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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)): Good morning, committee members.

I call to order meeting number six of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We are honoured today to have Minister Aglukkaq with us.

Minister Aglukkaq, we welcome your opening statement, followed by some questions from our committee members.

Thank you. Please proceed.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment): Thank you. Good morning, everyone, Mr. Chair and committee members.

This is my first appearance before this committee, Mr. Chair, and I would like to start by saying how delighted I am to meet with you today.

Thank you for the invitation to appear here today to discuss the supplementary estimates (B) for fiscal year 2013–14 for Environment Canada, Parks Canada, and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

I will begin with a brief statement that will highlight our government's actions on and investments in the environment. After that, I will be pleased to answer any questions that honourable members may have.

As this is the first time I'm meeting with many of you, I would like to start with a little personal background and my goals going forward. As a northerner, I know first-hand how important the environment is for our livelihood, our culture, and our traditions. Our relationship with the land and the water is an important part of our identity and our everyday lives. We still rely on wildlife that feeds our families. We understand how essential it is to protect the quality of our air, water, and environment.

There are multiple jurisdictions, players, and partners, and the issues have broad implications for our quality of life, standards of living, and economy. The degree of collaboration required to tackle environmental issues is something I am quite aware of. It was also a major part of my previous role as Minister of Health.

In the north, it is not a choice between the environment and the economy. Sustainability and balance are a significant part of the approach towards the environment. It is also the approach the government is taking.

Environment Canada has a broad and important mandate. Our business is protecting the environment, conserving the country's natural heritage, and providing weather and meteorological information to keep Canadians informed and safe.

Sound science is central to our work, and that's why, since 2006, our government has invested over \$4 billion in science at Environment Canada. These investments support scientists working in well-equipped labs on important environmental issues such as air and water quality. This record level of support has made Environment Canada a world leader in scientific research, and we are proud of this.

By having a strong science base to work from, we are able to manage and deliver policies that will actually make a difference and improve the lives of Canadians, their families, and their environment. It is my goal to make sure our actions at Environment Canada continue to be based on the best available science and information.

Since we formed government, we have continued to advocate for increased transparency and access to scientific data. The joint Canada–Alberta oil sands monitoring data portal that we launched with the Government of Alberta is a perfect example of these efforts. Earlier this fall, I travelled to Alberta and was fortunate to see, first-hand, the great research being done on the ground. We will continue to make great strides on this front and provide the public with access to the scientific data collected through the joint oil sands monitoring plan and the methodology used to produce it.

Mr. Chair, since I became Canada's Minister of the Environment, I've had an opportunity to meet with many of the Environment Canada employees and to see the important work they are doing. In August, I was lucky enough to visit Environment Canada's Ontario Storm Prediction Centre. Here, I got to meet Environment Canada's scientists who provide Canada with globally respected weather services and world-leading scientific expertise and technology.

Our government is making important advancements to protect the quality of our air and water, and we are also enhancing our ability to ensure that our natural environment is clean, safe, and sustainable. For example, when it comes to climate change, our government has introduced strict new rules on light-duty vehicles for the 2011–2016 model years. We also proposed more stringent emission regulations for light-duty vehicles for the 2017–2025 period, and we published the final regulations for heavy-duty trucks.

We also became a world leader when we introduced new, stringent, coal-fired electricity regulations. In fact, it is important for this committee to note that in the first 21 years, the regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of about 214 megatonnes, which is equivalent to removing some 2.6 million personal vehicles per year from the roads.

Moving forward, we will continue to play a leadership role by taking concrete actions to reduce carbon emissions. We will build on our actions to date by working with provinces to reduce emissions from the oil and gas sector while ensuring Canadian companies remain competitive.

On the international scene, Mr. Chair, I just returned from the UN climate change negotiations in Warsaw, Poland, where it was a privilege to represent Canada. I think this committee would be interested to know that Canada was very well received at this conference. Throughout the conference, several other countries personally thanked me or even made statements mentioning all of the support that Canada has provided.

During the conference, Canada played a constructive role and pressed for a global climate change agreement that includes all major emitters and supports meaningful global action. This has allowed us to come out of Warsaw with the momentum needed for achieving a new climate agreement in Paris in December 2015.

Canada's leadership was also instrumental in achieving a breakthrough in Warsaw on an important initiative to help developing countries reduce deforestation and forest degradation, which account for nearly 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions. As well, Canada is actively promoting a North American protocol to add HFCs to the Montreal protocol. HFCs are potent greenhouse gases that are used as substitutes for ozone-depleting chemicals, and addressing them will further our efforts to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

Likewise, Canada is also an active player on other international bodies dealing with climate change. This September I travelled to Norway to take part in a high-level assembly of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to reduce short-lived climate pollutants. These potent greenhouse gases and dangerous air pollutants are of particular concern to arctic countries like Canada. They are one of the reasons the north is warming faster than other parts of the planet. In fact, I think it's important to note that Canada is a founding member and a major financial contributor to the CCAC.

Through Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the overarching theme is development for the people of the north, with three sub-themes: responsible arctic resource development, safe arctic shipping, and sustainable circumpolar communities. Reflecting the importance of taking action on short-lived climate pollutants,

Canada has focused work in this area through its chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council has working groups on a number of environmental issues, such as monitoring and preventing pollutants in the Arctic, climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability. The council is working to ensure responsible arctic development and to protect the arctic marine environment. It is also continuing to pursue cooperation among arctic and non-arctic states to support the conservation of migratory birds on which northerners rely.

The government has also taken major actions to protect air quality. We are implementing the air quality management system, which is endorsed by the Canadian Lung Association. This comprehensive approach for improving air quality in Canada results from years of extensive collaboration with the provinces and the territories as well as stakeholders. Continuing this collaboration is essential to its success, as federal, provincial, and territorial governments all have a role and responsibility in its implementation.

Another important development I would like to highlight for the committee is that in October Canada signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury. This is a global agreement to reduce mercury emissions and releases to the environment. This agreement is important, as 95% of the mercury deposited in Canada from human activity comes from foreign sources.

We're also building on our achievement in conserving and restoring Canada's natural heritage through programs such as the ecological gift program, the habitat stewardship program, and the Species at Risk Act. For example, in budget 2013 our government committed \$20 million to the Nature Conservancy of Canada to continue to conserve ecologically sensitive lands. This builds on the \$225 million that Environment Canada has already invested in the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Our eco-action community funding program continues to support grassroots conservation activities at the local and regional levels. In September I announced our intention to introduce an emergency protection order for the greater sage grouse.

● (1110)

This initiative again builds on the actions of our government that have increased the size of our protected areas by creating three national wildlife areas, three marine protected areas, two national parks, and two national marine conservation areas. The total of these protected lands is equal to an area larger than the size of Denmark.

Going forward, as promised in the throne speech, our government will build on its record of conservation and protect Canada's rich natural heritage by unveiling a new national conservation plan. The national conservation plan will further increase protected areas for focusing on stronger marine and coastal conservation.

As we move forward we will work with communities, non-profit organizations, and businesses to create and protect more green space in our urban and suburban areas.

I would now like to turn to the supplementary estimates (B) for 2013-14. This is the first budget adjustment for—

The Chair: Roughly how much time will you take? I'd like to give committee members adequate time for questions. Could you wrap it up in two minutes?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: It will be less than that.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): On a point of order, Chair.

You will rightly criticize questioners for going on and asking the minister about a whole bunch of things extraneous to supplementary estimates (B). We have now gone 15 minutes—

The Chair: We haven't gone 15 minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Well, whatever we have gone—10 minutes—the minister is just now going to supplementary estimates (B), which is the purpose of the meeting. It's not an abuse of members' privileges, but it's starting to get close to it.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Chair, on that point of order, I would just like to recognize that Mr. McKay is actually using up the committee's time with the minister and he's going to point this out later on—

• (1115)

The Chair: Okay, we're going to proceed.

Minister Aglukkaq, please proceed. We'll try to wrap it up in two minutes, if possible.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the supplementary estimates (B), Environment Canada's submission mainly includes three areas. The first is the renewal of funding to address Lake Simcoe water quality and nearshore toxic and nuisance algae growth in Georgian Bay. The second area is the first phase of the strategy to implement a world-class prevention, preparedness, and response regime to oil spills from ships. The third also includes resources for sustainable management of Canada's oceans.

For Parks Canada supplementary estimates (B), the agency is seeking \$26.4 million in additional funding to improve highways and bridges and dams in national parks, \$16.7 million to establish Canada's first national urban park in the Rouge Valley in greater Toronto, and \$1.5 million to expand and support the national parks and national marine conservation areas.

For CEAA, Mr. Chair, the agency is not requesting any additional funding under supplementary estimates (B). The agency will continue to deliver high-quality and timely environmental assessments for responsible resource development.

Mr. Chair, this highlights some of the objectives being pursued within the environment portfolio to provide Canadians with clean, safe, sustainable environment initiatives.

