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Mr. Mark Warawa

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC)): We'll call the meeting to order.

Welcome, everyone, to our 56th meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. We will continue our study on urban conservation.

I want to welcome the witnesses. We have four groups with us today. Each witness group will receive up to ten minutes for their presentation.

We'll begin with you, Mr. Savard. You have up to ten minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard (Representative, Green School Project, Municipal Councillor, City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, As an Individual): Good afternoon, everyone. I'm very happy to be here today to talk about an environmental project.

This project was carried out in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. It has to do with schoolyards. We wanted to enhance urban areas. So we chose a schoolyard and decided to improve it. The schoolyard was previously completely paved. We developed an environmental project with students, partners and community members.

On the slide, you can see what kind of an idea we had for the project. We met with students. We met with everyone to get ideas, which we used to draw up a plan. That is what's currently on the screen.

The Sacré-Coeur school park is a project to ecologically enhance a paved schoolyard where several partners—institutions, industries, businesses, community organizations, teachers and students—worked together for the first time to create an appealing area that respects the principles of sustainable development.

The miraculous transformation of the Sacré-Coeur school park is a concrete and remarkable initiative in terms of environmental management and local resources—air, soil and water. The project also protects, restores and enhances ecosystems in all its aspects. It is innovative in its participation-based approach, and its scope, appearance and long-term sustainability. It's an example to follow, as the process respects the wishes of every student and member of the public to have a better place to live, more recreational opportunities, and a healthy environment for future generations. The school park is also a great example of a successful partnership with a focus on ecofriendly management and environmental protection from a sustainable development perspective.

The project had a number of goals. One of them was to improve water quality in the Saint-Charles river by preventing runoff. I should mention that the school is located on a St. Lawrence tributary, the Saint-Charles river. We also wanted to improve the well-being of the community. The neighbourhood where the school is located is disadvantaged and had no park. We also wanted to improve on that aspect of the neighbourhood.

Our goal was to create an accessible park for the neighbourhood, and thus decrease school dropout rates. As the children had nothing to do at their school, they did not like it very much. Since the schoolyard was enhanced, the children have been loving their school. That's a good thing. We wanted to bring the community and municipality onside and make them work together. That was a way to increase awareness of environmental problems among the student body and the community. So we have educated young people about protecting the environment.

By the end of the project, we had planted 38 deciduous trees, 34 deciduous bushes and 4 coniferous trees. We had laid down 28,200 ft^2 of grass, 805 m^3 of wood chips in play areas and 940 m^3 of cedar mulch in bioretention areas used to reduce water runoff. Altogether, we ended up with 2,850 m^2 of greened space.

You can see what the schoolyard looked like before the work began. As I mentioned, there was previously only asphalt and nothing else in the schoolyard. There were no games for the children. You can now see the bird's-eye view of the plan. It was a very big yard, but it was completely paved.

So we began the work. We created seven bioretention basins for rainwater. I should point out that this was a bit of a delicate operation because we were working in an elementary schoolyard. The school board was concerned that the water would accumulate in the basins and children would drown. So we connected the basins. You can see that drains were installed. All the basins are connected by drains. If one basin absorbs less water, it will be diverted towards the other basins.

We filled the areas with sand, soil and membranes. We did what the architect asked us to do for runoff. We planted trees. We also had help from students. They provided a lot of assistance in the planting of shrubs, trees, flowers and native plants. Fifth-grade students worked on that with us. They really enjoyed the experience. In addition, by using children, we are sure that the plants will stay there longer than a year.

Essentially, by reducing the amount of asphalt and concrete, the heat island effect was reduced. In 10 years time, we estimate that over 50% of the existing area will be covered in vegetation or shaded. We often say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Look at the photos on the screen. Previously, there was nothing but asphalt here. On the left, we created a park and, on the right, you can see that, at the back, we created a small hill using the soil from the bioretention basins we had dug. It's used for sliding during the winter.

● (1535)

We also built a soccer field for the children. On the left, there was asphalt and on the right, with one of the seven bioretention basins, we built a small amphitheatre where children deliver musical performances or stage plays. The outside area is also used for landscaping and shows.

It's often said that, when we work together, we can accomplish great things. This project is a true community success. Several regional industries participated in the project voluntarily, and members of the community helped us out, as did many organizations and all the committees. Salaberry-de-Valleyfield has 148 accredited organizations. We reached out to them, and they helped us raised funds.

Here, you can see the park. Nothing was there before and now, children can have fun in that area. There is a lot of green space. Volunteers from the Grace Canada plant were given a day off to lay down turf. As I explained earlier, the projet included an information component. We explained to them what a bioretention basin was, why trees were being planted and what the issues related to heat islands were. They were educated about the project and about the environment. Here, we also laid down a lot of cedar mulch to help water accumulate.

The children had never seen grass in their yard. On the first day, we were surprised to see children rolling down the hill. That's a game for them, and it's nice to see. Here, you can see the yard and the play facilities from different angles. We have a few other photos. For the winter, we bought crazy carpets for the children because this is, after all, a disadvantaged area. The children use up all their energy on sliding during lunchtime. They have a lot of fun.

Thanks to this project, in May, we received the Joseph-Beaubien award, the most prestigious prize awarded by the Union des municipalités du Québec. We also received a prize from the Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé last September thanks to the green school park initiative. The project has inspired others to action. Last year, two schools undertook a similar project in Beauharnois following my presentation. I have made a number of presentations for certain organizations. The volunteers have worked on two schoolyards in the cities of Salaberry and Beauharnois.

People from Longueuil, Quebec, called me. They came to visit the Sacré-Coeur schoolyard. They have begun working on a project, which will be finished next year.

There are two schoolyards in my sector. I have started working on the second schoolyard. I have already raised funds and found volunteers. These projects lead to others. People are very interested, and their participation is the best aspect. The school board cannot do all this on its own, and neither can the city. Having the help of people from the region is fantastic. Assistance is often most needed in the beginning.

Architects have to be hired to develop a plan. The most difficult part, at first, is having the money needed to draw up a plan. Once that's done, finding sponsors becomes easier.

That was my presentation on the planned green school park project at the Sacré-Coeur school in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield's Champlain neighbourhood. Thank you.

● (1540)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

The next 10 minutes is for Madame Blais and Monsieur Husk.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Blais (Biologist, Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen members of the committee.

Thank you for having us. We appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today. You have the summary of our brief. That brief will be submitted to you and translated soon.

We represent the Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec, a non-profit consulting body, whose goal is to promote environmental protection and improvement through sustainable development.

I am also joined by John Husk, City Councillor for the City of Drummondville, who will begin our presentation.

Mr. John Husk (Member, City Councillor, City of Drummondville, Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen members of the committee, good afternoon and thank you for having us.

Today, as City Councillor for the City of Drummondville, I am joining the representative from the Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec to explain to the committee the repercussions of municipal land-use planning on urban conservation.

I will give a little background first. Municipalities are a provincial responsibility under the Canadian Constitution, and the law indicates that municipalities must organize their land-use planning. In addition, in the case of the Drummondville municipality—located 100 km east of Montreal with a population of about 72,000—the municipality garners about 60% to 70% of its revenue from property taxes calculated on the basis of property value. So the land is very valuable for municipalities.

However, over the last two generations in North America and many other places around the world, land-use planning has been based on urban sprawl, as you probably know. For instance, during that period in Quebec, each time the population has increased by 1%, the area occupied by the city has increased by 5%. So there is a strange correlation. That puts tremendous pressure on conservation. Fundamentally, the goal or the best thing for urban conservation is to limit the encroachment of urban areas on conservation areas. The best conservation areas are those left alone.

Therefore, municipalities are trapped in a structure where they must constantly—and quickly—build new neighbourhoods to acquire new revenue and pay for the very expensive infrastructure in older neighbourhoods. That creates something of a vicious cycle, where cities are constantly expanding. So green spaces are constantly being encroached upon.

Clearly, a number of consequences stem from urban sprawl. The first consists of repercussions on urban conservation, as I mentioned. I will spare you a detailed explanation of all the consequences. Nevertheless, Canadians could benefit greatly from better land-use planning. Those benefits include the reduction of atmospheric pollution, better rain water management, food security by limiting the division of agricultural lands, and energy security by reducing oil consumption. It is also a matter of public health, as automobile dependency discourages the use of active transportation and leads to obesity and cardiovascular issues. Improved urban density—the objective of better land-use planning—would encourage the use of public transportation and would, in turn, improve its profitability.

I would like to highlight one specific repercussion of land-use planning—the impact on public finances. Every time a city expands, urban conservation is greatly affected. The building of streets, sidewalks, and waste water and sewer systems costs taxpayers a small fortune. In fact, a report by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities recently revealed—you have perhaps heard about this—that, if all the roads whose state ranges from fair to very poor were replaced at the same time, the cost to Canadian taxpayers would be $91 billion. That is a major impact.

