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**EVIDENCE**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht**



# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Monday, November 3, 2014

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)):** This is meeting number 35 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. We are continuing our study of Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park.

Our witnesses today are, from the Regional Municipality of York, Mr. Ian Buchanan, manager; from the Altona Forest Stewardship Committee, Larry Noonan, chair; and from Rouge Park Alliance, Mr. Alan Wells.

We are going to proceed with seven-minute opening statements, following the order of Mr. Alan Wells, Mr. Buchanan, and then Mr. Noonan.

Following the three opening statements of seven minutes each, we'll proceed to questions from our committee members.

Mr. Wells, go ahead for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Alan Wells (Chair, Rouge Park Alliance):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to your committee today.

Rouge Park is a beautiful river valley, but back in 2008 when I joined the board the alliance had its problems. We carried out a review of all the aspects of responsibilities managed by the alliance. The issues faced by Rouge Park Alliance are best summarized by StrategyCorp, the consulting firm that assisted the board in carrying out this review. They said we needed a consolidated and well-defined land base, a comprehensive master plan, a funded implementation strategy, a functional governance model, and a known park brand.

The study focused mainly on governance and funding. The review team concluded that the alliance needed about \$100 million over the next 10 years for both capital and operating expenditures. This was about 10 times its current level of funding.

The review evaluated eight park models, including a municipal park, a not-for-profit corporation, a branch of the conservation authority, a provincial park, or a national park, against the following criteria: funding, control of lands, authority, and expertise. The recommendation approved by the board of directors included support to create a national park. That report was circulated to each member municipality and the directors of each agency. They all supported the recommendations to transfer responsibilities to Parks Canada. The Province of Ontario, through a letter from the Minister of Natural Resources, also supported that recommendation.

It has now been over two years since the federal government included Rouge national urban park in its policy statements and budget. Over the last two years, Parks Canada has been involved in the transition planning to create Rouge national urban park. We can review how Parks Canada has addressed the major concerns experienced by the Rouge Park Alliance.

First, the federal budget now includes a 10-year plan with total expenditures of \$143 million to manage the park, thus addressing our concerns.

Second, the federal government through Parks Canada has submitted clearly mapped boundaries. The proposed area also includes an expansion of approximately 4,800 additional acres known as the federal airport lands. This brings the total park area to over 14,500 acres.

Third, Parks Canada has shown its experience and expertise to operate Canada's first national urban park by placing a planning team on site, the members of which have been working with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the park's manager, community groups, and stakeholders to produce a draft management plan for consultation.

Parks Canada has recognized the complicated and sensitive issues of agriculture policy and plans. Building on the work done in 2010 by the Rouge Park Alliance, they have added agriculture to the park objectives. Until 2010 agriculture use was reflected only in park maps and never shown along with natural heritage, cultural heritage, and recreation as a key purpose of the park.

Parks Canada has continued to recognize agriculture as an important part of the park. The work has gained the confidence of the farming community both in the park and through regional farm organizations. Parks Canada has proposed plans that reflect the need to improve the trail system in the park. Draft trail plans included in the draft management plan build on the planning work recently done by the Rouge Park Alliance. The number of volunteer hike leaders has increased significantly over the last two years to 50 in total, and there is strong support for recreational users.

Over the last 20 years, cultural heritage through the preservation of historic buildings has been neglected due to a lack of funding and commitment. Parks Canada has the mandate, experience, and resources to address this issue and has included cultural heritage in Bill C-40.

My experience in seeing the work of Parks Canada in Dawson City, North Battleford, Halifax, and Fort William gives me the confidence to know that the protection of the cultural heritage of the park will be addressed.

Parks Canada is regulated by 10 different agencies responsible for such things as protecting against abusers of the park rules, as well as for regulations and firearms offences by illegal hunters and poachers. In the past, there were constant complaints by park users, and funders denied requests for additional staff. Since Parks Canada has been involved, there are now three uniformed park wardens on duty and ready to enforce the provisions of the act once it is passed.

•(1535)

Most importantly, Parks Canada understands how complicated it is to preserve and protect the natural heritage system in Rouge Park. This is a difficult task because the park also accommodates municipal infrastructure, private utilities, hydro lines, provincial highways, and federal railways. There are also private homes and businesses in Rouge Park. Despite these barriers, it is beautiful, meaningful, and a national treasure. It is appreciated by its neighbours and users. A national urban park will be appreciated by millions of potential park users in the GTA.

I am confident that Parks Canada will meet these challenges and carry on with its long history as one of the best park systems in the world. Our first national urban park will develop and maintain a healthy park that will still be “wild in the city”.

In closing, I would like to comment on two sections of Bill C-40. Under clause 6, I would recommend that the act be amended to clearly identify maximizing ecosystem health to the greatest degree possible. Under clause 8, I would like to recommend that the wording be changed to “the minister shall” from “the minister may establish a committee” to advise the minister. This change would ensure the continuation of the long tradition of full community participation in Rouge Park.

I hope that the government finds these to be friendly amendments and gives them consideration.

I thank you for your time today.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Wells.

I know that you had to shorten your comments from an expected 10 minutes to 7 minutes, and you did it very well. Thank you.

We'll move now to Mr. Buchanan, from the Regional Municipality of York.

Mr. Buchanan.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan (Manager, Natural Heritage and Forestry, Environmental Promotion and Protection, Regional Municipality of York):** Mr. Chair and members, thank you for the opportunity to provide a municipal York region perspective on Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge national urban park.

My name is Ian Buchanan. I manage the natural heritage and forestry programs for the Regional Municipality of York in the environmental promotion and protection branch of environmental services.

I would first like to commend the Government of Canada for their vision, strong leadership, and innovation in the commitment to Bill C-40 and advancing the management of a unique park, the first of its kind, Rouge national urban park.

To tell you a bit about myself first, I worked as a professional ecologist in the Rouge watershed and surrounding area for more than 25 years. I worked with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in York and Durham regions as ecologist, supervisor, and provincial lead for fish and wildlife management in the greater Toronto area. I worked restoring the Rouge watershed for decades, and have been involved with the Rouge Park since its inception. With the Regional Municipality of York, I chaired the Rouge Park natural heritage committee for seven years and participated on the Rouge Park Alliance as an alternate. I'm York region's current designate at the Rouge national urban park landholders table.

Having been actively involved with environmental decision-making in this urbanizing landscape, I have well-grounded experience with the challenges and the complex realities, but I am also aware of the significant opportunities for the protection and restoration of our rich natural heritage

York Regional Council is a long-time supporter of Rouge Park, and is very encouraged by Bill C-40 and the steps taken by Parks Canada to advance park management on a collaborative and integrated platform.

Regional council has stated four priorities of paramount concern. The first is growth management, ensuring sustainable growth with livable communities, viable businesses, and economic development opportunities. The second is infrastructure delivery, protecting existing and future infrastructure, providing critical services for communities, and supporting sustainable growth. The third is agriculture: 38% of lands in York region are devoted to farming. Protecting agriculture and the agriculture industry, and providing new opportunities for near urban markets, is a priority. The fourth is sustainable natural environments: 69% of all lands in York region fall under either greenbelt or Oak Ridges Moraine designation. Protecting and restoring habitats and linkages, as reflected in our proactive official plan for natural environment policies and aligned with our greening strategy on-the-ground action, is a priority.

I will now focus specifically on the importance of growth management and infrastructure. The GTA is the fastest-growing region in Ontario, with a projected population of 8.9 million people by 2036. York region, with our nine local municipal partners, is part of a broader economic region where over six million people live, work, and play. York region is called home by 1.1 million people; I'm one of them. In accordance with the province's Places to Grow Act, our population will increase to 1.8 million by 2041. Today almost one third of our residents reside in the city of Markham, on the park's doorstep.

Rouge national urban park is being established within an existing urban area: 68% of the park is in York region. The park represents 16% of the city of Markham. The park stretches from Lake Ontario northwards as a wide band along the eastern margin of the city of Toronto and up into York region, to the southern edge of the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville at the base of the Oak Ridges Moraine. This area is strategically important for wildlife habitat and connectivity, but it is also strategically important for urban areas and supporting above- and below-ground infrastructure. The region has invested billions of dollars in critical infrastructure supporting those communities. This includes transportation corridors and water and waste water infrastructure, among other things. These assets support healthy communities, economic vitality, and environmental sustainability.

• (1540)

We are very pleased that provisions for supporting growth and protecting existing and future infrastructure are clear in Bill C-40 and are captured in the Rouge national urban park concept plan 2012, land transfer memorandums of agreement, and current draft management plan policy framework.

It is encouraging that Bill C-40 presents clear direction in key areas, specifically clauses 4 and 6 dealing with the park's establishment and management; recognizes the unique setting; and reflects a multi-purpose focus, including natural and cultural heritage, farming, and an emphasis on healthy ecosystems, which we feel is the right balance. Parks Canada, municipalities, and partners have demonstrated a commitment to protecting and restoring the natural environment. York Region has recently invested \$6.5 million in the park, creating wetlands, grasslands, forests, and trails connecting people with nature.

Clauses 8 to 11, dealing with the advisory committee and the management plan, support collaborative decision-making. Clauses 12 and 16 allow for clearing of lands and disposition of lands in support of maintenance activities and the installation of future infrastructure.