I would now be happy to answer any questions that you may have related to the portfolio.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Aglukkaq.

I just want to point out as well that joining the minister today we have Mr. Bob Hamilton, deputy minister, Department of the Environment. Welcome.

We have Mr. Ron Hallman of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Welcome.

We have Mr. Alan Latourelle from Parks Canada, the chief executive officer.

Following the minister's one hour, our officials from Parks Canada and Environment Canada will continue with us for the following hour.

On the first round of questioning, we go to Mr. Carrie from the Conservative Party, please.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank everyone for being here today.

Minister, I do want to say welcome back. Everyone here is aware that last week you were in Warsaw for some very important negotiations. I was wondering if you would be able to update the committee on the key outcomes of the latest round of climate change negotiations, because wherever I go, people want to know what Canada and the world are doing.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you for that question.

As you know, our government is taking a leadership role in the international climate change effort. Canada is representing less than 2% of the global emissions of greenhouse gases. Canada understands that an effective international agreement requires participation and action from all major emitters, and that is why Canada continued to push for such an agreement. The outcome from the Warsaw conference firmly solidified that position.

We're also coming out of Warsaw with the momentum needed and clarity on the next steps for achieving a new climate agreement in Paris in 2015. Canada's leadership was also instrumental in achieving a breakthrough in Warsaw on an important initiative to help the developing countries reduce deforestation and forest degradation, which accounts again for nearly 15% of the global greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to the negotiations, Canada also participated in important meetings at a high-level assembly of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. Being a top donor for the coalition, Canada's contribution has been significant and is leading to practical actions being implemented to achieve new term emission reductions. Canadians should be proud to know that this leadership is being recognized on the world stage. In fact, when I was in Warsaw, I heard from a number of representatives from other countries who all thanked and praised Canada for its environmental record. Canada will continue to work to advance the development of a fair, transparent, and effective climate change agreement that includes a commitment by all world emitters as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Minister, you mentioned in your comments the praise that Canada was getting from around the world for the work we're doing. I was wondering if you could give some examples of the kind of work that Canada is doing around the world that we're receiving praise for, because, as you said, this is a global issue and it's so important that everybody work together. Do you have some examples of the work that Canada is doing?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I think a great example of some of the work that Canada is doing is the effort it is taking through the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. Through the CCAC, Canada has been supporting important efforts to address methane and black carbon emission reductions. Obviously, reductions in black carbon emissions are particularly important for Canada due to the climate warming effects on the Arctic and northern regions and on the health of northerners. Canada has supported the development of strategies to lower these types of emissions in the oil and gas sector in Colombia. It was in relation to this work that Colombia made a statement during the meeting thanking Canada for its continued support.

• (1120)

Mr. Colin Carrie: This morning I met with some of the automotive industry people, and they were talking about some of the work we're doing with the United States and across borders, working together to really make a difference in greenhouse gas emissions. I was wondering, are there any other interesting initiatives you might want to bring up that Canada is taking internationally with respect to climate change?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Among some of the other initiatives that we are doing...Canada has provided \$1.2 billion in international climate finances over 2010-1012 to support the mitigation and adaptation efforts in over 60 developing countries. This represented Canada's largest-ever contribution to support international efforts to address climate change. The Fast-start Finance is drawing upon and strengthening Canada's private sector expertise and technologies, and the projects that are being funded are achieving concrete results.

Canada has, among other actions taken, established facilities at the multilateral banks, such as the International Finance Corporation, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank, to catalyze and promote private sector investments. These facilities are already generating significant environmental benefits across the globe. For example, our facility at the Inter-American Development Bank recently supported a project to bring large-scale solar power production to northern Chile. This investment in the

solar power sector in Chile is an important step in the development of a commercially viable solar energy sector in that country. Going forward, projects of a similar nature will be more attractive to private investors as a result of the demonstration efforts of this project.

Environment Canada also used targeted bilateral support to help countries access the expertise they needed to develop and implement mitigation policies that can scale up investment. For example, we are working with Colombia, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico to manage emissions from the waste and landfills, again to attract more private investment in this area.

Thank you.

Mr. Colin Carrie: How am I doing?

The Chair: You have 50 seconds.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Again, coming from Oshawa, the auto industry is so important to our economy. I notice, Minister, our government has taken action with the transportation industry and also with the electrical industry. You mentioned coal-fired electrical generation.

When you went to this international forum.... If you look at climate change, you can have some short-term things we can do, immediate action plans, and then you also have some long-term things. Are you able to comment a little bit? Instead of going to these international forums and the complicated negotiations, and I understand the complexity of it all, because you really do have to have all major emitters signed on to it.... But would you be able to give us an idea of immediate action that you can take on climate—

The Chair: I'm going to ask the minister to respond to that later. We want to give everybody an equal chance. We've used up your seven minutes, but we'll come back to that if we have time.

Mr. Colin Carrie: All right.

The Chair: Ms. Leslie.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much, and welcome, Minister. It's nice to be reunited after our work together on the health file.

I'm going to jump to some questions where I'm only looking for quick answers. Specifically, we'll start with the emergency order for sage grouse. The only action I've actually seen from government on this is to send out a pretty self-congratulatory press release. We actually aren't seeing any action. So my first question is, when does the government plan to issue the emergency protection order?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: The government has taken the steps to protect the sage grouse. On September 17 I announced my intentions to make an emergency protection order. The order will prohibit activities that affect the species—

•(1125)

Ms. Megan Leslie: So when will it be issued?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Sometime shortly, yes.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay. Where's the funding for it in the supplementary estimates?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Do you want to speak to that?

Mr. Bob Hamilton (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): Yes, we're working right now on the order and hoping to issue it shortly. I can't tell you exactly when it will be. There's no funding allocated at the moment for that.

Ms. Megan Leslie: So is the expectation that there's no funding needed?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: We will find the funds necessary to deliver on what's required, until such time as we can go and ask for additional funding if it's required.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay. Thank you.

Minister, can you tell us if you plan to ensure that the order protects sufficient critical habitat free from oil and gas and other industrial development that would actually allow the species to recover?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I believe the recovery plan is in the works at this point in time. Once that's completed, it will be public.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay. Thank you.

You raised that you are now chair of the Arctic Council. Congratulations on that. It's exciting to see Canada at the helm of the council for a couple of years.

Why is climate change not one of the priorities for the Arctic Council?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: That is a priority. There are a number of initiatives within the Arctic Council mandate that affect the environment, not just in the science related to black carbon or methane. It's also in areas of protecting the environment, such as safe arctic shipping and standards of that nature.

Ms. Megan Leslie: What about climate change, though?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Sixteen years of research have been done by the Arctic Council just on climate change. It's an important area, and that work will continue.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay. Is it going to continue under one of the specific themes?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Perhaps I can explain how the themes for Canada are arrived at. We consulted with the northern regions, the three territories. The recommendations came from environmental groups, aboriginal groups, and government in terms of what they want to see during the Canadian chairmanship for the Arctic that will actually benefit northerners. Those recommendations were put forward to the Arctic eight ministerial forum, because the Arctic Council functions on a consensus basis. Canada's priority initiatives were approved by the Arctic eight going forward.

There are a number of areas that we've identified. But that does not stop the 80 other projects that are currently undertaken by the Arctic Council in all areas around climate change, black carbon, safe shipping, search and rescue—there's a long list. But to focus on

Canada's priorities, those were arrived at through consensus of the Arctic eight, as well as the stakeholders in the three territories.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay. Thank you for that.

My next questions are around the oil and gas regulations that you raised in your opening statement. It's four years now that we've been waiting for these oil and gas regulations. When will they be ready?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: As indicated in the throne speech, the Government of Canada is now working with the provinces to reduce the emissions for the oil and gas sector. But at this time it is premature for me to say when they will be ready. There has been good progress in that area in the last few years. Once they are ready, I will share that with the committee.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Do you expect it will be this year?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I can't give you a timeline, but work continues, and when we're ready we'll release that.

Ms. Megan Leslie: As you know, documents around the negotiations on our oil and gas regs were obtained by Postmedia. It appears that even with the most ambitious proposals on the table, such as Alberta's 40/40 proposal, oil sands emissions are still going to grow over 60% in absolute terms.

If the toughest oil and gas regulations on the table would still allow our oil sands emissions to grow at that really strong rate, what's the plan to close the gap? Will the gap be closed through other sectors, or will it all be the oil and gas regulations?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: The Government of Canada has been very clear that we are taking a sector-by-sector approach to address reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We've moved forward on the two largest emitters—the coal-fired electricity and the vehicles.

We will move forward in the area of the GHGs and the oil sands, as outlined in the throne speech.

Canada remains committed to meeting its targets and will continue to move on that front. The other area that I think is important to highlight is that we're also moving forward in the national conservation strategy. As outlined in my opening remarks, we have moved forward in a number of parks that are greater than the size of Denmark.

