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Mr. John Aldag

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.)): Let's get today's meeting under way. We have two different panels. The first is on our study related to agriculture, forestry and waste.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, just before we get started, did we ever hear back from the minister on whether she is planning on coming on the supplementary estimates? I just want to know that now, instead of finding out at the end of the meeting whether we heard back anything.

The Chair: It's not a point of order.

Hon. Mike Lake: It's just a point of clarification, I guess. We saw her on TV. She was in the House two minutes before we started here, so she's in town. I was just wondering.

The Chair: I was actually hoping to deal with that tomorrow at our subcommittee meeting.

For the committee's information, the invitation went for the dates that we have and her office communicated that she's not available. That is as far as we got.

Hon. Mike Lake: Okay.

The Chair: To our witnesses, welcome. For today's panel, we have the first hour and a bit dedicated to the study on agriculture, forestry and waste. Then at around 4:45 p.m., we'll be moving into the supplementary estimates (A) budget stuff with Parks Canada for the last 45 minutes.

For our witnesses, I think each of you has been invited to make opening comments for 10 minutes. I'll use this handy card system. When we're down to the last minute, I'll hold up the yellow card. When the 10 minutes are up or when we get into the questions and answers, each of the members have six minutes and when that time is up, I'll hold up the red card. Don't stop immediately, but wind up your thought and then we'll move on to the next round of questions.

Mr. Moffat and Ms. Miller, who would like to go first?

Mr. Moffat, you have 10 minutes.

Professor Mike Moffatt (Senior Director, Smart Prosperity Institute): Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me.

Today, I'll limit my remarks to agriculture, since that's what we're working on at Smart Prosperity, although I should note that Smart

Prosperity has argued elsewhere for the important role of clean innovation and market incentives for enhancing forest carbon sinks and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the forestry sector, including through innovative bioenergy and other bioproducts and for moving towards a resource efficient, circular economy.

Canada is already a greenhouse gas efficient producer of crops and livestock. The sector has more than doubled the value of its output over the past decade or so, while keeping emissions near constant, which has caused the sector's overall greenhouse gas emissions intensity to decline by 0.9% per year from 1990 to 2012. Due to improved feeding practices and other factors, we are also one of the most greenhouse gas-efficient animal protein producers in the world. This means that increasing Canada's export market share could potentially decrease global greenhouse gas emissions, if our production is causing production in other jurisdictions to decline.

Agriculture currently accounts for only 10% of greenhouse gas emissions, but as Canada and the world move towards deep decarbonization, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from crop and livestock production will increasingly require action from industry and policy-makers. This is particularly crucial if we are to meet our ambitious growth targets set out in the agricultural economic sector table report, as well as our long-term potential to meet the economy's burgeoning demand for safe, quality food.

Given tight margins and an industry that competes on a global market, the most realistic long-term solutions involve innovative technologies and practices, including but not limited to improved crop and livestock genetics, changes in animal diets, using technology and big data to improve nutrient management and emerging technologies for producing low-carbon fertilizer. Governments have a clear role to play in fostering this innovation.

We need to start acting now because promising opportunities for low-cost reductions in the agricultural sector are currently available and can potentially improve the sector's competitiveness. Based on our preliminary research at Smart Prosperity, we believe that the most promising efforts to reduce emissions, while maintaining producers' profitability, will be to improve nutrient applications and that's mainly nitrogen from fertilizer. There is extensive evidence from Canada and elsewhere that modest reductions in fertilizer application rates can enhance farmers' profits. For example, one recent study estimated that advanced nitrogen best management practices for corn in Ontario, and canola, wheat and barley in Alberta could potentially decrease per acre nitrous oxide emissions by 29% to 33% relative to the reference case. This is a win-win because it also increased profits by anywhere from \$29 to \$71 per acre.

Potential policy instruments to achieve this include improved extension and certification services, innovative tools, such as income support and insurance schemes, reverse auctions or cross-compliance schemes. As well, we can improve access to technology, such as seasonal weather forecasting services.

Enhanced carbon sequestration will also play a role in reducing the sector's carbon footprint, although technical and institutional hurdles pose some challenges for creating a substantial and viable offsets market. In part, this is due to issues of permanence, additionality, transaction costs and possibly the low price commanded on the market for offsets. We believe at Smart Prosperity that the economic growth potential for agriculture is enormous, but we need to take the long view. Sector growth should not be achieved through significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions. Fortunately, the last couple of decades have shown that smart policy choices can lead to simultaneous improvements in both economic and environmental performance.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Miller, we'll move over to you for your opening comments.

Ms. Susie Miller (Executive Director, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops): Thank you for inviting me to speak here today.

The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops was formed in 2013 specifically to facilitate cross-commodity collaboration on sustainability issues facing the grains sector. For our purposes, sustainability means social responsibility, environmental sustainability and economic viability.

Our members include, as you would expect, grain farmer organizations, grain marketers and grain customers, but we also include input suppliers, researchers and environmental organizations. The scope of our work, because we do say crops, is limited to grains, oilseeds and pulses.

In 2015, we embarked on a major initiative to provide fact-based information on the sustainability of Canadian grains. This culminated in the publication of our grains sustainability metrics platform in March 2018.

In the process of collecting and developing fact-based information, we undertook a major study to quantify greenhouse gas emissions, which we express as a carbon footprint, for the

production of 10 major field crops in all of the regions of Canada where there is a substantial production of that grain. This study was completed in 2017. We used internationally recognized carbon life-cycle analysis methodology. It was produced under the oversight of academic and government researchers and was peer reviewed. It's my understanding that the results are actively being used by several government departments as the latest information on carbon footprint for crops.

I'm going to share some of the results with you today. In front of you, you will have a chart. It shows the results of the carbon footprint for eight of the 10 crops that we surveyed that are grown in Saskatchewan.

This shows the actual greenhouse gas emissions, kilograms per tonne of crop produced. The orange is from fertilizer manufacturing. The green is from energy use on the farm to grow and harvest the crops, specific to the crop. The blue is the GHG emissions from seeds and pesticides. The pink is the GHG emissions from nitrous oxide emissions, which include emissions from crop residue in the field, which is a natural biological decomposition, and from nitrogen fertilizer that escapes into the air or runs off the field. The grey is a soil organic carbon change.

Referring specifically to the soil organic carbon change numbers, these are all negative. This signifies that the production of each of the crops is resulting in a carbon sink. In Saskatchewan, not all across the country, but in Saskatchewan, that is the case.

For example, looking at canola, which is currently the largest crop by volume in Saskatchewan, the GHG emissions are reduced by 43% because of the sequestration of the carbon in the soil. For wheat, it's a 60% reduction. For field peas and lentils, it more than balances the greenhouse gas that is emitted from all other sources. The carbon footprint of crop production varies across Canada due to climate, the crops grown and the crop management practices. I've chosen Saskatchewan because the province has 45% of the crop land in Canada and because of the significant change that has occurred over the last 25 years in production practices that have led this region to being a significant carbon sink.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada reported in 2016 that agricultural soils represented a net source of 1.2 megatons of carbon dioxide in 1981, but in 2011, it became a net sink. There's no absolute change available for Saskatchewan, but they did report that in all parts of Saskatchewan they had over a 90 kilogram per hectare increase in soil organic carbon per year. It's the most significant. That's the top of the level that they measure.

What led to this sequestration? One factor contributed the most. That was a change in farm practices from full tillage to reduced tillage and no tillage.

● (1540)

As a bit of explanation, what full tillage means, as defined by Statistics Canada, is the sort of traditional ploughing, where most of the crop residue is reintroduced into the soil and the soil is basically bare. Reduced tillage retains most of the crop residue on the surface; it's not ploughed under, it's on the surface. No till means no disturbance at all; the seeding is done under the soil with equipment that goes in directly.

By adopting seeding and weed control practices that do not disturb the soil, the carbon remains in the soil. It's not released every year, and the growing process continues to add carbon, up to a limit. In 1991, only 10% of Saskatchewan was no till. By 2016, it was 74%, with an additional 20% in reduced tillage. That's a 94% change from conventional tillage to none or reduced.

What motivated farmers to do this? First and foremost, it was increased yield. By not disturbing the soil, water and organic matter was retained, leading to higher yields but also less risk of crop failure. Saskatchewan is a dry area.

Second, it was widespread practice to follow or let rest a certain percentage of the land each year to retain the moisture and the soil organic carbon, which is not necessary under no till. In 1981, 20% of the land was fallowed every year—taken out of production—and it was less than 1% in 2016. That meant that for each individual producer, they had 20% more land available to increase their income and also reduce their overall costs. It also meant lower farm equipment energy use, as well as significant reduction in the loss of soil due to wind erosion. That was a net effect.

