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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

I'm going to start the meeting, and if our witnesses could just be patient for a second, I'd like to do some committee business that needs to be done, really quickly. We have circulated the subcommittee meeting results to everybody and we need to get them approved so that we can start moving.

What we did was come forward with an idea to have one more witness with us on the 17th. We tried to get the Pacific Salmon Foundation to join us, and they cannot, so to stay with the focus on the marine parks aspect, we went with West Coast Environmental Law, which was our second choice, and they can come. I just want to make sure everybody knows that.

The second thing was a frame for a possible trip in the late summer, right at the very beginning of the first week back—this is to give the clerk the opportunity to start scoping it out and seeing what it might look like and what the costs might be. I need approval from the committee to say that we're willing to entertain scoping this out and moving forward on investigating a possible trip for the protected areas. That is really the essence.

We also identified some more witnesses for subsequent meetings, shown on the list you have. It's not solid; it's just a projection of who we might try to bring forward for the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): You also have something here, Madam Chair, about establishing a Facebook page for the committee.

The Chair: We will have the clerk investigate that idea. She needed to know from the committee that there is an okay to investigate it and report back.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is it a requirement of committee members to like this page?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: That I'll leave up to you, but that is probably a good idea.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Don't tell him it's a great question.

The Chair: I'm going to move it along, because we have six witnesses and I want to make sure we have a good chance to ask questions.

As for Grande Cache, we're still working on trying to get them up.

I want to finish committee business so that we can move on to the meeting. I'm looking for someone to move concurrence in the subcommittee's report.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'll move that.

The Chair: Adoption has been moved. All in favour?

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That's unanimous. Thank you very much for doing that.

I would like to move on to welcoming our witnesses.

We are having some technical difficulties. We are still trying to get one group up, which they are still working on. We'll see whether Western Canada Wilderness Committee can join us a little bit later.

Let me introduce everyone who is with us. We have two groups. The first is the World Wildlife Fund, and Sigrid Kuehnemund is with us, the lead specialist from oceans, as well as Kimberley Dunn, manager for national oceans governance. Thank you very much for being with us today.

We also have the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, represented by Nadim Kara, senior program director, and Lesley Williams, senior manager for aboriginal affairs and resource development.

We thank you very much for joining us today.

By video conference we have Willmore Wilderness Foundation. They are up now.

We want to test whether you can hear us. Can you put your hands up, if you can hear us?

I don't see any hands up. We are not connected. We still have some technical difficulties.

Oh, I see two hands up. That's from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association; they can hear us. Thank you very much.

We will have to work on the other two.

Just to say who is with us on video conference, from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association we have Bob Lowe, the director, and Fawn Jackson, manager for environment and sustainability.

Thank you for joining us.

From the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, we have Stephen Woodley.

Oh, no. We just lost the ones we had.

We definitely have Stephen Woodley, and I appreciate your waving to let us know you are there.

We just have two on the video conference at the moment, and the other group is not.... If you can hear us, please wave again.

We will get going with the video conference group, because I don't want to lose you without hearing from you—if those who are with us don't mind being patient while we try to work with the video conference.

Let's start with Stephen Woodley, please.

Go ahead, start.

● (1105)

Dr. Stephen Woodley (Co-Chair, WCPA-SSC Joint Task Force on Biodiversity and Protected Areas, International Union for the Conservation of Nature): Thank you very much.

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee today. I hope the technology holds.

First, let me introduce myself. I've worked in the protected area world for well over 30 years as a scientist, as a manager for Parks Canada, and as a university researcher doing field work, and from 2001 to 2013 I was Parks Canada's first chief scientist.

I network with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, known as the IUCN; with the World Commission on Protected Areas; and with the Species Survival Commission. I want to be clear that today I'm speaking as an individual and not representing an IUCN position or a position of its commissions.

The first point I want to make is that protected areas are the key conservation tool to conserve nature. We have many tools, but these are the key ones used globally. There's considerable research to show that they're highly effective when they're well managed and well planned. That's simply because the biggest threat to biological diversity is habitat loss. Well-managed and well-designed protected areas effectively conserve habitat and species.

I think you've been told that Canada signed on to the Aichi biodiversity targets in 2010. Two years later, at the Convention on Biological Diversity conference, Canada agreed, and I'll quote this, to “undertake major efforts, with appropriate support to achieve all elements of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11”, which is the one on protected areas.

