 100,000 people on the grounds each day. We think that probably 50% of those people spill into a park almost on a daily basis because the physical location of the Calgary Stampede is tied into the river valley system. We supply, really, the breathing space for many tourists along the riverfront area. A number of festivals are held in Calgary. Again those are large events where we work carefully with the carrying capacity of the outside spaces.

Calgarians tell us that they are in their parks on a weekly basis, a monthly basis. Through the citizen satisfaction baseline survey that has been done in Calgary for as long as I can remember, which is at least 15 years, it turns out that parks are the second most important piece of municipal infrastructure after the fire department.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: You've not said anything at all about any concerns by citizens regarding accessibility. May I assume that everybody finds their way to the parks without difficulty?

Ms. Anne Charlton: We have a standard in our development process that puts a 450-metre corridor around where you live to the nearest park. With the exception of maybe two or three communities that are older and were built in a different planning structure, we have been able to attain that. We also look at regional parks with a 20-minute driving distance. We also deal with barrier-free. I would say there hasn't been a park designed or retrofitted in the last 25 years that has not been striving to have a barrier-free design.

Even within a natural area such as Nose Hill, if you come off of two of the main parking lots, you have carefully constructed less than 8% technically appropriate pathways that will handle strollers, walkers, wheelchairs, etc.

One of the things we are looking at is working with the provincial parks. They are dealing with some wheelchairs with different stroller mechanisms for more technically challenging terrain. We'll work with them on that.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr. Pilon, you have seven minutes.

[Translation]

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

I would like to congratulate all of you on your presentations. They were very interesting.

My first question is for Mr. Rosen. You recently held your 10th Canadian Urban Forest Conference, and you have planted 70 million trees over the last 20 years. Congratulations! In a context where urban green spaces are in decline, where real estate development is expanding, your organization is of capital importance.

Could you tell us how, in your opinion, an urban conservation plan would make your task easier, and which measures would help organizations such as yours?

• (1620)

Mr. Michael Rosen: That is a good question, even though it is a bit complicated.

Historically, our mission has been to plant trees. Our programs, basically, are geared towards tree planting. In the 1990s, in particular, we started to plant many trees in urban areas. As you noted, the conservation of existing forests is very important. Of course, it is municipal regulations that encourage the protection of urban woods.

A municipality that favours growing trees is what has helped us the most. Some municipalities favour growing trees and others have policies with regard to trees. They don't all have similar policies. That is why, in my presentation, I spoke of the necessity of having a national presence.

The current problem is that all municipalities are completely isolated from technology and programs that would help them to improve their urban forests. It is sad to note that we are the only organization that can offer reforestation programs in urban areas. Municipalities need much more than that.

As Mr. Cullen said, there is a significant decline in the number of trees in cities. We don't see it, because it takes a great deal of time. After living for about 80 years, over time, one realizes that municipalities have fewer trees. It is not because they don't like trees, it is because there was negligence, if you will, and planning and reforestation in urban areas have not been respected. Municipalities are asking more and more for national leadership with regard to urban forests.

Mr. François Pilon: Thank you.

My second question is for Mr. Cullen. Along the same lines, one of the goals of your organization is to double the urban tree presence in Canadian urban centres. How would an urban conservation plan help your organization or a coalition such as yours?

[English]

Mr. Mark Cullen: How can the federal government help to double the urban tree canopy in the urban centres across the country? The answer would be to engage with the not-for-profits that are currently committed to this goal, to work with them and partner with the other levels of government that are also interested in making this happen. Most of the funding for municipal replanting comes from—correct me if I'm wrong—the municipal level. They need help.

Every city, every village, every town, every councillor, and every mayor that I talk to say the same thing. I was here in Ottawa for the AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, conference back in August, and I spoke to hundreds of them. They all said the same thing. They don't have money to plant more trees or to protect heritage trees. Frankly, it's not just about money. It's about the resources that exist in each of the ministries of the federal government, including Environment Canada. You have all kinds of interesting things going on. Resources could be marshalled around the cause of doubling the urban tree canopy, without necessarily having to find new money.

I'd be happy to help you put some creative thinking behind what that actually means. I can't give you a specific answer to the question. It's a very good question, and I hope that we continue this discussion.

[Translation]

Mr. François Pilon: I would like that as well. In the municipality in which I live, there is a tree management plan. One must obtain permission to cut a tree, but there is no requirement to replant one once it is cut. I would like to discuss that with you.

I only have a minute and a half left.

I am now addressing the representatives of the City of Calgary. You developed an urban ecological sustainability plan called the

• (1625)

[English]

the imagine Calgary plan for long range urban sustainability.

[Translation]

Could you quickly inventory the means and strategies you intend to use in order to attain the goals of that plan?

[English]

Mr. Chris Manderson: Certainly. The imagine Calgary plan, which I mentioned it briefly in my talk, was based on a consultation. It was the biggest consultation with Calgarians that we had ever done. Some 18,000 citizens participated. It was very broad-based. It was based initially on the Melbourne sustainability principles for cities, which looked at that whole issue of balancing economic, social, and environmental issues in figuring out how you were going to grow a city.

There was a series of questions that we put to Calgarians. We asked people to look forward 100 years. The reason we chose 100 years is that it would take you beyond your own lifetime, or at least most of us wouldn't go beyond that. You're able to take your personal stake in the future out and think about what you want to leave for future generations. We looked at issues related to environment, fiscal stability, governance, accountability, those sorts of things. A whole number of visions and directions came out of that.

We took that and we said that would be a core element of how the city would govern itself. The next step was a 60-year plan. The 60-year plan is our statutory municipal development plan. That plan guides how we're going to grow. We've elected to incorporate, for example, key environmental principles into the growth of the city itself, a more dense urban form, more conservation and biodiversity, things like that. From there, we've cascaded plans down. We're doing 30-year and 10-year plans, as a result, in all business units throughout the city.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Rempel, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start my questioning with a comment for Ms. Dobbie.