It's important to balance reducing greenhouse gas emissions with creating further green spaces.

•(1130)

Ms. Megan Leslie: With the sector-by-sector approach, do you think you'll have to adjust the other sectors? Do you think you'll have to make up that ground in the other sectors, or do you think we'll meet our targets just through the oil and gas regs?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: We're going to continue to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We're going to take a sector-by-sector approach. We produce less than 2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. We'll continue to focus on areas that make up our portion of the greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, we'll be moving to protect our lands. Once the national conservation plan is ready, we'll be moving forward on that front.

It's also important to note that moving on these files requires us to work with the provinces and the territories, which have a role in implementing many of the initiatives. It is a partnership. Agreement with jurisdictions is an important piece that we have to consider in any work that we do.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Aglukkaq.

Thank you, Ms. Leslie.

We'll move now to Mr. Sopuck.

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

Minister, it's a great honour to have you here before our committee. We watched with interest your work in Poland. You certainly did our government proud there.

In that international forum, they focused on long-term projects, years of negotiations. To follow up on my colleague's question, what are we doing to promote immediate action on climate change?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Canada is the leading member of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. To be a part of the CCAC, you have to have a plan in place to reduce black carbon and methane.

In fact, Canada is a co-founder and lead partner. It's a voluntary international framework for concrete actions to reduce short-lived climate pollutants. The great thing about the CCAC is that it's a lead in promoting a culture of countries constantly debating with one other. It is promoting action, as opposed to just talking about it.

In the 19 months that the CCAC has been in place, it has seen remarkable progress. It has grown from six to over 70 partners, including countries, UN organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

There are currently 10 action-oriented initiatives under the CCAC. Canada is an active partner in this work and is leading the development and implementation of initiatives in agriculture, solid waste, and heavy-duty diesel vehicles and engines.

I'm also proud that Canada is the top contributor to the CCAC, having delivered \$13 million in support of developing and implementing the initiatives.

Canada is receiving recognition and praise for its leadership of the CCAC. Canadians should be proud of that. We are moving this initiative forward and establishing an organization that is action-

oriented, as opposed to just talking about it. The commitment is there from over 70 partners now taking action on this initiative.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I really appreciate, Minister, your distinction between talking about the environment and actually doing something about specific environmental issues and generating real and meaningful results.

Regarding our domestic actions in Canada, we've taken a number of actions to curb emissions—all emissions—and also to improve air quality. Can you elaborate on some of the programs and on the progress that has happened to date?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you for that question.

We will continue to pursue the sector-by-sector regulatory approach. That will allow us to protect both the environment and the economy. We're not taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, we're tailoring our approaches to what makes sense for each sector. We are continuing to make good progress and are already seeing some positive results.

Regulations are in place in the two areas I mentioned in my opening remarks: transportation and electricity. As a result of the current and proposed greenhouse gas regulations for cars and trucks, the 2025 cars and light trucks will emit about half the amount of greenhouse gases of 2008, and new regulations for the 2018 model year heavy-duty vehicles will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 23%.

For electricity, we finalized the regulations to address carbon dioxide and coal-fired electricity in September 2012. The stringent performance standards for new and end-of-life units will come into force on July 1, 2015. That makes Canada the first country to effectively ban the construction of traditional coal units. In fact, the first 21 years of these regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction in greenhouse gases of about 214 megatonnes, which is equivalent to 2.6 million personal vehicles being removed from the roads per year.

As well, in the Speech from the Throne, we confirmed that we're moving forward, working with the provinces, to deal with reducing emissions from the oil and gas sector.

•(1135)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes, and I think that work is bearing fruit. In my own research on environmental indicators, all air quality environmental indicators are improving in Canada, and that is a remarkable legacy.

Regarding the most recent Speech from the Throne, in your opening remarks you also talked about the national conservation plan, something this committee is very interested in. Can you update us on the status of the national conservation plan?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: First of all, I would like to thank the committee for all the hard work on this file. This is a topic of particular interest to many of you here. I can assure you that the hard work of the last couple of studies that have looked at conservation has been very informative.

As you know, a national conservation plan is a priority of our government. We have been engaging with our partners and stakeholders to develop the plan.

As you rightly pointed out, the most recent Speech from the Throne reiterated as well the government's commitment to developing the national conservation plan. As stated in budget 2013, further details will be announced in the coming year.

The plan will articulate a national vision for conservation and build on existing successes while fostering new and innovative approaches and partnerships. It will focus on our collective efforts and promote stewardship and encourage on-the-ground actions to conserve Canada's ecosystem. Efforts will be focused on conserving the ecosystem, including stewardship actions on working landscapes, reconnecting Canadians with nature, and restoring the degraded areas.

This is an exciting initiative. I hope to make an announcement moving this forward in the not too distant future.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sopuck.

We'll move now to Mr. McKay for seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

I tend to focus my questions primarily out of the Public Accounts of Canada, volume II, page 8.6 and thereafter.

I'm just going to ask a whole series of questions, because I have only seven minutes and I'd like answers, and I'm perfectly prepared to accept written answers.

The first, page 8.6, under vote 1, you have total authorities of \$768 million, and you lapse \$43 million; you have \$60 million, and you lapse \$14 million; you have \$171 million and you lapse \$67 million. So out of a total budget of \$1.1 billion, you lapse \$125 million, roughly 10% of your budget. That seems to be an extraordinary amount of moneys given back to the treasury, which calls into question whether the original budget presentations are accurate and what it is that members of Parliament are voting on when they receive budgets from your department.

The second question comes from page 8.9, the top line, "Climate change and clean air". Total authorities available are \$240 million; authorities used in the current year \$157 million, and that also comes out in your documents on November 28.

On "Threats to Canadians and their environment from pollution are minimized", you're spending upwards of \$70 million less than the authorities have granted to you. When you add in "Substances and waste management" and "Compliance promotion and enforcement", all of those budgets take a hit as well. You have total authorities available of \$375 million, you spent \$278 million, so \$100 million less than you have authority for.

Also on page 8.9, "Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency", you have \$32 million available to you and you've only spent \$27 million.

I have several other questions.

Over to 8.12, you have total authorities available there of \$4.7 million for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. You've used \$1.9 million, almost \$2 million, and you've lapsed \$2.7 million. Again, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is a pretty important agency and you've walked away from the better end of half of their budget.

On 8.13, "Water resources, Regulatory services", you have \$163,000 available for water resources, and none of them have been used.

Also on page 8.13, under "Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, External revenues, Environmental assessment services", you have available, \$7.4 million and you've only used \$2.2 million.

All of that indicates a substantial number of lapses certainly in areas of significance to Canadians. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is an important agency and a \$5 million lapse on a budget of \$8 million is a substantial lapse.

Possibly all of these have explanations. On the documentation that's before the committee it's not readily apparent what these explanations might be, so I'll leave those questions with you.

My final question has to do with your oil and gas regulations, and in response to Ms. Leslie's question, you say you're working on with the provinces.

Do you expect a decision will be made before or after President Obama makes the decision on Keystone?

• (1140)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you.

On your last question, the greenhouse gas emissions that I made reference to, when we're ready we will present that. We want to get this right for Canada, and when I'm ready to release that information, that will be released publicly. Again, we have to work with the provinces and the territories on any of these initiatives.

To answer the first question—

Hon. John McKay: With the greatest respect, Minister, that doesn't respond to what is a fairly significant economic decision for Canada. A significant economic decision is going to be made by President Obama as to whether to allow Keystone. If Keystone doesn't occur, there will be a whole ripple effect throughout the industry, and it's largely determined by the fact that we have no GHG emission regulations. So it's a little late in the day to say we're going to continue to work with our provincial partners.

•(1145)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Partnership with the provinces is an essential part. We cannot move forward in any of these without working with the provinces or territories on any initiatives of this nature.

As I said earlier, we want to get this right for Canada. This is for Canada. We want to get it right for Canada, and once I'm ready to present that, I will present that, but at this point in time it's premature to comment further on what the timing of this will be. Again, we have to work with the provinces.

To go back to the very first question you asked related to public accounts at Environment Canada for the 2012-13 areas where there are lapses, the \$125.6 million that lapsed consisted of the \$68 million in grants and contributions, which was a surplus, of which \$62.5 million was funding that we had made available to Sustainable Development Technology Canada and they were not able to spend it or use it. The balance of the \$43 million in operating and \$14.2 million in capital are surpluses that have been approved by the Treasury Board to transfer from one fiscal year to the next fiscal year.

In regard to the other questions, I'm going to pass on to Mr. Hamilton to respond.

The Chair: In light of the time and the limited time we have with the minister, could we make a note of that and possibly Mr. McKay could come back to that with Mr. Hamilton in the second part of our meeting?

Are you comfortable with that?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: It's in your hands. I'm happy to do that.