I have some examples of best practices and best land-use planning in Quebec. If you are interested, I will share them with you during the question period.

In closing, if nothing is done to improve land-use planning, urban conservation will always be under pressure. That will be inevitable.

Thank you.

● (1545)

Ms. Andréanne Blais: I will take over.

There are some tools available for land-use planning. I should perhaps explain what we mean by “urban conservation”. To us, that term includes all the interventions, programs and regulations used to limit human impact on green spaces. The order of impact varies from full protection of wetlands, to their enhancement and restoration. So the scope of participation is fairly broad.

In order to support municipalities and other municipal stakeholders—including the Quebec department of natural resources' regional commissions on national resources and land—the Conseil régional de l'environnement du Centre-du-Québec developed a decision-making tool. That tool prioritizes natural areas across the region. It helps municipalities better plan and integrate development schemes with regard to regional county municipalities. This decision-making tool makes it possible to act early in development processes.

The project's goal is to support municipalities in taking into account natural areas early in processes, as I mentioned. It is really about constructively shedding light on the difficult trade-off between conservation and development. The tool has already been taken up by several RCMs and municipalities, including Drummondville, which integrated it into their practices to really shed some light on development.

In addition, the ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs used this tool to analyze certificates of approval under the Environment Quality Act, especially when it comes to section 22, which concerns wetlands.

In closing, we would like to share our recommendations.

First, in order to help integrate decision-making tools and enable the implementation of conservation plans, the Conseil régional de l'environnement recommends integrating into the EcoAction Community Funding Program a financial support component for organizations that wish to support municipalities in developing a conservation plan. Funding for planning is currently not part of this program.

Second, it must be ensured that the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk will be renewed and will help collect knowledge in sites with historical records of species at risk. It should also include species in decline and those likely to be designated as threatened. There should also be a budget amount set aside for developing protection measures.

Third, the Government of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program should include no-subdivision and forest conservation easements, which would recognize things like forest management practices that do not go against the International Union for Conservation of Nature's definition of a “protected area”.

The fourth recommendation is to take into account the strategic framework for action of the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy.

Mr. Husk will tell you about the fifth recommendation.

Mr. John Husk: Thank you, Ms. Blais.

I will be brief. As I mentioned, we understand that the federal government cannot interfere in the municipalities' land-use planning, which comes under provincial jurisdiction.

However, we recommend that the federal government use its buying power in infrastructure. We are referring to subsidies allocated to provinces. I will share some recommendations found in the guide titled *Pour un Québec libéré du pétrole en 2030 CHANGER DE DIRECTION Chantier Aménagement du territoire et transport des personnes*. The guide was drafted by the organizations Vivre en ville and Équiterre to help Quebec free itself of its oil dependency by 2030. Its goal is to provide the province with recommendations on how to change the directions it's headed in by focusing on land-use planning and transportation.

We recommend that the government demand that municipalities identify priority investment areas according to pre-established criteria—such as existing infrastructure and expected growth—outside of which the government will not support investments. Funding programs should be eco-conditional—so there should be no development made on agricultural land, wetlands, or areas whose density is too low. No support should be provided for any new infrastructure or increase in road capacity, with the exception of existing infrastructure. We also recommend enhancing the funding for public transportation infrastructure.

Finally, we think it would be a good idea to give money to the FCM'S Green Municipal Fund, specifically for studies on financial assistance and other measures, while taking into account the conservation component—which is not the case currently—to improve land-use planning.

Thank you.

● (1550)

Ms. Andréanne Blais: Thank you for your attention.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we will hear from Mr. Kendall and Ms. Barocas.

You have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Peter Kendall (Executive Director, Earth Rangers): Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. I'm Peter Kendall. I'm the executive director of Earth Rangers. I'm joined here today by our director of development, Tovah Barocas.

Earth Rangers is the kids' conservation organization. We're a national NGO, focused on communicating a positive science-based message to children on the importance of protecting biodiversity through our live programs in schools and public venues, an extensive online community, and a daily television presence. We educate several million Canadian children each year and inspire them to become directly involved in protecting animals and their habitats.

In addition to my work at Earth Rangers, I also chair a new organization called the Cornerstone Standards Council and I'm a board member of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, both of which I'll speak a little bit about later.

The goal of conservation is to maintain healthy ecosystems and the fresh air and clean water they produce. In wilderness areas, this can often be accomplished by preserving large areas of land and letting nature do the work. Unfortunately, it's not as simple in urban areas. Not only do we need to establish protected areas, but we have to actively manage them. This often requires extensive and ongoing restoration work.

One example of this I would like to share with you is at our own home, the Earth Ranger Centre. Our facility is located on 30 acres in the 800-acre Kortright Centre for Conservation in Woodbridge, Ontario. It's a beautiful urban protected area. However, two years ago we conducted a biodiversity survey of our property and found that nearly 90% of our plant biomass was invasive species. This was resulting in lower native species diversity than would have been projected.

With the help of the EcoAction program, we conducted controlled burns, did extensive native replanting, and rebuilt a historic wetland. Not only was this a very expensive program, but the work will have to be repeated on a five-year cycle. However, because of our unique situation, we were able to turn this project into a corporate volunteering program that not only gets the work done, but helps fund our organization and also spreads awareness about invasive species.

Urban conservation must also address the numerous external pressures facing urban environments, including how we handle our waste, energy, transportation, and our buildings. The cost, of course, and competition for land increases this challenge exponentially. In short, in urban areas everything we do has an impact on conservation. So urban conservation itself cannot be accomplished by one level of government or a group alone. To be successful, we need to engage all sectors of society and find innovative ways to work together so that we can address both nature's needs and people's needs.

One such example is a group I mentioned earlier, the Cornerstone Standard Council, or CSC. The CSC is a non-profit organization that's made up of a wide cross-section of aggregate producers and NGOs. We are now focused on creating and promoting a voluntary certification program for socially and environmentally responsible aggregate extraction in Ontario. This will include stronger environmental practices, stringent rehabilitation requirements, and what's proving to be the most controversial principle, responsible siting.

To give you some context for the impact a program like this could have, the best information I could find currently indicates that the aggregate industry in Ontario currently has licences on roughly 170,000 hectares. While it's in no way an apples-to-apples comparison, the NCC, Canada's leading land conservation organization, has protected 17,000 hectares since 1969. The proposed Rouge Park is roughly 6,000 hectares. What's more, this program will be developed for less than $1 million and will be self-financing through industry contributions.

Another good local example of working together is the greenbelt in Toronto. The greenbelt is the result of 30 years of political leadership from all parties, combined with NGO and industry support. It's now considered to be one of the strongest and most successful greenbelts in the world and provides the protection of over 1.8 million acres.

Neither of these programs would have been possible without significant public engagement. How do we generate this type of engagement? At Earth Rangers, we believe the best audience to start with is children. In a recent U.K. study, 24% of parents cited children as their key motivator on sustainability and concluded that children are more powerful in getting environmental ideas across than either politicians or the media. So how do you get children more engaged in conservation?

In 2009 we did a major study across North America with 8- to 12-year-olds to look at this very question. The first thing we found was that the children's number one concern was endangered animals and their habitats. This was not surprising. Interestingly, however, they went on to say that they were tired of being told to turn off the water when they brushed their teeth and turn off the lights when they left the room. They wanted to get involved in ways that had a direct impact on helping animals. For kids, education and small actions are not enough to produce a conservation ethic. They really need to see those tangible results.

● (1555)

To respond to this, Earth Rangers launched a new program called Bring Back the Wild. This program allows children to become involved, primarily through fundraising, in one of the conservation programs we're working on across Canada.

This year's programs include supporting Environment Canada scientists studying the impact of climate change on polar bears, rebuilding habitat in the Southern Norfolk Sand Plain for American badgers, creating a wetland in Vancouver and reintroducing the Oregon spotted frog, and acquiring land and studying the migration patterns of wood thrush in Quebec.

Since we launched this program in 2010, nearly 250,000 children have joined us in these efforts and have collectively raised close to a million dollars for these projects. But it's not just about the dollars raised. The real impact of these programs can best be understood through the letters we receive almost daily from children and parents across the country.

I want to share a letter we recently received from the parent of Grayson, one of our newest Earth Ranger members in Manitoba:

> This program is such a wonderful opportunity for kids to get involved with their environment and learn a lot about it. Grayson is only 6 but has such drive. He hates seeing litter and says, “I want my revenge on them!” We couldn't be more proud!! I think this will become a yearly thing for us. It allowed us as a family to get together and learn about the wood thrush and teach very valuable lessons to our son.

And children are not alone in this desire to take meaningful action. To drive long-term change, programs need to have very direct outcomes, and we need to do a better job of celebrating their success.

This brings me to my recommendations for the role the federal government can play in urban conservation.

First, I think it's very important that you “walk the talk” yourself and ensure leading stewardship of your own lands and buildings in urban areas. Protecting and maintaining federal lands is an important component of respecting the investment of Canadian taxpayers.