There are many contributing factors to this adoption: first of all was innovation in equipment manufacturing. It wasn't by the big companies; it was by small local companies that were willing to take a risk and to start small and grow big.

There was investment by governments to assist in that innovation. There was research by academics and governments that demonstrated the benefits of adopting the new technology. They'll only believe their neighbours. Some will believe their neighbours; some will believe the research result.

The neighbours were very important. There were strong producer-based groups that championed adoption, usually by example, but there was also a science-based regulation system that permitted the introduction of crop protection products and crops that could be used with reduced tillage.

Although I've used Saskatchewan as an example, and Alberta is very similar, the adoption of no till and reduced tillage extends across Canada. In total, 60% of land in 2016 was under no till, and another 24% under reduced tillage.

However, there are limitations to the adoption of no till technology. It's not suited to some crops. The technology is not suited to some soils. Organic producers need tillage to control weeds, so it's not possible for any organic producers. The cost of acquiring the necessary specialized equipment is not necessarily feasible for the smaller operations that you might find in the Maritimes and in parts of Ontario and B.C. It's realistic, however, to

expect some continued expansion of no till and reduced tillage, both of which contribute to soil organic carbon.

Although Mike and I had never met before today and we certainly had not had any discussions, I'd like you to turn your attention back to the pink part of the graph and the orange, which are nitrous oxide emissions and fertilizer manufacturing. If you're looking at ways for producers to improve their emissions while maintaining or improving their bottom lines, this is likely where it will have the most significant payoff.

As I indicated, biological processes such as crop decomposition, which contribute to nitrous oxide emissions, can't be controlled. Our surveys show that while generally producers follow good practices in the use of chemical fertilizers and manure, there are opportunities for improvement.

I'd like to highlight an approach that's taken by Fertilizer Canada to facilitate the adoption of the four Rs of fertilizer use: right source, right time, right place and right rate.

● (1545)

The research has shown that closely monitoring soil nutrient need and adjusting fertilizer type, amount, timing and method can significantly contribute to greenhouse gas reduction. As well, as Mike mentioned, producers can improve yield and reduce costs.

The reason this is so significant is that, in greenhouse gas equivalents, one nitrous oxide kilo is equivalent to 298 carbon. So, when you're talking about greenhouse gas carbon footprint, a small reduction in nitrous oxide emissions can significantly effect the carbon footprint.

Thank you for your attention. I'm available to answer questions.

● (1550)

The Chair: Now we'll get into a series of six-minute rounds.

First up, we have Mr. Peschisolido for six minutes.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you.

Ms. Miller and Mr. Moffat, thank you for attending.

Both of you in your presentations talked about innovation. In the variables, Mr. Moffat talked about diet and the importance of the input. I got the sense that Mr. Moffat was looking more at livestock, and obviously Ms. Miller dealt only with crops.

I also sit on the agriculture committee, and we've had a few discussions on the distinction between organics and traditional agriculture. I'm just trying to get a sense, because in throwing around "fertilizer", "organic", "nitrogen", what is the impact of the variable of having an organic system without artificial fertilizer versus not? How does that impact on tillage versus non-tillage? You seem to be suggesting that organics is a bad way of going because that non-tillage is unavailable.

Ms. Susie Miller: I can take that question.

When we did our study, we included organic and conventional together. We didn't separate them out. However, I can tell you the direction where there would be some differences.

As you indicated, the fertilizer manufacturing piece, the pink piece, would not exist because they use manure. However, soil organic carbon would probably turn from a sink to an emitter because of the tillage of the soil. That is what creates the soil organic carbon emission, the actual tilling of soil, which organic growers need to do.

On the balance, that's information we don't know.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Are there thoughts of looking at that and comparing the two systems? It's interesting that, pretty well from a standing start of zero, in 10 years the market of the organic industry in Canada has gone up to \$5 billion. In fact, there's a shortage of organic products in Canada and we need to import that.

I'll move to Mr. Moffat and the variable of feed.

I'm assuming that the greatest emitters of carbon would be more the livestock sector rather than the crop sector. What is the significance of the type of feed when you are looking, not at the yield per acre, but at the number of pounds that a farmer would get per animal, whether it's hogs or...?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: There are small differences. Those differences are small unless you're getting really innovative and doing things like feeding seaweed to cows—there are pilots—and things like that.

The biggest gain that we've seen—we're very preliminary in our research—has to be more on the genomic side, basically just technologies to breed cows to emit less. That seems to be where the gains would be, rather than in small changes in feed, but every little bit helps.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Sure.

Mr. Moffat, you talk about income support and insurance. Can you elaborate on the work you've done and how that would impact on reduction?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: On income support in general, again, as my colleague was saying, a lot of these technologies have an upfront cost that is particularly expensive for smaller producers. We've been looking at mostly southwestern Ontario. There are new technologies that can help reduce fertilizer use, but they have a payback period of maybe six, eight or 10 years, so it's not necessarily cost-efficient for the farmers to use those. Once you take into account the externalities, though, not just on greenhouse gases but also on runoff issues, such as all the algae blooms in Lake Erie, I think there

is a role for government to support farmers with those upfront investments.

I actually think some of the changes we saw in the fall economic update with the accelerated capital cost allowance may play a role there. I have to admit that we haven't analyzed that too closely; it's been a week.

• (1555)

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: We haven't talked about the agricultural framework that is funded both provincially and federally. Are there innovative programs there that we can work on to enhance the transition of the type of agriculture you are talking about?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: We're very early in our research. We haven't come up with any new policy recommendations for the next Growing Forward; I can't remember what they're calling it now.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido: Let's just call it the framework.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: Yes, the framework; we have not developed anything on that. Part of what we'll be looking at, however, is best practices from other jurisdictions to see if there are policies that the federal government or provinces may wish to adopt.

The Chair: You're out of time, Mr. Peschisolido.

Mr. Warawa, it's over to you.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Thank you.

To both of you, I'd like to continue with what Mr. Moffatt was talking about with regard to other jurisdictions. In terms of the industry, what other jurisdictions would be models of reduction? How are we learning best practices and measurable success? What are our models?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: That's a good question.

Ms. Susie Miller: Actually, that is a good question. One of the things I did in preparation for this was to compare the results of greenhouse gas emissions for our crops versus in the rest of the world. In fact, we're as good or better. I think we have some advantages that we can't lose. One of those advantages is that we do have good research scientists who know and understand, and who can help us measure.

We probably have a better understanding of the contributions to greenhouse gas by various farming practices than most places in the world because of, frankly, Statistics Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, [*Inaudible—Editor*] that the industry can base upon. Continued investment in that type of measurement helps us know where we can do better.

Then you add in the investment in innovation, which is our model here in Canada of jointly working with government and industry, including the support that comes from the agriculture framework. It is really helpful at targeting to what will work, because that's important. You can do all the research and you can build the innovation, but if it's not being used, then you're not going to get the result you want.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The Canadian target is a 20% reduction by 2020 and 30% by 2030, below the 2005 levels. If we're using ourselves as a model, how far have we improved, using the 2005 Paris target? How far have we improved, especially if we're beginning, as you're saying, as one of the world leaders, with possibly the highest standards in the world? The largest carbon sink in the world is our boreal forest.

If we're starting at the top and we have to improve, based on 2005, how far have your industries or your sectors improved? Is it possible for your sector to actually improve by 20% when we're already at the top?

Ms. Susie Miller: That was the reason I pointed out the benefit of reducing nitrous oxide and focusing on that rather than the carbon sinks, because if carbon sinks...if 45% of the soils or 80% of the soils have already been converted, then it's very difficult for us to make the same type of significant improvement.

I haven't seen any analysis at this point that indicates where and how much we could actually reduce. I think everybody is trying to work to get the best bang for the buck, but at this point in time, we don't have the analysis behind us.

• (1600)

Mr. Mark Warawa: British Columbia is often referred to as a model. They've been successful. The economy has grown. Yet there is little mention of affordability. It's also the least affordable place in Canada. There has been a price on carbon, a carbon tax, in British Columbia, which is growing at \$5 a tonne per year.

You're representing Canada. We're told the price on carbon in British Columbia is \$35 a tonne, so would you know what that equates to in a percentage of tax? In British Columbia, there is a PST and a GST, 5% and 7%. Do you know what that carbon tax of \$35 a tonne equates to and what percentage of the tax...? When British Columbian homeowners, farmers and industry pay a carbon tax on natural gas, do you know what percentage that tax is on the carbon?