The Chair: I do want to give each member equal time.

We're going to move on now to Monsieur Choquette.

[Translation]

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

Madam Minister, thank you very much for being here.

My first question is about the Green Climate Fund. According to the Copenhagen target, which is a weak one, you agreed to contribute to the tune of \$400 million. Are you going to increase that amount in the coming years?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Is that on the Fast-start funding?

Mr. François Choquette: Yes.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: We have delivered our commitment of the \$1.2 billion. This is the largest contribution we have made. The grants have been provided in many cases.

In terms of the outcome of the next climate agreement for 2015, it's premature to comment on what that will be.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Forgive the interruption, Madam Minister, but my question was actually about—

[English]

if you are going to send more money now, this year and next year. Is there going to be more money?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: In terms of our commitment, we remain committed to that \$1.2 billion.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: That is strange, because, in the negotiations that are now underway, they are saying that it is very important to invest more money in developing countries and poor countries.

Let me move to another matter. According to the Public Accounts of Canada, tabled on October 31, the Government of Canada's environmental deficit increased by more than 27% over last year. There is also an increase in almost \$2.2 billion for nuclear liability. The environmental deficit now represents more than 9% of the payables and the accumulated deficit is \$10.6 billion. That is a huge amount and it has been increasing steadily since 2006. In fact, since 2006, the increase has been 80%, which is a quite staggering statistic.

How do you explain that increase in the environmental deficit? What steps are you going to take to stop the increase in order that there can be some justice between generations. It would be irresponsible to leave this environmental deficit to future generations.

•(1150)

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: On the first comment you made, I just want to put this out for the record. The discussions related to a new agreement will be determined in 2015 on a new climate agreement for Canada. That's for the record.

In terms of your secondary questions relating to the nuclear liability, that is better referred to Minister Oliver. Minister Oliver should be addressing that question, as opposed to me.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Ms. Aglukkaq, yesterday, the Green Budget Coalition issued its four priorities. Could you tell me your impression of those priorities? Are you going to follow up on them?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I have yet to receive that report.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: I understand that you have not yet had the time to examine the report.

[English]

The Chair: In fairness, I think it arrived yesterday on my desk, so I'm assuming most of us received it yesterday.

[Translation]

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

Recently, you transferred one million hectares of native prairie to provincial governments and the private sector. Are you going to at least commit to protect the Govenlock community pasture and the four research farms as protected wildlife areas?

If you do not have the answer, it's fine. You can send it later.

Mr. Chair, I would like to—

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: That, again, is referred to Agriculture Canada as opposed to Environment Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Just a reminder, too, for those of us who aren't bilingual, it takes a little time for the translation to come through.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Ms. Aglukkaq, I know the report was tabled only yesterday, but, for the benefit of our committee, I would like you to provide us with your observations on the four priorities in the Green Budget Coalition. I feel that Environment Canada has a role to play in protecting the environment. A report on habitat protection is also underway and the report will be ready soon. I would also like you to bring the committee up to date about the million hectares of native prairie that were transferred.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Choquette, so we'll have to respond to that at a later date.

We'll move to Mr. Toet for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you, Minister, for appearing here today. It's good to have you here.

It was good that you also acknowledged, in relation to Mr. Sopuck's question, the work this committee has done on the national conservation plan. We did spend a lot of time on that, and we're really anxiously looking forward to seeing what comes out of that next year. It's good to hear that we're going to be seeing some details shortly.

In light of that, we don't want to leave the impression that we're just waiting for this one plan and that there are no conservation efforts being done on behalf of the Government of Canada at this time at all. I was hoping you could just elaborate a little bit on what actions the government is undertaking today in the conservation field.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you for that question.

You're absolutely right, our government is playing a leadership role, and Canadians should be extremely proud of our record in the area of conservation.

Currently, Canada has protected approximately 10% of the terrestrial areas. This is equivalent to approximately twice the size of Spain. Building on this record, our government has increased the size of our protected areas by creating three national wildlife areas,

three marine protected areas, two national parks, and two national marine conservation areas. Again, this area of land is equal to an area greater than the size of Denmark.

Further, since 2006, we have also protected more than 90,000 hectares of wildlife habitat, an area about twice the size of the city of Toronto.

In addition, thanks to our investment, the Nature Conservancy of Canada has secured more than 300,000 hectares of wildlife habitat, an area approximately half the size of Prince of Edward Island.

Finally, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has protected nearly 800,000 hectares, an area approximately the size of Kuwait.

These achievements on conservation have been recognized by the World Wildlife Fund, as they have presented Canada with a Gift to the Earth award for everything we have done since 2006.

Thank you.

● (1155)

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you.

I think receiving that Gift to the Earth Award speaks volumes as to what we have been doing and accomplishing.

The other thing I know we also talk a lot about in this committee is the aboriginal traditional knowledge and the integration of that with the work in science and research. I'm just wondering if you could also talk about the work our government is undertaking to integrate these two pieces together in our policy and whether it works.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I think it's a very important area, and one that I'm very happy to answer questions about.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge, ATK, or as we call it in my language *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*, is an important source of information to inform policies and programs and science across the environment portfolio.

Environment Canada considers aboriginal traditional knowledge to be equal to traditional science and does not place a higher value on one over the other. It is widely accepted that by hearing from and listening to and integrating the experiences of people who have lived on the land for thousands of years, we can greatly enhance our scientific knowledge. I would use polar bear management as an example.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge is used in management decisions related to species at risk, wildlife management protected areas, reporting on biodiversity, and environmental assessment. As an example, Inuit traditional knowledge has broadened current understanding of the birds and ecology of the arctic ecosystem, which is very important in making harvesting decisions.

I am very proud that the environment portfolio has been a leader in this respect. Parks Canada is recognized internationally because of the agency's work with indigenous people and its relationships with various groups.

I want to add that the Arctic Council has also put forth integrating Inuit traditional knowledge or aboriginal traditional knowledge in science as part of our two-year chairmanship, which has been accepted by the Arctic eight. All the countries that are part of the international Arctic Council forum have adopted a policy that will do better at incorporating into the science the traditional knowledge of people who have lived in the Arctic for thousands of years, followed by the United States' northern policy, which has also identified this area. I honestly think this will improve and enhance the scientific work being done on the arctic regions, as an example. I am very proud to be part of a department that is leading in these efforts with this government.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Toet.

We have about two and a half minutes left. We're going to go back to the NDP, with Mr. Aubin and then Madame Freeman.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to the minister for joining us.

I fully understand how important it is for any minister to stand up for their department and their government's position. However, I must admit I have some difficulty in making a connection between the idyllic vision presented to us today and the reality I see on the ground.

Our environmental deficit has gone up exponentially. And since this government came to power, Canada has collected a huge number of fossil awards internationally. The first question that comes to mind is whether this is the result of a complete lack of understanding of the Canadian strategy on the part of the international community. Is it possible that Canada is not quite heading in the right direction?

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: With regard to Canada, we remain committed to the climate change targets and its leadership, and of course our actions have shown this. Our latest emission trend report projects that as a result of the existing measures and actions from all levels of government, consumers and business, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 will be reduced by 128 megatonnes, compared to where Canada's emissions are projected to be in 2020 if no measures had been taken to reduce emissions since 2005.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I am sorry to interrupt you, but I think I only have about 30 seconds left.

In your opening remarks, you said that, at your recent meeting in Warsaw, you received congratulations for Canada from some countries that agree with our position. Could you tell us which countries were so generous in their comments about Canadian environmental policy?

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I can use two examples. Mexico and Colombia have publicly stated that in side conversations with other

countries. They have also expressed support, thanking Canada for its contributions, financially, for the initiatives they're undertaking.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank the minister for being with us today.

The time we've allocated for the first hour has expired. We're going to suspend for about three minutes, and then come right back so we can proceed with questions for the officials.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1205)

The Chair: I call the committee to order, please.

We're going to proceed with the second hour of our meeting.

Again, I want to thank our officials for remaining with us.

We're not going to start with opening statements; we're simply going to continue with our questioning. So we're going to move back to four seven-minute rounds.

We'll begin with Mr. Woodworth.

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

I thank the individuals who are here today representing the department, Parks Canada, and so on. It's always a pleasure. I know you have all the answers I want, so I have no hesitation in trying to dig into a few things.

One of the issues that interested me—I come from the great riding of Kitchener Centre, which is in southern Ontario, and therefore surrounded by the Great Lakes—is about the restoration of areas of concern identified in the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. In point of fact, I proposed for this committee, in furtherance of my constituents' interest in this, a study of the areas of interest or concern in the Great Lakes.

I understand some funds will be transferred to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans regarding the restoration of areas of concern identified in the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The minister, herself, although I don't have a copy of her remarks, mentioned the Great Lakes—

The Chair: We need a little more quiet around here so we can hear the question. Thanks.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I'm amazed that everyone isn't listening in rapt attention to every word that comes from my mouth.