Second is to encourage and support innovative collaborations through your funding programs. EcoAction is actually a great example of this. Focus on projects that will demonstrate direct, positive outcomes and will not require long-term government funding, but instead are projects for which your contributions will help their efforts to become sustainable.

Finally, and almost most important to me, is to celebrate success. People, I think, are tired of negative environmental messaging and the characterization of Canada as an environmental laggard. Canadians are world leaders in conservation. This is often overlooked. We built the world's first national park service. We have protected more than 12.4 million hectares. And we've developed innovative partnerships, such as the Boreal Forest Agreement and CFC. Canadians need to celebrate the success and feel empowered to make a difference, because we have plenty to be proud of.

Thank you. I'd be pleased to respond to any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now hear from Mr. Koch, instructor in the School of Environment at Olds College.

You have 10 minutes to share with us your views about urban conservation.

I think back to our visit to Olds College. It was in the springtime. A number of us on the committee enjoyed our visit there. We didn't meet you at the time, but we heard lots of good things about you.

If you would, please share with us. You have 10 minutes.

● (1600)

Mr. Gord Koch (Instructor, School of Environment, Olds College): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting Olds College to appear before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on its study examining urban conservation practices in Canada.

My name is Gord Koch. I'm a faculty member with the School of Environment. For the past 12 years at the college, I have delivered courses related to landscape design, management, and implementation, with a focus on best management practices related to sustainable landscapes. Prior to joining the college, I spent just under 30 years in landscape planning, management, and implementation of projects, primarily in residential community and parks development in the Toronto and Calgary areas.

Within the context of this invitation by the committee and on behalf of Olds College, I am providing a perspective on urban conservation as it relates to the development and delivery of programs and courses at the college, coupled with the values and principles promoted at the institution.

Olds College will be celebrating its centennial in 2013, marking 100 years of quality education and training. Over the past century, Olds College has contributed to successful careers for many generations of learners. With pride, the college can link the values that underpinned the first course offerings of the Olds School of Agriculture and Home Economics in 1913 with those reflected in courses offered today. We're located about 95 kilometres north of Calgary and 60 kilometres south of Red Deer, so we're on the golden corridor, so to speak.

The college awards certificates, diplomas, applied degrees, and bachelor degrees designed to meet the needs of both learners and the communities served by this college. Olds College programs offer learning opportunities in agriculture, horticulture, land and water resource management, animal science, business, fashion technology, and apprenticeship training. The college works with industry partners and clients to develop and deliver a range of training programs and products designed to meet desired specifications. These outreach services are offered throughout the province of Alberta, across Canada, and internationally.

The School of Environment offers programs in several key areas. We have land-based programs, which include land agent, environmental stewardship, and land reclamation programs. Our horticulture-based programs include arboriculture, landscape management, production horticulture, and golf course management.

The college, and specifically the School of Environment, have been and continue to be placed in a unique position of bridging not only the rural and urban fabric, but also rural urban centres and metropolitan urban centres—in other words, small town and big city. The content of the programs and their alignment with stakeholder needs in industry and the public sector lend to and emphasize aspects from the subject of urban conservation.

When one seeks to find information related to urban conservation, the breadth and depth of this subject is far-reaching and varied. Whether the focus is safe water supply and quality, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and/or evolving technologies related to maintenance and operation of infrastructure services, many aspects may or will fall under the urban conservation umbrella.

Certainly, various stakeholders and interest groups will leverage those aspects that align with proposed goals and outcomes for each party, so a question that can be posed is: is it about urban conservation, restoration, preservation, replication, or all of the aforementioned? The college's School of Environment aligns its programs with social, economic, and environmental measurables as they relate to each of the content areas.

More specifically, in terms of ecosystem services, this would include soils, water, vegetation, materials, health, and well-being. Through these filters, various industry sector developments can be assessed at pre-development, development implementation, and post-development stages. Within the urban context, this includes programming and courses that deliver and promote best management practices in the areas of low-impact development, diverse ecosystems, and healthy environments.

Through the college's ongoing partnerships with provincial and federal agencies, in addition to the school's collaboration with its several industry advisory committees and associations, Olds College has provided, and continues to provide, students and stakeholders with the avenues and tools necessary to provide progressive processes and protocols that contribute, establish, maintain, and promote attributes that can be considered as aligned with urban conservation.

That is our briefing. We will certainly entertain questions as this moves on.

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will begin our seven-minute rounds of questioning with Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to be the first to welcome the witnesses and thank them all for their contributions to our study of urban conservation.

I would like to start with our first presenter, Monsieur Savard.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate you on your good work and on this success.

[*English*]

Let me switch back to English.

An hon. member: Well done.

Mr. James Lunney: I think I got in my six words *en français*.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: Thank you, Mr. Lunney.

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: I'd like to congratulate you for the success and the awards that your project has attracted.

You just gave us a nice example of schoolyard naturalization and the benefits to the community. Can you give us a timeframe? When did this project actually get started, and how long did it take to work through the process?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: I began the project about four years ago. The most difficult part was finding partners. In fact, if we had paid for the project, it would have cost nearly half a million dollars. However, I only had $30,000 at my disposal.

The first step consisted in determining whether people and industries would get involved and whether they wanted to take on a project of this size. During the first year, we relied on word of mouth. We talked to people about the project.

I am also very involved—sometimes as chair—in a number of environmental committees in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, including the St. Lawrence committee, the ZIP committee, and committees on industrial parks.

When I started talking about the project, people were interested in participating, in doing their part, in injecting money into the projects or in providing labour. So during the first year, we relied on word of mouth.

In the second year, I recruited organizations from Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. We have some community organizations and some environmental organizations. There are some others, such as PRAQ —Pour un réseau actif dans nos quartiers—which is involved in the revitalization of older neighbourhoods. I really surrounded myself with organizations to obtain environmental grants, and other kinds of grants.

In the third year, we began meeting with people from the neighbourhood. We met with students, teachers—everyone—to figure out what kind of "green space"—or environmental space—they wanted in their schoolyard. We spent a whole year finding out what all those people thought.

In the fourth year, we initiated the program. That was great. We completed the project in one summer. It was difficult because, many of the volunteers were construction workers, so we wanted to use their services during the two months of summer and not during the two weeks of construction holidays. It took a lot of management, but it went really well.

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: What I find particularly appealing about the way you managed this was that first there was a lot of planning involved in consultation. There's an old axiom: to fail to plan is to plan to fail, so plan the work and work the plan. That's the English version, anyway.

I am impressed, and I just wondered.... When you engaged the community, it was time-consuming working with volunteers—I heard a little bit of frustration there—in organizing their availability and time, and especially, probably, with some of the professionals with heavy equipment and so on, who all have schedules.

But it seems to me that you had tremendous community buy-in. In other words, they have ownership of the project right throughout the community, and pride of ownership. I think there's something tremendously value-added through that approach, as painful as it would be. Would you verify that experience?

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. James Lunney: We heard earlier in our committee hearings from a gentleman named Adam Bienenstock, the founder of a company that specializes in naturalizing schoolyards and so on. They talk about nature deficit disorder and about the impact that playing in a natural environment has on children. Is that something you'd be able to comment on from your experience?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: Given my experience, it's true that it was difficult to set the project in motion at some point.

Earlier, you asked whether the community was involved. It's a matter of selling the project and finding people. We had the support of the city of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield in terms of communications, and local newspapers gave us a lot of support. That was a real strength. People really supported the project. When community members saw how their schoolyard would look at the end of the project, some even came to me with envelopes of money. I told them to not bring them to me, as I am a politician, after all. I asked them to bring any money to the school. One fellow even made bird houses to be placed into the trees. He worked very hard on making them. The community was quick to get involved.

As for managing a project of this size, I had no experience with that and no idea of how to manage entrepreneurs. However, Anne Bouthillier, of PRAQ, took over and managed all the work. So I had a lot of support in carrying out this project.

You mentioned that some people specialize in schoolyards. I have no expertise in that area, but we were able to complete such a project. The key to success is to believe in your project and in the benefits for the children. My spouse works at this school and told me that, since we converted the schoolyard, the children's aggressiveness has been reduced by more than half. The children use up a lot of energy in the yard. They talk about trees because they now know their names. They are involved. As my colleagues mentioned here, children's ability to pass on environmental information is considerable. It's sometimes difficult to change the minds of people of a certain age who have always watered their front lawn with a garden hose, but when children talk about this, it works. One of the goals of converting schoolyards is to educate children, so that they can in turn educate parents.

Here is what our project has led to. On the other side of the river, a project is supposed to be set in motion. It was decided that this project would meet LEED standards. So it will be an entirely green project across from the schoolyard. There's really been a series of green projects, simply because we converted one schoolyard—

[*English*]

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

Madame Quach, seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you for coming to share your experience and provide some advice.

Mr. Savard, I am really spellbound. I'm glad you agreed to come meet with us. You are a pioneer in urban conservation in our riding, Beauharnois—Salaberry. You said that this project has inspired a number of other regions.