In closing, Bill C-40 provides clear direction and a strong legislative framework and foundation for the park, including providing more protection than has ever existed in the Rouge's history. It enables environmental protection and restoration, and supports farming while providing for growth management and infrastructure delivery. The legislation is sensitive to the urban context and promotes a collaborative and integrated approach.

The Rouge national urban park is a unique opportunity. People and healthy communities are an integral part of this ecosystem. The overall balancing of interests is part of the success and future of this one-of-a-kind park.

Thank you.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Buchanan.

Now go to Mr. Larry Noonan, Altona Forest Stewardship Committee.

Mr. Noonan.

**Mr. Larry Noonan (Chair, Altona Forest Stewardship Committee):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Larry Noonan, and I am honoured to be here today to talk about Bill C-40.

I am the chair of the Altona Forest Community Stewardship Committee. Altona Forest is a preserve in Pickering that has provincially significant status. Our committee has designed more than six kilometres of interpretation trails in the forest, along with guides and maps. Among other projects, we have restored one wetland and created another wetland, which has resulted in the natural return of five species of amphibians into the forest. Altona Forest is very close to the Rouge and has a connection to the Rouge Park Orchard Trail via a hydro corridor.

I have contributed to the City of Toronto and Pickering environmental initiatives, served on the Rouge national urban park trails committee, and I am presently researching aboriginal connections to the Rouge and interviewing residents of the Rouge watershed. Some of these families have been there for over 150 years. Some arrived in Conestoga covered wagons. The purpose of these interviews is to preserve their stories as part of the cultural heritage and farming tradition of the Rouge watershed and the new national urban park. I am very happy to see that both the cultural heritage and the farming communities of the new park are encouraged and supported by Bill C-40.

My connection to the Rouge started around 40 years ago, while visiting to see fall colours and skiing at Caper Valley. About 30 years ago I started hiking in the Rouge, and over the last several years I have made it a point to hike at least once a week on one of the Rouge trails. I lead adult groups and school classes into the Rouge Valley for enjoyment and studying the environment. The latest group of hikers consisted of 55 students in grade 7, on October 22 of this year.

The previous stewards of the area have done a fine job in preserving much of the environment of the Rouge while restoring sections and assembling watershed land to include in the park. However, the time has come to place an additional level of protection on the Rouge watershed, along with new stewards who have the experience and funding to make a great positive impact on the park. I have been involved in planning processes of parks, trails, and other environmental initiatives, but rarely have I seen such extensive consultations with the public and stakeholders and regular visitors to the Rouge as I have seen done by Parks Canada. The legislation reflects this thorough consultation process.

Some people have questioned why we need a different act for the Rouge. The Canada National Parks Act covers wilderness and near wilderness parks, such as Bruce Peninsula and Banff, which have small settlements inside a large park and little fragmentation and urban infrastructure. The Rouge national urban park's wilderness sections are fragmented by many things, from highways to villages to gas pipelines to the largest former garbage dump in the greater Toronto area. When examined in this way, it is clear that a new act is needed for urban national parks, one which contains sections such as definitions, strategies, and timelines that are appropriate for this unique position as a park inside an urban setting.

Some people have asked why the term ecological integrity is not in the act. The Canada National Parks Act states that "ecological integrity" includes "supporting processes". As a further clarification of part of this definition, Parks Canada defines "ecosystem processes" as "the engines that make ecosystems work; e.g. fire, flooding...".

Ecological integrity cannot be applied to an urban national park. We cannot allow fires and flooding in the Toronto, Markham, and Pickering urban environment. The Rouge national urban park act cannot have this term included, or there would have to be a list of exceptions to the definition which could serve to lessen its impact in the Canada National Parks Act. Instead, Bill C-40 refers to "the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems". The Rouge national urban park and the management plan lay out strategies for attaining the highest possible level of health for the park's ecosystems.

The Province of Ontario has asked that the new legislation meet or exceed existing legislation or other protections. Bill C-40 does this. For example, in the protection and recovery strategies for species at risk, the Rouge Park management plan of 1994 states that "rare species will be monitored. Specific protection or recovery programs to ensure their continued presence in the park may be undertaken as necessary". This is moderate protection at best.

Clause 60 of Bill C-40 amends the Species at Risk Act, subsection 58(2), to include the Rouge National urban park and, by this, gives the plants, animals and ecosystems of the Rouge National urban park the full protection of the Species at Risk Act.

Section 6 of that act states:

The purposes of this Act are to prevent wildlife species from being extirpated or becoming extinct, to provide for the recovery of wildlife species that are extirpated, endangered or threatened...and to manage species of special concern to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened.

• (1550)

Paragraph 7(2)(a) states that the appropriate ministers must provide the preparation and implementation of action plans.

Through the connection with the Species at Risk Act, Bill C-40 requires immediate action to identify species at risk and implementation of recovery strategies, and not just monitoring, or action may be taken. As an example of how this will work in the future, on June 30, 2014 Parks Canada, along with the Toronto Zoo, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and the environmental group called Earth Rangers, took action and reintroduced 10 Blanding's turtles—a provincially and nationally threatened species—into the Rouge.

A common concern about the Rouge Park as it is now is that policing and enforcing of rules is not practical under the existing management. Clause 23 of Bill C-40 provides for policing, and wardens have already been hired and are making themselves familiar with the park. However, they have no authority until Bill C-40 is passed. Then policing will be visible and active in the park every day. This, along with consequences outlined in Bill C-40, makes policing far better than exists now. It is clear that the legislation in Bill C-40 exceeds safeguards developed to protect the park.

Another concern raised in the local newspaper was the place of farming in the Rouge. One quote that particularly upset many farmers was that the interests of a few people are being put above the interest of the public.

Bill C-40 supports the farming community, and so, it appears, does the Ontario government. In reply to an e-mail to Brad Duguid, Ontario's Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, about farming in the Rouge, I received the following reply from his office: "We also want to ensure the Rouge Park acknowledges the important role of agriculture in the development of southern Ontario and that agriculture remains an on-going activity in the park."

For the protection of the Rouge Park, I hope that Bill C-40 is passed sooner rather than later.

Thank you

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Noonan. I cannot resist noting your comment about some arriving in Conestoga covered wagons—which, of course, member from Kitchener—Conestoga would have to mention. So thank you for that.

Thanks also to all of you for being well within your time frame. It's much appreciated.

We'll move now to the government side. Mr. Chisu has the first question.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much to the witnesses for their thorough testimony. I enjoyed hearing it and learned a lot of things.

I live very close to the lower Rouge Park. My family and I have enjoyed the park for the last 25 years, and I was delighted that I was able to participate actively in the historic event of the introduction of Bill C-40 that finally will make the park a national treasure close to the largest city of Canada, giving access to 20% of the Canadian population.

I have one general question for all three of you. Do you think the government's bill, Bill C-40, strikes the right balance for the Rouge Valley?

**The Chair:** We'll start with Mr. Wells, and we'll move down if you all want to respond.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** Thank you.

Does it strike the right balance? I think it does in one respect certainly, that it is balanced. It recognizes the importance of the natural heritage in protecting the park. It also recognizes that farming is an integrated and major part of the activities. It also talks in terms of protecting the heritage and history of the park, along with recognizing the ability to expand visitor appreciation within the park.

Of course, from my own interest too, as the person who formerly had to try to find the funds to operate the park, I will say they have certainly recognized that these are important priorities and have included in the budget significant funds to operate all the major activities.

**The Chair:** Mr. Buchanan.

● (1555)

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Through you, Mr. Chair, I absolutely feel it is the right balance, as mentioned earlier.

I further know it's the right balance from listening to the previous witnesses. Some individuals are striving for a little more agriculture, a little more environment, and some of my engineering fraternity back at work want a little more for the infrastructure side.

It is the right balance. The language in the legislation and the draft "Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan" outline a collaborative framework.

I feel that the Rouge Park previously had an incredible foundation, with hard work and the right approach to saving the landscape. That trajectory is not sustainable moving forward. It needs to be a much more collaborative approach, and that is the backbone of this legislation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Noonan.

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** I would agree with Ian and Alan and say that it is the right balance, particularly where it's located. An urban national park has to be different by nature from a regular national park, and because of that you need the balance of those three aspects.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Thank you very much.

We were all surprised and disappointed, at least on this side of the room, when we learned on September 3, through the media, that the Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, the Honourable Brad Duguid, was recommending to his caucus colleagues that the Liberal Government of Ontario not support the transfer of provincial land into the Rouge national urban park.

Did you have any indication through your discussions with the Government of Ontario that there were problems in securing support for the creation of this park? That question is for all three of you, please.

**The Chair:** I think that a yes or no would probably be adequate.

Mr. Wells.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I was very surprised. Based on my experience, when I was the chair working.... I was appointed by the Minister of Natural Resources, who is now the Mayor of Brampton, and there was great support for the park from that ministry and her colleagues in the the GTA caucus. So I was quite taken aback by that letter.

**The Chair:** Mr. Buchanan.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** As the designate at the Landholders Table, I was completely surprised.

**The Chair:** Mr. Noonan.

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** I was surprised, shocked, and saddened by that recommendation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chisu.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Thank you very much.

To all three of you, do you think that the environmental protection under this bill is stronger than the Province of Ontario's policies?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I'm not sure if it's stronger. I certainly think, from what I understand, that it meets the concerns that were expressed by the province in the memorandum of agreement. And certainly the reputation that Parks Canada has in implementing parks throughout Canada has set a standard second to none in Canada.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** I think we have to be careful in talking about legislation to legislation, and policy to legislation. I look at the package of Bill C-40 and the policy framework and I believe that package is stronger as a whole than anything previously on the table.