The Chair: I was trying.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I'm probably speaking too quickly for some of my colleagues.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: In any event, the minister, herself, mentioned the Lake Simcoe cleanup and also the Georgian Bay algae issue. I happen to know there's an issue regarding algae in Lake Erie as well.

I would be grateful for some understanding about the arrangement with DFO, the amount that's going to them and whether it is tagged for specific projects.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll note at the outset that in addition to Ron and Alan, we have officials behind us who can help with some of the detailed questions. With your permission, I could call them up to the table from time to time as we go.

Let me start on the Great Lakes issue, and I would ask our chief financial officer, Carol Najm, if she would come forward and provide specific details on what you've asked.

You're right to point out that the work we do at Environment Canada in the area of water is one of our priorities. We consider it quite important. It covers the Great Lakes, as you've mentioned, but there's also Georgian Bay, Lake Winnipeg, and a number of areas across the country. We're looking at what we can do to prevent the harmful effects of algae and other substances by trying to limit the amount of phosphorous that goes into the water, and we have a number of programs we've set up to do science, research, and action on those fronts. We work together with DFO in a number of circumstances.

Before I turn to Carol on the specific transfer to Fisheries, I'd just mention that our work with the U.S. on the Great Lakes is quite an important part of our activities as well, and we did agree to a renewal of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 2012. That provides a very important part to our work, together with the U.S., in an area that obviously has very sensitive environmental impacts and a large population living around it. That's an area where we focus a fair amount of attention, and we were very happy to have that agreement renewed.

That agreement identifies specific areas of concern, which you've raised. I would note one that's very topical at the moment, which we've just got agreement to move forward on, and that's Randle Reef in Hamilton Harbour. It has been identified as one of the areas of concern, and we are now moving forward with the agreement of the Government of Ontario, the municipality, and the Hamilton Port Authority on a very major remediation effort there. That's going to last a number of years, but we will finally be able to take care of the contaminants that are located there. That, again, is a very important part of what we're doing in the Great Lakes, in addition to the other areas across the country.

Carol, if you want to add anything on the specific transfer, go ahead.

• (1210)

Ms. Carol Najm (Assistant Deputy Minister, Finance Branch, Department of the Environment): In response to the request from Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, as part of supplementary estimates (B), will transfer close to \$900,000 to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans specifically for work in the Hamilton Harbour and the Bay of Quinte. It's going to be conducting habitat research and assessment of fish populations in support of remediation in that area of concern.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you very much.

The other area I wanted to ask about arises in part from the minister's comment regarding oil spill concerns. There is a vote in

these estimates of around \$2.387 million to strengthen prevention, preparedness, and response to oil spills from ships, \$2.327 million of which is for operating expenditures. I'm very glad the Government of Canada is strengthening those procedures because it's essential to social licence that we look after those risks. I wondered if one of you might comment for me on some particulars regarding that appropriation.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes. Again, I'll start by talking a little bit about our work in the area of oil spills, and Carol can comment and add any details on the specific amounts in supplementary (B)s.

This is an area where we're doing a fair amount of work at the moment. From the Environment Canada angle, it comes in two forms. When there is an oil spill, often we're not the lead department in that exercise. It could be Transport or another department that would be leading. We are very important in a couple of regards, one of which is that we provide a coordination effort in terms of the response to an emergency, whatever it might be, such as an environmental emergency. We are putting a lot of effort into making sure we are doing that effectively. We've got some greater efficiencies in that area now, and we're able to better manage when something happens, making sure everybody knows what's going on.

I would also add that we contribute with our weather services in terms of the need to track wind patterns or anything that would help determine what the impacts of the spill would be and what the next steps would be. We provide efforts on that front.

The other area, in terms of oil spills, is that we are doing some scientific research on how diluted bitumen behaves, for example, in water. Does it behave the same as other types of oil? Are there things we can see that would help us know about the behaviour? This is if there were to be a spill. We do everything we can to prevent there ever being one. So we contribute on that science side of things to the debate to try to bring that scientific information to the front.

Those are a couple of the areas where we contribute to the oil spills regime. I think Environment Canada plays a pretty significant role.

Carol, if you want to talk a little bit about subsidies—

The Chair: We'll have to leave the specifics for another time. We're well over on Mr. Woodworth's time.

We'll move to Madame Freeman and Mr. Aubin.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to our officials for being here today.

I'm going to jump right in, because I have a bunch of questions, and if I have time left over, I'm going to pass it on to my colleagues.

In the changes that were brought in through the last couple of omnibus budget bills, there were two that resulted in big changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and as a result to its budget. The repeal of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and gutting of the Navigable Waters Protection Act mean that only a handful of the projects that would have been assessed under the 1995 CEAA are now being assessed. My information is that just under 1% are being assessed. So with only a handful of rivers and lakes protected under navigable waters, hundreds of thousands of lakes, a thousand in my riding actually, could have pipelines, or bridges, or other works built, without triggering any kind of environmental assessment that would have been triggered before.

The new CEAA 2012 regulations were announced a couple of weeks ago, and there are holes, in my opinion, in the list of projects that now require an environmental assessment—pipelines, offshore drilling, just as examples. How exactly was this list arrived at? What is the process for amending it? And how did you decide that it was no longer worthwhile examining projects that cross navigable waters, for example?

• (1215)

The Chair: Mr. Hallman, do you want to respond to that, or Mr. Hamilton?

Mr. Hallman.

Mr. Ron Hallman (President, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): Thank you. I'll start, Chair, and others may jump in after.

What I can tell you is that changes to the project list regulations were made to ensure that they cover those projects with the greatest potential for significant adverse environmental effects in areas of federal jurisdiction, which focuses resources on where they most need to be. A number of additions and deletions were made to the previous project list, based on whether they have potential for significant adverse environmental effects in areas of federal jurisdiction or not.

For example, project classes such as offshore exploratory wells and diamond mines were not previously on the list. They were added as it was determined that they do have a higher potential for adverse effects. Projects like in situ oil drilling are not included because they don't have significant effects in areas of federal jurisdiction. And just for clarification, in situ was never on the list. It wasn't removed; it just wasn't added.

For those types that were removed from the list, they were found to not have typically had high potential for significant effects in areas of federal jurisdiction, so they were removed. The process for that was that the government consulted various stakeholders, aboriginal groups, the public. There was a draft that was gazetted. Based on that feedback, the government made decisions about what would be on the regulations, and those are the ones we saw.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: To be fair, there is a pretty major limiting of the scope, and there's been a reduction in the number of factors that are taken into account.

But to get beyond that, how much money is the government saving the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's budget by really limiting the scope?

Mr. Ron Hallman: I think a more accurate way of framing that would be that we are putting the resources we do have to those areas that have the highest potential for adverse effect. So rather than dealing with some that may have been more inconsequential, and that were subject to a federal EA simply because, for example, the federal government may have been putting in money even if there were not significant effects, those have been removed so that the bigger, more major projects that are expected to potentially have significant effects can be focused on with the resources we have.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Unfortunately, we don't know exactly yet, but that does leave a fair number of gaps that are leaving a lot of things completely uncovered, and not covered by provincial jurisdiction either, so it's not a question of duplication.

But to move on further into that, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency had 12.8% of its available funds allowed to lapse; that's \$4.1 million. For me, that's not surprising. I assume that's because there are cuts and not so many triggers left. Can you explain that substantial amount of money left over? I'd also like to know if it's going to be carried forward to this year's budget, and how the agency actually overestimated its budget to such a huge percentage.

Mr. Ron Hallman: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I can first of all acknowledge the question in terms of the lapsing. There were really two portions to the lapse identified by the member, the \$4.1 million lapse. Part of it was through grants and contributions, the dollars that were lapsed, and the other part was the O and M that was lapsed.

The reason, really, for the grants and contributions is twofold. First of all, the agency manages those contribution dollars based on take-up and need, and based on the timing and phasing of the projects. When we are forecasting projects that we believe are coming forward, we map out the potential timeframe for a proponent to bring forward a project description, an EIS statement, and the actual conduct of the EA. We map out certain timeframes. Often the proponent will take longer—or shorter—than what we anticipated to get the project description done. They will take longer to do the environmental impact statement than we might have contemplated.

During those times the clock is stopped, but there also is no work for aboriginal or other groups to comment on or participate in, and we don't flow that money when it's not needed. Those commitments, however, are retained going forward.

We have more than \$6 million, for example, already booked for contribution—

• (1220)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Sorry, but I'm going to stop you right there and put forward a couple of questions—

The Chair: Maybe in the next round you can, because your time is up. We're at seven minutes.

We'll move to Mr. Lunney, please.