It was just mentioned that the environment is a priority for Canadians. Climate change is currently being discussed at the Doha conference. Regarding the impact on young people, you talked about a decrease in aggressiveness of about 50%.

Are there any other socioeconomical or energy benefits? We talked about health impacts. Have you noticed anything like that? You said that there has also been a positive impact on other infrastructure, as your project has inspired other environmental projects.

Given all those benefits, how can the federal government support and promote those types of projects across the country to contribute to the fight against climate change?

Mr. Robert Savard: To such a well-put question, I would say, of course, give me money. That would help, but we need more than that. What could help us is having access to people who can answer our questions. People like you and me create such projects, but we don't have all the required expertise, as I mentioned. So it would be a good start if we had an opportunity to present a project and to ask where to find the help we need to implement it.

It's often a matter of financing at first, during the project planning stage. Nevertheless, one particular issue is very important, and you made that clear by inviting me here. I'm talking about setting up some sort of a website that would list the projects that have been carried out across Canada. Sometimes, we only think about large projects that cost billions of dollars, but many Canadians across our country have carried out similar projects that can be replicated in any city. It would be useful if a reference website could be set up—something of a large catalogue of green projects carried out by Canadians.

I really believe that all Canadians can do their part. We can sit down and wait, but everyone can carry out a project, and there are many environmental projects waiting to happen. So it would really help if the government could facilitate communications and provide information on the projects being carried out.

● (1615)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Environment Canada experts, for instance, could help, couldn't they?

Mr. Robert Savard: Yes, for example, or even someone who could give us some direction, quite simply.

Suppose someone wants to create an environmental project in an urban centre, like a school playground. Could we contact someone somewhere and ask to be directed to the right place, because a number of projects have been carried out? For the average person, for people who want to carry out projects, that would be quite helpful. Because we don't know where to go anymore. We don't know certain things and we don't have experience right off the bat.

Still, this took us four years, which is a long time. Some people are a little discouraged. If the government could facilitate things for us, show us access routes, support us and, then, publicize projects that already exist, that would already be a great advantage for me.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

With respect to jobs, do you think the federal government could encourage green jobs that would concern green infrastructures that have been installed in the schoolyard?

Mr. Robert Savard: Having architects would be good. In the schoolyards, it's very specific. There are a number of standards to comply with. We have to find experts in schoolyards who work with the green aspect. We would very much appreciate having references for that.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: I have another question about this project. You mentioned that there was 50% revegetation. You spoke about the greenery and trees that were planted. I don't know if you spoke about it, but there would probably be a greenhouse at the school—

Mr. Robert Savard: The greenhouse has been built.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: It's been built. Super.

So people are always in contact with the environment and its benefits. You spoke about education and all that. We have seen a number of cuts at Parks Canada in education and educational activities.

Do you think the federal government's role is to encourage educational activities having to do with the environment and with environmental awareness? Do you think the federal government has a role to play in educating Canadians about the environment?

Mr. Robert Savard: That's the key to success if the federal government helps us promote the environment with young people in schools and to hold workshops in schools. Children who are eight, nine and ten years of age don't read the newspaper. But if we help them by going to their schools and creating projects, that changes things. For example, because of the greenhouse that we built, the students have planting activities where they grow flowers, which will help beautify the neighbourhood. It's the children who are doing the work.

With respect to whether the federal government would improve things, I would say that it would be a real benefit for the children and the school to promote a green future.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: How would you like to follow up on your project? Are you going to give talks? Given everything you've done, have you spoken with scientists? Would scientific data on the environment help you with these projects?

Mr. Robert Savard: Yes, we met with a scientist. Because, to get grants for fighting heat islands, we had to take the temperature outside and do some calculations. We were asked how many percentage points the temperature would be reduced if we carried out the project. So, for someone who is not a scientist, it's difficult to do those calculations that take into account the shade from trees.

It would also be worthwhile to have access to people who could do these calculations so we could submit requests. It's all well and good to have a project, but it is important that it be measurable in five or 10 years. In fact, having scientific experts would help us a lot. So, we would know if we are doing the right things. The project may be quite relevant, but if it does not resolve a heat island problem, it is basically not good.

What you are proposing would help us.

● (1620)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Sopuck, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thanks.

Mr. Kendall, I was very intrigued by your comments regarding the protected area that you and the children fixed up, in terms of invasive species. You used the phrase "actively managed". As someone who represents a farm constituency, the management of land is something we do.

A British author named Mark Lynas recently wrote a book called *The God Species*. He writes that we are such a planetary force that actively managing the Earth for sustainability is something we have to step up to the plate to do.

When you did that project, were you able to impress upon the children the need for good stewardship and active management of the Earth, as opposed to just standing back and looking, if you can get the distinction I'm making?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I do. The answer would be absolutely. In fact, all of our programs—we're in about 600 schools per year right now—highlight our partnerships with different corporate and NGO partners on these projects.

Maybe I can ask my colleague, Tovah, to speak a little bit about how we do that.

Ms. Tovah Barocas (Director, Development, Earth Rangers): One of the ways we do that is by talking to kids and trying to inspire them to go into environmental careers—not defining or narrowly defining an environmental career as in becoming a conservation biologist or working for an environmental group, but that there are many people in Canada who are having a positive impact on biodiversity, that there are many different industries and ways you can get engaged.

As Peter mentioned, by highlighting some of our partners—for example, Ontario Power Generation is a partner. We have a young, energetic person who works in their environment department, standing on a rehabilitated area at one of their power plants, talking about how cool it is to have a job where you work at OPG, but you're also helping to protect biodiversity. We want to make sure that children understand that there are many different ways to play an active role in protecting biodiversity and conservation.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: What I like about your approach is that you're providing hope, because too much discussion about environmentalism these days is all bad. So you take somebody to a rehabilitated site and you point out that we, as humans, can actually make a positive difference. I find that very exciting.

Let's just follow up on the theme of the use of Earth's resources. Do you teach the children about sustainable resource use? As a species, we have to use the Earth's resources in order to live. Like this wooden table—it started off in a forest. Do you make the connection for the kids that how they live requires the sustainable use of the Earth's resources?

Ms. Tovah Barocas: That's a good question. That's also a big focus, particularly in this year's presentation. Each year we create a different show, but basically the message is that Canada's economy is based on natural resources. We need aggregates to build roads and houses. We need power to power those houses. We need all of these different things.

Canada also has a lot of the world's remaining intact wilderness, and therefore a big responsibility and opportunity to protect it. The only way we can do both of those things—take advantage of our natural resources and protect our natural resources—is by working together collaboratively.

We like to talk not only about species that are threatened—it's important to give an accurate view of what's happening in our country—but also to always end every show with a good news story. We bring live animals into schools. Every show ends by featuring either a bald eagle or a Peregrine falcon, or some species that was once at risk and has now made a comeback thanks to government, industry, and NGOs working together.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: If you ever need an MP to come and give a talk to your kids, I'm your man. I represent a rural constituency, and something that's been really bothering me for many years is the rural-urban split. We have a number of Canadians who, through no fault of their own, don't make the connection about where things come from.

As a rural MP, I think what you're doing is very exciting, and this is the kind of program we need.

I have a question for you, Mr. Koch. You talk about building a rural-urban bridge. Do the land-use practices of farmers in the agricultural communities that surround most of our cities have a role to play in urban conservation?

● (1625)

Mr. Gord Koch: Absolutely, Mr. Sopuck.

Again, through the programming, say at the school of agriculture, when we're looking at better practices in terms of soil conservation on the farm, lower usage of chemicals, and more up-to-date technologies, on the agricultural side we certainly see that, particularly at the interface between an urban or a larger urban centre and the surrounding environment. We're finding more and more—and I think with the next generation, with the family farms particularly—that folks are far more aware of their footprint on the environment, and they are looking at better or best management practices to run their farm.

I think there is more of a bridging now than there ever has been in the past. I would say there is less of this "us against them" type of attitude happening. That's certainly the case among the young folk, and that's beneficial.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Excellent.

Councillor Husk, this is a quick question. You mentioned the green infrastructure fund. In my strong view, wetlands perform a lot of the functions that infrastructure does. Should our green infrastructure fund include a program section dealing with the restoration of things like wetlands and forests that perform what many of our built structures do?

Mr. John Husk: Yes, of course. I believe it should, because there is a cost that has been put forward for so many square metres—my colleague could tell you what it is precisely—and the cost of what green infrastructure provides to society in general is free. Otherwise, if we just pave it over and put in infrastructure, it would cost us quite a sum of money, as I was explaining earlier. So I believe that any tool that can be put into the hands of the FCM's green municipal fund is an obvious plus.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Great.

My colleagues will note that I did not take a dig at engineers.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you.

Your time has expired.

Ms. Duncan, you have seven minutes.

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

Thank you all for coming. It's interesting to hear your stories.