Ms. Susie Miller: The answer is no, but Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada actually undertook some analysis to look at how a carbon tax of various levels would impact producers. Now, they didn't include carbon sinks and they didn't include biological processes: methane generated from cattle or nitrous oxide from decomposition. They also excluded fertilizer, which is of course a big contributor—

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm going to interrupt you and then ask you to finish, because my time is quickly disappearing.

It's 112%. Next year, on April 1, it goes up to over 155%. That will be the price that will be charged on the amount of carbon you use. Do you think a tax of 155% on the amount of energy you use through natural gas as fuel is going to have an impact on your sectors?

Ms. Susie Miller: I would say absolutely—

The Chair: We're out of time, so I'll give you have a couple of seconds to respond if you have a brief response.

Ms. Susie Miller: I would just say that an impact of that size... definitely some producers would feel an impact.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Stetski, let's go to you for six minutes.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Thank you for being with us today.

My riding is Kootenay—Columbia, located in southeastern B.C. I have three mountain ranges: the Rockies, the Purcells and the Selkirks. I have dairy farms around the Creston area, but much of East Kootenay is mostly cattle ranching and crops grown to feed cattle.

One of our issues, of course, is the lack of broadband connectivity. We're still on dial-up in a number of places, and we have to fix that. I'm wondering if you could tell us your view on how broadband can help farmers ultimately improve their impact on climate change if they have good Internet access.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: We are looking at that issue.

If we go back to the nitrous oxide, we believe there is a role there for the Internet of things, such as soil sensors and that kind of thing, which would help farmers with the proper use of fertilizer. We're going to be investigating that to see how much of a bottleneck that is and what are the costs of getting these areas on better cell coverage—and ideally in the future 5G—and what the benefits would be as far as greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental performance standards go.

We haven't done that analysis yet, but in terms of the fact that we are even investigating that, we believe that there are likely to be gains there. We believe that part of the lack of adoption of some of these technologies is on these Internet bottlenecks.

• (1605)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: It would be mostly about fertilizer and soil moisture then, or—

Ms. Susie Miller: I think it's greater than that, because the traditional mechanism for expanding knowledge and new technology was through word of mouth, demonstrations and extension officers who were out in the field. That has changed significantly over the last 20 or 30 years. That's not where producers get their knowledge now. Yes, they get it from industry professionals they deal with, but they also get it from the Internet. If they don't have access to that, and if they don't have access to online courses because their Internet is too slow or it's out, they don't have the same advantages of adopting new practices and appropriate practices.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: My first paid employment was picking rocks and baling hay for farmers in Saskatchewan, so it's come a long way since then.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): It's better than baling rocks and picking hay.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Absolutely.

I want to talk about biofuels for a minute. There is a company that produces biodiesel fuels, in Sparwood, B.C., which is in my riding. It's called Agri-Green Biodiesel. Traditionally, you used mostly corn and sugar cane, etc., for some biofuels. Biodiesel was from fats, waste greases and vegetable oils, but apparently the technology is moving forward.

I would be interested in what you think some of the opportunities are in Canada to expand businesses, or to get into businesses around biofuels of the future.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: There are all kinds of possibilities for areas where there are waste products. That could be in forestry, for example. You have all of these products that could be ending up in landfills or areas like that. There is both an environmental and economic opportunity there. I think part of taking advantage of that is being able to price externalities so that those technologies would have a price advantage over more emitting sources.

There is also an innovation role to play. There is an important role for our industries to work with community colleges and other institutions to develop these technologies, which we could use not just here in Canada. We then have intellectual property that we could export around the world.

Ms. Susie Miller: Mike is right, in terms of the motivation behind a producer. A producer will sell and produce what is at the highest cost, so it needs to be realistic, whether it's a new crop or an existing crop specifically designed for the biofuels market. It all comes down to price. In terms of new crops, there has been a lot of investigation over time with various kinds of oils and products that can be used. That investment needs to continue, in order to be able to open up the possibilities. Economics will take care of the introduction itself.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: It would seem to me that burning waste is an environmentally better thing to do than grow crops specifically for biofuels. That's a personal opinion, I guess.

If we have a chance, I'd like to talk a bit about carbon offsets, which I always thought were an opportunity just to relieve how bad you're feeling about your carbon footprint. They are also, potentially, economic opportunities.

I wonder if you could share with us some examples of what you think are good opportunities in Canada around buying carbon offsets. What might that look like?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: Is that buying or selling?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Well, from my perspective, I'd have to buy them, but for selling—

Prof. Mike Moffatt: Yes, I think there are issues around measurement and permanence—you know, making sure the carbon that goes in the ground is actually staying in the ground. There is an opportunity. As we heard earlier, we do have some of the largest boreal forests. We are one of the world's largest carbon sinks. There is an opportunity to use that and try to determine.... Keeping this carbon in the ground helps us get that much closer to our Paris commitments.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go over to Mr. Fisher, where I hope we talk about seafood, seaweed and cattle. I'll leave it up to you what line of questioning you want to take.

Mr. Darren Fisher: He brought it up, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, folks for being here. It's been fascinating testimony.

I will go right to you, Mike.

Mike, you were talking about reducing GHGs being both an issue and an opportunity. You talked about increased profits and economic return when you improve environmental performance. I'm fascinated by the opportunity, whereas we always look at the issue.

You talked about animal diets of course. Thank you for bringing up seafood, because it is happening on the east coast, of course, and Atlantic Canada, with seaweed and non-traditional diets, as I think you might have said. There are promising opportunities, nutrient applications, and advanced nitrogen practices. These are all things that, from what I got from your testimony, will lead to an economic return. I don't want to put the words in your mouth, so I'll let you go, but you're providing an economic return by doing the right thing.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: Absolutely. I think it's important that we not couch this and say we need to hit these environmental targets, and so in order to do that we must produce less. Nobody wants that. We have very aggressive export targets set out in the Barton report and the economic round table. I think it's important. My family is from rural southwestern Ontario. We believe it's the economic opportunity for these communities.

I think these opportunities come in three areas. The first is increased yield and lower costs with the better use of fertilizer, use of technology, just producing more or producing more value on the same plot of land. I think that's the first opportunity.

The second opportunity is creating greener products. We've heard about organic. Agriculture is by its nature a sort of low-margin industry, but if there are ways that we can differentiate our products as being more green, which in many cases we are—our wheat has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world—and if we can use that when exporting and our international customers are willing to pay more for our wheat because it has a lower greenhouse gas footprint, that creates opportunity.

Third, if we can develop new technologies, again whether it be for fertilizer use or genomics or anything else, this will create a set of intellectual property that we can use to export. We've heard people like Jim Balsillie talk about the opportunities connected with creating IP in Canada. Instead of constantly being the importer of these technologies, we can export those technologies.

Ideally I would like to see those technologies manufactured in southwestern Ontario, where I'm from, but either way, if we own that intellectual property, that creates economic opportunities for all of Canada.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You talked about a role for government. You mentioned the fall economic statement. How is the federal government spurring innovation in the agricultural sector right now and, moving forward, in what ways could the federal government better assist, be it research or funding to help your sector transition to a clean low-carbon economy?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I think there are a number of things the federal government is doing. I was chief innovation fellow for the Government of Canada back in 2017. I am, I suppose, promoting my own work a little bit when I talk about the economic tables and superclusters.

I'll focus more on going forward. I think there are a few things we can do. The big one is research and development again. I see the community colleges playing a huge role here, with pilot projects and those kinds of things to develop new technology.

I think in the fall economic update, we had the 100% capital cost allowance for green technologies, and there was a list of green technologies. At Smart Prosperity, we are fans of that, but we would also like to see that list expanded. There are some green technologies that don't fit under that category. That would be something moving forward for budget 2019.

I think overall I agree with the path that it's about research and development and it's about clustering, having a number of firms working together all tackling these big challenges.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Susie, there's a bit of time left.

Perhaps you want to chime in on that topic, or I could ask you a separate question.

• (1615)

Ms. Susie Miller: I'd like to chime in on this one, because I think it's really important to have a science-based regulatory system that is predictable. It doesn't matter if it's a piece of equipment or a pesticide or a new feed. We need to be able to go and get approvals in order to be able to advance that innovation.