Several years ago during your term as an MP, you visited an elementary school in your riding, and you talked about how young women could run in politics. You have a woman sitting in front of you right now who sat in that class, who since has been elected to politics, and believes the principle that it just takes someone to show

that it can be done. I just wanted to thank you for your contribution to our country.

Voices: Hear, hear!

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Moving on, I want to direct some of my questions to the team from the City of Calgary because I represent a Calgary riding. We have a unique challenge in our city in that it's very fast growing. We've seen an enormous expansion in population over the last decade especially. We're under extreme pressures to expand the city beyond its needs. When we talk about infrastructure in the city, it's not just about roads or hospitals and whatnot; the dialogue is also about how we attract people to the city and retain them. Labour is one of our determinants of growth. How do we make the city sustainable in the long term as well? As you said, and certainly I hear this from my constituents, it is something that is important to them.

You touched upon some of the uniqueness of the City of Calgary's management plan when it comes to urban conservation. I can't remember the exact title of it, but it's the wetland conservation plan and some of the other frameworks you have.

Could either of you speak very briefly to some of the challenges you faced in developing them and then speak to some of the challenges you face in implementation, in the context of best practice? I know you have achieved some measurable results over the last few years and it has been very well integrated into the planning process. For the committee's edification, maybe you could speak to how you developed that, any challenges that you face, and any ongoing challenges there may be in implementation.

Mr. Chris Manderson: Certainly. I'll talk specifically about the wetlands conservation plan just to keep within the time limits. You're right, in that we're projected to grow by about 28% in the next 20 years. Infrastructure and sustainability are big issues for us. We do know that if we build the city smarter, we'll ultimately be saving some money.

From a strict conservation point of view, and by that I mean identifying what's important and working with that within the context of development, we work within the confines of what the legislation, the provincial Municipal Government Act, allows us to do. The ability to protect, identify, and conserve wetlands, for example, is covered by, I think, 69 words in the Municipal Government Act itself, which talks about protection of ravines, gullies, swamps, and coolies, land that could be flooded or is otherwise unstable. When you look at what that really talks about, it's saying this is land you shouldn't build on because it's not a good idea.

As a municipality, and there are several in Alberta that do this, we've had to work quite creatively with our partners provincially and federally to determine: What's important about these areas? What's important about wetlands and riparian areas? How do we take that nub of an idea within the legislation and apply it to some broader ecological goals? You have to know who you're working with and you have to be creative in how you apply a fairly small piece of legislation.

• (1630)

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Great.

Ms. Charlton, did you have a comment?

Ms. Anne Charlton: I'll add that I dabble a little in the municipal politics level because of my interface with the aldermen, and frankly, political direction is huge. The ability to understand that, even if you are very interested in transit, transit is about livability. People walk to transit. You want walkability as well as that transit.

Everything that these gentlemen said about what trees add to a city, you could take the next step and say that parks add to a city. Whether you are walking on a green street to go to transit, whether you are changing the fabric of a playground that you take your kids to, whether there is shade and sun, the political direction at every level is very important.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

I'll open it up to the three at the end of the table on my right with a quick question regarding trees.

Mr. Cullen, I think you made a statement about how it costs less to save a tree than it does to cut it down. Could you talk about what saving a tree entails exactly?

Do any of you at the table have an understanding of best practice programs to implement, large scale, either identification of problems or guidance for the committee on some recommendations we could make to support an initiative such as that?

Mr. Mark Cullen: My comments were specifically targeted to the emerald ash borer that is attacking all three native ash species in Ontario and Quebec. You need to be aware of it because the chances of it moving west are very good. Whether it will or not, I don't know, but we do know that it's taking every ash in its path.

The emerald ash borer can be treated with a biological treatment called TreeAzin. TreeAzin is not a chemical. It's derived from a tropical tree called the neem tree. Three or four applications cost less than what it costs to cut down and replace a mature ash tree.

One needs to qualify that a little bit. Not every ash is worth saving. I'd be the first to say that. But we're not saving nearly as many ash as we could. We have this product that was developed in Canada, partly with federal government funds, by the way. It's made in Canada and it works. It has proven efficacy, yet we're allowing valuable ash trees to die. It's costing us more to dispose of them and replant them than it would if we just saved them.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Go ahead, Ms. Dobbie.

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: I have one comment to add. This really does have a bearing on what the federal government can do. In the infrastructure agreements signed from time to time, trees are not mentioned. It's always about the cement, the sidewalks, the bridges, and the roads. It takes an awful lot longer to grow a tree or to replace a tree than it does to build any of those hard features.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Great.

Mr. Rosen, go ahead.

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: By the way, thank you for your comments.

Mr. Michael Rosen: The only comment I'd like to add is that it really does start at the top. I think the government's policies and direction are very important to municipalities. At present, you have the infrastructure in place. There is Natural Resources Canada. There is the Canadian Forest Service. But neither of these organizations reflects the trees that grow in cities and towns. They are very much involved with what I would call the industrial forest.

I think I'll share our feelings here. We think it's a missed opportunity, especially when over 80% of Canadians are now living in cities. There are researchers and programs, but none of them seems to be directed towards the trees in the city.

My feeling is that things would be greatly improved by directing existing resources in a slightly different direction.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time has expired.

Ms. Duncan, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for your time and for your expertise.

Mr. Rosen, you talked about a national urban forestry strategy. I wonder if you've given some thought to, or if there has been, consultation with stakeholders. If you could make recommendations to this committee, what would they be?

Mr. Michael Rosen: An urban forest strategy, in fact, aligns with best management practices, so it's a Canadian version of what the challenges and possible solutions are to improving our urban forest, making sure they're not going into decline, as Mark has discussed. It has to do with things like how to promote good inventories of trees, what the best management practices to maintaining trees are, and what communities need for educational things to encourage individuals to protect trees.

We don't realize it, but the large majority of urban forest is actually in private ownership. The trees that you see along city streets do not show the whole picture. You're seeing maybe 20% to 30% of the urban forest. The other urban forest is sitting in those mall parking lots and in people's backyards and front yards. To get to those people, you need a major educational program.