In addition, I have 15 years of environmental enforcement background at three different levels of government, and what was sadly lacking among all of the framework of legislation in the past was that there was no one window for environmental protection. There were multiple layers and people didn't know who to turn to about what activities were taking place. The one window is a blessing for the Rouge Park.

**The Chair:** Mr. Noonan.

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** I think it meets or exceeds what's in place right now, particularly in some areas like policing and in many others.

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds, Mr. Chisu.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Do you think that ecological integrity is a concept that is achievable within the Rouge national urban park, without evicting farmers, businesses, and homeowners?

**The Chair:** I think we've already had the answer from Mr. Noonan.

Let's ask Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Wells.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I don't think it's achievable and that is why it's defined as an urban park.

**The Chair:** Mr. Buchanan.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** It's not achievable. The benchmark of looking at ecosystem health is the right framework. Tying that in with some emerging science looking at novel ecosystems that accept that perhaps restoration to a previous state is not possible, what we need to be is practical, forward-thinking, looking for improvement but aiming for the right target.

● (1600)

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chisu, your time is up.

We'll move now to Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

Pardon me if I'm very soft-spoken. My voice is slowly disappearing on me.

My first question is going to be for Mr. Wells and Mr. Buchanan. I'm going to ask both of you the same questions. In your opinion, what do you think is the biggest threat to preserving the ecological health of Rouge National Park?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** The biggest threat to—

**The Chair:** To preserving the ecological health.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I don't know what the biggest threat is. I guess the threat currently is that there is not adequate protection. But I think that threat will be minimized when proper enforcement is in place.

As Mr. Buchanan pointed out, when we brought together all the enforcement agencies we had a table as big as this table of all the various agencies that had a piece of the enforcement. So there were infractions and abuses of the—

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Pardon me, but I'm going to cut you off, because I don't have too much time. Your answer is that the biggest threat to preserving ecological health in Rouge Park is not having adequate enforcement.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** It's not having adequate.... Yes.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Okay, thank you.

Mr. Buchanan.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** The biggest threat would be picking the wrong end point, as was mentioned. Ecosystem health is a "yes", but ecological integrity is unrealistic. The debate would continue. There is also the matter of taking a level playing field and prioritizing one thing over another. The collaborative environment will take care of that, but prioritization of some of those components sets us on a wrong tangent for recovery.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

I'm asking you specific questions because these are questions I've been asking of almost all of our witnesses.

Can the ecological health of Rouge national urban park be restored and protected while the interests of the farmers or the people who are living and working through agriculture on the land be protected?

Mr. Buchanan, I know you mentioned that 38% of the lands in York Region are agricultural, so we want to look out for the farmers' interests as well as conservation. Can both be achieved, and if so, how? Can you answer that in a few seconds?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Restoration is all about what the target is and whether there is room for improvement and a net gain of ecosystem. The answer is that, yes, the Rouge can be taken to a special place. There is absolutely room for improvement but not that built on

ecological integrity. They have to come up with a practical end point and work together to improve that environment.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Okay, that's about the same answer.

Mr. Wells, do you have an answer to that?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I think my answer would be similar, but I do want to point out that the agricultural land also functions in the park, and although it can be improved just like the other areas of the park, in my view it's not a negative to—

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** We've learned from some of the farmers who did come in that they are engaging in environmental practices. I forget what it's called...environmental plan. There you go—it's the environmental farm plan. I had two of the three words. They told us that they are being environmental activists through their agriculture. That's what they're doing in their work.

A 2013 report by Environment Canada called "How Much Habitat is Enough?" mentions what is needed to improve the health of the Great Lakes area as a whole. Are the federal park proposals we're seeing through Bill C-40 consistent with the plans to improve Great Lakes water quality and health as a whole? Do they ensure that the headwaters are protected and important for the entire ecosystem?

Mr. Wells, could you begin?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I'll defer to the scientist on the panel.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Let's hear from the scientist.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** They are aligned with those objectives. Certainly, there are a number of things already in place and in motion, and Bill C-40 reinforces many of those things to achieve the same objectives. I know York Region, for example, has a forest-cover target of 25%. I'm not sure what the current target is for the Rouge watershed itself. "How Much Habitat is Enough?" talks about having about 30% forest cover. We're all in alignment, and that is what's important here: working towards the same objectives.

● (1605)

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** You're exactly right. "How Much Habitat is Enough?" says that we need 30% of watershed and 10% or more for wetland cover. Currently, the Rouge watershed has only 13% forest cover and 1% wetland cover. So does the legislation ensure that we are moving towards that 30% and 10% to ensure long-term sustainability?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Mr. Chair, we're certainly moving towards that. As far as the endgame goes and what the math will be, I'm not sure. I think what's important today, within the context of the park, is to look at what is achievable given the balance of the agriculture, the cultural heritage, and the natural heritage, and to come up with a formula that works. I think that's what the management plan, supported by the legislation, does. So the numbers are important, but the math needs to be redone.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** We'll get there eventually, hopefully, is what you're saying.



**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Yes.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Okay, I've got it.

I have less than one minute.

From speaking with some aboriginal elders in the community and hearing you speak of cultural heritage, we know there is a sacred burial ground and village site within the park. Some of these elders would like to see an aboriginal education centre as part of the Rouge national urban park plan. Do you support that idea and do you think it's a good idea?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I certainly support that idea. I'm encouraged to see that. Certainly in the draft management plan, there's a space for ongoing consultation with the first nations and aboriginal communities.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** I certainly support that idea. Since Parks Canada has been on the landscape for the Rouge Park, there's been a much more serious and aggressive engagement of first nations. It's been really encouraging. I would think this would be a perfect example of a great opportunity.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll move to our next question with Mr. Calandra, please.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses.

I want to go back to something raised by my colleague Mr. Chisu. I'm going to read from Minister Duguid's letter of September 2 to the minister, with respect to the position taken to halt the land transfers. He said: "This is a position that I have arrived at after discussions with stakeholders, local citizen groups, and staff".

When I asked this question of the farmers last week, they told me they had not been contacted about this. They were not part of the input process.

I want to reiterate this for the record. Mr. Wells, as a former chair, were you part of the citizen group that advised the minister on holding back the transfer?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I was not consulted on that process.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** So you were not one of them.

Mr. Buchanan, as a stakeholder, was York Region involved in this consultation process at all?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** One hundred per cent.

Mr. Noonan, I want to confirm that.

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** No.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Wells, it's nice to have you back here. I didn't think I would ever say that. You and I started off on a very difficult footing when it came to the Rouge National Park, when I was elected in 2008—and I think you might agree now—because of the way I viewed how the Rouge had treated farmers in the past. One of those examples, of course, was the Bob Hunter Memorial Park, what I call the "Bob Hunter Park fiasco". Some people might think differently, but that was an instance where about 600 acres of class 1 farmland was taken

away from farmers, if I'm not mistaken. It was before your time, though, right?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I came in just as the plans were starting to be implemented, but I'm certainly aware of the issue.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Farmers were evicted.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** There were farmers. I don't know if "evicted" is the right word. They ceased being able to farm that land. Several of them had their leases terminated.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** How was the reforestation done? Did you pay a contractor to do it?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** The way the Rouge Park Alliance operates.... Bob Hunter Memorial Park was fully restored. There are various forms of restoration. Some meadows were mainly treed by a number of contracts with NGO groups. There were no private for-profit contractors there. There was some restoration by Rouge Park staff, but mainly by agreements with two major NGOs—10,000 Trees for Rouge Valley and Save the Rouge Valley System.

● (1610)

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Thank you.

In 2012, I believe, while we were discussing the Rouge National Park, the province suggested that they wanted to be paid for the land, before they would transfer the land. I think they wanted a hundred million bucks for previous investments, and so on and so forth. There was, of course, no talk of ecological integrity before doing the transfer. They just wanted money for that. Had that ever been the case in previous transfers under previous governments?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** Lands were never transferred from the province to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and to the City of Markham. The issue of compensation was never discussed when we were in discussions with the province, the federal government, and your colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek, who represented the province on the board. I say "your colleague" because you both represent the same boards, with different colours or shades, apparently. But that never came up, nor did it come up in discussions with the Honourable Linda Jeffrey and her staff.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Okay.

Mr. Buchanan, the region sometimes takes a bit of a hit from individuals who suggest it's always willing to take down trees and that there's not enough forest cover. I'm not sure, but perhaps you had a role in my own family farm, in reforesting 60 acres of class 1 farmland on our farm. That process was a lot different. We actually sat down with farmers in-between the two regional forests. There was a long process, and we sat down and worked with the farmers, and we ultimately came to a resolution together that it was in the best interests of the York Regional Forest to reforest these lands.

This is something that York Region does, and they do work with farmers when it makes sense. In your experience, do farmers stand in the way of maintaining a healthy environment, or are they more often than not partners in helping to maintain a healthy environment? They are not just good farmers, but also important in helping to maintain healthy environments.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Through you, Mr. Chair, they are part of the solution. If we don't acknowledge that the farming community is the front line of environmental protection, we're missing the point. We've worked with farmers for many years, as well as many of the conservation organizations like Ontario Nature, Ducks Unlimited, and had some very significant wins, as York Region has had, through our greening strategy. Thanks for mentioning that. We've had some great successes there. We both learn and the environment wins. That is going to be an integral part of Rouge Park moving forward.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Yes.