Also, we need to be able to measure. I know surveys and data are not particularly the top-of-mind products, but if we don't know how we're doing, how can we do better?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Susie, could you also touch base on what Mike and I talked about with the issue versus the better economic return? You talked about no tilling. It was fascinating. I hadn't heard about this. There is less labour cost, of course, because you don't have machines and people out there doing that.

You have the ability of increasing productivity, but also increasing profits in many ways in the grain sector as well.

Ms. Susie Miller: My experience has been that incentives will only work as long as they're consistent and they're paid forever. If you want to make fundamental change in decision-making, it has to make economic sense first.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Godin.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'm glad you're...

[English]

The Chair: We'll pause for just a second while people put on their earpieces.

Mr. Joël Godin: It's usual for me.

The members respect two languages here. It's very important. I appreciate it.

The Chair: We're good to proceed.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: I'm glad you're with us this afternoon. Your testimony makes me really happy. This is good news, indeed.

You've both talked about good practices. There is technology that allows us to do environmentally-friendly sustainable development while taking economic performance into account. For a number of years, we've been taking measures to develop our knowledge, which is a credit to Canadians. Mr. Moffat made a comment that I quite liked. He said that instead of importing technologies, we should keep our knowledge and export our green technology as well as our innovations in the field of sustainable development.

I read good news on the Smart Prosperity website. I want to mention it because I feel that it is important to see every positive thing that is done for the environment. We're not only just discovering that environment matters, and it is not true that nothing was done in the past. Various governments implemented measures. The previous government was conservative, and its predecessor was liberal. All partisanship aside, I am happy to see really concrete results. In the Conservative Party, we've been labelled anti-environment. Whenever I can, I say that it's not true that Conservatives get up every morning to destroy our planet.

I read the following headlines on the Smart Prosperity website: "Meet an oil sands project that will capture and store 1M tonnes of carbon in the ground every year"; "Turning manure into renewable fuel"; "Neighbourhoods that blend in with nature"; "Fabricating metals the carbon neutral way"; "Fuelling more sustainable air travel — A mustard-based biofuel that will revolutionize your next flight"; and "Storing energy locally".

This last article talks about Sigma, an energy storage business which was created in 2011. This company has done a lot of research and development, and has managed to develop interesting technologies. As was mentioned earlier by Mr. Moffatt, the government should provide financial support to these companies so they can go further and faster.

Today, there are solutions. I recently met representatives from Coca-Cola who showed me that they take very active measures in that sense. Companies are increasingly more aware of this reality. This didn't happen by magic these past three years. They have been aware for years, and they are implementing measures to protect our environment.

My question is simple. Given all technological advances that have been made to this day, is the carbon tax really necessary? I'm inviting you both to answer this question.

• (1620)

[English]

Ms. Susie Miller: I can't answer that question. I don't have enough knowledge. I'm sorry.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I would say that, in many cases, the carbon tax is the most cost-effective way of doing that. Does that necessarily mean it's necessary? Well, no. We could find other ways of accomplishing that, but those ways, in some instances, will be more expensive.

I would say, with agriculture—because again, I'm here to talk about agriculture—that carbon pricing only takes you so far. In this sector, I would not limit greenhouse gas policy simply to carbon tax for a variety of reasons.

First of all, you're looking at a lot of non-point source emissions. The emissions aren't always easy to measure. Second, as we've seen in a few other sectors, for the most part, this tends to be a low-margin sector that is highly susceptible to international competition, so then you have to start worrying about carbon leakage. Third, there is a real role for innovation to play, as you state. There is a role here for government to do things like pilot projects, to look at projects that help farmers purchase this new technology and so on.

So while I do think that the carbon tax is useful in many instances, I do not believe, and we do not believe, that the carbon tax is necessarily a one-size-fits-all solution and that, to meet our Paris commitment for greenhouse gas, we are going to need a wide array of policy instruments.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you very much.

Ms. Miller, I'm glad to know that you're unable to answer this question. You're more specialized than I am in environmental issues, yet you're not able to answer this question either. I appreciate your honesty, it's really remarkable. I can't answer either, but I have great doubts regarding the carbon tax.

I see that time is running out.

On an unrelated note, on which years are based the numbers in your table regarding greenhouse gas emission reductions, that is, 43% for canola and 60% for wheat?

Ms. Susie Miller: These numbers are from 2014, and the study was completed in 2017.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you. You're very articulate.

[English]

The Chair: Next, we'll have Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Thank you both so much for being here today. It's greatly appreciated, and your testimony is really beneficial and helpful.

I'd like to follow up on Monsieur Godin's line of questioning. I guess, up until now, we've used a variety of regulatory and policy measures to try to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Has that been successful? Do you feel that's been successful so far?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I believe so, though there are questions, obviously, of stringency.

Clearly, we haven't met our previous commitments, so there is more work to be done. I do think that carbon pricing can help reduce emissions in the most cost-effective manner in many industries. It does work best when you don't have as much concern about carbon leakage, about this competition effect, and you're dealing with either point sources or fuels where you can accurately measure the emissions.

For something like agriculture, it's a different set of conditions. It requires a different set of policy instruments, which, as you point out, governments have used. Governments have never used a one-size-fits-all approach to emissions, and I think they should continue to use and utilize a wide variety of policy instruments.

Mr. Mike Bossio: To follow up on that, we look at the regulatory environment or the policy measures that could be taken to benefit, and I think that, as a government, we've recognized that you need to use a broad range, a broad basket, of different policy measures in order to achieve our targets, but it has shown, as you said, that the regulatory side is far more expensive.

Would you agree that it doesn't send as clear a signal to the market of the intention of meeting our targets around climate change and GHG emissions?

• (1625)

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I agree, and I would go further. The risk that governments run in using those instruments is that they're picking winners and losers, in many ways, by setting those performance standards or those technology standards. It's essentially, "You do this; you don't do this". In some sense, it's almost taking a "government knows best" approach. Ideally you would want to let the market figure out where it's cheapest to cut those emissions. So yes, I would say in many instances—in most instances—the best bang for the buck is going to be through carbon pricing.

That is not to suggest it's appropriate in all cases, again, because there are going to be exceptions depending on the industry and depending on the nature of those emissions.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Would you not agree, then—and Ms. Miller, I think you can probably jump in on this—in taking that exact view with agriculture, with the federal backstop, which will apply to Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick, that farm fuel use is exempt for that reason? It is an industry, a sector, that today doesn't have the technology to replace or to eliminate the use of fossil fuels in its production or completely its greenhouse gas emissions, and as we know with animals, we can start working toward reducing those emissions, but we're not there yet. We need time to adapt for that sector, to adapt and develop those technologies. Maybe you can expand on that and the types of technology you think are going to lead us there.

Ms. Susie Miller: I'd like to use two examples of where government instruments have helped or not contributed. One is on the adoption of this technology we talked about, the zero till. Essentially there was very little federal government investment. It was provincial government investment that got it going, but there were no incentives provided and there was no punishment, I guess, for not adopting that technology. It led significantly to the reduction of greenhouse gas, but it was not for that intention.

The other was the biofuels industry. The biofuels industry had a lot of investment by producers and local communities, but it was only because government was there at the same time in terms of taxation. That industry would not have developed without that and the mandated minimum fuel.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Moffatt.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I'm just trying to think.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Do you think that was the right decision, right now, to exempt on-farm use of fuel?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: Yes. I do. Again, this is an industry where I think governments, both federal and provincial, do need to tread very carefully. We have a sector where, again, margins are low and they are susceptible to international competition. The last thing we want to see is a reduction in wheat grown because of this, let's say, and those international sales taken up by countries like Kazakhstan that have a much higher carbon footprint. That would both reduce our output but also increase greenhouse gas emissions across the world because you're taking away a low-carbon producer and replacing it with a high-carbon producer.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warawa, we're back to you for six minutes.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

I was looking at the Smart Prosperity Institute website. I just wanted to see what they said about the carbon tax. They've said the same.

Is their headquarters in Ottawa?

• (1630)

Prof. Mike Moffatt: That's correct.

Mr. Mark Warawa: They're not in British Columbia. They're headquartered in Ottawa, and they're praising the B.C. carbon tax, which is 112%.

I live in British Columbia, and I can tell you first-hand that this is not what British Columbians sense. It's an extremely high cost of living, so it is having an impact. Emissions are going up. Canada will not meet its Paris targets in 2020. That's the perspective of people who are under that burden.

I'm thinking of the importance of the agricultural sectors in Canada. I'm thinking of the testimony I heard that Canada is a world leader. We're the model that the rest of the world is following in many sectors and in many ways.