The other piece of an urban forest strategy for the nation is around our educational institutions. At the post-secondary school level, not a lot of universities or colleges have urban forests as one of their core programs.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thanks, Mr. Rosen. I'll ask Mr. Cullen if he would like to add to that. If not, I know you talked about doubling the tree canopy and I'm wondering if you would like to make some specific recommendations to this committee about that.

Mr. Mark Cullen: First of all, with regard to the education piece, I am really glad that came up. I'm happy about it because I recently read a book about Edmund Zavitz.

I'm not sure whether you have heard of him, but Edmund Zavitz was responsible for planting over two billion trees in Ontario. I went to school in Ontario and I don't recall learning anything about tripling the Ontario forest cover in southern Ontario between 1904 and 1949. I think that kids need to learn this stuff. By learning about some great Canadian heroes, like Mr. Zavitz, they'll gain a greater appreciation for the value of trees generally and, one hopes, for the urban tree canopy. That would be my response.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You talked about doubling the tree canopy. Would you like to make some specific recommendations to this committee?

Mr. Mark Cullen: Do you mean beyond helping us plant more trees?

I don't simply throw that out, and I don't use the expression "double the tree canopy" lightly. There is a strategy. For instance—

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: That's what I want to hear. Tell us about that.

Mr. Mark Cullen: Okay. It's difficult to answer this question without being fairly specific.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Be as specific as you can.

Mr. Mark Cullen: You represent Etobicoke, so perhaps you would know something about the strategy in Toronto. The strategy in Toronto has been very well articulated. I believe it's called "Every Tree Counts". It calls for a doubling of the tree canopy by the year 2050. It's not the only city that's done that. Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville has the very same goal, to double the tree canopy by the year 2057, because that will be the 200th anniversary of his town. There are many other municipalities that have given this some thought and have committed some resources to developing a plan. I think the federal government could provide a great deal of incentive to the municipalities that haven't done it.

Michael referred to something really interesting. He said something about how the guy who cleans the local ice rink is also responsible for the trees in many municipalities. That's because their resources are so thin; it's the only way it works. What can the federal government do to help municipalities like that develop a plan that really has some teeth, that is meaningful? It would be something which 20 or 30 years from now, our grandchildren would look back and say that their forefathers were smart, that they did the right thing.

• (1640)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Mr. Michael Rosen: Can I add one thing?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Please, Mr. Rosen. In detail.

Mr. Michael Rosen: This is going to be as specific as I can make it. There's one thing this committee could do that would help the urban forest. It would be to give firm direction to the Canadian Forest Service to allocate one position in each of their forestry centres—they have one in Edmonton, one in Sault St Marie, one in Sainte Foy, one in Fredericton—to work on the problems in the urban forest. It's a simple as that.

Currently, lots of resources are there but nothing is going on. Everybody has to go to the United States to get their technical information. Why can't the Canadian Forest Service direct some of those resources to the urban forest?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I really appreciate that. I know Ms. Charlton wants in, but I've got a minute and twenty seconds left.

You talked about biodiversity and what you've done. Are there recommendations to this committee that you would make? If we're going to do urban conservation, what should be the goals for biodiversity? Any of you, please jump in.

Mr. Chris Manderson: Simply put, within a minute and a few seconds, the goal would be to consider cities to have vital ecological needs as well. You need to think about viable, sustainable, healthy ecosystems within the context of growing cities.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Should the management principle be ecological integrity?

Mr. Chris Manderson: I like that phrase. I would say so.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Would anyone else care to comment?

Ms. Anne Charlton: I have one comment on the prairie city, which loves trees but has a hard time growing them.

We have just enacted—it's not quite through council yet, but it has passed through committee—the amount of soil volume that has to be at the bottom of a tree in streets. It's extremely important. The expensive part of an urban canopy is at the beginning of its life and at the end of its life. What we're finding is that our trees are dying a third of the way through what could be a longer life because they have insufficient soil. The technical framework that needs to be attached to the trees must be very robust.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What would your recommendation be to the committee?

Ms. Anne Charlton: It would be to look at parts of Canada. You have to look at it regionally. You have to look at soil profiles, but make sure that the tree can live its whole life.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We begin our five-minute round.

Madam Quach, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here. You are going to need your earphones.

I would like to thank Tree Canada for visiting Beauharnois—Salaberry two weeks ago. You made the headlines. The local people were very proud.

My question is for Ms. Andreeff. I hope I am pronouncing your name right. You spoke very highly of Banff and the Jasper National Park and their benefits. In fact, a study by the Canadian Parks Council showed that for \$800 million invested in parks, \$4 billion is generated in economic benefits. We are in agreement that our national heritage and its protection have a significant impact on tourism and the economy. You spoke about this.

There have been cutbacks of \$29 million in national parks and historic sites. You yourself commented on the 41 job losses in Jasper. You said this concerns you because the cutbacks will have an impact on tourism.

What must the federal government do to ensure that parks play a major role in urban conservation and the economy?

[English]

Ms. Monica Andreeff: Specifically, with respect to your question about the budget cutbacks, it is of concern in terms of balancing ecological integrity with tourism and visitor experience. We need to keep investing in the infrastructure of parks, particularly in the mountain parks. We consider them sometimes the entry level parks where people can come for their first taste of wilderness. Our campgrounds, trails, and infrastructure need to be maintained to a standard of excellence that currently doesn't exist.

There are opportunities, however, in national parks for the private sector to partner with Parks Canada to deliver high-quality visitor experiences. We draw most of our visitors from urban areas and through high-quality recreational activities and increased visitation to national parks. Those messages of urban conservation will become second nature to visitors and Canadians.

• (1645)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

You spoke about promoting cultural and educational activities. You also spoke about aboriginal cultures. Such activities exist in a number of parks. You talked about enhancing nature interpretation. These activities require guides or people to make it an enriching experience.

[English]

Ms. Monica Andreeff: I'm sorry, I'm not getting the translation. Could you repeat that, please?