Mr. Noonan, I was actually quite encouraged by some of the things that you said. A lot of people don't really know the important history in this area with respect to farming, and how important it was not just for the families that came a couple hundred years ago but well before that with our first nations, the Wendat people. I'm wondering if you've had any chance at all to talk with them about their farming operations. There was, of course, that documentary that a lot of us saw, the *The Curse of the Axe*, which outlined the massive amount of farming that was done 400 to 500 years ago. It goes back a long time.

I'm wondering if you had a chance to speak with them, as well as the heritage farm families.

**The Chair:** You may have to wait for that response to weave into another answer, but we're out of time.

Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

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

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all.

Mr. Wells, what is ecological health?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** Ecological health to me means maintaining or restoring the property under discussion to a healthy state that it previously was in. That's it.

• (1615)

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Buchanan, what's ecological health?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Ecological health would be an outcome of a series of processes that result in a series of environmental functions and services, such as clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, wildlife functions, fish habitat. It would be a balanced outcome that would easily be recognized as a functional ecosystem.

**Hon. John McKay:** Is it in the act?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Which act?

**Hon. John McKay:** This one.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Ecosystem health is referenced in—

**Hon. John McKay:** But is it defined?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** No, it is not.

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Wells might have one idea of what ecosystem health is, you might have another idea, and Mr. Noonan might have a third. So if no one really has a consistent definition of what ecosystem health is, how can you know whether you've achieved it?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Through you, Mr. Chair, ecosystem health is a positive direction for the environment. It's based on some of the realities of the landscape, whether it be farming, whether it be the lack of vegetation, whatever the current state is. It demonstrates a net improvement.

**Hon. John McKay:** Prior to this bill being tabled, there was a discussion chaired by the Honourable Peter Kent, then the Minister of Environment. The discussion paper went to great lengths to talk about the protection of ecological health in the Rouge; adopting a conservation-forward approach based on best international practice; maintaining, conserving, and restoring species and habitats within landscapes; having distinct ecological, cultural, scenic and community value; and encouraging and promoting active stewardship, etc.

I'm looking for something in the act that makes reference to that discussion paper. Do either of you see that?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** No, I don't see that clearly. That's why I made my recommendation.

**Hon. John McKay:** For whatever reason, between the discussion of the draft and the bill itself, the concept of ecological health seems to have been dropped for some sort of vague idea that the minister takes things into consideration. I'm not sure how that's going to work, to be honest with you. Some ministers may take things into consideration, and others may not take things into consideration. Is ecosystem health a priority? Is it the priority above all other priorities?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I think it's a major priority, but we talked earlier about a balance in the park. There are other priorities that are important as well. The park has four fundamental pillars: natural heritage, cultural heritage—

**Hon. John McKay:** Yes, I get that, but ecosystem health is only one priority along with a bunch of others.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** It is an important priority, obviously.

**Hon. John McKay:** But it's not “the” priority.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** It's not the predominant priority in an urban park. It is a very important priority.

**Hon. John McKay:** We're kind of caught in that. We don't actually know what ecosystem health is, and then we say, “Well, but it's not really a priority”, or, “Well, it's a priority with other priorities”. So it's a priority with other priorities where we don't actually know what the definition of it is. Are we—

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I think now we're confusing the details of the plan and the act. In the plan, there is a great deal of detail on the definition or the function of ecosystem health.

**Hon. John McKay:** If there is a lot of definition in the plan, why is that therefore not in the legislation? Plans come, plans go; legislation has to be passed by royal assent and it can only be amended.

**Mr. Alan Wells:** You're asking the wrong person. I suggest that it should be there.

**Hon. John McKay:** Well, I agree with you. It should be there.

Mr. Buchanan.

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** I believe that when you read the legislation you see that it sets the framework for the development of the Rouge Park management plan. The Rouge Park management plan is in place for 10 years. It needs to set the right direction and give examples of objectives and specific measurables.

**Hon. John McKay:** But it doesn't define ecosystem health and it doesn't prioritize ecosystem health. Would you agree with that?

• (1620)

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** I would agree with that. It does not define a number of other objectives of the park as well, but it's clear to those who managed the park in the past what the improvements in the ecosystem health are intended to be, similarly with agricultural objectives and the other stated objectives.

**Hon. John McKay:** It's been a policy of both Markham and York to protect that 600-metre connection between the Oak Ridges Moraine and the park, but it's not part of the plan as presented by the minister. Why is that not part of the park?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** I can't say why it's not. I do know that the park is committed to connectivity when it comes to the linkage from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine and the parameters of that—600 metres. I understand the alignment with the Greenbelt Act—

**Hon. John McKay:** I get “committed to connectivity”. What I don't get is that there is no connectivity to make the connectivity, to make the connection. If I'm committed to connectivity, but there's no connection, then how committed am I to connectivity?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** If I can explain, there are many scientific documents that speak to the width of environmental features that provide or support the function of connectivity. The old comprehensive set of policy statements before the Oak Ridges Moraine act and plan talked about the importance of hedgerows, and certainly the farming community, in terms of wildlife connections, understands the importance of those beyond soil protection.

There are widths for ecological corridors that range from 20 metres to 100 metres to 300 or 600 metres. Connectivity can be achieved. That 600 metres is based on science. There are also, depending on the context, other numbers out there.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. McKay.

We will move now to Mr. Harris, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Thank you very much.

I'm going to start on the other suggestion from you, Mr. Wells. Would you mind repeating the other proposed amendment that you made from “may” to “shall”?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I recommended a wording change in clause 8, from “may” to “shall”, so that it reads that the minister “shall” establish a committee to advise the minister. The reason is that there has been a lot of discussion on and commitment to having an advisory committee. In fact there are even charts explaining how the committee would work in the draft plan—who's represented and how it would work.

My experience is long on community development and working with communities, and I think it would be reassuring to the community if the phrase were “shall” instead of “may”. The

expectation is there that it will be there; why not ensure that it's there continuously in the act?

**Mr. Dan Harris:** So you think that would reassure the various stakeholders?

**Mr. Alan Wells:** Yes, I certainly do.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Excellent. I really like the suggestion, and I wouldn't be surprised to see that amendment proposed when the committee moves to that part of the study.

Certainly it was mentioned before, with regard to law enforcement, that there's some reassurance that it will all be under one umbrella. As was mentioned, in a room this big you had all the different enforcement agencies. I think a committee based on the stakeholders to advise and inform the minister would certainly go a long way, and I think it would help to ensure that everyone continues to be a part of the evolution of the urban park.

You're representing the region of York, Mr. Buchanan. Would you support that kind of a change?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Yes, I would. I see it's supported in the management plan draft. That is certainly a positive.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** And you think York would want to certainly be a part of that?

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** Yes.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Excellent.

Mr. Noonan, I'd ask you the same question.

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** Yes, I would support it as well. I think it's a really important thing to have happen.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** I also think, looking at the witness list of everyone who's already been and everyone who will be coming to committee, virtually every single one of those organizations, agencies, individuals, and families would probably want to be a part of that. Of course we'll have to figure out those details later, but I think it's an appropriate kind of change to ensure that we actually improve the bill, because I think there's always room for improvement.

Going back to I guess ecological health, Mr. Buchanan, you were taking about the net improvement. In the context of the Rouge, where you have some areas that have been restored, some areas that are farming, some areas that contain all kinds of different components, I guess the difficulty would be in how you measure a net improvement. On farming, is it improved environmental output so there are less negatives going into the ground and the water? Is it getting more out of that same land without doing damage to it?

Where do you see, on the farming side specifically, how we reach that net improvement? That's where I think ecological damage down the road potentially happens.

●(1625)

**Mr. Ian Buchanan:** I'm no farming expert. On the ecological side, I know that you typically go with a suite of indicators that give you an indication of the move towards a particular end point. When it comes to farming, I'm not sure if it would be productivity, if it would relate to soil conservation, or if it would relate to some of the environmental parameters, but I'm sure they have many ways in which they can measure improvements for their business.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Excellent.

Going back to you, Mr. Wells, you spoke about the on-site team. I do have to agree; I think the on-site Parks Canada team is fantastic and has been doing a great job. I've met with them as well. They are really trying to include as much of the community in the process as possible, even to the point in the last couple of years where they have already had weekend camping trips in the park for neighbourhood kids to get more familiar with it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris, your time is done. We'll have to wait for a response on that.

We have three minutes left until the end of this first hour, and I'll give Ms. Ambler a three-minute time slot.

I'm so generous today.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of you for being here today. We really appreciate your comments and expertise in the area.

I would like to give Mr. Noonan the opportunity to answer Mr. Calandra's question with regard to the history of farming on the land, because we do know that first nations have farmed this land for many hundreds of years. Could you give us an idea of the history of farming in the Rouge?

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** The research I am doing right now has to do with archeology. I've only talked to a couple of aboriginal members, who really weren't up on the actual farming that was done before, so I am finding out most of that from books and other sources.