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

I want to pick up on the marine environment and marine conservation areas, being as I come from a coastal area. I noticed these sums:

\$1,234,506 to support conservation in marine based ecosystems, \$340,000 of which is through grants and contributions, while \$894,506 is for operating expenditures;

I wanted to ask about how the funds in this marine-based ecosystem are based. Is a lot of this money going into ongoing development plans for marine conservation areas—I know we have an interest in going in that direction—or is some in managing some of our marine conservation areas?

As well, on the grants and contributions, could you describe maybe who are some of the partners you're working with in that realm?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Perhaps I'll turn that over to Carol. I'm not sure if we have all of the information that you want at our disposal, but we can certainly get it.

Carol, did you want to tackle that?

Ms. Carol Najm: I can briefly give some highlights.

Responsible marine management is really about all of the work that's done on consultations, designation, and the management of proposed work. Their 2013-14 funding will enable the completion of a management action plan, regulatory impact assessments to support the designation process, and the publication of proposed regulatory amendments.

For example, the establishment of Scott Islands will enable Canada to contribute to the global target by protecting 10% of the marine and coastal environment by 2020.

Those are some of the high-level examples. We can provide you with more details.

Mr. James Lunney: Okay, well, there's a lot of interest out our way in the Georgia Strait initiative around the Gulf Islands. It's a very ambitious plan considering it's a rather developed area with lots of human activity in the area, including industrial traffic through the area.

Mr. Latourelle, I don't know whether that falls into your area. Where are you at with consultations in that particular development? Can you comment on that?

Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada): Yes, I can, Mr. Chair.

We're continuing the feasibility study. As the member is probably aware, the federal and provincial governments have identified the proposed boundary that we're consulting on. We're now carrying out

consultations with municipalities but also with aboriginal communities.

Our objective over the next year is to complete that consultation process and be in a position to offer advice to the government.

Mr. James Lunney: Thank you.

Does that include some of the industrial users in the area, such as the commercial fishing in there, and...?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes. The broad range of users in the national marine conservation area are all consulted, for example, and would be part of the report we would table in Parliament if there was establishment of the marine conservation area.

Mr. James Lunney: Thanks very much.

Now, I want to go on to another issue, which was actually where my colleague, Mr. Woodworth, was headed, and you didn't get a chance to reply. That is on the \$2.387 million toward strengthening prevention, preparedness and response to oil spills from ships. As we jump into that, part of your response before you ran out of time was that you are looking at doing some research on the behaviour of bitumen and water, especially salt water, how it behaves and so on. I just want to throw something out for consideration if it isn't on your radar.

I remember that when the terrible incident happened down in the gulf, there were farmers saying why didn't they just distribute straw on the surface of the water, that it was great for trapping and holding oil on the surface. I don't know if anybody followed up on that, so I'll throw it out there for consideration.

But I would like you to perhaps follow up on where we were headed with Mr. Woodworth's question. There's a lot of anxiety on the coast about the oil spill situation, even though we have double-hulled tankers now and there hasn't been a major spill since that's been engaged—anywhere in the world, actually. The risk is small, but the anxiety is high. So I think in terms of addressing social licence, we have to do more to make sure that contingency plans are in place to deal with the worst-case scenario. Could you explain to us exactly where we're at on that file?

• (1225)

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes.

The last time we ran out of time because I went on a long time and Carol didn't get to provide the details. So I'll keep it very short.

Suffice to say that, yes, there's a lot of interest and work being done on the issue of oil spills, and there are two tracks. One is to make sure we do everything we can to prevent them—collectively. It isn't just Environment Canada; it's across governments—federal, provincial. Are we doing everything we can to prevent them? And then, are we also making the necessary plans so that in the event something happens, we minimize the environmental impact from it?

For our part in Environment Canada, the point you raised, the research we're doing—which isn't completed yet, but we hope to be completing it soon—is looking at bitumen. We have a lot of information about how conventional oil might behave if it were spilled. We're trying to get the information up to that level for bitumen, which may or may not react differently. We want to understand the properties and what would happen, and then be best placed to deal with a spill if it ever did happen. So that research will be our contribution into that effort, which as you say, goes from the types of ships that are there to a whole bunch of other areas that are really being led by others.

Carol, is there anything further that you wanted to add on the specifics of those dollars that you didn't get a chance to?

Ms. Carol Najm: Not at this time, no.

Mr. James Lunney: Okay, thank you for that.

The Chair: You have 50 seconds.

Mr. James Lunney: Well, I hope someone will take into consideration the suggestion from the farmers. You never know.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Sorry, I didn't address that. I do recall that.

Mr. James Lunney: We do have lots of straw being produced in Canada. It could perhaps be stored nearby.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: I do recall that coming up in the gulf. I don't know of anybody who's picked up that ball and run with it. But let us go back. There will be a number of areas where we have to follow up, respond, and I'll see if anything's been done on that front.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much.

We're going to move now to Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I'll look forward to next year's allocation in your budget for straw.

I want to go back to a question raised by a colleague to Mr. Hallman, with respect to in situ. As I understand it, the federal government has withdrawn from any in situ environmental reviews, but in situ is three times more intensive on GHGs than is open-pit mining. So I don't quite understand the reasoning of the government, which says that we're going to leave it to a provincial regulatory authority rather than a federal regulatory authority. Air crosses provincial and international boundaries, and since when does the federal government no longer have authority with respect to in situ emissions from that kind of mining operation?

Mr. Ron Hallman: I think, Mr. Chair, the point with respect to the project list is that it focuses on those major projects that have the greatest potential for significant adverse environmental effects related to the project. That's not to say that the federal government writ large doesn't have an interest in and responsibility for GHGs, but it's not handled on a project-specific basis through the EA process. There's other work that Environment Canada conducts.

Hon. John McKay: Virtually all of the projects, with the exception of the last announcement with Suncor, are in situ, and the effect of what you are saying is that we're just going to walk away from this and leave it to Alberta. Is that it?

Mr. Ron Hallman: I would not characterize it that way.

Hon. John McKay: You do have legal authority, though. If you wish to use your authority, you have it. I think we can establish that. Is that agreed?

The Chair: Mr. Hallman.

Mr. Ron Hallman: The minister has authority under the act.

Hon. John McKay: She has the ability. So what's the thinking behind the choice not to exercise it?

• (1230)

Mr. Brian Storseth: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth: As you'll find in O'Brien and Bosc, we cannot ask officials to predict what the minister is thinking or ask them for their advice on policy in regard to the minister's decisions. I think Mr. McKay is well over that line.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Storseth.

Proceed on technical questions, not on policy and politics.

Hon. John McKay: The authority is there. The choice has been made by the government to withdraw its authority in in situ mines. Do I have my facts right?

Mr. Ron Hallman: What I can say is that in situ was not on the project list before and it continues not to be.

Hon. John McKay: And will never be, in spite of the fact that this will be the greatest growth area of Alberta crude in the foreseeable future.

The Chair: Again, Mr. McKay, you've asked the question and the question was answered. It never was there; it's not on now.

Hon. John McKay: The second question has to do with the partial response I got to my first question in the previous round. It has to do with the \$67 million that's lapsed. Out of the \$125 million that's lapsed, the \$67 million that's lapsed is gone money. Is that correct?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes. I'll just walk you through it quickly. Of the \$125 million that lapsed, \$68 million was grants and contributions. Of that, \$62.5 million was allocated to Sustainable Development Technology Canada to fund work they were doing that they couldn't use. So that money is gone.

Hon. John McKay: Why couldn't they use it?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: I'd have to go back and check exactly why. They didn't have enough projects ready to fund. They fund projects on commercialization of technologies, and there just weren't projects of sufficient quality for them to invest in. They couldn't use the money in that year, so it lapsed.

Hon. John McKay: Are these all technology projects?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: Are they technology projects in a particular environmental area?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: I believe it was in the biofuels area. I'll have to go back and check. We can get you that information.

Hon. John McKay: I would be interested, and I'm sure the committee would be as well.

The other moneys are rolled over. Am I correct on that?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: In this case, yes. Where we don't spend money in a particular year—the balance of that \$43.4 million—we have up to a limit an ability to carry those funds into the next year. In this case, we are able to carry these funds forward to the next year. If the number gets big enough, we can't carry it forward at all. Money that wasn't spent in that year we can spend in the next year. Some things may not be able to get done in this year, but we can defer that task until the next year.

Hon. John McKay: In your research on diluted bitumen, the big issue is that diluted bitumen hits water and goes directly to the bottom. How are you going to handle that? Where is that research going? This is a very significant issue, certainly in my area. A great many watercourses cross between Sarnia and Montreal, and this affects the largest population base in Canada. I'd like to know the state of the research in diluted bitumen, because that's how it's going to flow from Sarnia to Montreal. Where are we on that?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Let me come to the diluted bitumen in a second. You raised a number of other specific lapses from the public accounts. I don't have a copy in front of me, but we will get you a written response on all of those.

Hon. John McKay: I was expecting you would.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: I just wanted to say that we haven't forgotten about them and that we'll get them to you.