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: You spoke a lot about the importance of awareness-raising and of promoting educational and interpretation activities. These activities require guides, real life experience, material and human resources. The purpose of these activities is to give visitors or residents a wonderful experience when they visit Parks Canada sites.

What could the federal government do to enhance these activities?

[English]

Ms. Monica Andreeff: I believe that the federal government can help with looking at the mandate of Parks Canada. Ecological integrity needs to be balanced with visitor experience and education. Currently, ecological integrity is the first priority, and that's wonderful. That's wonderful in remote national parks where no one visits. In order to attract Canadians to the national parks, we need opportunities for adventure, activities that appeal to young and urban Canadians, and we need to make all of this accessible to anyone.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Do you think this would require additional investment?

[English]

Ms. Monica Andreeff: I understand that Parks Canada has been struggling to maintain the high quality of visitor experiences in light

of the recent cutbacks, but I believe there is still reinvestment that can be done in the form of maintaining highways and structures in the parks, making sure the infrastructure gets funding from various federal departments.

They've had cutbacks in wages and salaries, but I believe there's still room for a lot more investment. Upgrading of highways is very important. A crumbling highway between Lake Louise and Jasper, called the Icefields Parkway, needs a great deal of investment, and unfortunately there is not enough money to improve that road.

The Chair: Time has expired.

Mr. Sopuck.

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

Ms. Andreeff, I happen to represent a constituency in west-central Manitoba, and within my constituency is the entirety of Riding Mountain National Park. What you said about national parks really hit home to me.

Given that the private sector is taking more and more of a role in our national parks, where are we with what the private sector has done? What is the potential for more private sector involvement in our parks?

Ms. Monica Andreeff: The private sector continues to invest in infrastructure in the national parks, maintaining buildings to a higher standard, in some cases, than Parks Canada is able to afford to do.

The private sector can also partner in the delivery of high-quality visitor experiences, something that Parks Canada may not be required to do. I think Parks Canada does a great job of making sure that the mandate of the National Parks Act is met, but sometimes they just have to get out of the way and let private operators deliver the services to visitors and tourists.

There is plenty of potential for more high-quality recreational opportunities. Even though there is sometimes some great direction from Ottawa, we find that at the field unit level the implementation is quite a different story.

• (1650)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I couldn't agree with you more. This has been borne out in my discussions with local business people, Riding Mountain National Park, and park staff. Your comments about far-off diktats from Ottawa hit home with me as well.

It seems to me that private sector operators in national parks have a strong incentive to do things right in an environmentally sound way, to present visitors with the most effective experience possible, because their livelihoods depend on it. Could you expand on that?

Ms. Monica Andreeff: Private sector operators understand they have no interest in killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Many of them, sometimes generations of families, are residents and have been doing business in national parks for decades. They live and breathe the wilderness and the national park values and these things are very close to their heart.

Obviously, we still need to have an economic engine driving the parks so we have sustainable communities where people can afford to live and work. I think that private operators who are operating in national parks are very responsible and work well within the guidelines of the National Parks Act. They're often subject to very stringent environmental assessments that sometimes make it prohibitive for them to move ahead with a new project or a new idea or to replace an aging ski lodge. Sometimes these requirements are very expensive and time-consuming, so in many cases things die on the books because of the cost of pushing a new project or a new activity.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I would just comment that I think our changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will facilitate the kind of redevelopment of our parks that you described.

Ms. Dobbie, I was very intrigued by the phrase you used, "environmental infrastructure", trees as infrastructure.

Mr. Manderson, you used a phrase that is near and dear to my heart, "ecological goods and services", which implies the same thing.

Could either of you comment on studies that have quantified what environmental infrastructure does in terms of improving urban living?

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: I made some comments about that in my initial remarks, but I think we know both instinctively and empirically that trees make a huge difference to the value of individual properties. It is much more difficult to quantify. I've done some research in this area in making presentations to the City of Winnipeg, for example, and there are numbers all over the place. Certainly no Canadian research was useful, but there's lots of research from the U.S.

I can give you a negative when it comes to replacing trees, Moscow planted a million trees at great expense when they came out from behind the Iron Curtain, and 80% of them died. You can see the difficulty if you don't keep up your urban infrastructure.

I don't know if anyone here has been to Truro, but the trees there were subjected to the emerald ash borer back in the early part of the century when the ash borer came to Canada. It took away nearly 100% of the trees. There may be a handful left. If you go to that town, you get a really strong sense of the impact. They stripped the bark off their elm trees, and turned them into icons that celebrate their pioneers and all the good things in their community. That's how much the trees mean to them.

While it is hard to attach dollars and cents to some things because the studies are few—and I think Mark has one that he can point to—certainly you can see all around you the difficulties you have if you don't include the maintenance of trees. Many of them were planted at the beginning of the last century, 80 to 100 years ago. Some of them can live to be 200 or 300 years old. Replacing them would take that much more time and that much more money.

• (1655)

The Chair: Time has expired, sorry.

[Translation]

Mr. Choquette has the floor for five minutes.

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

I would like to thank all the witnesses here today. This is very fascinating.

Urban conservation is an enormous challenge. It is part of the larger challenge of conservation on a national level. We conducted a study on this and it was published in a report. Of course, we were in disagreement. We mentioned that the committee did not acknowledge significant contributions made by science and scientists, environmental groups, aboriginal groups or communities. Moreover, the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy recently tabled its report.

As for urban conservation, there are always problems related to urban development. For example, where I am from, in Drummondville, the city wants to grow. It is natural for a city to want to grow, however it does so at the expense of forests. So we are faced with the difficulty of balancing conservation and housing or industrial developments.

That brings us to the question of climate change. You touched on this when you spoke about the problem of droughts and what not.

How can the federal government provide tools to better reconcile the environment with the economy? What are these tools?

I think that Mr. Manderson and Mr. Cullen have some good ideas on this. Go ahead, gentlemen.

[English]

Mr. Chris Manderson: Within the context of environmental change and dealing with change, this is clearly an issue of the best available science. We need science to understand this and to learn to predict.