I'm thinking of the production of aluminum. The cleanest place in the world to have aluminum manufactured is in Canada. In Canada, there are two tonnes of GHG for every one tonne of aluminum; in China, it's eleven.

Where should the aluminum be made, if we truly look at the issue of climate change as a global crisis? Where is the best place to make the aluminum? Well, it's Canada. If we produce more aluminum in Canada, then our GHGs go up, making it more difficult to reach the targets.

Now I'm going to go into your sectors.

Where is the best place to grow food? It's in Canada. In your testimony, you said the cleanest place in the world to grow grains and food is Canada.

I'm thinking of testimony that I heard from the aviation industry. They've reduced their emissions. I think it was 30% below 2005 levels already. All the major airlines in Canada are asking why should they have to pay a carbon tax when they've already achieved and exceeded the Paris targets. They will continue to improve, but this is a burden that they've said to me is unfair.

I hope you understand my perspective. Yes, we have to do better globally. If Canada is one of the world leaders, are you suggesting that we cut back on our production or should we expand our production if we're the cleanest model in the world? Should we cut back, stay static, and just get cleaner, or actually produce more?

That's my question.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: We should produce more, but we should produce more through innovation.

I don't accept this idea that this necessarily has to be at a cost to each other. Again, if we look at the agricultural industry across Canada, our output has increased, but our greenhouse gas emissions have been dropping 0.9% per year, every year, since 1990. We can continue to achieve that performance—and better performance—through the use of innovative technologies, both creating those technologies in Canada but also better adoption of the technologies that already exist. In things like fertilizer use, we've seen that when you're able to do that, you see a cost reduction of \$29 to \$71 per acre. That money goes into the pockets of farmers.

I agree that this should not come at the reduction of production. What we should be trying to accomplish is getting more value per acre. We can do that through the use of new technologies and through government helping industry with those technologies. That will achieve better economic and better environmental performance.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

The Chair: You still have over a minute.

Do you have a question?

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm good, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to Mr. Amos next.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate how we're bringing up the issue of carbon pricing once again in this discussion at our committee. I think it's a pervasive topic, and the sooner we get our minds wrapped around how important pollution pricing is, the better.

I appreciated Mr. Moffatt's remarks, which could leave no one with any doubt that your opinion is it's a necessary but insufficient measure. It's one of a suite of initiatives. Thank you for clarifying that. I know your economic expertise from Western precedes you, and that's not just the opinion from Smart Prosperity, as I understand it, but yours also as an academic at Western.

We've heard from the Grain Growers of Canada that they are concerned about the applicability of the fuel charge on fuels that would be used to dry crops. We're talking about situations of flooding, wet weather at inopportune times, where the farmers have no choice. I know there are grain growers in the Pontiac who consider this an important issue.

Could you comment on how expensive a proposition it would be to provide the coverage or provide that exemption, if you would, to those farmers for those fuels? I'm not clear on the cost associated with that fuel usage, and the full extent of it across Canada.

Perhaps you could comment on that, Ms. Miller.

● (1635)

Ms. Susie Miller: I can't give you the exact amount. It varies by location time. For the individual producer it can mean a significant amount. I think that's what Grain Growers was getting at.

On a regular basis, grain dryers are used sparingly, but some years, and this would be one, where it was either harvest them with a higher moisture content than ideal or not harvest them at all....

It is cyclical and it is region specific. For that reason, it has a significant impact at various times.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

Could you please go a bit further and let us know what particular regions are more vulnerable to these cyclical needs?

Ms. Susie Miller: This year it would be Ontario and Alberta because the snow came before the harvest was completed.

It does move around. I don't think any region is exempt from the risk.

Mr. William Amos: Okay. Thank you.

I believe my colleague has a few other questions so I will pass my time to Mr. Bossio.

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you.

Thank you both once again.

I know some of the larger farms in my community use the zero till method. They talk about the Swiss cheese impact on the soil of that happening, and it becoming a sponge, essentially, because there are dry spots in some of the areas. They are saying their crops are growing much better.

What crops do not suit a zero till method?

Ms. Susie Miller: I have heard anecdotally from talking to farmers in Saskatchewan that corn is much more challenging because there's so much trash left on the surface it's hard to see below it.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I'm surprised because one of the largest crops they have is corn.

Ms. Susie Miller: Again, I said anecdotally.

We don't cover them, but potatoes and vegetables don't fit that.

It's combined with regions in some areas. For example, where it is very wet, and you have crops like canola that are more susceptible to disease, tilling will reduce the risk. It's individual situations like that.

Mr. Mike Bossio: You were saying the smaller farms. This is Ontario, so in Ontario 1,300 acres is one farm I'm talking about. That's not a big farm in Saskatchewan. You were saying the size of the farm also seems to be an indicator. This may not be a viable method for a smaller farm.

Do you have a sense of what size is the optimal level to do it on?

● (1640)

Ms. Susie Miller: No, but I do know that in Ontario, for example, there are a lot of farms around 200 acres. You would never get that out in the Prairies. It doesn't take a 10,000-acre farm, but it might take a farm of 500 to 1,000 acres.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I know you're seeing many new technologies that are coming out. Looking at farm management systems, we had enterprise management systems that were all the rage, and now they've actually gone to the farm level, where from their office on the farm they see every aspect of production, especially now with drones and other soil management practices or technologies that are being developed.

Can you give us a sense of where you see that going? We know Canada is leading the way when it comes to zero till and some other practices, but are we leading on the technology side?

Ms. Susie Miller: The level of technology adoption is quite high, but the optimization of the use of the information from that technology is still quite low.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Chair, you usually say this but I didn't hear it.

I would encourage both of you to send in any reports you have that would expand on what we've discussed today.

The Chair: We'd like to see briefs of up to 10 pages, if there's anything you have that you feel would add to the conversation and to our report. If it's longer than that, it gets difficult for translation and other purposes, but 10 pages would be great.

Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I've lived in British Columbia for decades now, and we've had a carbon tax for the last 10 years. In my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, quite frankly, I haven't heard people complaining about the carbon tax. It's more a discussion about how that money should be properly used once it's collected.

My interest is in bringing it right down to home. I truly believe people want to do the right thing with domestic waste, certainly in my riding. I would be interested, Mr. Moffatt, and perhaps Ms. Miller, to hear from you, first of all, on the optimum percentage breakdown in GHG between domestic waste and industrial waste—if you don't have it, that's fine—and second, on what we should be doing at home to reduce our waste and what the federal government's role should be in helping us do that.

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I think the biggest thing on the household side is just keeping organic materials out of landfill. Here in Ottawa we have our green bins. We see this as being a useful project that other municipalities could follow. I'm originally from London, Ontario, and we don't have that there. I don't know if there's a role for the federal government to assist municipalities in this, but again, keeping organic materials out of landfill and preventing the methane from escaping does go a long way.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Basically, I was referring to a report credited to the Smart Prosperity Institute called "Economic Tools to Reduce Household Waste and Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions", which addressed incentive-based strategies. If you get a chance after this meeting, Ms. Miller, to talk a bit more about this, that would be great.

Ms. Susie Miller: I just want to mention the whole issue of plastics. They don't bale with twine anymore. They bale with plastics and they use plastic bags. I think there is a lot of opportunity between the agriculture sector and the household sector to take a look at innovations in what we do with plastics.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Moffatt, do you have anything more on incentives?

Prof. Mike Moffatt: I think a lot of it is getting prices right on things like tag programs for garbage and trying to price that externality so people are taking into account the costs of their actions when they take them. That was a lot of that report. I believe it was my colleague Stephanie Cairns who wrote that report. A lot of it was focused on municipalities, with an additional focus on getting prices right and using economic incentives to assist households in making the right decisions.

The Chair: That concludes this portion of the meeting today.

My thanks to both of you for being here. We had a great discussion.

I'm going to suspend the meeting briefly while we get set up for the next panel with Parks Canada. This is going to be on supplementary estimates (A). We'll be back.

● (1640)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1645)

The Chair: We're ready to get started on the next part of our meeting, which is with our Parks Canada officials. Welcome.

The purpose of having you here today is to go over the supplementary estimates (A) that were directed to Parks Canada. I know you weren't able to join us last week, so it's great to have you here this week.

We've allowed 45 minutes. Actually, it's going to be 40 minutes. We'll have up to 10 minutes for opening comments and then we'll get into a round of questions and answers.

● (1650)

Hon. Mike Lake: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, again, could I get clarification on what we're doing today? It's not 100% clear to me. When we get to the end of time today, what is the game plan for the supplementary estimates?