Hon. John McKay: I know you're an honourable man, Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Thank you very much.

On the diluted bitumen, I can't give you the results of the research. They're not ready yet, but we hope they will be out soon. We've been working pretty hard on this, and we've also been testing our research in a peer review manner. We are looking at the question. The answer is not as simple as you just characterized it—when the diluted bitumen hits water it sinks. That's the question we're trying to answer: what happens to it when it hits water? It can depend on a variety of factors, as you can imagine.

Hon. John McKay: There are a lot of “soons” and “when we're ready”, yet we have an NEB pipeline decision, line 9, coming up very quickly. One of the major issues is the flow of diluted bitumen across watercourses. Does “soon” mean this month, next month, or next year?

• (1235)

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes, soon—I mean, we can get into trouble when we put specific deadlines out and they're not met.

Hon. John McKay: I wouldn't do that to you.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Suffice it to say, we're trying to make sure that this analysis is out there in time to prepare us for decisions that will have to be taken.

I would say.... I'm not going to put a date on it. But soon. We're into the final stages of that analysis.

The Chair: Thank you Mr. McKay.

We'll move now to Monsieur Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us this morning. I will use the few minutes I have to learn from your expertise, since I am relatively new on this committee. The questions I would like to ask you are mostly about parks. So I would imagine that Mr. Latourelle is the person to answer them first. If the rest of you also feel the need to clarify something, please go ahead.

I have read a quotation from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society to the effect that, for every dollar invested in national parks, \$5 is generated. Do you agree with that statement? In your view, is it accurate, slightly different or not accurate at all?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, Parks Canada, together with the provincial parks, did a study on the economic benefits that parks generate across the country. The results show that the economic benefits really are that high.

Mr. Robert Aubin: That obscures my understanding of the government's strategy even more.

I'm fortunate enough to live in a riding that is home to a national park, Forges-du-Saint-Maurice, which you are, no doubt, familiar with, and the next riding over is home to La Mauricie National Park. But for a number of years, no resources were invested in La Mauricie National Park to help it reach its full tourism potential and so forth.

It goes without saying that the \$55 million or so in budget cuts didn't help matters. So a strategy was put in place, and I'd like you to explain it to me. Where I'm from, we've seen guided tours disappear, and they really went a long way towards showcasing everything we have to offer visitors and enhancing their experience. The season was shortened and fees went up. Same thing with La Mauricie National Park, where the cost of a cross-country ski season pass will go from \$49 to more than \$100, somewhere around \$110. The fee is more than doubling.

Adding insult to injury, it would seem that decision making around a park's operation depends on its visitor volume. You and I are more or less from the same generation. You probably remember that popular ad for Hygrade hot dogs that said more people ate them because they were fresher and they were fresher because more people ate them. I get the feeling this is the reverse situation. We're in a downward spiral: the less we invest, the less parks can draw visitors, and the fewer they draw, the greater the justification for budget cuts.

There are two possibilities. Either you explain the strategy to me, because I can't wrap my head around it at all. Or you tell me that the aim is to close some of Canada's parks, including Forges-du-Saint-Maurice, to balance the budget.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Latourelle.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Thank you for your question.

I want to make it perfectly clear that none of Parks Canada's parks or historic sites are closing. In fact, Parks Canada's budget changes did not result in a single closure.

Keep in mind that, while we have made budget cuts in the past two years, during that same period, the number of visitors to our national parks has gone up by 2% and the total number of people visiting Canada's national historic sites has gone up by 5%. From our perspective, then, I would say it's not always possible to draw a correlation between budgets and visitor volume.

I'll give you an actual example. The S.S. Klondike National Historic Site in the Yukon experienced an increase in visitor volume of 33% this year. That's also a site where we partnered with the private sector to offer self-guided tours.

There are different situations across Canada, different economic realities and different challenges. At Parks Canada, our goal is to increase visitor volume at all our national parks and historic sites. That's in our business plan. Our target is to increase visitor volume by 10% over 5 years. That's still our goal today.

As far as self-guided tours are concerned, I have to tell you they've been very successful in some areas. Agencies in other countries use the technology as well. The U.S. National Park Service, for instance, uses it at Alcatraz Island, one of its biggest national historic sites.

• (1240)

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Aubin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: I just have a quick question.

We've also seen an increase in rental opportunities at sites such as the Forges-du-Saint-Maurice park, in order to generate new revenue. Could that revenue be tagged for future development or does it go into Parks Canada's consolidated revenue fund?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Thank you for the question. I have two brief comments.

First, we haven't raised user fees in our national parks or historic sites since 2008. And no decision has yet been made.

Second, all the revenue generated by a national historic site or national park stays in the local budget for reinvestment in the unit's activities. No money goes back to the federal government collectively or Parks Canada centrally.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you kindly.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Aubin.

We'll go now to Mr. Storseth for five minutes.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Before I get started, I would like to invite Mr. McKay to my riding so he can see the difference between in situ oil sands and mining oil sands. There is a significant difference.

Hon. John McKay: I was there three weeks ago.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Well, then, you should know that it's not a mine, which is what you already called it. Also, there's the difference between bitumen and crude.

Hon. John McKay: I understand that too.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Now, for the witnesses, could I ask you for the definition of what a low-risk project would have been in the environmental assessments? Just give me an example of what we would have considered a low-risk project.

Mr. Ron Hallman: Often, the significance will also relate to impacts on aboriginal communities, and that is determined through discussions with the aboriginal communities and the proponent in terms of what the expected effect will be.

I'm not an EA science practitioner, so I won't get myself into scientific details. I could ask for a follow-up, if you like. In terms of significance, it's normally about the scope and scale. For example, a mine can remove the top layer of earth of hundreds of square kilometres or square miles, compared to in situ, where the impacted area is relatively smaller.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Under the former environmental assessment regime, for example, would the painting of a park bench in a national park have required an environmental assessment?

Mr. Ron Hallman: I'm sorry. I'm having trouble hearing you.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I will answer that.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Please.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, in terms of doing maintenance work on our assets, it wouldn't have been. For example, special events or minor events in national historic sites of gathering would have historical.... But doing the minor work, like painting a bench, would not have been a—

Mr. Brian Storseth: What percentage of the 100% of environmental assessments we were doing would have been minor events?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: In the case of Parks Canada specifically, they were quite significant. Again, because of the nature of our operation and the nature of the activities that we carry out, currently what we're doing is really focusing on the big projects that could have major impacts.

In fact, in his report, the Commissioner of the Environment reviewed specifically our implementation of the changes and confirmed that we are carrying them out diligently.

Mr. Brian Storseth: In regard to Parks Canada, when it came to doing environmental assessments for even these minor events, you would have taken it very seriously, as it was a part of your protocol. Would that have represented a fairly significant cost in the overall costs that you had with environmental assessments?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, we took it seriously because it was the law, so I want that to be clear. In terms of our investments, what we're doing now is focusing our investments on where there could potentially be the biggest impact from an ecological perspective. We have not produced in huge numbers, for example, the overall investments...what we're doing is putting that investment where it has the best return.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Absolutely. Thank you very much for that.

I'd like to talk to you a little about the social licence. We often talk about the social licence. Part of the social licence is making sure we have some of the best world-class monitoring and research done. When it comes to my area, which would be the oil sands area, that includes water and water quality measurements. Could you talk a little about the dollar figures that have been spent on research in water monitoring in Alberta?

• (1245)

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes, I can speak to that.

As you've noted, we have a fairly significant project with the Government of Alberta to enhance monitoring in the oil sands area, which includes monitoring of water, air, land, and biodiversity. That's been agreed to relatively recently, and we are now starting to put in place a credible scientific plan.

We were always monitoring. Now we're increasing that in recognition of the fact that there is interest in the impacts of oil sands activity on the surrounding environment. We take that very seriously. We work very closely with Alberta, as the minister said. It's often important for us to work hand in hand with the provincial government.

The idea is a good thing for governments, industry, and citizens for a few reasons.

One, we'll have a better sense of what the impacts are. If there are impacts in the water, aquatic species, on the land, in the air, we'll know better because of this enhanced activity.

Two, it's also good for the industry itself because it shows we are paying attention. To the extent people outside Canada, or even within Canada, have concerns about the oil sands, we are making efforts to understand those impacts. If we see the impacts, we'll know better what to do.

Three, it's in our "open science" commitment. All of the information and the monitoring we do is available on the portal that we have established, and that is accessible to everyone. Again, it's putting that information out there that people, researchers, can use and can do their own subresearch projects on.

Mr. Brian Storseth: That's excellent.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: In terms of the amount of money, the industry has committed to fund this additional monitoring activity up to \$50 million per year, and that would be between us and Alberta.

Mr. Brian Storseth: That's excellent.

Could I get in one last quick question?

The Chair: You can, Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth: The chairman is just brutal when it comes to time.

The Chair: Nice try.