As far as the aboriginals are concerned, there is a lot to be learned from some of the sites that haven't been totally explored, like Bead Hill. There is a whole area there that I think we should discuss with aboriginal parties. We should see whether this is one of the sites they were referring to before as a place of learning. I would be totally in favour of doing that, and I think a lot of people in the archeological and educational area would. We could also find a lot of evidence there of what type of farming they were doing and how they were doing it.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Do you know if they've been consulted, the historians and the people who have written those books that you were referring to? Are they some of the stakeholders who were consulted in this process?

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** I'm not sure of that, but I do know that in the management plan Bead Hill is mentioned, and there is a possible future for some of the things I mentioned. Personally, I'd like to see it opened up as a site where archeologists can go and other people can visit and learn.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Absolutely. That's a great idea.

I wonder if our other two witnesses can speak to the stakeholder consultations that were done. I know this has been a long process, and that you've been involved for many years. Could you tell us a bit about the consultations?

●(1630)

**Mr. Alan Wells:** I can comment briefly that I am impressed and envious of the consultation that has taken place between Parks Canada and first nations. The first issue is determining whom to consult with, which we always found difficult. I know they've made good progress in having ongoing consultation.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds left.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** I wanted to thank you—I think it was Mr. Noonan—for talking about youth and the grade 7 class. As a member of Parliament from the GTA, I know this is going to be a great park for children and young people, especially those in the urban areas around Toronto, who might not otherwise be able to experience nature in the same way as children who grow up in rural areas.

**Mr. Larry Noonan:** That's one of the things I am particularly interested in, and I have taken many classes down into the Rouge in the past.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Fabulous. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mrs. Ambler. Thank you to each of our witnesses for your testimony today, and thanks to our members for the questions.

We're going to declare a three-minute recess, and then we'll invite our other witnesses to appear at the table.

●(1630)

(Pause)

●(1635)

**The Chair:** I will call the meeting back to order, unless there is a technical issue we have to work out. We need to move ahead. We have very limited time, so please, members, come to your spots.

We're glad to have witnesses for the second hour: Mr. Jay Reesor, from Reesor Farm; Mr. Jim Robb, from Friends of the Rouge Watershed; and, by teleconference from the David Suzuki Foundation, Faisal Moola, director general.

We're going to proceed in that order. That will give us time to sort out any technical issues that may need to be sorted out prior to Faisal being ready.

Mr. Reesor, welcome to our committee. We will have a seven-minute opening statement, and then we'll have questions after all three of our witnesses have finished.

**Mr. Jay Reesor (Reesor Farm, As an Individual):** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about the importance and benefits of the inclusion of sustainable agriculture as an equal partner in the exciting reality that is Rouge national urban park.

The creation of the Rouge national urban park is something very important to me, as my wife and I have lived and worked in the federal portion of the land designated to become park since 1985. In fact, my Reesor family has lived and farmed in the current park area since 1804, when they emigrated from Pennsylvania in search of good farmland and good government and settled in the Rouge area.

It is said that my predecessors, on arrival to the area in their quest for good farmland, looked for stands of black walnut trees, which were a sign of productive agricultural soil. My park farm must indeed be productive soil, as walnut trees grow very quickly anywhere they are planted around my farm.

I've chosen some photographs to show you while I speak today. They were all taken on land that I farm within the boundaries of the park. I hope they give you a glimpse of the existing vibrant agricultural preserve within this urban park.

When I was a child, my family made a weekly trip into Scarborough every Sunday, down Warden Avenue to church, from our farm in Markham, Ontario. The city at that point began at Finch Avenue, about 13 kilometres from our home. Over the years, the beginning line of where rural land ends and developed land begins has gradually crept north, destroying excellent farmland. Currently, that dividing line between urban and rural begins only three kilometres from my childhood home.

Urbanization in the region has progressed at an alarming rate, I will say, and if this rate of loss continues over time, virtually all of Markham's productive farmland will be lost in my lifetime. Who will bother to preserve land to produce food when it can be sold to develop for tens of millions of dollars?

Back in 1972, however, just to the east of where I grew up, the federal government expropriated about 18,000 acres of farmland for a new Toronto international airport. Over the years since then, while private landholders were busy developing land in west Markham, the land in east Markham was inadvertently being held in a virtual farmland trust by the federal government for the eventual creation of a new airport.

Currently, however, it has been recognized that some of the federally expropriated land is now surplus to an airport, giving the Rouge national urban park an incredible opportunity to preserve valuable food-producing land close to the city for generations to come.

Productive food-producing land is a valuable natural resource, just as a Carolinian forest or wetland is a valuable natural resource. The founders of the former Rouge Park had a vision for a property, a park, that protected nature and gave no real protection or encouragement to food-producing land, but they ran into obstacles. Unable to fulfill the dream for various reasons, they came to Parks Canada as the logical next step to help them implement their vision.

I am very pleased that our park system, in their draft management plan, has shown their intention and commitment to sustainable food production in this exciting new type of park. If the federal park system doesn't intentionally protect the natural resource of productive food-producing land, who will?

There are few places in a city where a person can get a view beyond simply down the street. Only open space can provide a vista, and agricultural fields provide an excellent opportunity for a park visitor to see the bigger picture, to have a view, to see beyond the forest and the trees, to see a sunrise or a sunset over an expanse of land, and to actually see the amazing natural and cultural heritage of the park.

Although forested land is beautiful and necessary in a park setting, I don't believe that the value of open agricultural space should be diminished as an important ingredient in a park visitor's appreciation of the outdoors. Agriculture's open spaces can be vital to the park's overall success.

● (1640)

As a farmer, I am asking myself difficult questions within the new Rouge national urban park reality, recognizing that the status quo of food production in a park must change in some circumstances. Will trail development through agricultural land, perhaps through my fields, take place? Will I be asked by the park, for example, to identify the least productive 5% of my leased agricultural land for potential wetland creation or other park purposes? Will I be required to submit a provincial environmental farm plan prior to being granted a lease in the park, or could I be asked to identify an appropriate site on some of my leased park land for a community garden?

To each of these questions, if I were asked, I would heartily say "yes". I am willing and wanting to work with park authorities to enhance a viable, modern, and environmentally sustainable food-producing systems in this urban park.

Since the creation of the park, with one of its stated purposes being to promote a vibrant farming community, realities have and will continue to change for all of us who have an interest in the Rouge lands. For every farmer, leaseholder, and Rouge River advocacy group, and individual, for all of us, it's going to change.

There is a vision of a near urban park equally embracing nature, food production, and our cultural heritage. I would implore each of us to work diligently to overcome stumbling blocks to the creation of this park for the common good. The park is now in the hands of our respected national park service, and I believe our collective job currently is to support them in their work to create a model that can be an example urban park for the rest of the country and the world.

Sincerely, all the best to you and your colleagues as you work together to fulfill the vision of the park.

● (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Reesor.

We'll move now to Mr. Robb, for a seven-minute statement.

Mr. Robb.

**Mr. Jim Robb (General Manager, Friends of the Rouge Watershed):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to address the committee.

Whenever I come to Ottawa and I'm given this opportunity to talk to legislators, I really am impressed with the country I live in, so thank you. It makes me feel really good about the country I live in.

First I would like to say that Friends of the Rouge support farming in the Rouge Park—continued farming, long-term farming. Our question is about where the balance lies. I'd like to just give you a little bit of information about where we are.

In the world context, we're in the greatest extinction that's been known for millions and millions of years. It's one of the three or four big extinctions in hundreds of millions of years. We're losing many species. We have global climate change happening and it's affecting our communities, causing multi-millions, even billions, of dollars in damage in our communities.

Within this area, I'd like to draw you to this particular park. This is a picture of me 30 years ago in the eighties. The Save the Rouge Valley System were really the promoters of this park and the people who helped to protect this land. Going back 30 or 40 years, people such as Lois James and others encouraged the land to stay in agriculture and green space rather than be developed for housing. If it weren't for the efforts of tens of thousands of people, this land would already be developed.

When we worked on this it was very much a community initiative; there were thousands of people, literally, showing up at public meetings. The east end of the GTA love the Rouge; they've worked on it for decades and they will continue to work on it. Their commitment's there. So you can see all three parties supported it.

What happened back then is that the Mulroney government—which was very good on the environment, I must say—actually nudged the Liberal government of David Peterson, which wasn't quite sure about how much they'd leave on the table as undeveloped land. The Mulroney government played a really important job in urging Premier Peterson to do the right thing. It's almost a karma circle now that the province is trying to urge the federal government to do the right thing.

So what do we have? In southern Ontario less than a quarter of one per cent is in national parks. We have 60% in agriculture. We have this slice of land; it's 100 square kilometres plus of public land. It's already in the greenbelt natural heritage system. It was designated greenbelt natural heritage system because it's one of the few natural links between the lake and the moraine. It's in Canada's most endangered eco-zone, Carolinian and mixed wood. One-third of our endangered species are in this eco-zone, and a third of Canada's population. Less than three-quarters of a per cent is in provincial and national parks combined, whereas 60% is in agriculture and 18% is urban.

This map is really important. If you look at this map, you'll see the stripe in the middle, the agricultural area. When the Rouge Park was created in 1995 there was a balancing that occurred, which was that the provincial government said they were creating a 10,500-acre park and creating a 8,300-acre agriculture preserve at the same time. So there was this balance. The park would be mainly natural, but with farmland, and the agriculture preserve would be mainly farmland, with some natural.