The Chair: The question that I'll be putting is whether we're willing to consider voting on them today. I know that there is some outstanding business and I'm willing to hear that. Let's have that discussion in the last five minutes of the time.

My preference or my desire is to hear from Parks Canada and then we'll have a discussion as the committee about whether we move to a vote today on the supplementary estimates (A) or if we wait until a later date, given the request that you have.

Hon. Mike Lake: Thanks.

The Chair: Parks Canada, you may start with your opening comments.

Mr. Michael Nadler (Acting Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Sure.

Mr. Chair, and committee members, thank you. It's a great privilege to join you here today. It's always a privilege to visit this committee and all of the House committees.

I'm Michael Nadler. I am the interim chief executive officer of Parks Canada. The last time we presented with you, Daniel Watson was sitting in that role.

[Translation]

With me today is Sylvain Michaud, Chief Financial Officer at Parks Canada Agency.

As I mentioned, we're really happy to be with you. It's a privilege for us to present to you.

If you don't mind, I would like to give a brief overview of the Supplementary Estimates (A) 2018-2019 for Parks Canada Agency.

[English]

With your permission, as you mentioned, I'd like to begin with a short overview of the Parks Canada Agency supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year 2018-19. Then, we'd be pleased to receive any questions committee members might have.

The agency's supplementary estimates (A) submission amounts to an increase to the agency's voted appropriations of \$45.5 million. This is approximately 3% of Parks Canada's voted authorities to date for the fiscal year. These supplementary estimates would bring the agency's proposed voted authorities to date to \$1.69 billion for the current fiscal year.

[Translation]

This funding is requested for six initiatives.

[English]

First, there is \$21 million to purchase a unique and important property located within the boundary of Bruce Peninsula National Park. The funds originate with budget 2018 for the protecting Canada's nature, parks and wild spaces initiative. This parcel of land will bring the Bruce Peninsula National Park to nearly 90% completion. It's home to 10 species at risk as well as rare ancient cliff-edge ecosystems. The expansion of Bruce Peninsula National Park is one of the priority initiatives of a nature legacy for Canada.

Second, there is \$14.8 million, also from budget 2018, to help us conclude an impact and benefit agreement for Nahanni National Park Reserve and advance indigenous collaborative management and reconciliation initiatives at Tallarutiup Imanga, or Lancaster Sound, the marine conservation area in Nunavut. These efforts are also part of a nature legacy for Canada and support the advancement of conservation of natural and cultural heritage while strengthening Parks Canada's collaborations and relationships with indigenous peoples.

Third, there is \$7.5 million from budget 2017 to provide a contribution to the Trans Canada Trail, which is a registered non-profit charitable organization dedicated to enhancing and maintaining Canada's Great Trail, a national network of multi-use recreational trails that links 15,000 communities across the country and spans some 24,000 kilometres. Canada's Great Trail is one of the longest recreational trail systems in the world.

Fourth, there is \$1.1 million to advance Parks Canada's involvement in negotiations on rights reconciliation agreements with the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Peskotomuhkati first nations in the Atlantic region. These negotiations are for renewal of treaty-related measures on fisheries governance and access and to test new treaty-related measures relating to governance and fisheries access. Also being negotiated in these treaty-related measures are stewardship of natural and cultural resources, harvesting and co-operative management in Parks Canada places in the region.

Fifth, there is \$673,000 from Treasury Board to provide for surge capacity to increase support services to employees with pay issues at Parks Canada as a result of the implementation of the Phoenix pay system. This includes assistance in informing employees of the support and information available to them.

Sixth, there is \$475,000 in the form of a transfer from the Department of Transport to complete three climate risk assessment reports looking at climate change risks to highway infrastructure in Kootenay National Park, the Trans-Canada Highway in Glacier National Park, and the Eastport causeway highway in Terra Nova National Park.

● (1655)

The transportation assets risk assessment program's aim is to improve the understanding of climate risks to federal transportation infrastructure by providing those responsible for the assets with the information upon which investment decisions and asset management plans can be based in the future.

[Translation]

Thank you for your attention. We'll be glad to answer any question you may have.

[English]

Many thanks, Mr. Chair and members, for your attention.

Sylvain and I would be pleased to take your questions at this time.

The Chair: Thank you so much for those opening comments.

We'll get right into the questions.

First up for six minutes is Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, folks. We appreciate your being here.

It's nice to see you again, Michael.

We studied and produced what I think was a really great report on protected areas, and I believe it was unanimous. We asked the government to do everything in its power to protect more land and nature. We had a recommendation that the federal government work directly with municipalities in acquiring land so that we could hit some of our targets. The government delivered. They announced the \$1.3 billion, of course, to protect nature, parks and wild spaces in our budget 2018.

Bruce Peninsula National Park was a file that our chair, Mr. Aldag, worked on back when he was a public servant with Parks, so I'm happy to be his voice now that he's chairing, because he's not allowed to ask questions. I'm sure, though, that this would be the one he would ask. I know that he and many Canadians have advocated for the expansion of Bruce Peninsula.

You mentioned in your remarks, Michael, and I was happy to hear that Parks Canada had reached an agreement to acquire a parcel of land in Georgian Bay to expand this park, so \$21 million is included in the estimates for this acquisition.

I wonder if you can tell me a little bit about this land parcel, specifically its significance, maybe ecologically. I'm not from that area of the country. I don't have the in-depth knowledge that our chair would have on this, but I do find it fascinating, because we have a park that I consider to be Halifax's Rouge Park in Blue Mountain-Birch Cove. I hope someday I'll be reading a question to a Parks Canada person about a massive acquisition of land in Halifax for our version of this park or Rouge Park.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Sure. I could give a bit of context on that acquisition.

Actually, since 1987, when the park was established—now it's a provincial park and before it was a national park—we've made 140 parcel purchases of land to complete the park. This is among the most sizeable....

The lands being acquired are 1,300 hectares, or 3,217 acres. The lands themselves are cliff-edge ecosystem lands, so there is significant waterfront on these lands. There is some recreational trail infrastructure there as well. There's a facility on the lands.

Important to Parks Canada is that these lands protect some unique ecosystems in the region. There is some karst geography there, as well. Sandstone geography is relatively rare in the region, and important for us to protect.

As I mentioned in my remarks, there are 10 species at risk in the area. Habitats for these species are in this 1,300 hectares, including a habitat that's used by the massasauga rattlesnake, which is an important species that we're protecting in that region.

It brings that park to 90% completion. We're still not quite complete with the Bruce Peninsula National Park. Before considering any expansion, we'd want to focus on completing the park.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Are you familiar with the park that I mentioned in Halifax?

Mr. Michael Nadler: I'm not. Where is it?

Mr. Darren Fisher: It's on the bus route.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Oh, is that right.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You can take a city bus to this current park, but proposed massive urban park, which has the support of the people of the municipality of Halifax.

I'll switch for a second, since you're not up on it, but maybe we can chat offline about it sometime.

• (1700)

Mr. Michael Nadler: Yes, I'd be pleased to.

Mr. Darren Fisher: In terms of the money for The Great Trail, what is that specifically going to? Can you outline that a little bit? Is it for maintenance?

Mr. Michael Nadler: It's covering two functions for the Trans Canada Trail, or The Great Trail.

One is enhancements and improvements to the trail infrastructure. Last year, we all celebrated Canada 150 but also the completion of the Trans Canada Trail. These investments will support ongoing improvements and enhancements to that now connected trail, plus capacity development for the communities that are involved in the delivery of the trail network.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I don't need a whole minute and a half to invite you to come to Halifax and visit with me.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Absolutely.

Mr. Darren Fisher: We'll take a look. Bring your hiking boots.

Mr. Michael Nadler: That's kind of you. Thank you. That's very generous.

The Chair: Are you good?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Lake, we're going to you.

Hon. Mike Lake: As I did last time, I'm going to pass my time to Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Is there another floor crossing going on here?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

Thank you for being here today.

I want to follow up just quickly on the trail itself.

It's a spectacular initiative. It crosses Canada. It comes right through my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. The groups that helped to establish the trail, of course, have a concern about ongoing operational funding to maintain the trail. I'm sure that's true everywhere across Canada.

It says \$7.5 million, and I guess that's for this year. I would like to see that become an annual operating expense for Parks Canada to have in their budget, rather than one time.

I don't know whether you can speak to that or just make note of it, Mr. Nadler.

Mr. Michael Nadler: I think the Dewdney Trail is part of the network. Further to your comments during the last presentation, one of my first jobs was picking rocks and tossing bales in Lister, British Columbia, near Creston.