Monsieur Choquette.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you all for being here today to answer our questions.

I'd just like to clarify something regarding the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and a comment Mr. Storseth made. He was concerned about the painting of a bark bench. Keep in mind that, under the current list, in situ oil sands are no longer assessed, nor will they be. Let's not forget there are some pretty serious concerns, after all. We know that in situ oil sands development is growing.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth: I hope this doesn't take up Mr. Choquette's time.

The Chair: No. We'll stop the clock.

Mr. Brian Storseth: I just want to clarify that they were never part of it; it's not that they were taken out.

Sorry, Mr. Choquette.

The Chair: Proceed, Mr. Choquette. Your clock is starting again now.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Storseth.

Actually, the oil sands were never on the list because you were the ones who drew up the list. Prior to that, it worked on a trigger basis. So the oil sands could have triggered an assessment. Be that as it may, that's another matter.

Sir, there is something I'd like to know.

[English]

How many full-time employees have been cut or were later reassigned from each of your respective departments in each of the last three years?

[Translation]

I know you don't have time to answer that this very second, but could you send that information to the committee?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: What information did you ask for?

[English]

Mr. François Choquette: If you can, how many full-time employees have been cut or were later reassigned from each of your respective departments? Can you provide us with that?

[Translation]

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes, of course, we'll provide you with that information. I think we've already provided some details on that, but we'll provide more.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Do you want the others to respond, all three of them, or do you want to just—

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Actually, my question was for all the agencies. If each of them could provide that information, I would very much appreciate it.

Mr. Latourelle, of Parks Canada, you're aware I'm troubled by the 33% reduction in science-related positions. Now I'm learning that, in supplementary estimates (B), you are requesting emergency funds to repair highways and bridges in national parks.

Can you shed some light on those urgent needs? Why weren't those costs already planned for? How is it that urgent repairs are necessary all of a sudden?

After giving the committee some general information on that, would you mind providing us with details on the specific needs of each park? That way, we will be able to see whether a park like the one near my colleague Robert Aubin's riding is experiencing those problems.

• (1250)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, the supplementary estimates reflect the decision made by the Canadian government, in Budget 2013, to invest \$18.9 million more in highways and bridges in national parks. In our case, that involves a number of spots along the Trans-Canada Highway, for example. We have investments in Terra Nova National Park of Canada, in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in parks in the Rockies. We are responsible for sections of the highway located in national parks.

I can provide a full list of the investments. They all flow from the Budget 2013 decision and are being presented to you today for your consideration.

Mr. François Choquette: I'd like to revisit the 33% reduction in scientific positions at Parks Canada.

As you know, you accepted a number of the recommendations made by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. But you did not want to accept that there may have been a lack of resources that would explain the delay in following through on many of the reports and strategic plans you are responsible for. Why do you refuse to evaluate your resources?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, I have to tell you that's an area where we very much disagree with the commissioner, and I want to make that perfectly clear. Parks Canada's resource conservation team has nearly 600 members. They are incredible men and women who work on fulfilling our conservation objectives every single day. I see the tremendous amount of work they do around the country. We're working on our organization's largest ecological restoration project in a hundred years.

I'm very comfortable with the decisions we've made that affect our organization and our investments. Those investments are actually going a long way, from a conservation standpoint.

Unfortunately, in my view, the commissioner's report focused too much on the 15% of our activities where we still need improvement and not enough on the 85% of our endeavours that make us world leaders, whether it's developing a science program or reporting on ecological health. We are the only organization in the world that reports on its entire system.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move to a final question from Mr. Sopuck, for five minutes, and then we need about three minutes with the committee to deal with the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you very much.

Does Environment Canada conduct environmental monitoring across Canada?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: What parameters do you measure?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: Well, for example, we measure water quality across the country, and we measure air quality, the emissions in a variety of constructs, looking for what particles might be in the atmosphere. We also monitor the numbers of species, numbers of caribou, whatever it might be.

We monitor all facets of water, air, and biodiversity. In a number of circumstances, we do it in conjunction with the provinces, and there might even be funding going back and forth, but yes, we're pretty much in all areas of monitoring. There are some areas of special concern. Oil sands was an area we talked about earlier, and the Great Lakes, other lakes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Given that you do extensive environmental monitoring, generating environmental indicators across a wide variety of areas, what have been the trends in Canada's environmental indicators, let's say, over the last decade?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: We produced an environmental indicators publication, which I'd be happy to go back to. I think we're seeing improvements, if I could put it, overall. You need to go into particular details. Some things improve. Some things don't. We could provide the committee with a summary of some examples within that indicator study, although it is available publicly. Also, in our plans and priorities within Environment Canada, we set certain goals for ourselves in what improvements we'd like to see in different areas—water quality, air quality.

I'd be happy to provide more information to the committee. I don't have the document in front of me.

• (1255)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sure, but you're saying that most environmental indicators in Canada are showing an improvement over the last decade. Is that a fair characterization of what you've said?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: I don't know if I'd put the word "most" in without having the document in front of me, but in a number of key areas we are seeing improvement. What I would say is that we're doing a better job of monitoring. There may be some cases where we're seeing negative things happening, but it's because we're actually doing a better job of monitoring. On the whole, though, we are seeing some improvements from the things we're doing on air quality, the management system, and the initiatives we're taking.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Of course, part of the improvement is due to the ever-improving environmental remediation technology and environmental mitigation technology that the private sector employs.

I guess the conclusion is that in spite of the changes our government has made to environmental assessment processes—removing duplication, changes to the Fisheries Act, changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and even changes to budgets—there simply has been no effect on the environment itself.

Mr. Bob Hamilton: I guess to be a bit more precise, one of the things we see, for example, in water quality monitoring...we know we're having an impact with some of the programs we're doing, but all the time we're moving along, activity is taking place. We're always trying to measure against what would happen if we were to do nothing. We would see activity increasing, and there might be more nutrients going into the water. Our actions can reduce that, and we're seeing that effect.

I would still caution against an overly simple view of the world that said it's not having an impact. We know things are going on out there, and we are trying to do a better job of monitoring. We're seeing some areas of improvement, but we are also seeing some areas where activity is increasing, and we know we need to put further efforts.... For example, in the area of algae, we know....

So despite some of the things we're doing, we would like to see more improvement.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I would never say for a minute that we don't have any environmental issues in this country. We certainly do—there is the issue of wetland loss, grassland birds, and so on.

The point is, though—and I stand by it, and I think you're getting there as well—these process changes that our government has made, this reduction of duplication in environmental process and changes

to budgets, have simply had no effect on Canada's environmental trends, and for many indicators our trends are actually improving.

The point about government budgets as well...there's an inordinate focus on budgets. For example, when you do a piece of work and you make, let's say, an industry's performance better because of the research you do, they are spending the money on the environment. They are actually doing a much better job because of the dollars you spent, even though the dollars you spent may have been reduced. There has been a change out there that has resulted in improving the environmental quality.

Hon. John McKay: A point of order, Chair.

The Chair: A point of order.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Sopuck's question is a conclusion that should be properly responded to by a minister.

The Chair: Those are comments. That's not a point of order.

We're going to proceed now to the votes on the supplementary estimates. We have....

Hon. John McKay: A second point of order.

The Chair: I hope it is one.

Hon. John McKay: All of us can be enlightened, Chair.

In response to questions to Mr. Hamilton about the lapsing of \$125 million, he elucidated, quite helpfully, I thought, with respect to the \$67 million, that some of it's lost, some of it's not, and similarly others will go over to next year's budget. If that's true—

The Chair: Mr. McKay, that is not a point of order.

Hon. John McKay: Chair, this is a point of order. We're being asked to vote, and I wonder why it's not available for use in subsequent years. That's where it should be disclosed.

So if he has \$43 million available for next year, why is it not there?

Mr. Bob Hamilton: To the question, it's a lapse from last year and available in this year, but maybe I'll....

An hon. member: It's not a point of order.

Hon. John McKay: But it is. It's a point of presentation as to—

The Chair: I'm going to ask Ms. Najm to respond.

Ms. Carol Najm: Just for clarification, at the time the public accounts were published, the carryover to departments was not approved by the Treasury Board, so it's a question of timing.

The approval came subsequent to the issue of the public accounts, and for that reason you don't see them available.

• (1300)

Hon. John McKay: Okay. That's helpful.

The Chair: We're going to move to the supplementary estimates.

We have three on the Department of the Environment, operating, capital, and grants and contributions, and one for the Parks Canada Agency.

ENVIRONMENT

Department

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$10,004,395

Vote 5b—Capital expenditures.....\$50,316

Vote 10b—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions.....\$2,162,339

Parks Canada Agency

Vote 20b—Program expenditures.....\$37,514,062

(Votes 1b, 5b, 10b, and 20b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the supplementary estimates (B) 2013-14 to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you to our officials for being with us today. Thank you to committee members for a good meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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