What happened to that balance? In the late nineties, when the government of Mike Harris was in, Paul Calandra was, I think, an assistant to cabinet minister Steve Gilchrist, and they decided to sell the land. But they wanted to give it back at an affordable price to

people leasing it, so they gave it back for \$4,000 an acre—no competitive bid, right of first refusal. What was the key clause? The key clause was that you had to sign on that it would stay farmland forever. So the land went to the tenant farmers. Unfortunately, what happened is it was flipped to developers. Groups like Friends of the Rouge and the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition had to work for five years in really nasty fights to try to protect this land. In fact, it got so nasty that some of the farm community formed a community association that actually funnelled money from developers to beat Conservative Janet Ecker in the election. Full-page ads were taken out.

In that context—and Mr. Calandra was there when that happened—it still doesn't make it right to totally rejig that balance.

I can also tell you that Friends of the Rouge delivered hundreds of thousands of flyers over the year, including 10,000 in the middle of the winter, to create a Markham food belt for the rest of Markham to be farmland outside the existing urban area. What happened? The farmers stood shoulder to shoulder with the developers at the meetings, and they said, "We don't want you to create a greenbelt or a food belt; we want to be able to sell the land to the highest bidder." We lost 7:6. Jim Jones cast the deciding vote.

● (1650)

We have always supported farms. We were there at all the OMB hearings. I seldom had farmers with me at the OMB hearings when I was trying to protect farmland and green space. We respect the farm community. I apologize if some things have been blown out of proportion in the media. I'm sure you all know about that. You say nine perfectly reasonable, sensible things and one that's a little edgy, and it's the edgy one....

You can see the greenbelt context. The Rouge was put in the greenbelt in 2005 and you can see this little wedge that goes through the urban sprawl. The dark green is the greenbelt natural heritage system, and you'll see the light green over in Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve. That's more on the country side. That was in recognition that the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve was to be mainly agricultural. That's the provincial greenbelt plan.

Let me read just a few things here that you don't have in front of you, regarding the existing legislation the province is asking you to meet or exceed as well as the ecological integrity. The Rouge Watershed plan already says that its goal is "protecting and enhancing its ecological and cultural integrity within the context of a...natural...system". That was in 2007. If you go to the Greenbelt plan, it says that policies of this plan "collectively support biodiversity and overall ecological integrity". The minister's letter said those things weren't there. If you go to the Oak Ridges Moraine conservation plan, it says, "protecting the ecological and hydrological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine Area". That's the first priority. The minister's letter says it's missing from the legislation. The 1994 Rouge Park management plan in section 10 talks about how "protecting the ecological integrity of the Rouge Watershed is a necessity".

So ecological integrity is already there in spades. Also, you would have heard evidence that this isn't a protected area. It doesn't even meet the international standards unless you give priority to ecological integrity.

How can you do this? You don't have to throw out the farmland. You do it through zoning, so you scientifically define a sustainable natural heritage system, and you apply ecological integrity to that. Then outside that area, you apply something like net gain and watershed health. We can do this. We can make it work. We can sit down with reasonable people.

Unfortunately the advisory committee that was promised to be set up two years ago wasn't, so as the Right Hon. Joe Clark, former Prime Minister, said just two days ago, we need these committees like the environmental round table and the Rouge Park advisory committee because they help people to, instead of being antagonistic, work on win-win solutions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Robb, you're well over your time. Hopefully you'll be able to work some of your further responses into the answers to questions.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** You do have our recommendations also.

**The Chair:** We do. We have all the printed material in front of us.

We'll move now to Mr. Moola, director general for Ontario and northern Canada at the David Suzuki Foundation. We're doing this by teleconference.

Mr. Moola, welcome.

**Dr. Faisal Moola (Director General, Ontario and Northern Canada, David Suzuki Foundation):** Yes, hello. Good afternoon.

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to share with the committee recommendations by the David Suzuki Foundation for Bill C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park.

My name is Faisal Moola. I'm the director general for Ontario and Northern Canada with the David Suzuki Foundation and a professor of forestry at the University of Toronto. I'm terribly sorry that I'm unable to provide my comments to the committee in person, and I'm very appreciative of the opportunity to participate by phone.

Mr. Chair and honourable members, three years ago almost to the day, in 2011, I had the honour of joining the then-environment minister Peter Kent at the historic Miller Lash House near Old Kingston Road in the Rouge at the first stakeholders' meeting held following the government's announcement of its intention to create a national park in the Rouge. In addition to Minister Kent, we were joined by members of the Conservative caucus, such as MPs Michael Chong, Paul Calandra, Corneliu Chisu; elected members of the opposition; local municipal leaders; senior executives of Parks Canada; representatives from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the York Region Federation of Agriculture; and, of course, local advocates who have fought for over 30 years to protect the forests, fields, and farmland that are at the heart of the Rouge national urban park.

We rolled up our proverbial sleeves and sharpened our pencils and by the end of the day we had banged out 10 consensus principles to guide the establishment and management of the Rouge Urban National Park. These principles address a diverse set of issues, ensuring inclusive, progressive governance led by Parks Canada to foster a culture of community engagement and respect and partnership. However, one principle has stood out consistently for the many years of subsequent public consultation and planning that

have followed the inaugural meeting of government leaders and stakeholders originally tasked with drafting a vision for the park. To quote from the guiding principles for Rouge national urban park, drafted by the stakeholders at Parks Canada's visioning workshop, held on November 9, 2011, principle 6 is to "Maintain and improve ecological health and scientific integrity" of the park.

For several years now, Parks Canada has expressed a preference for managing the Rouge national urban park under an ecosystem health framework rather than an ecological integrity framework to distinguish national urban parks from other national parks. Indeed, maximizing ecological health features prominently in both Parks Canada's original discussion paper and the Rouge national urban park concept. To quote:

Past and current stewards of Rouge Park have made great strides in protecting and improving its ecological health. In order to continue to protect the variety of habitats within the park for generations to come, Parks Canada will adopt a conservation approach that fosters the interaction of people and nature while also maintaining and restoring species and habitat diversity.

Past and current stewards of Rouge Park have made great strides in protecting and improving its ecological health. In order to continue to protect the ecological health of the Rouge Park for generations to come, Parks Canada will need to adopt a conservation approach based on international best practice that is focused on maintaining, conserving, and restoring species and habitat, within a landscape context that emphasizes the interaction of humans and nature and that gives Rouge Park its distinct ecological, cultural, scenic, and community values.

Maximizing ecological health was even referenced by the government when it introduced Bill C-40 to the House this past June.

My point in going to these earlier references to ecological health is to argue that since the initiation of the planning process to establish a national park in the Rouge, the government has made considerable progress in advancing ecological health as an overarching management objective for the park. However, in the drafting of Bill C-40, this earlier explicit reference to maximizing ecological health has been dropped. There is no reference to ecological health in the bill, nor to ecological integrity for that matter. Instead, clause 6 of the bill offers a highly discretionary approach for the protection and restoration of nature or the benefits that are provided to humans, such as the provision of clean air, clean water, and healthy food, attributes that we believe are at the heart of sustaining ecological health in the park.

To quote from clause 6 of the bill:

The Minister must, in the management of the Park, take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes and the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems.

The David Suzuki Foundation believes that the government should adopt the earlier approach that Parks Canada had advanced and make maximizing ecological health an overarching priority for managing the park. While there are a number of elements of Bill C-40 that we support, such as the strong prohibitions against resource development in the park, we believe that the bill must be improved with surgical amendments to properly define and prioritize ecological health in the management of the park. By doing so, the government will create a strong legislative and policy framework for the park that protects core ecological values, such as the habitat of endangered species, while allowing for human land use, such as agriculture, to continue within a broader sustainability context.

Indeed, we do not believe that maximizing ecological health and support for agriculture are mutually exclusive objectives in the park. The David Suzuki Foundation supports sustainable farming in the park. Several years ago we published a major study documenting the contribution that farming, if well managed, can make to producing not just market wealth, but non-market economic benefits as well, something commonly referred to as “ecosystem services”. A summary of this study was provided to committee members earlier. We found, for example, that croplands, conservatively, produce an additional \$380 per hectare in non-market benefits, such as agricultural pollination and the sequestration and storage of greenhouse gas emissions by agricultural soils, the point being that these non-market benefits are over and above the market benefits that farming generates.

● (1655)

There are numerous examples from other jurisdictions where sustainable farming and the protection and restoration of nature are happening in a coordinated and complementary fashion, often guided by a strong legislative and policy regime that prioritizes ecological health and its constituent attributes, such as the protection and restoration of ecosystems. For example, in Cuyahoga Valley National Park a number of private farms are in operation under long-term leases despite the fact that the legislative and policy regime governing Cuyahoga Park is subject to the National Park Service Organic Act, which clearly prioritizes the conservation of nature. Eleven working farms were operating in Cuyahoga in 2009. The number of farms in the park is set to expand to 14 by 2015.

Closer to home, Parks Canada is already working closely with local ranchers who are grazing their cattle herds within Grasslands National Park. The fact that this program even exists is a reflection of the willingness on the part of Parks Canada to work with the agricultural community to support farming within a management regime that continues to prioritize nature. The David Suzuki Foundation would like to see the same in the Rouge, as well.

We believe that Bill C-40 captures many of the core values that motivated stakeholders and local communities to come together to advocate for a national park in the Rouge in the first place. We're nearly there. But the David Suzuki Foundation believes that Bill C-40 requires surgical amendments to explicitly define and prioritize ecological health if those values are to be effectively protected and stewarded well into the future.