It was in budget 2017 that \$30 million over five years was allocated to this initiative. Part of the supplementary estimates is actually reprofiling of that funding, to increase the amount but reduce the duration, so it's a four-year allocation.

We work very closely with the trail. In fact, it's an honour to collaborate with the Trans Canada Trail. They are looking at long-term funding options, including fundraising and other activities.

Right now, we have stable federal funding for them for the near future, but we are talking with them about their long-term plans.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: This isn't really new funding. This is restating...dividing it by four years rather than five.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Yes, it's just a change in the profile of the funding.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I'm quite surprised to not see anything in here concerning Wood Buffalo National Park.

As you know, the IUCN report from 2017 said that impacts on the park from development are "far more complex and severe than previously thought". Wood Buffalo National Park was determined to have "the worst conservation outlook" for a natural world heritage site in Canada.

The report is due in December, if I remember right, in terms of responding to the IUCN report, yet I don't see any money in here for Wood Buffalo Park.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Yes. In fact, as part of the nature legacy announcement in budget 2018, \$27.5 million is going to our work with indigenous communities and other parties around the action plan for Wood Buffalo National Park.

Member Stetski, you're absolutely right. The deadline was December 1 for us to provide our action plan. One of the indigenous parties asked for an extension of that deadline, so our approach will be to table with the World Heritage Committee a state of the park report on December 1 and a draft of the action plan, but the actual final action plan would come in February.

There is one thing I want to mention. This year was a significant year for Wood Buffalo National Park. Many of you might be familiar with the whooping crane, which is a severely at-risk species. We set a new record for whooping crane nests in Wood Buffalo National Park, with 98 nests in the spring of this year. That's up from 82, which was the previous record. We're making significant strides on bison and on whooping cranes in that national park.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: That's even more reason to put some money into actually moving conservation forward there.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Fair enough.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I have four national parks in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, including Kootenay National Park and Glacier National Park. I wonder if you could tell us a bit more about what the climate risk assessment would look like for Highway 395 and Highway 1 in terms of those parks. What's the objective for that?

• (1705)

Mr. Michael Nadler: It's part of Transport Canada's broader initiative to assess the risks of climate change on our national transportation infrastructure. I don't have a lot more detail on the analyses as they are ongoing, so I can't give you an assessment of the current risk for that infrastructure.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Would it be primarily around flood-proofing, do you think, or—

Mr. Michael Nadler: In that corridor, you're probably acutely aware of the environmental conditions that can affect transportation. Flood-proofing is one, and we know the flood season there along the Columbia River can be quite significant. We also know that avalanche season can be equally significant. Both are impacted by climate change, but that wouldn't be the limits of it. It would even relate to the stability of the road surfaces themselves and—

Mr. Wayne Stetski: If the reports lead to additional funding to improve those highways, that would be very welcomed, as you know, by people who live in my riding and people from across Canada and the world who use them.

Mr. Michael Nadler: As part of our \$3.6-billion investment program, we are undertaking some twinning in that region and some improvements in that region.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: The dream is still twinning right from the Alberta border through to—

Mr. Michael Nadler: Yes, fair enough. I understand.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I'm just happy to see the agreement with the Mi'kmaq and the Maliseet first nations. I think our report indicated that aboriginal parks are the way of the future, and hopefully we'll see a lot more allocated in future budgets to make that happen.

Mr. Michael Nadler: We're encouraged also. We have collaborative relationships with the Mi'kmaq and the Maliseet in New Brunswick but also in Nova Scotia, as you might be aware. The Peskotomuhkati are also part of that relationship and an important partner for us in southwestern New Brunswick.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: We certainly need more of that going forward.

Mr. Michael Nadler: I agree.

The Chair: That's the end of your swap time.

Now I'll go back to Mr. Stetski, who I assume will respect the gentleman's agreement that he has with Mr. Lake.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I think I could use a cookie....

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I'm happy to turn it over to Mr. Lake.

Hon. Mike Lake: Thank you.

It's funny. I feel obligated to talk about the parks in Alberta after hearing my colleagues talk about parks, but rather than get Mr. Stetski a cookie, I will say how much I enjoy travelling through his area. I spend a significant amount of time, of course, in the neighbouring province. It's right on the border with Alberta. It's a beautiful part of the country.

As much as I'd like to talk about those things, I'm probably not going to take up too much of your time in terms of where I'm going to go with my time.

We have had a few challenges in this committee in terms of those of us who believe in the principle that the minister should come before the committee on supplementary estimates when we're voting on an extra \$85 million being spent, especially when we hear that the minister has turned us down but was in the House literally immediately before the committee speaking. She's clearly here; she represents a riding that's here. We want to make sure as committee that we give her every chance to appear, because I'm sure she really wants to come before the committee. Maybe we were too restrictive in our time frame by only offering committee slots to her.

I'm going to move a motion right now, which I gave notice of previously:

That the Committee invite the Minister of the Environment to appear before the Committee at any time over the next two weeks to answer questions on the Supplementary Estimates (A), 2018-19.

Just to be clear on this motion for Liberal colleagues, it's an invitation. It's not a demand that the minister appear. It's an invitation from our committee. We are the environment committee of the House of Commons and it seems to make sense that we would invite the Minister of Environment to appear before committee. We're giving a broad window of time to the minister to appear. We want to give her every opportunity to come. I note that in taking a look at the history of this committee during the years from 2006 to 2015 there was only one year, I believe, when the minister didn't appear on supplementary estimates, and I don't believe that this minister specifically has appeared on supplementary estimates yet.

That is where we would like to go. Given that the last time we moved a motion similar to this the Liberals basically moved adjournment to shut down debate on it, I'm excited to see an Alberta member of Parliament on the Liberal side here today, because of course, he'll be interested to know that there's significant money to implement Bill C-69. I'm sure he's hearing from constituents on that issue just as much as I am, so given the opportunity to vote on whether to invite the minister, I'm certain the member will be excited to have that opportunity.

I would love to get an indication from Liberal members before I give up my time, so if anybody were to indicate that they would support the motion, it would be nice to know that now. We could move on. I'm not seeing any indication, so I'll continue with my arguments, and hopefully we can convince somebody over there. We only need to convince one.

In doing that, I will reference, as I did at the last meeting, the mandate letter to the environment minister. I think it's an important place to start. It's a letter from the Prime Minister, who was, I guess, the host to 2,000 Calgarians, it sounds like, or thousands of Calgarians, who came out to get the chance to be in the neighbourhood of the Prime Minister—maybe not in his presence—to express their thoughts on Bill C-69 and other policies of the government in the last week.

His mandate letter to Minister McKenna says in part, “Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians.”

Of course, we're here assessing an ask for an extra \$85 million in a context of a budget that's almost \$20 billion in deficit. Again, the Prime Minister has written, “Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises.”

• (1710)

I'll reference one particular promise from the Liberal platform. I'll quote it here. This is from the 2015 Liberal platform and I think is an important context to the conversation. It's from page 12. Some members of the committee might be very familiar with this. It says:

We will run modest short-term deficits of less than \$10 billion in each of the next two fiscal years to fund historic investments in infrastructure and our middle class. After the next two fiscal years, the deficit will decline and our investment plan will return Canada to a balanced budget in 2019.

It's a very clear promise, just in case anyone had missed it. I noticed that Mr. Amos is on his phone, so maybe he missed this and would be interested.

Mr. William Amos: No, I got it. Thank you.

Hon. Mike Lake: I'll repeat it. “After the next two fiscal years, the deficit will decline and our investment plan will return to a balanced budget in 2019.” This is 2015, by the way.

It's a very clear promise. Reflecting on the mandate letter to the Minister of Environment which says, “Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians”, one would expect that she would be excited to come and talk about supplementary estimates. It has her asking for spending of \$85 million more.

Now, moving on within that mandate letter, it says, “I expect Canadians to hold us accountable for delivering these commitments, and I expect all ministers to do their part individually and collectively.”

I would note that many ministers have appeared on supplementary estimates. In this case, we have \$85 million and we have yet to hear from the minister on this.

I'll just continue because it's interesting reading here. It says, “Our platform guides our government. Over the course of our four-year mandate, I expect us to deliver on all of our commitments.”

I assume that means a balanced budget and also transparency and accountability in government, which was a big promise that was made.

I will note, just as an aside, that there was also a significant promise made over and over again about no more omnibus bills. It's interesting to note that promise in the context of maybe the biggest BIA we have ever seen in the history of our Parliament. There is no more use of closure or time allocation. I think the government is well on their way to the record books in terms of the use of time allocation. But, those are asides.