We have done some work in the Calgary region, for example. We know that we're going to be losing the primary source of water, the Bow River, which is fed by the Bow glacier. That's going to disappear certainly within my lifetime.

The patterns of precipitation are changing in southern Alberta. We're going to expect somewhat wetter, more unpredictable weather. We have to think about that in terms of how we supply drinking water to several million people, which is going to be a big change for us.

We need guidance. We need science. We need advice, I would say, at the federal and international levels, that's going to help municipalities deal with that.

With respect to the Convention on Biological Diversity, an interesting report just came out which talks about cities and the biodiversity outlook, and that the brunt of climate change is going to be borne by cities.

It spoke, for example, of coastal cities and the rise of the oceans as being one issue. Drought is going to be another. It's not just going to be an issue that can be solved locally. It needs to be solved nationally and internationally. Mitigating the effect of that is certainly an important element of that, but the mitigation is going to take some comprehensive planning.

Mr. Mark Cullen: LEAF is an organization that has spent a lot of time planting trees on private property. That is its mandate. It has determined that one tree equals \$161,000 in environmental benefits. It has measured that. I'd be happy to provide the background information on that to anyone on the committee who would like to see it.

Let me make sure that I understand the question. I think you were pitting development against green infrastructure and the concept of developing green infrastructure in our urban space. Is that the nature of the question?

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: In fact, I was not referring to green infrastructure, but rather to housing and industrial and commercial developments.

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Mark Cullen: Right. I just wanted to make sure I understood the question before I attempted to answer it.

I think it's a mistake to pit development against either the preservation or the development of green infrastructure. I believe that we can do both, especially where the intensification of residential development is concerned. We know that the intensification of residential development is a huge issue in our five or six largest urban centres. Elsewhere I'm not so sure. Maybe we're still dealing with sprawl, but less so in Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, etc.

I won't go on any longer except to suggest there are answers to that question. We need to talk about how we can do both, rather than have one or the other. I think when we start talking about doing both, we can really advance the discussion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Toet, you have five minutes.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our panellists today. It's been very informative.

I just wanted to go back to a couple of points on the scope of the study: point two, what could be the goals of connecting urban Canadians with conservation; and point five, what are the economic, health, biodiversity and social benefits associated with urban conservation.

The reason I go back to those two points is I know Mr. Cullen and Ms. Dobbie are avid gardeners and big promoters of gardening. Ms. Dobbie, I often enjoy your program on Sunday mornings while I have my morning cup of coffee. It has helped me with great insight into some of the gardening challenges that I face on an ongoing basis. I do appreciate it.

I wouldn't necessarily call myself an avid gardener, but I love getting out in my yard as much as I possibly can. I enjoy gardening, landscaping, the whole aspect of working out there and getting my hands in the soil and getting my fingers really dirty. I know some of the benefits that I feel personally about getting involved in that.

I wonder if either or both of you could speak to some of the psychological benefits of gardening and getting involved in the landscape, kind of becoming one with it.

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: I always say that gardening is what made me recover from politics. It really does have a huge psychological benefit. When you go outside and you're in your garden, you're in that green space and you lose all sense of time, whether you're gardening, just cutting the grass, or whatever it might be. It takes you into another place and it's a happier place. I can't quantify what the health benefits are, but I'm sure they are great.

You cannot live in a city that doesn't have green spaces. All parts of those green spaces are important. We are talking about trees here, but grass is important. It helps to cool the atmosphere and makes it possible for trees to grow. The things people grow in their backyard gardens, the tomatoes they grow, it isn't so much about the food they eat, it's the joy they get out of growing it that makes the difference.

You mentioned my radio show. I know that many of my listeners don't garden. We get 50% of the Sunday morning listeners in that time slot of all the radio stations in Winnipeg. The people who listen are listening because it takes them away from strife and war, from stress, and it makes them feel good. How do you quantify that?

Mr. Mark Cullen: That's one of my favourite questions. Thanks for asking it.

I think all of the evidence needed to answer this question exists in a whole new industry that has developed over the last 25 years called horticultural therapy. You can now be certified as a horticultural therapist, a qualified therapist who helps people with any number of maladies, whether it's cancer, Alzheimer's, or any kind of cognitive disability. It can slow the progression of that malady or illness and sometimes reverse it.

If you look into horticultural therapy—google it and explore that a little bit—you'll get answers to your question. I think you'll be impressed by what the association has to offer as evidence of horticultural therapy. Not only does a beautiful garden provide benefits of its own, but there is the experience which Dorothy was talking about, of being in a garden and the benefits that gardening also provides.

Finally, going out into the garden is not an escape from reality; it's an escape into reality. By that I mean the garden links us to Mother Nature. It links us to our parks and to the real world around us, and it gets us out of the four square walls that we surround ourselves with.

• (1705)

Mr. Lawrence Toet: That goes a long way to explaining why I fight with my kids about cutting the grass, not because I want them to cut it, but because I want to cut it. It's my time.

Mr. Manderson, I have a question for you. Wetlands are something of a real interest to me. It's obvious from some of the research you've done that it is of great interest to you. You may be looking from a slightly different aspect. I come from Winnipeg, where we have real issues with water management, as almost everybody across Canada is aware of.

I would like you to talk about the benefits that wetlands would have, specifically for cities, but also in the role for Manitoba. I look at it from a flood mitigation aspect. Can you give us some enlightenment on that?

The Chair: Unfortunately, your time has expired and you'll have to get the answer to that maybe through another question.

Ms. Leslie, you have five minutes.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Thanks very much for your testimony. It has been very interesting.

Ms. Andreeff, you started off by talking about funding. Everybody talked about funding, but you mentioned funding and legislation, I think.

Ms. Monica Andreeff: Yes, that is correct.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Could you expand on what you mean by legislation? I am trying to figure out where federal jurisdiction would lie around legislation.