Thank you very much.

● (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Moola.

I'm going to move now to questions.

I just want to ask our members to please direct their questions specifically to a person. Especially with Mr. Moola being here by phone, it's important to indicate that right up front.

We'll move first to Mr. Calandra, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Robb, the September 2 letter from Minister Duguid states that he arrived at this position after discussions with stakeholders and local citizens. Are you one of the stakeholders consulted on this?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** In your statement you said that an advisory committee is such an important part, that it's something you want to see happen right away.

But we heard from farmers, not only today but also previously to this, that they were not informed of this. We heard from York Region that they were not informed of this. We heard from Altona that they were not informed of this. The federal government found out about it through *The Toronto Star*.

Did you ask Minister Duguid whether he had advised people in the same format that you now want to see the federal government move into?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Thank you for that question, Mr. Calandra.

I believe that what Mr. Duguid is doing is.... There's been 24 years of intensive stakeholder and public planning—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** No, I'm not asking that. That's not my question.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Mr. Duguid is essentially upholding the plans developed over the last 24 years with huge public and stakeholder—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** So basically you're saying no, you didn't. That is not the type of consultation.... So do as I say, not as I do.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** No. The consultation is already encoded in law, Mr. Calandra. Your government—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Could I ask the questions and you answer them?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Sure.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** But in changing and developing this new position of the Province of Ontario, you provided advice. Ontario Nature provided advice. Environmental Defence provided advice. But local citizens did not provide advice. Parks Canada did not provide advice. Farmers did not provide advice. And York Region did not provide advice. But now you're suggesting that one of the guiding principles has to be that stakeholders are brought into this.

I want move forward on this.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Could I answer that question, Mr. Calandra?

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** No. I think you've answered it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Calandra has the floor, but go ahead.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I think he's answered it to my satisfaction.



You talk about the importance of farming. You say how much you appreciate farmers. Maybe some of the things you've been saying have been taken out of context. The following quote is attributed to you:

farmers are a political constituency that's being catered to, one that takes up 70 per cent, of the park's land in Markham and uses pesticides and genetically-modified crops that can harm the environment.

That's attributed to you. Did you not say that?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Yes, Mr. Calandra, I probably did say that.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** At Markham's Development Services Committee, about three minutes into the meeting, you called our local farmers just industrial cash crop farmers. At four minutes and 24 seconds, you said that you were willing to share the park with the heritage farm community.

What's a heritage farmer?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** I think that some of the people who are here today, like Jay Reesor, or many of the other farmers who have been on the land for a long time, could be considered heritage farmers. I think that if we developed a list of people in the park who were expropriated by the Conservative government of Bill Davis, south of 16th Avenue, and by the government of Pierre Trudeau, north of 16th Avenue, we would certainly be willing to give them special provisions to farm at least the equivalent amount of land that they had before the—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** All right, that's an important point. Suppose I'm a farmer from Stouffville or Mount Albert—or even Mr. Reesor, for that matter, who has been farming since 1985. Let's say the business is called Simpson's Farm Produce, and that it now has a lease in the park. Is that farm a heritage farmer? If it's only been in operation for 10 to 12 years, is it a heritage farm?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Well, I think that we also want to encourage new —

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Yes or no, is that a heritage farmer?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** We want to encourage farming by a diversity of people—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** That's not what I'm asking.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** —by heritage farmers, new farmers—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Would you consider it a heritage farmer?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** I really don't know what the definition would be. The heritage farmers I'm thinking of are people who were there when the land was expropriated, because I think they deserve special attention—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** All right, that's fine.

In this example there are farmers who are from Mount Albert, who come in from Pickering. They weren't expropriated but they hold leases to farm the land on this side. What would happen to them? They're not heritage farmers, as you're suggesting. What would happen to them?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** I need to give you a graphic. The Rouge Park in the federal land is five kilometres wide. The ecological corridor is 600 metres wide, so it's less than one-eighth of the park—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I'm not asking about the ecological corridor. I'm asking a question specifically in response to your comment. You

said that you can share the park with heritage farmers. You've just suggested to me now that a heritage farmer is somebody whose land was expropriated in the 1970s. There are farmers, who come in from Mount Albert and other areas, who were not expropriated, but have leases which have been acquired over the last number of years. I'm asking you what would happen to them. Would they be able to continue farming in the park?

• (1705)

**Mr. Jim Robb:** It would have to be on an individual basis. What I would like to say is that you also have to look at the big picture—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Yes or no. Give me a yes or no. I don't have time—

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Yes or no answers don't really provide much information—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** When you said that you could share the park with a heritage farmer, you didn't actually mean the families who were expropriated; you meant that you would go at it on an individual basis. So if I've been farming for two years, in essence I could be a heritage farmer.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** I think you have to look at it on an individual basis.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** So, is that statement you made about being willing to work with heritage farmers incorrect?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** No, I think that you would want to give special consideration to people who were on the land when it was expropriated, because expropriation is a nasty process.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Okay.

You talked about the ecological corridor. I'm told that the development of an ecological corridor would mean the removal of about 1,700—Parks Canada suggest it's about 2,000—acres of class 1 farmland. Is that about what you would expect?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Mr. Calandra, when you were with the Harris government, the ecological corridor was defined at that time—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I'm not asking you about the Harris government. I'm asking you, in your opinion, right now, the 600-metre corridor—

**Mr. Jim Robb:** I can only tell you that it was defined in law when you were there in 2001 and it was put in the greenbelt plan in 2005.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I'm not asking you about that. Answer a question that's put before you.

What is your estimate of the amount of land that would have to be taken out of production that farmers like Mr. Reesor would lose, to develop a 600-metre corridor?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** You can get that directly from the Little Rouge corridor management plan, the Rouge national urban action plan—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Do you accept that it's about 2,000 acres from Parks Canada?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** The number I am aware of is about 1,700, but that's from the Rouge Park Alliance's unanimous report.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** I'm not going to disagree with you.

So you're talking about removing 1,700 acres, and Parks Canada says 2,000.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** I'm not the one talking about it. This is the law of the land right now. It's not me; it's the Rouge Park Alliance; it's the provincial governments; it's the greenbelt plan; it's the Rouge North plan that was put in place when you were in the provincial government and when the mayor of Markham was Don Cousens, a former Conservative MPP.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** You understand that this is a new park that's being created, right? We're not talking about a historical park, right?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** That's why the province won't transfer the land, because you are ignoring their policies.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** No, that's actually not true.

**The Chair:** Mr. Calandra, your time is up.

We're going to move now to Ms. Sitsabaiesan, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** My first question is addressed to Friends of the Rouge Watershed, and Mr. Reesor. You both spoke of the development of the land.

Mr. Reesor and Mr. Robb, what do you see as a bigger threat to farming in York Region, urbanization or ecological restoration?

Mr. Reesor or Mr. Robb, I have less than seven minutes.

**Mr. Jay Reesor:** Urbanization is not going to be a threat on the parkland.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** The question is about farming.

**Mr. Jay Reesor:** I'm saying that it's not going to be a threat to farming on the parkland. But I will say, as I mentioned in my little speech, that urbanization is a huge threat to privately owned land. Markham will be completely developed within a few years.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

Mr. Robb.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** It's definitely urbanization. Markham just expanded the urban envelope by 11 square kilometres, and 120 kilometres of Markham's 200 is already urbanized. That's the finest class 1 agricultural land.

We fought it every step of the way.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Moola, on the phone there—I almost forgot you were there, my apologies—I want to ask you the same question that I've been asking everybody else. In your opinion, what is the biggest threat to preserving the ecological health of Rouge national park?

Mr. Moola, and then Mr. Reesor and Mr. Robb. Be very, very brief, please.

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** I would say that the biggest threat to maintaining ecological health in the park is what is happening outside of the park in terms of the greater watershed. In 2008 the David Suzuki Foundation did a comprehensive satellite analysis looking at the loss of prime agricultural land and nature from the Rouge watershed and surrounding watersheds in the GTA. We documented the loss of 11,000 hectares of green space and farmland over that period: 70% of that loss was due to urbanization, 15% of that loss was due to conversion to golf courses, and 13% was due to

conversion to aggregates—pits and quarries. The impacts of tree planting were negligible.

There's no question about it: it's urbanization within the greater watershed.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you, Mr. Moola.

Mr. Robb.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** The greatest impact on an area like the Rouge is habitat fragmentation. Studies done in the current park ranked almost all of the habitat as poor to fair; followed by invasive species; followed by external pressures from urbanization and public use. Those are the greatest threats to the health of Rouge Park and the watershed outside of the park.

• (1710)

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

Mr. Reesor.

**Mr. Jay Reesor:** One of the greatest threats is actually the status quo and not doing anything. We have a really good plan on the table right now, and I'd say a big threat to ecological health is just not doing anything in order to maintain the status quo. This is not a good option for ecological health.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

I'd ask all of you to be even a bit more brief this round.

Can farmers and people with conservation interests work together to preserve the ecological health of Rouge Park?

Mr. Moola.

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Yes, definitely. We have the world class-renowned greenbelt, 1.8 million acres in size, in which farmers and environmentalists have come together. We have found that this area is producing \$9 billion in market sales. In addition to that, it's producing an additional over \$2 billion in non-market ecological benefits.