• (1715)

Mr. Darren Fisher: We'll never catch up with you.

Hon. Mike Lake: Darren says they'll never catch us. The interesting thing about it is we didn't actually promise not to do it. It was a very clear promise on your side though.

I am just reading again from the Prime Minister's words. This one is particularly interesting in the context of the conversation we're having today. It reads:

As Minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government. This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees and the public service.

Apparently, as Prime Minister, he's saying that his ministers will be held accountable for commitments. I think it's in that spirit that our committee wants to make sure we give the minister every opportunity to come before the committee because she's going to be held accountable for that. It's incumbent on us to make sure we open up our calendars, make sure that we're available at any time to fit within her busy schedule.

I've talked a lot about that. I want to talk about the importance in terms of her being here.

Look at the context of what's happening right now in Canada and what's happening in Oshawa. Our hearts go out to the folks in Oshawa. When you combine that with the tens of thousands of jobs lost in Alberta....

Kent, you'll know about this. Many of your constituents will have faced job loss in Calgary.

Look at the impact of the inability to get pipelines built in this country. When the election happened, there were three pipelines in the pipeline, so to speak. Three pipelines were in process. We had one that was approved, northern gateway. We had energy east, which was well on its way, and Trans Mountain, which was under way as well.

The Chair: Mr. Lake, I'm just going to jump in here.

I appreciate the context that you're giving, but as we discussed the last time, we're working here on the supplementary estimates (A).

Hon. Mike Lake: I'm sorry; I thought Bill C-69 was a part of the supplementary estimates. It has everything to do with pipelines, right?

The Chair: There's money for implementation, so I'll give you that connection.

I just wanted to make sure that we're keeping it in context.

I was thinking of that in light of the Parks Canada piece today, because we have had the discussion on the others. I'll let you keep going on the broader umbrella of supplementary estimates (A) .

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, Mr. Lake is speaking to a motion. There's no time limitation on a motion, providing he's speaking to the motion. The motion is in order. You didn't challenge the validity of the motion. I believe there's no time limitation on his....

The Chair: I'm not offering any time limitation. I was just seeing if—

Mr. Mark Warawa: Why was he stopped from speaking?

The Chair: I was just saying that last week we got a bit broader than the discussion, what we were studying, and that it would be great to keep it tied to what we were discussing.

He's given his response. Now I'm turning the microphone back to him.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

Hon. Mike Lake: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd love to get some indication from somebody across the way that they're going to support this invitation. Then we can move on as a committee.

No, I'm not seeing anything still, so I'll continue.

This is of huge interest in my constituency. For those of you who don't know this, I serve the largest constituency by population in the country, Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

The Leduc-Nisku industrial area is one of the largest in North America. It has been hit significantly. My constituents have been hit significantly by decisions made by this government to create an environment where it's almost impossible to build pipelines in this country.

I can guarantee that my constituents want us to hear from the Minister of Environment in regard to the supplementary estimates. They want us to have the opportunity as parliamentarians from all sides to ask questions.

It's not only the pipeline policy of this government that is having a negative effect; compounding it in their minds are the massive deficits that are being run up right now—over \$60 billion in deficits, with no end in sight.

Do you know what they come back to? Time and time again they come back to the previous Trudeau era of the 1970s and early 1980s. What were the things that led to the devastating cuts that wound up happening in the mid- to late 1990s under the Chrétien government? It was the \$35 billion in transfers that were cut from health care, social services and education. What was it that caused those cuts in the first place? Some might say it was 14 out of 15 years of deficits run by the original Trudeau government in the 1970s and 1980s. Some might say that it had something to do with the national energy program of 1982 which devastated the oil industry in Canada. That economic collapse led to rising interest rates that caused the debt to balloon out of control.

Some might say that they're very concerned, taking a look at the fiscal environment we have right now, where it seems like we're doing exactly the same thing. It seems like this Trudeau government is doing the same thing that the previous Trudeau government did.

You have a circumstance where you have a government with a spending problem that is completely out of control. It's quite clear that they don't know how to deal with that spending problem, because if they did, they would have fulfilled their promise to balance the budget. It's quite clear that they're unable to do that.

One would assume that they want to do it. Every day in the House of Commons, the finance minister stands up and talks about how fantastic the economy is. There's no reason that the government couldn't and shouldn't be able to balance the budget based on revenues that they have coming in. They have increased spending by tens of billions of dollars, each and every year. There is no end in sight to that.

Here we are, sitting in the environment committee, studying \$85 million in supplementary estimates. It's a committee where ministers of the environment have come for years to explain their supplementary estimates and answer questions from committee members.

You have a government where the Prime Minister has said, “As Minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government.” This is a quote from the Prime Minister. I'm not making this up. It goes on to say, “This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament, [and] Parliamentary Committees”. That's the mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the Minister of Environment . So here we are today.

The hope is when I come to the end of my time here that at least one Liberal member will put up their hand and say, “No, I don't think it's okay to adjourn the debate”, and when the vote comes, they will say, “Yes, I think it's appropriate for the environment committee to invite the Minister of Environment to come before the committee on supplementary estimates.”

• (1720)

It is my hope that one member of Parliament from the Liberal side will have the courage to stand behind what his own Prime Minister has promised and simply vote to invite the minister to come before the committee. If it really doesn't work within the minister's schedule, she can say no.

We may not agree on everything, Wayne, but I think most of us on our side and, I assume, on the NDP side agree that there's a principle that when you make a promise, you should stick with that promise. There were clear commitments made during the campaign, and it is important in a democracy that the minister come before the committee to defend her ask for more money. I think Canadians expect us to do our job as a committee.

Mr. Chair, could I ask who else is on the speaking list?

The Chair: Next I have Mr. Bossio, then Mr. Warawa, then Mr. Godin, and then Mr. Stetski.

Hon. Mike Lake: Okay.

The Chair: We have six minutes left on the clock of allocated time for the committee meeting.

Hon. Mike Lake: I want to make sure that we have time to vote.

With that, I will cede the floor to Mr. Bossio.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments on your motion.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: With all due respect to my colleagues on the other side, the minister has actually been at this committee six times since becoming the minister. She has been here for all of the main estimate presentations. She has made herself available to this committee in the past, and I'm sure she will do so again in the future.

I'll leave it there. Thank you.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm new to the committee. I have a responsibility to ask the minister about estimates. Under our guide, our policy, committees considering estimates may invite witnesses to

appear. These typically include the minister. It's reasonable to call the minister.

A week ago, when we expected the minister to come, the minister, instead of being here, was at a party, in the same building, on the same floor, in a different room. I think the minister has a responsibility to be here. It's her responsibility.

Our policy says that this process typically includes the minister. I'm hoping, as Mike has said, that the members will say that this is what is typically expected and typically done, and that the minister will be asked to come. We can't demand that the minister come, but it is for us to say that we will meet for that one hour, whenever the minister is willing to come.

Without that agreement, the message from this committee, which is dominated by Liberal members—that's the reality—is that the minister isn't going to come. The minister's not going to respect tradition. She's not going to respect what is typically expected of her. It provides a bad message, so I support the motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Monsieur Godin, the microphone is yours.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: I will be very brief because I see there is very little time left.

I simply want to say that it's an important exercise as far as expenses are concerned. As parliamentarians, we must be able to ask questions. During the 2015 campaign, the government committed to staying within budget, but it does not. It showed it once again with last week's Economic Statement.

For the sake of thoroughness, we would like to question the minister regarding unplanned overspending. These were exceptional expenses for which, unfortunately, the minister gave us no answer. We've even accepted to modify our schedule to be available to her. We know that she's busy, but we want to do our work in a very professional, conscientious, and rigorous manner.

It is disappointing to see what's happening here today. Even though, as Liberals across the table mentioned, the minister has appeared before us on six occasions, this topic should have been a priority given its importance. Unfortunately, Liberals do not give us the opportunity to ask questions.

That is the comment that I want to make, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Yes, just quickly, I do think it's important that the minister come when we're talking about substantial amounts of money. I also know that she's very capable of answering questions. On both of those fronts, it would be good to have her here.

The Chair: All right.

With that, I have no more speakers on my list. We have a motion before us, so I'll call the question.

Hon. Mike Lake: I'd like a recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

The Chair: With that, we're now at the end of the meeting.

I would like to thank the Parks Canada officials for coming and providing us insight into the supplementary estimates (A) that were for Parks Canada.

The meeting is adjourned.

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