Ms. Monica Andreeff: The Canada National Parks Act currently puts ecological integrity as the overriding governing principle for national parks. To be successful in attracting and being relevant to Canadians, national parks need to consider visitor experience and education, on par with ecological integrity. Similar to what somebody said earlier, these things don't need to be considered in isolation of each other. They should be considered in equal balance.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Thanks. You did mention that piece of legislation. I was just wondering if there were other aspects.

I want to get to funding. I will open this up to everyone.

I appreciated, Mr. Rosen, when you talked about a very specific solution in response to Ms. Duncan's question. That's the kind of information I am looking for. I'm looking for specifics, such as at Canada Forest Service you need a position that does x and guidance and advice from the feds. Was it Mr. Manderson who said that piece?

I would love to delve into some of those specifics. Do you have a wish list of specifics? Funding is such a large, grand thing for us to talk about. What are some tangible things we could put our fingers on that would work?

I would love to hear from either Mr. Manderson or Ms. Charlton about the infrastructure granting piece. That's a new concept for me.

Ms. Anne Charlton: At the municipal level, when we deal with federal funding, it's often a tri-party agreement. The infrastructure Canada program, the national infrastructure program from 15 years ago, was leveraged dollars, which is always of interest to a municipality no matter how big or small it is. Often it dealt with built infrastructure. We have wiggled parks in as green infrastructure.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Good job.

Ms. Anne Charlton: We have done some very interesting projects, because leveraged money goes a long way. If the federal government believes that urban conservation and green infrastructure truly are essential to a city, then it should expand the definitions. You don't even necessarily have to put as much money against it.

When I debate the cost of a park, and we have built some multi-million dollar parks in Calgary recently, I still talk about them as being a quarter of an intersection and a quarter of an overpass. The

value people get from them goes far beyond that. They have that social connectivity. Parks bring people together. Some of the most social people in the world are urban dog walkers.

When you look at the triple bottom line, you can judge the success of urban infrastructure on not only the economics. I think that has been well covered, particularly in the tree discussion. You can evaluate it. It's a social benefit. It's an economic benefit. It will bring kids out of the basement and away from their laptops, back into playing soccer and everything else they should do to combat obesity. Interestingly enough, right now, recreation and health are having very significant discussions at all three levels of government.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Does anyone else want to get in on specific suggestions?

Ms. Dobbie.

• (1710)

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: I have one. I'm not sure that it's anything the federal government can do.

Somehow we need to educate developers, engineers, architects, and contractors about how trees grow. They have a vision that the roots go straight down. You will often see trees with these nice little board fences around them. It doesn't do a darn thing for them. Those are some of the trees which cost so much money, and suddenly, after a construction site has been cleared, fall over because a big wind had come along and all of their anchor roots had been cut. When I was chairman of Tree Canada, I wanted to put together a conference where we could bring people with green experience and tree experience together with the people who actually do the built landscapes so that they could have an exchange. I don't think that is done deliberately. Perhaps it's they just don't know any better. I think there is a role for the federal government in that education.

Let me just add that I want to congratulate all of you, because I know that you all voted for National Tree Day. That's going to have a tremendous impact on some of these education pieces. Congratulations to all of you.

The Chair: Thank you so much. Your time has expired, Ms. Megan.

Mr. Lunney, you're next for five minutes.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Great. Thank you for that. It's a fascinating discussion, I can't wait to jump in, but before I do, and for Ms. Ambler's benefit, Mr. Cullen, I believe you brought with you some booklets about trees. Unfortunately, they're only in English. I'm wondering, colleagues, could I take a second to ask if there would be agreement to have these distributed? Regrettably, they're only in English but I think there's information in it that would benefit all members of the committee.

The Chair: Very good. I think you have consent.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you very much. Perhaps those could be distributed now. That would be helpful.

What a fascinating discussion we're having today. Gardening in order to recover from politics: thank you very much for that, Dorothy Dobbie. Some of us are wondering what step we're at right now. Is this a 12-step program we're talking about?

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: It's an easy step, just into the garden.

Mr. James Lunney: Horticultural therapy, not an escape from reality but into reality. I think some of us appreciate that. I know I'm fortunate enough to live on acreage on Vancouver Island. I have my little trails through the trees behind the house that I maintain with a lawn mower. When I'm contemplating the challenges of the universe, I like to walk those trails. I really miss that time out there if I'm away too much. We appreciate the concepts you're bringing up today.

I want to pick up on one of your comments, Ms. Dobbie, about having a conference with urban developers on how trees grow. I want to tie that in with a question I heard earlier about soil volume. I walk in urban areas. There's concrete everywhere and I see trees that are planted in little holes hardly bigger than the tree trunks. I wonder how those trees could possibly survive. Maybe there is a water supply underneath the trees. Maybe you could comment on that and how big a problem it actually is.

Mr. Michael Rosen: I want to address that one.

Actually it has to do with a question from Mr. Choquette. He mentioned the same principle because the trend now, of course, is all toward densification. Mr. Choquette was talking about urban areas expanding into rural areas and what we can do. The trend in municipalities is toward densification, to develop more in the cities themselves. That itself, by definition, is going to put pressure on existing trees. We have to learn how trees can live in an area of more hard surface.

There are techniques, and they're not those what we call tree coffins, those little cement boxes that you described. That's a technology from the 1960s and 1970s. There's new technology available. One of them is called Silva Cells. It's a living system underneath sidewalks. They are cells that can support sidewalks and infrastructure but allow for soil so that tree roots can exist in the soil beneath the sidewalks. They're one of the best examples, and they're being used all across the major cities. If you're ever at Yonge and Bloor in Toronto—some of you may be there one day—take a look at the trees planted along there. This is a multi-million dollar project. They ripped apart the entire sidewalk system simply to incorporate these cells to allow the trees that they've planted to grow to maturity and maintain a very large size.

It is possible, but not under the technology that you described. In the technology you described, according to a study that I saw, the trees live an average of seven years. It's more like a replacement program, a job creation program, where the trees are literally replaced every seven years. The long-term solution is to invest big money and unfortunately—here's the plug again—that money is borne by the municipal tax base. It's a tax levy on the municipalities. They have to bear the brunt of trying to support a tree in a hard surface area.