Mr. Kendall, if we look at the IUCN definition of a protected area, it requires that conservation of nature be the primary management objective in order for an area to qualify as a protected area.

I'm wondering if you think a recommendation of this committee should be that conservation be the primary management goal when were talking about urban conservation.

Mr. Peter Kendall: I want to preface my answer by saying that I'm not a scientist, but my personal opinion would be that you have to be more flexible in urban areas. I think we need green spaces as well for a lot of the other reasons we talked about.

We do need strict conservation areas in urban settings as well. As I was mentioning in my remarks, they can be very expensive to manage properly—not that we shouldn't try.

I think we have to get into a lot more mixed-use areas within urban areas to protect what remaining wilderness we have or what green spaces we have in these areas.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Do you think prioritizing ecological integrity and ecological health should be a recommendation of this committee?

Mr. Peter Kendall: Absolutely.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay. Do you think they are essential to protecting ecological values and to connecting people with nature in the long term?

● (1630)

Mr. Peter Kendall: I certainly think keeping as much green space as we can at this point—I mean, once it's gone, it's gone—is a very important aspect in connecting people to conservation and to natural areas long term.

I think I would go back to the idea that these can be mixed-use areas as well. We have to be careful not to set aside areas too much so that we're keeping people out and limiting the amount of space that is available for public use.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay.

You said that we absolutely should prioritize ecological integrity and ecosystem health. Should ecosystem health be enshrined in policy and legislation?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I don't know that I'm qualified to answer that one.

I'm not really sure what that would mean, so....

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: That's fair enough. Thank you.

To Mr. Koch, should a recommendation of this committee be that a guiding principle, when we're talking about urban conservation, should be based in science?

Mr. Gord Koch: As Mr. Kendall said, I'm not a scientist. I would say that's an aspect of it, but I don't know if I'd totally weight it on that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Well, I'll broaden it out. Should it be based on science, traditional knowledge, with ecological and social research, monitoring information, and management planning and decision-making?

Mr. Gord Koch: That certainly would envelop it. Yes, I'd agree with that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: That it should be a recommendation of this committee?

Mr. Gord Koch: Yes, that would be fair to say.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

To Mr. Kendall, should a recommendation be that management goals, such as connecting people to nature, must happen in a way that does not compromise a conservation goal?

Mr. Peter Kendall: Again, I don't think you can make a blanket statement like that. There will be certain areas that need to be set aside for their ecological value and have as little impact as possible, but there'll be much larger areas that you can't have mixed use on. It's important not to restrict that at the same time.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: To both Mr. Kendall and Mr. Koch, if we look at management goals, should there be a recommendation for improved ecosystem health, including restoration of species at risk?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I certainly can't argue with that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: So it should be a recommendation?

Mr. Peter Kendall: Absolutely.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Should a recommendation be to put in place a strong science-based research and monitoring system to guide management actions to maintain and restore ecosystem health?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I would certainly advocate for that in areas that are set aside strictly for conservation and also.... Restoration ecology is still a developing science as well. More research and study need to be done in that area to be able to understand how to more effectively manage these areas in urban settings.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Should a recommendation of this committee be that it's important to engage people, to build on the established volunteer base, in appreciating and learning about nature, learning about the broader national parks system?

Mr. Peter Kendall: We certainly would advocate for that. I mean, that's what we do, day in and day out, so....

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: So that should be a recommendation of this committee?

Mr. Peter Kendall: Yes.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

I'm probably out of time.

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: We'll let it go. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Choquette, you have five minutes.

● (1635)

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. It was really very interesting.

Mr. Koch, I would like to say that I visited Olds College with our committee colleagues this year. It was very interesting. We visited your wetlands project, and it was really extremely enriching.

Mr. Savard, I wanted to congratulate you on your project. It's really a great initiative. I also congratulate Mr. Kendall and Ms. Barocas for what you have done in education. I myself supported a green school project in Drummondville, the Duvernay school. So I know what you are doing is very difficult. It takes an incredibly large amount of mobilization. Congratulations! I know how much energy it takes.

My first question is for Ms. Blais.

You spoke a bit about a tool that you developed or that you helped develop to determine the best places for urban planning that are more beneficial for nature, the environment and urban conservation. Could you elaborate on that?

Ms. Andréanne Blais: Yes, in Quebec we have the environmental quality act, which states that wetlands can be developed, with authorization. This legislation is very controversial right now, as some MPs may know. It has led to very big discussions about planning and about the ecological importance of these wetlands. Of course, as we discussed earlier, education about the importance of wetlands is very relevant, in particular, as the person from Alberta mentioned, with respect to the ecological goods and services these wetlands provide to society.

Clearly, society being what it is, we must use natural resources, as mentioned earlier, in a sustainable way and, to do that, we think that planning is really the basis of this process. So, it is important to identify the wetlands that are a priority. The tool we developed uses a five-level priority scale. It can be adapted to the number of priority levels that we want and to the geographical unit desired, be it the RCMs, municipalities, drainage basins, or at the provincial or national level. In addition, this priority methodology can be exported.

In short, we base things on the surface area of the wetland, its connectivity with other areas, on its ecological diversity, the disruptions inside and outside that area, and also its fragmentation. All those criteria, combined with the presence of species at risk and how rare the environment is, give a priority rating to this area that people can include in planning. So, upstream of development, people can know whether they will have difficulty getting their authorization certificate or if it will be easier to get it.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you very much, Ms. Blais.

Indeed, we spoke about education, about the importance of having tools to ensure we know which locations and environments need to be protected, but we must also trust science, as my colleague mentioned earlier. Science is very important. I know that there is a program, the habitat stewardship program, that you have submitted requests to. You have dealt with that program for a few years now. I don't know how many years, exactly. There were cuts recently, unfortunately. It has just been brought back by the Minister of the Environment, who was with us a few weeks ago, and told us that the funding is back. But could this issue of unstable funding have a negative impact on a conservation policy? Should we instead have stable funding? What repercussions are being felt in our community?

Ms. Andréanne Blais: Basically, the grant program that was cut last year drastically cut our projects on the ground. We had a very strong cranberry development in central Quebec, in the wetlands where there are a number of species at risk, provincially and nationally. Last year, because of this cut, although our project had been said to be one of the best, we were about to exceed our funding. The projects would have taken place, but were not realized because of a lack of funding. Stewardship with private owners is important. We really focus on voluntary stewardship, so on educating owners. Last year, we were unable to carry out our projects.

Mr. François Choquette: So one of your recommendations would be to provide stable funding to programs that can help with conservation.

Ms. Andréanne Blais: In federal jurisdictions, exactly.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have five seconds.

[*Translation*]

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

● (1640)

[*English*]

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

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to all of our guests here today. I was very appreciative of your input.

Mr. Koch, I was also fortunate to be in the group at Olds College this spring. I saw your man-made wetlands area and was intrigued by what you've done and some of the work you're doing. In your brief, when you answered some of the study's questions, you talked about using existing wetlands, but also about the ability to construct wetlands to be used in stormwater and runoff management. You referred to it in several places, the impact this could have on reducing infrastructure costs. I was hoping you could expand a bit on that. Maybe you could give us examples of some of the practices you've been able to bring forward and implement in an urban environment through the research and work done at Olds College with your students.

Mr. Gord Koch: We've been fortunate to have a 20-acre site. We just finished construction this summer. Half of it was funded through the industry, as part of the Urban Development Institute, and with some of the green industry partners. The intent was to better the constructed wetlands practices that are currently happening. Both Calgary and Edmonton, as part of their land-use planning and land-use bylaws, support and promote the use of constructed wetlands, particularly in new urban developments. In effect, we're trying to slow down runoff into the existing infrastructure. As we build out, we get more hard surfaces and a greater volume of water, and our existing infrastructure can no longer support the rush of water going through the systems. By creating constructed wetlands in our communities, we have the ability to slow that down, to clean our water or cleanse it out through the proper use of planting regimes. In some cases, we reuse it for irrigation of public spaces, as well as for sediment removal. So what we're putting back into our river basins is of reasonably good quality after passing through a built environment.

We're still looking at improving the systems. This is not to say that it's totally bulletproof, or that it's the silver bullet, for that matter. Through our students and programs, as well as through research funding, we're looking at different kinds of plant materials, what the benefits are, what toxins they can pull out of the water. Whatever we can find, we're putting that out to industry and to government agencies. We're also negotiating with a couple of partners on looking at brownfield restoration within the city environment and how can we build water treatment through a constructed wetland in those cases.

The other part, which goes back to the previous guest, was to the loss of wetlands through urban development, and identifying natural wetlands and what could be lost. In Alberta it's essentially a three-for-one: if you disturb a hectare, you put back three hectares. So we are trying to replace or replicate what we're disturbing.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you.

Mr. Savard, I was very intrigued by the project you did at the school. You talked about the timeframe. Now that you've done it—and you indicated you had been helping out on a couple of other projects—that timeframe must have really tightened up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: It basically takes a lot less time. For the next school that I'll build next summer, we started in September. A year is enough time because we have put the methodology and procedure in place and it is working well.