So there's no question about it.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

Mr. Robb.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Of course; we've worked with the farm community over the years. When the park was started, we worked closely with some of the patriarchs who are gone now, such as Russ Reesor.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** So you, being a conservationist, are saying yes that you want to work with the farmers.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Got it.

Mr. Reesor.

**Mr. Jay Reesor:** Yes; farmers and conservationists are like-minded.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** You can work together.

**Mr. Jay Reesor:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Awesome. Thank you.

My apologies. I'm being as brief as possible because I have 12 other questions I want to ask you all.

**A voice:** Good luck.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Robb, over and over and over and over again, you mentioned that you want to see federal lands in the greenbelt and north Pickering included in the Rouge national urban park. Just briefly, why is that?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** First, you need to get around the urban blockade. Stouffville forms a blockade between the northern part of the proposed park and the actual heart of the Oak Ridges Moraine. You need the Pickering lands.

Second, they were already announced as a federal green space preserve, or a significant amount of them were, in 2002. We should carry that forward to link to the moraine.

Three, the bigger the park, the more room you have to balance the needs of nature, the needs of visitor use, and the needs of farming.

I guess the last one is that in Markham, the Rouge is only 5% forested. If you go across into Pickering, it's 25%. So there's a little bit more work to be done on the Markham side. You could trade lands. There are fallow lands in the Pickering area that aren't being farmed right now where you could say, "Farmer, you're in the ecological corridor. We don't want to disadvantage you. We'll give you a slice of land over here. But we do need this backbone of the park, that 600-metre ecological corridor, to have a place for nature and public use."

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Moola, I don't know what your official position is on this. Can you briefly tell us what it is?

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** The David Suzuki Foundation supports the current boundaries of Rouge national urban park that have been proposed in the bill. We'd like to see greater stewardship of the surrounding watershed through such things as the creation of an urban farmland reserve and the expansion and strengthening of the greenbelt and so on.

We think there are other complementary forms of government that could—

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Thank you.

Mr. Robb, you gave us a whole bunch of amendments in the documents you sent us to satisfy the "meet or exceed" clause. I want to say thank you for that, because I know we won't have time for you to go through them all. Why do you think the Rouge Park watershed plans call for restoration of the forest and wetlands on some lands that are currently being leased for agriculture? Is there a scientific basis for this? This topic has come up again and again: is there a scientific basis?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Yes.

The Rouge is part of the Toronto area of concern under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and, under that, Environment Canada did a scientific report called "How Much Habitat is Enough?" They said that for a healthy watershed—good water quality and biodiversity—you need a minimum of 30% to 50%

forest cover. The Little Rouge River watershed, where the park is, has 13% forest cover. They said 10% wetland; it's 1%.

Now the reason that this is so important is that people have lost the economic aspect. The premise of the province's whole growth plan was the Rouge watershed plan. It said that to offset the flooding and erosion of extreme storm events from climate change and also from the runoff from planned urban growth, we have to restore forests and wetlands or our liabilities are going to skyrocket, insurance-wise, and with infrastructure and property damage.

The restoration in the existing greenbelt plan and Rouge park plans was premised on that due diligence. If the federal government ignores that, they're ignoring the due diligence at great risk. We've seen what happened in Calgary, the southern prairies. Even in Toronto, one big downpour is \$1 billion in damage; it basically shut down the financial district for a couple of days.

**The Chair:** I think we're through our time. We will have to move to another questioner.

Mr. Woodworth, for seven minutes.

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

My thanks to all of the witnesses for their attendance here today.

Mr. Moola, I would like to ask you a question.

Are you aware that Parks Canada reduced its policies for Rouge national urban park into a management plan, in draft, in June 2014?

• (1715)

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Yes.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Are you familiar with that draft management plan?

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Yes.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Can you point me to any Parks Canada policy contained in that draft management plan that you feel does not meet or exceed the provincial land use planning agreements referred to in the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario?

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Sure.

We believe it's in everyone's interest to ensure better protection for nature, which is currently under the existing management frameworks that apply to the Rouge. Regrettably, we don't believe this is the case either under Bill C-40 or the management plan. Our concern is exactly the same as what I mentioned earlier, which is that there's the absence of any explicit language in the bill to clearly define and prioritize ecological health as the overarching management goal for the park.

The prioritization of nature is within the existing provincial policy regime pertaining to the Rouge, such as the Rouge park management plan, the Rouge north management plan, and the greenbelt active plan.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Could I stop you for a moment?

I always hate to interrupt someone in the middle of remarks or speeches, but I'm not sure you understood my question.

I have asked you to point me to any policy contained in the draft management plan that you feel does not meet or exceed the equivalent provincial policy.

Can you do that?

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Yes.

I would say it is the failure to clearly identify and prioritize the conservation of nature in both the draft management plan and the bill.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** What policy are you referring to in the draft management plan?

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Yes.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** What policy are you referring to in the draft management plan?

I have it right in front of me and I've looked at it. There are a lot of policies. You're telling me there's a policy in here which you feel does not meet or exceed an equivalent provincial policy. I would like you to point it out to me, please.

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Well, I would say it's the absence of any clear language in that management plan that explicitly identifies ecological health or ecological integrity of the overarching—

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** You're not referring to any policy that is in fact stated in this draft management plan.

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Then I'll reframe it. I would say it's the absence of any reference—

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** So there's nothing in this plan that you can tell me does not meet or exceed provincial policy.

**Dr. Faisal Moola:** Well, the failure to identify and clearly prioritize ecological—

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** We're repeating ourselves, so I'll take your answer as it is.

Mr. Robb, you heard my exchange with the last witness. Are you familiar with the policies that have been put in writing by Parks Canada for Rouge national urban park in this draft management plan of June 2014?

Have you seen that?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Yes.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** You're familiar with it.

Can you point to any policy in this document that does not meet or exceed an equivalent provincial policy?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Yes.

Number one is that the existing provincial policy clearly sets out a goal of ecological integrity. That's in the Rouge watershed plan. It's in the Rouge park plans. It's in the greenbelt plans, and the Oak Ridges Moraine. That's one.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** I'm sorry, what policy are you referring to in this draft management plan?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** The draft management plan essentially adopts the same wording about ecosystem health instead of ecological integrity.

The second—

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** I'm sorry, I'm looking for specific policies to compare. Quite frankly, I don't accept the notion that objectives and goals are the same as policies. Can you tell me if there's a specific policy here? They're numbered. There are objectives and so on. They're paged. There are actions.

Which of the policies in this draft management plan does not meet or exceed the equivalent provincial policy?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** The particular one is the main ecological corridor. The "Rouge North Management Plan (2001)", the "Greenbelt Plan (2005)", the "Markham Official Plan", and the York Region official plan all say there will be a 600-metre corridor. It will be a minimum of 400 metres wooded, with 100 metres on either side in compatible uses, and it will extend from the lake to the moraine. That is not in the federal plan.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** When this policy says that the government will work with the Province of Ontario, other federal governments, the TRCA, and municipal governments to develop connectivity options having consideration for ecosystem and trail connectivity objectives, ecosystem performance, implementation feasibility, and so on, don't you think that encompasses the necessary corridor?

• (1720)

**Mr. Jim Robb:** No. A management plan should be specific. It shouldn't say "trust us", it should write it down specifically. When the federal government signed the memorandum of agreement, they said specifically that in the creation and management of the park, they would meet or exceed the existing greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, and provincial policies.

It needs to be specific.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Is that the only one, or can you point me to another policy in here that you're not satisfied with?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** The key ones are ecological integrity—

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Well, this is something we've already discussed, and I don't agree with you that this is a policy; it's a goal or objective.

Can you tell me about a policy in this document, this draft plan, that is not equal to or greater than...?

**Mr. Jim Robb:** The lack of priority-setting.... As everyone has said, it is in a protected area under international and national definitions, and unless you give priority to nature.... This is a little sliver, a piece of land, a tiny bit of the landscape that happens to survive.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Since you're not telling me about a specific policy, I'm going to give my time to Mr. Calandra.

**The Chair:** You have only 30 seconds.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Robb, you talked about the transfer of lands. The reality is that the MOU says no such thing. The MOU is specific to the lands that the province was going to transfer. So when you talk about the ecological corridor, which you suggest would go across the federal lands as well, that actually has nothing to do with the MOU that we signed with the provincial government. The reality is that was excluded. The provincial government spoke only...to meet or exceed on the lands that they were transferring.

You're suggesting that they suggested the entire park corridor. That's not true.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** Well, can I—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** The reality is that's completely not true, and that's how you have been selling this to people. That's how your petitions have been selling this to people. That is wrong. That's not in the MOU, and I suggest that if you're going to fight, you do it on the basis of reality, and not—

**The Chair:** I'm going to give you a 15-second response. The bells are ringing; we need to adjourn.

**Mr. Jim Robb:** There are two ecological corridors. There's one that goes outside of the provincial and federal lands onto the lands in

Markham that were intended to be acquired long-term by willing seller, willing purchaser, and there's an alternate corridor that goes through the federal lands.

We are talking about the lands, Mr. Calandra, south of 16th Avenue, which are already legislated, but if you look at the overall planning context, it says right in the Rouge north plan that the expectation is there would be a 400-metre to 600-metre corridor going through the federal—

**The Chair:** Okay, our time is up. We're going to have to adjourn because the bells are ringing—

The meeting is adjourned.

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