●(1715)

Mr. James Lunney: Thanks for that.

Ms. Charlton, I think it was you who mentioned soil volumes, the beginning of life and end of life. Would you expand on that for us?

Ms. Anne Charlton: Yes, and actually Michael's very right. In downtown situations we, too, are experimenting with Silva Cells, but as he mentioned they are a very expensive technology and are only appropriate in the places where you have that kind of money.

What we've been doing is under the residential street policy for Calgary, we've been in negotiations with developers, our engineers, and internally as a municipality, for probably a couple of years, and we have become a little more creative. We have looked at the width of the streets, the width of the sidewalks. We are creating additional space and additional soil volumes, as well as trying to style the size of the tree with the amount of dirt attached.

The Chair: The time has expired. Thank you.

Mr. Trotter, you have five minutes.

Mr. Bernard Trotter (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a real delight to be here.

Mr. Rosen, I appreciate your comments about Toronto. It's my city. We've lived through all of the digging and re-digging of Bloor Street, and it looks to be a success.

Another project that's been happening in the city of Toronto is one around the waterfront. You're probably aware of it.

I've spent some time with them. They've talked about some of the best practices they're putting in place for all the park space they're developing down there, but also for the tree planting. They mentioned that the vision is to have not seven-year trees down at the waterfront, but 50-year trees. It sounds as though they've been incorporating the Silva Cells, I guess. Is that the technology they're using?

A voice: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Trotter: Is that an example of best practices?

I should mention, by the way, that it's not all municipal money that's going into the Toronto waterfront. It's actually mostly federal money.

Is that an example of the best practices being used in the country, or are there better examples of best practices when it comes to urban planting?

Mr. Michael Rosen: When it comes to best practices that you could have in a municipality, I'm not going to name the municipalities. I don't want to get into that.

You have to think of the bigger picture. Some municipalities actually have an urban forest strategy. In my mind, every city should have one. I don't know if we want to legislate this, but we should be actively encouraging it.

A municipal urban forest strategy tells the municipality that we have to do an inventory. You have to ask yourself: why do we have the problem with emerald ash borer? Why is it that the City of Ottawa has one-third of their trees in one species? How did that happen?

A lot of it happened because there was not a lot of planning. Actually, there was no strategy in Ottawa in the 1970s and 1980s—after Dutch elm disease, ironically—no strategy to say that the strategy should be to have a diverse urban forest, no strategy to say that you should want to create diversity in the forest.

I think the short answer is that the best management practices always start with a good, comprehensive plan, including: what kinds of trees we have growing now; what kinds we would like in the future; when the trees have to be replaced; what size of tree we have to replace them with; and whether we're redeveloping the downtown. Also, we should be using Silva Cells. All of that stuff has to be spelled out in a comprehensive plan.

Yes, the waterfront is a good example, and so is the area around Yonge and Bloor. Unfortunately, though, there's the rest of urban Canada, with the guy maintaining the hockey rink taking care of the trees, who's not privy to the technology, the training, or the funding to do that kind of innovative stuff. But yes, the waterfront is a great example.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Good. Thanks.

I hate to be too Toronto-centric on everybody, but I'd like to talk a little about Rouge Park. It's our first urban national park. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on some of the uses for Rouge Park. It's great to have trees and a wild space in the City of Toronto, but at the same time, this is an opportunity for young Torontonians, a lot of whom are also new Canadians, to experience the forest.

Maybe, Mr. Cullen, you could comment on that too. I know that you've spent a lot of time in Toronto.

In thinking about those people and how to get them to experience nature in a different way, some uses that are being proposed are things like canopy walks, zip lines, and things like that, which get the kids into the forest itself. Are those kinds of things appropriate, or do they degrade the quality of the forest?

• (1720)

Mr. Mark Cullen: I think you need to look at the activity, whether it's a zip line or mountain biking—probably not a good idea—or whether it involves something motorized, and you need to ask yourself whether that is good for the trees. If it's not good for the trees, I don't think it's a good idea.

On the other hand, we want to engage as many Canadians as we possibly can in Canada's first federal urban park, right? I live in Markham, which envelops the northern part of the park, so I am very familiar with it. As a kid, I rode my bike through it.

The question is maybe best answered with a question: What would engage people to the maximum and draw them to the park without damaging the trees? That would be my response. Is that reasonable?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Yes, and maybe as what I'll call an armchair designer at this point, what kinds of suggestions do you

have? I know that we're still in the early stages of designing the park; I don't think the planning is too far advanced.

What kinds of suggestions would you have? What could we do to make Rouge Park a fantastic park, and a destination not just for Torontonians, but for people from across the country and around the world?

Mr. Mark Cullen: Right. With your permission, I'd like to think about that. It's a good question and I'd like to give you a more thoughtful response than I can give you at this moment. Could I do that?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Yes, absolutely.

Maybe Tree Canada has some thoughts on that. Again, I'm soliciting as an amateur urban landscaper—

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: —and time has expired. Maybe next time around we can get some answers.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan.

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

You've all mentioned funding. Are you able to provide to this committee specific recommendations that you would like to see in an urban conservation strategy?

Mr. Mark Cullen: I sometimes call this the elephant in the room. We spend very little time talking about private donors—private foundations, private individuals, corporations. They are very enthusiastic about what all of us represent here this afternoon.

I call this the miracle of matching funds. The federal government could come to the table and say, "Here's a buck to plant another tree, but we would like to see four more bucks. If we put one in, could you get us four more?" I think Trees for Life, as a coalition, would be delighted by that challenge and would go out and find four more bucks, so that your buck would represent five bucks. Then instead of planting 100,000, we'd be planting 500,000, or instead of a million, five million.

We'd have the private donor looking at this and saying, "You've brought the municipality to the table. You've brought not-for-profits to the table. You've brought the province to the table. You've brought the feds to the table. I'm coming to the table."