[*English*]

Mr. Lawrence Toet: I have one other question on that.

You talked about the student and community involvement in the project. I want you to comment a little bit on the benefits—not only about the benefits of the finished product, which you talked about quite extensively in your presentation, but what about the benefits of the community and the students being involved in creating this environment, taking away this asphalt and creating a much greener environment—

● (1645)

The Chair: Unfortunately, the time has expired, so we'll have to get that answered later. I'm sorry.

Monsieur Choquette, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will continue with Mr. Husk.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Husk, for your UMQ video clip that you made recently. It was very interesting and very well done. I'm also thinking about the fact that we both participated in this summer's campaign to leave the car at home when commuting to work. So we cycled to work this summer. This is the kind of thing you spoke about earlier—active transportation—that we need to encourage. I think it's important to talk about it.

You talked about the FCM, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and the fact that it was given a green fund of $550 million. On Monday, a representative from the green fund came to appear before us, and I asked her if projects are sometimes turned down. She told me that it happens often, if not all the time, because she can only give funds to the best projects since there currently isn't enough money.

As you may know, $1.3 billion is currently being paid annually as a subsidy to oil, gas and other fossil fuel industries. So that would be money we could transfer to the green fund to have infrastructures that improve energy efficiency. I am also thinking, for example, about our next university in Drummondville, about the library and about exhibition centres where we could have a solar wall, a green roof and things like that, but you need funding for that.

You spoke about eco-conditional funding. Could you elaborate on that?

Mr. John Husk: Thank you, Mr. Choquette.

When we talk about eco-conditional support, it means giving grants or amounts that meet ecological criteria. So, these criteria become a condition for the money to be paid out.

Earlier, I spoke about land use planning. In this case, the eco-conditions could be not to give money for developing agricultural lands, in wetlands or for developments where the density is too low. However, if more money was given to building infrastructures that the federal government participates in, the conditions could address rainwater management. The government could require the municipality or any other developer to do a study on the life cycle of a building. The municipality or developer would have to show that a LEED—or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—building results in a 5% to 10% cost surplus compared with a standard building. But the building won't exist for just five years. So the payback—if I may use that expression—will be over the long term, if you take into account the fact that buildings these days last for 40 to 60 years.

In short, an eco-condition could be that the municipality needs 10% more, representing a certain amount, but if it can prove that the additional investment from governments would be profitable over 8 to 12 years and that it would then be profitable, that would be positive. The fact that there is a gain and that the municipalities are paying means that taxpayers pay less.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Husk.

To summarize what you said, even if the government provided more funding in the long term, we would be better off investing in LEED infrastructures or, for example—I'm thinking about a larger development—in a transit-oriented development transportation link to encourage the use of active transportation or public transit.

Along those lines, I would like to know what you think about Olivia Chow's position. She proposed a national public transit strategy. Should this be part of an urban conservation strategy? If we have a strategy, we pay attention to our urban planning and our public transit. So could that foster urban conservation?

● (1650)

Mr. John Husk: I agree. I am the chair of the CIty of Drummondville's public transit committee, and public transit works and is profitable with a certain level of urban density. We aren't talking about 20-storey condos, cheek by jowl, but about an acceptable number of condos. That means that such a strategy could be used to promote better urban planning because people would be less motivated to take their car.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Woodworth, you have five minutes.

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

[*Translation*]

Welcome to our committee. I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

[*English*]

I'd like to ask Mr. Koch some questions.

I was most intrigued by your paper, quite frankly. If I were going to write a report for our study, I would probably write it along the lines that you did, with that kind of basic information. With your permission, I'd like to delve into a few things more closely.

I'm looking at page 4 and the statement that:

> An urban conservation framework should provide the criteria that recognizes ecosystems in the built environment…and the relationship to the environmental, economic, social and cultural attributes of a community.

I wonder if you could expand on that. What kind of criteria are you talking about?

Mr. Gord Koch: I guess, Mr. Woodworth, we're trying to label a very broad scope of what I call “deliverables”.

For me, it's really difficult. This is a personal perspective of wrapping my head around a title or a label and saying that urban conservation is a specific thing. In a broader scope, when I'm in a classroom teaching about sustainable sites and we're going out and having our students promote green roofs to a client, I've got to be able to knit essentially all those categories together, to really promote and understand what the net outcome is at the end of the day.

What are the inputs relative to environmental benefits? I hate getting into dollars, but there's still the economic implication in both the short and long term. How do we maintain it? How do we carry it on? What are the benefits from a societal standpoint? Are we really creating a space that people are getting something from, whether it's health and well-being or whether it's building a strong community? Again, folding in cultural attributes, we're a country that's pretty much a melting pot. We know that. When folks come in from other areas, it's the ability for them to identify what we consider urban conservation.

I know that's not an exact answer, but I guess I'm trying to cover the generalized statement about urban conservation. At the end of the day, what are the measurables that we're looking for or seeking out?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: That is indeed the question, and I am sympathetic to the notion that it's hard to wrap your head around because that's my dilemma too.

What I would be grateful to hear from you is, what sorts of measurables for urban conservation should we be addressing?

Mr. Gord Koch: What we're currently using here at the college, and certainly at other institutions, is based on a framework developed by the Sustainable Sites Initiative out of the States. With respect to a matrix of five categories—soils, vegetation, hydrology, materials, and human well-being and wellness—they've put a scoring system, where we can really break down each component of those five and evaluate the importance on a site, within a community, for example, a new site or a restoration, and link it against the benefits we're getting out of the project. We can spend a week going over what the Sustainable Sites Initiative group has done. They are folding their matrix into the Green Building Council in the U.S. I'm not sure if the Canada Green Building Council is also going to be adopting that. It complements what LEED has started.

In the LEED program, pretty much anything outside the building environment has really not been recognized, from an evaluation perspective. They talk about xeriscaping and some very basic water conservation practices, whereas with Sustainable Sites, we're folding in many layers that we can score and determine short term and long term, beneficially, how we can wrap it under urban conservation.

● (1655)

The Chair: The time has expired.

Monsieur Pilon, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

My question is also for Mr. Koch.

Last spring, I had the opportunity to visit your college and all its facilities. One thing I noticed was the pilot project for water filtration in the wetlands. The project would work well in Laval. I even started to take steps in that direction. Could you please explain, for the benefit of the people who weren't there that day, how your pilot project works and the process you want to carry out with the project?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Koch: Essentially what we have at the college is a series of ponds that move or meander through a very gradual elevation change. In other words, we can move water, recycle water, through these various pond stages. In each pond we have different planting regimes that are placed for certain uses, say to pull out different kinds of contaminants or for sediment or erosion control.

We have 20 ponds, or 20 cells, as we call them. Ultimately, in this simplistic fashion, we have an input at the upper end. We can control the flow through the 20 ponds. At the very end, or at the 20th pond, our largest pond, our holding pond, essentially we can have what's called polished water. When I say “polished water”, we're not talking about drinking water, but it is water for reuse, say, in an irrigation application on site.

Within the 20 ponds are eight ponds that we can recirculate in a confined, contained area. In that confined recirculated system we can charge the water with either different pollutants or different types of chemicals, and we can cycle them through our planting regimes and record a whole raft of data that our school of innovation sets up, whether it's dissolved oxygens, whether we're looking at salts or measurables of different contaminants at the input and the output side of things....

As to the various clients we're talking with, we certainly have people from the energy sector who are interested in seeing what kinds of valuations we can provide for them. The flip side is that we're talking to the development industry. They're looking at the types of contaminants that come off roadways, say during the winter, from salting.

We also have the ability to move the water from our pool here on campus, which is a saltwater pool. Unlike many practices with pool systems, they discharge into the sewer system. We're looking at the opportunity to cycle that water through our ponds and then have it available for reuse on irrigation systems.

The flexibility of our constructed wetlands here gives us the ability to work with industry or stakeholders and run variables on water quality sampling and testing using this kind of system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Pilon: You said you are working with industries, but do you share your results with them? Given that those infrastructures become less costly for the municipalities, should the federal government have a role to play with municipalities in that type of infrastructure?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Koch: In reply to your first question, with respect to the information we gather, yes, that is published for various sectors, depending on whom we're partnering with or what the project is, whether it's under the guise of a public initiative.... Certainly it's made available.

We do have instances whereby we have done research work on a contract basis for a very distinct client, and in some cases those results may be held by them; they have ownership of them. It depends on how our contract or the research is set up.

With respect to funding these types of opportunities, certainly wherever financing is available, that is beneficial; there's no denying it. Currently, when we're looking at many developments, say, in the city of Calgary, and such a system is in place, the front-end cost is borne by the developer; it's part of the development agreement. In time, after they've gone through their warranty period, it is turned over to the municipality for the ongoing maintenance, but a developer puts the front-end costing into the site.