I have a file that represented about \$750,000 in private donations. Foundations have said they'd like to support what we're doing, doubling the tree canopy, but they don't want to do it alone. When you have money that you're prepared to invest as representatives of the federal government, you probably have the same attitude as private donors in the same situation. Nobody wants to do it all.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Mr. Michael Rosen: Believe it or not, in this case I look to our friends to the south. I look to the United States Forest Service. The United States has a forest service, as do we, the Canadian Forest Service.

The forest service in the U.S. treats urban forests no differently from any other sector in their forest code. They have three pillars. One is funding, and funding for community groups such as Trees for Life, Tree Canada, all the groups across Canada. The second pillar is science, having their scientists focus their work on the science of the urban forest. The third one is policies. In the United States, they fund and have policies directed at the state level.

If there's one thing the federal government could do, it would be to work with the provincial partners. In the United States, they have a state forester responsible for urban forests.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: You mentioned working with the provincial partners. Is that their recommendation?

Mr. Michael Rosen: That's my recommendation.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Mr. Michael Rosen: Alaska has an urban forester, funded federally.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I have a feeling that Mr. Manderson wanted to get in there.

Mr. Chris Manderson: I'll just pick up on some—

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Give us some detailed recommendations.

Mr. Chris Manderson: With respect to recommendations, there needs to be consistency and cohesiveness with respect to crediting incentives, infrastructure grants, and things that deal with compensation. The City of Calgary has its own compensation for wetland loss. It is about five times the provincial rate in terms of the cost for loss. That's been a tremendous tool that we're going to be able to use to start to replace wetland habitat.

We need cohesiveness between what I'm doing at the municipal level and what we're doing with respect to our provincial partners, where the water authority lies. I'd like to see cohesiveness, for example, between what we're doing with fisheries in Alberta and broader things like species at risk. There could be a real opportunity to consider some sort of scheme for stewardship crediting and compensation.

• (1725)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Tell me more about this.

Mr. Chris Manderson: This is just coming out of my head right now.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay. If you want to table it later and send your recommendations—

Mr. Chris Manderson: We would be happy to.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: —you're able to do that.

Mr. Chris Manderson: That would certainly be something that would bear some thought.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: We'd like to hear your recommendations.

Mr. Manderson, you talked about the fact that climate change is going to have a huge impact in our cities. As we think about this urban conservation strategy, what would you suggest? As a recommendation, what would you like us to be thinking about?

Mr. Chris Manderson: We need to understand how it affects cities.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: We should deal with resilience.

The Chair: There we go. Thank you so much. The time is expired.

Ms. Rempel, you will close it with the last five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always great to have two rounds in one meeting.

We're in early days in this study, but we've already heard the impact of urban conservation on all Canadians. The statistics keep coming up from independent witness groups. Over 80% of Canadians live in cities. On the conversation we had about the tree canopy today, and even with regard to some of my colleagues' comments on climate change, it's very interesting to talk about trees as a climate change adaptation mechanism and to think about what that can mean in the cities.

You're being subject to something that's quite an interesting dynamic in that you have consensus around the table on the importance of this.

I will close my comments by asking, would any of you—and I would like to go down the row—characterize this study as a happy little make-work project?

Ms. Anne Charlton: I'll start even though I'm not at one end or the other.

No, this is an important topic. This has been a significant piece of my professional career. People need to live in great places. This is about making cities great places to live.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

Mr. Manderson.

Mr. Chris Manderson: I would echo what my director just said for a variety of reasons, but the big one is that we need to think about cities as important ecological areas themselves. More than half of the planet is urban now. This is our future and we need to make these cities work better.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Rosen.

Mr. Michael Rosen: I'd like to put it in this perspective. When we were invited to appear before this committee, your sentiment about a make-work project did not occur to me. What I thought immediately was, "Wow. This is great news. This is wonderful news. Thank God this level of government is taking an interest in urban Canada."

Too often we get told there are jurisdictional blockages, if you will, for why the national level of government would not be involved in urban areas. I'm glad you're taking an interest in it, and we want to help you with that.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Ms. Dobbie.

Ms. Dorothy Dobbie: I think it's critically important, and I'm going to use an example from my area, from Winnipeg. You're probably familiar with The Forks and you're probably all familiar with the human rights museum that's going up on The Forks.

There was a great plan for somebody to build some sort of a waterslide there and the citizens were up in arms. They simply did not want that kind of development at The Forks. What we've come back with—I and the Manitoba Forestry Association—is a proposal for an urban forest at The Forks, a place where people can come out of the human rights museum and contemplate what they've seen and learn from it. There's nothing like getting back to the earth and back to nature to put things into perspective.

Just as I said, when I came out of politics, that was my healing place. I think it will be a healing place for a lot of people coming out of the human rights museum. I think this is an absolutely wonderful initiative that you have undertaken.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Cullen.

● (1730)

Mr. Mark Cullen: I'll echo what was just said. The thought certainly never occurred to me that you were wasting anybody's time. I followed up with a phone call just to make sure it was legitimate, because I thought it was spam at first. After I spoke with Marie-France, I understood the importance of what you're doing.

Let me say that the importance of what you are contemplating here, and hopefully, the work that you end up producing at the end of your term with this committee is extremely well timed and it's never been more important.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Ms. Andreeff.

Ms. Monica Andreeff: I think considerations of balancing environment and sustainable development are probably going to be one of the foremost important questions of this century. The work that you're doing to try to connect urban conservation values with parks, through Rouge national park, I think will be very successful in the long run, and Canadians will appreciate the work this committee is doing.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Thank you so much for coming here today and taking an interest in our study.

The Chair: The time has expired.

I want to thank each of the witnesses for being here. It's been very interesting. Silva cells are something I'm going to be talking to my local government about. It's a fast-growing area. That should be included in development instead of dealing with redevelopment.

Every spring I hand out 1,000 trees at a local Home Depot, so in eight years I have handed out 8,000 trees. Each of us can make a big difference. Native species grow really well if they're in good soil.

Thank you so much for your testimony.

The meeting is adjourned.

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