● (1700)

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

Ms. Ambler, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our guests today for this most interesting information you've given us.

Mr. Kendall, I'd like to speak to you about Earth Rangers, in your capacity as executive director as opposed to a scientist. I'm not a scientist either, but I do think I am certainly grateful that this committee sees the importance of urban conservation, of bringing that to the government and making sure we make that a priority.

I'd like to talk to you about something I found amusing. You mentioned it when you talked about getting children to raise money.

I'd like to know how you do that, and I think that's amusing for some reason. It's very cute. I'm sure there's a great story behind it, so I'd like to hear about it.

Mr. Peter Kendall: This is our Bring Back the Wild program, which, as I said, came out of that large research study we did where kids were telling us they wanted to have more of a direct impact on helping animals.

Through that study as well, actually, 53% of them came up with fundraising as one of the ways they thought they could get involved. It happens in all sorts of different ways.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: So it's not child labour?

Mr. Peter Kendall: No. They have full, school-wide fundraising programs. Close to 400 schools a year are doing that right now, and then individuals themselves are running bake sales and art sales....

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Where does the money go?

Mr. Peter Kendall: The money all goes to the conservation projects we're running across the country.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: So it's protecting the animals, which is what the kids want to do.

Mr. Peter Kendall: Absolutely. And then we're reporting back to the kids as their project progresses, and we're celebrating the success of the completion of the projects with them.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Excellent. Thank you.

When I was last at the Kortright Centre I noticed a big sign with all of the logos of the partners. You mentioned that you have a corporate volunteer program. Your colleague mentioned OPG. Who are some of your other partners?

Ms. Tovah Barocas: Do you mean corporate partners specifically?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Earth Rangers, Kortright Centre....

Ms. Tovah Barocas: From the program Peter was talking about, Bring Back the Wild, the funds the kids raise are donated to different funding partners. It's financial institutions, like TD, RBC, HSBC; construction companies, like Holcim and Lafarge; energy companies, like Imperial Oil, Devon Energy; mining companies, like Teck and Valley; and Union Gas, OPG, and Capital One. We've had groups from PetSmart doing corporate volunteer groups.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's fantastic. The private sector is obviously showing a great interest in the work you're doing. That's good to know.

I heard Pizza Pizza is one of them.

Ms. Tovah Barocas: It helped save the real reindeer this Christmas.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's fantastic. That is wonderful.

Will you be able to use Rouge Park at all for your activities with children? Does that mean anything to you, the fact that the Rouge will soon be a national park?

Ms. Tovah Barocas: Absolutely. Actually we are hoping one of our Bring Back the Wild conservation projects next year will be around reintroducing the Blanding's turtle into Rouge Park. We're hoping that will be something we'll be working on with kids across Canada.

● (1705)

Mr. Peter Kendall: One of the really neat things was that a letter came in a couple of weeks ago from a girl in Manitoba. One of our projects last year was around the plains bison. She had raised some money for that project in her school. Then, as a summer holiday, she and her family had gone to...?

Ms. Tovah Barocas: Old Man on His Back conservation area.

Mr. Peter Kendall: They went to see the herd they helped to protect. It was a great experience for the child and the family.

Doing a project in an urban area like the Rouge would provide a great opportunity for the kids to actually see the projects they are helping out with.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's wonderful. Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Rempel, you have five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): I'm going to let Mr. Toet finish his line of questioning.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you very much. That's appreciated.

It allows me to get back to the question I had started with Mr. Savard in regard to the community involvement, not only with the completed project but as part of building that project. How important do you feel that part of it was for the community, and also for the upkeep and the care of that project today, that they were involved in actually building it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: Yes, if we carry out a project, it is very important to have people participate, because the project will belong to them afterwards and we will not have any trouble maintaining the locations.

I'll give you an example. Before, children would throw paper all over the schoolyard. Now, with garbage cans, they don't throw anything in the schoolyard because it's their schoolyard. They have taken over the work that was done. The project increased respect for the environment. This year, they asked for recycling. We installed composters.

When we get them to participate, they understand much better. They learn and they respect things. There isn't even any vandalism. Normally, there would be much more of it. Citizens walk in the park in the evening. I've seen parents play basketball and soccer with their children. We didn't see that before. There was nothing. The community took over the park.

I think it's the best thing we can do for the children. There's theory and there's practice. Schoolyards like this one have an environmental vocation. It's their laboratory. They really see and feel the difference when we pay attention to the environment. If we get them interested in the project, they pay attention and respect it much more.

[*English*]

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you.

I'm also a huge proponent of bottom up rather than top down and the heavy hand saying that this is how we're going to do it. Bottom up is what you say. Now the children are coming forward and saying they want recycling, and they want to enhance it rather than that they're okay with the status quo. That's what happens when they're involved.

Mr. Kendall, I was really intrigued by several comments you made in your presentation. One was that “to drive long-term change, programs need to have very direct outcomes, and we need to do a better job of celebrating success”.

One of the things we quite often seem to think is that the bigger the process and the more the process, the more we're being successful. You really get down to brass tacks in saying that the outcome is what's important, and you ultimately celebrate that outcome. I'd like to expand a little bit on how you see that outcome being so critical and important. It's not so much the process. The process obviously gets us the outcome, but it's the outcome we have to focus on. You made a bit of a comment about the negative messaging and that we actually have so much to be proud of as Canadians.

I'd love you to expand a little bit on that and on why you see it that way.

Mr. Peter Kendall: In answer to the first question, this came out of the large study we did with kids. At the time, our program was called the Power of One. It was all about small actions aggregating to make a big difference. What the kids told us was that they understood that, but they wanted to help that animal over there and they wanted a very specific outcome for that animal. That's what kind of led us into this new program of getting the kids involved directly in the conservation projects.

Within those projects themselves, because we're dealing with children, it's important for us to take on projects where we can almost guarantee the outcomes. Through the process, we're reporting to the kids on the progress of the project they're getting involved with. We want to celebrate that success. This is a way we look at counteracting a lot of the negative messaging they're getting at school and through the news right now. Our program is really about celebrating how, when we all work together, we can make a difference for animals and for the environment, and how critical it is that we are working together on these things.

In terms of celebrating success and being proud of being a Canadian, there are some of those things I mentioned. One example is the first parks service in the world. There are 12.4 million hectares of protected area in this country. It's fantastic. It's not all back in history. Even within the last five years, the amount of land we have put aside and conserved is world-leading. We've put together partnerships in this country. The current initiative on the boreal forest was in collaboration with NGOs and industry. These are globally significant areas and globally significant partnerships. We're really leading here in Canada, and we should be proud of that.

● (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Duncan, you have five minutes.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

I'm going to come back to Mr. Kendall.

Should energy-efficient and nature-friendly modes of transportation be encouraged within urban parks?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I think it's a good idea. If we're talking about urban conservation as more than just setting aside land, as how we interact with the environment in all aspects of our lives, then it's a great example.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Now I'm going to ask the same thing. Should energy-efficient and nature-friendly modes of transportation be encouraged for travel *to* urban parks? Encouraged.

Mr. Peter Kendall: I'm not sure how you'd do that practically, but it certainly doesn't hurt.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay. Thank you.

I'll ask each of you.

Mr. Kendall, what would be your top three recommendations to this committee?

I'll ask all of you: if you haven't given a recommendation, what is your wish list for this committee? Anyone? Ones you haven't said—and be as specific as you can so that we can get this report right and hopefully honour some of your requests.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Blais: If I speak, it may help my cough.

I am thinking about one of our first recommendations. If we want to have urban conservation, we need incentives. In Canada, there is a certain amount of public land, but a lot of it is above the 60th parallel. So these areas are not in urban centres. There is a lot of private land in urban centres. So if we want to conserve land without resorting to expropriation, we need to develop conservation incentives.

One of our recommendations has to do with ecological gifts, which is related to your federal program. Our recommendation also focuses on municipal incentives so that conservation does not just depend on what the citizen pays in property tax, but is also based on funds that could come from the government. So there is a recommendation that involves the ecological gifts program, which could take into account more conservation incentives, especially at the municipal level.

I would also like to talk about your EcoAction community funding program. Earlier, we mentioned that there wasn't enough money for project planning. The EcoAction community funding program should be supported.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Kendall: In thinking about the question, I would try to think that if you could only do one thing, what would you do? There was some talk earlier of funding for energy efficiency programs. The scale of the problem is so large that any funding program is only going to make a tiny dent. Where you can have the most impact is I think in working with the provinces and the municipalities on setting higher bars for energy efficiency and for conservation within local planning laws and within local building codes. If I could focus on one thing, that's what I would do.

● (1715)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: What would your specific recommendation be to the committee, Mr. Kendall?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I guess it would be to work with the provinces and municipalities, where appropriate, on raising the bar on energy efficiency standards in transportation, in buildings, and in land planning.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Thank you.

Does Mr. Husk have time to respond?

Mr. John Husk: If I may—

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. John Husk: I gave you an English copy of my document, which indicates in section 1.1, under "Municipal powers", that the federal government must use its "buying power". Money speaks. If the government doesn't want to fund infrastructure outside and encourage urban sprawl, then don't do it, and that's what's going to happen.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll begin our third round of questioning.

Because of time restraints, you will have four and a half minutes each.

Mr. Sopuck, for four and a half minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Kendall, I'm a fairly new MP; I've been around for a couple of years. I come from a farm, but I'm spending a lot of time in Ottawa now. I'm very impressed with Ottawa as a city in terms of, for want of better words, its conservation planning and programming. Is Ottawa a kind of model, in your view, if you know enough about the city...?

Mr. Peter Kendall: I don't know that I know enough about the city to comment on that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Could any of the panellists comment on Ottawa?

Mr. Husk.

Mr. John Husk: If I may, thank you.

I would say that in my municipal experience, Ottawa is beginning to be a reference in active transportation and alternatives to using the car. It's a town—the Ottawa and Gatineau region—with a bike service, what they call BIXI in Montreal. I'm not sure what the name is in Gatineau and Ottawa. It is becoming a reference because of the impacts of active transportation: lower greenhouse gas emissions; they make public health easier; they reduce the use of carbon fuels; and so on. So in that sense Ottawa is a reference.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Ms. Blais, thank you for coming back. I would like to ask you a question, if I could. Again, coming from a farm constituency, I'm very much intrigued by what you said about conservation via incentives. In terms of agricultural communities, many of the rules and regulations that try to control agriculture just simply are not working. Can you expand on the idea of an incentive program for conservation?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Blais: For agriculture, we are trying to put certain practices in place in Quebec, be they riparian strips, windbreaks or reducing the use of fertilizers. Owners don't always pay enough attention to these practices. In that respect, money needs to be invested, but money is scarce in agriculture.

We could do what the United States does. There, they fund the purchase of riparian strips. They buy the land and plant trees close to waterways. The government could certainly fund that type of activity. Riparian strips help connect the natural environments that are protected. As Mr. Koch mentioned, conservation isn't only urban. It's truly a corridor of natural environments. Urban conservation shouldn't be considered in a vacuum. It needs to be considered along with the agricultural environment. It would be an excellent way to consider that connectivity.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Ms. Blais, would you say the regulatory approach in terms of controlling agriculture has failed and that we should look at replacing some of the regulations with incentives?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Blais: I wouldn't say it's a failure, but I would say that there is a lack of application and follow-up. In Quebec, the policy on the protection of riverbanks, shore areas and flood plains defines a certain area where there cannot be any agriculture. The municipalities must incorporate this regulation into their zoning or housing development regulations. There often isn't any follow-up. So there isn't enough funding to send inspectors to those places to see if the policy is being respected. The policy itself is excellent. But there isn't enough money in the budgets to oversee the application of the regulations.

● (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: You only have 15 seconds left.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I will pass.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame Quach, you have four and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

I would like to ask an open question about rainwater management.

There has been talk of greening and replacing pavement with bioretention basins. In the case of Mr. Savard's schoolyard project, we were told that it had improved the quality of the water in the St. Charles River. What can the federal government do to improve the reuse of water or have better conservation and better drainage of rainwater?

Mr. Koch, you spoke a lot about studies on this. Can you give us some more detail?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Koch: From where we are, I don't know if the federal government has to do much. I will tell you that the way water consumption is happening in urban environments...I would say the cost in the next five to ten years will increase exponentially. It's at the point that the end user—i.e. the consumer or resident—is going to start waking up to the fact that they have to handle water better.

We can certainly have many systems in place and legislate, but the main driver is going to be cost. What we're doing here in our area is we're certainly looking at different avenues regarding collection and reuse, so we don't have to use potable water for more secondary kinds of applications. But even with that, we have to be a little bit careful, because as we detain rainfall, we're having an effect on groundwater levels.

Again, I don't think it's just a black and white answer that we really have to look at. If we're going to capture and reuse, what are the beneficial aspects, and what are the implications to it? In short, the cost of water is going to be the driver.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you. I see that the others do not necessarily have…

Mr. Savard, go ahead.

Mr. Robert Savard: We were talking about agricultural environments. In Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, a lot of land borders the St. Lawrence River. There is a lot of overflow when there is rain in the spring and fall. Some systems have been tested, such as in the ditches. Work can be cascaded to leave time for deposits. The techniques are known, but there is a lack of financial assistance for specific projects.

It would also be good to help people implement the techniques that are approved by special subsidy programs. It would be very helpful.

Ms. Andréanne Blais: A little earlier, there was some discussion about eco-conditional support for federal programs. It's a good thing when we build roads and municipal infrastructures. Eco-conditional support for rainwater management in a context of climate change, where there will be droughts and flooding, is an excellent way for the government to be involved in managing rainwater.

Mr. John Husk: I don't know exactly how the federal government could be involved in rainwater management in municipal jurisdictions. But we can talk about best practices from Europe, among other places. In fact, some European municipalities have established an infiltration coefficient when a developer develops land. In order to get a building permit, the entire area must meet a certain infiltration coefficient for rainfall. It's a very progressive measure. But I'm not sure how the federal government could get involved in that.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

I have one last question for Mr. Koch.

Could you tell us if the federal government could intervene in the use of cosmetic pesticides?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Koch: I think right now, Ms. Quach, most municipalities in most provincial jurisdictions have set their criteria for the use of cosmetic pesticides. There's been strong, lively debate in many of them. Again, I don't know if the federal government really would be just duplicating what already is in place in those jurisdictions. So I can't see it being much different.

I think what's happening currently, either provincially or locally, at a municipal level, has been very effective, given the different jurisdictions in the communities.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: That's perfect.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Rempel, will you please close this off?

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

Again, on behalf of everyone who participated today, thank you so much for coming out. Your testimony was most useful and helpful to our deliberations here.

Something we've heard from witnesses almost consistently is—and, Mr. Savard, I believe you brought this up—the lack of best practice sharing.

Dr. Koch, you also alluded to the fact that the concept of urban conservation is one that's very broad, and part of the objective of our committee study is perhaps to gain some insight into how to put some definition around that concept.

With those two things in mind, I'd just like to give all of the witnesses an opportunity to talk a bit about how you feel we could better facilitate, or if there's a role for the federal government to facilitate, best practice sharing for urban conservation, but perhaps contextualized within your definition of what you see the scope of urban conservation being.

Mr. Savard, since you brought it up, I'll throw it to you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Savard: We can use websites, for example. If there could be a place within the government dealing with environmental practices that we can develop and on urban sites, already that would be a great start. When we want to carry out a project, everyone has ideas. We could consult the government site to see if there are any similar projects. It could be by category. It would provide some ideas. The web pages can recreate how the project works or show how it was carried out. Publishing all the projects would help us a great deal. That would be sufficient.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

[*English*]

Ms. Blais.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Blais: Thank you.

Environment Canada has published some excellent guides on conservation and biodiversity, especially *How Much Habitat is Enough?*, which provides basic rules for conservation. I think publishing a guide is very effective. The Quebec ministry of municipal affairs, regions and land occupancy has also done this for urban conservation. The Fédération québécoise des municipalités and the Union des municipalités du Québec talk about urban conservation. We deal directly with these jurisdictions. I think it's a great start for providing information on the topic.

[*English*]

Mr. John Husk: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has their green municipal fund, as we've discussed earlier, and they have an energy section and a transportation section. They have best practices examples and what project has received so much money. To my recollection, there is no department for urban conservation.

If there would be a way to gather that information on one site, one portal, *guichet unique*, as we would say in French, that would be an obvious plus. There's also the Quebec municipal affairs ministry, which has an *observatoire* on best practices, what's been done in North America and around the world, and also many guidelines on how to advise municipalities on conservation.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Great.

Mr. Peter Kendall: I don't think much needs to be done in this area. There is lots of great information out there already on best practices, and it's difficult to segment it and bring it all into one spot.

I just look at our own site. We operate one of the most energy efficient buildings in the world. We have an online tour of that building, featuring energy and water, green office space, and a whole bunch of different areas. Even trying to figure out how to make that interesting for all those different audiences is difficult enough when it's still all just about a building, and to add conservation, transportation, and all these other things, to me, can't be brought into one spot.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Great.

And to our representative from Olds College, perhaps you could give us your thoughts as well on overall context.

Mr. Gord Koch: Ms. Rempel, I think what the previous guests have mentioned, and Mr. Kendall specifically, is that there is so much out there right now that you can really access. Whether you want to portal it through one website by the government...that might be helpful. It reduces the search times. My students would love it, so they're not all over the place trying to find things. But there's a lot of information out there, and it doesn't take that long to pin down certain aspects that you're looking for.

● (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

I appreciate each of you spending your time testifying before us. You've highlighted the importance of this study. It's very much appreciated and very valuable to us. Thank you so much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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