Six years into the plan, progress has been slow, so I am really delighted to see renewed interest and commitment from the committee and from Canadian governments to deliver on this promise that Canada made to the world.

Often people interpret target 11 as being only about achieving 17% on land and 10% on water, and this would be a misinterpretation of the target. It's also very much about protecting areas of particular importance to biodiversity and ecosystem services to ensure that these areas are effective and equitably managed, that they're ecologically representative, and that they work together as a well-connected system. Those elements are fundamental.

The second point I want to make is that target 11 is an interim target. We're supposed to achieve it by 2020, but nobody in the scientific community thinks it is sufficient to halt biodiversity loss—which the targets are designed to do—even if all countries in the world achieve the targets by 2020.

Target 11 is a politically realistic interim target. Ultimately, we're going to have to move towards scientifically based conservation targets in the future, if we're going to be successful, so it's wise to start thinking about that now.

Many countries in the world have already gone well beyond target 11—Brazil; the Czech Republic, where I am today; Costa Rica; Botswana; Austria; Colombia; and Spain, just to name a few.

With only 10% of our lands and less than 1% of marine areas currently protected, we're not on track to meet target 11 by 2020. That said, I think we can still get there if we ramp up our efforts. I'll try to lay out what I think are the fundamentals we need to get there.

First and foremost, we really need some strong federal leadership. Although this is going to have to be done in a partnership with first nations and governments at all levels, as well as civil society, ranchers, farmers, and loggers, I think there's going to have to be federal leadership to be successful.

Where would the federal leadership come from in this?

On land, there are two possibilities. The first, obviously, is Parks Canada. Parks Canada, however, has a mandate that's currently limited to conserving a representative example of each of Canada's natural regions. This systems plan dates back well over 40 years; it's not in keeping with modern conservation science. For that agency to lead, it would need a mandate change to focus on those elements of target 11 that I already mentioned.

● (1110)

I guess the other issue with the current Parks Canada set-up is that many of the older national parks are too small and isolated to be effective core areas in a national systems plan, so they're not functioning effectively as representative units.

Although Parks Canada has a very large budget, almost $1.2 billion, it only spends 7.9% of that on resource conservation in national parks and only 0.8% of it on establishing new parks or national marine conservation efforts. There would have to be a reorientation from that department.

The other option is for leadership from Environment Canada. Again, their protected areas program is small, and it has really languished over the last few decades. They run migratory bird sanctuaries and national wildlife areas. Few of their areas have current management plans, monitoring systems, or adequate staff. On average, they would not pass even a basic assessment of management effectiveness as laid out by the IUCN.

My first suggestion would be to give one of these organizations a clear mandate to lead federally, along with the corresponding resources and mandate change, but it's going to require a significant mandate shift in either case. There are pros and cons to both choices, but certainly clarity is required.

On the marine side, the federal government has clear jurisdiction through the Oceans Act, but there are challenges here too. The main piece of legislation for large representative areas is called the National Marine Conservation Areas Act, and unfortunately it establishes marine protected areas that do not meet the IUCN definition of “protected area”. That's because, although they're protected from oil and gas development, they're not protected from large-scale industrial fishing; that's optional. In spite of clear scientific evidence that having large no-take areas is fundamental for ocean conservation, we don't have.... Well, they do not meet that standard.

My second suggestion is that the Canadian NMC act would need significant strengthening in order to be a tool to help us meet target 11.

I want to turn briefly to the question of what counts, and I know this has come up before the committee already.

IUCN sets the global standard, along with UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme and its World Conservation Monitoring Centre, to say what counts under our international obligations. It's very clear that a range of governance types can count under these guidelines. It includes private areas and indigenous protected areas, as well as the more traditional things such as national parks.

Canada's protected area system is currently tracked under a database called CARTS; that's the conservation areas reporting and tracking system. It's managed by an NGO called the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas and Environment Canada. It reports internationally, and it's a very good system. We're really lucky to have it.

The individual provinces and territories report through to CARTS. They have some different rules about what to count, and this has led to some confusion and perhaps a few inconsistencies, but I think this is a relatively easy problem to resolve. At the end of the day, I think it's important not to get bogged down on the counting system, on what counts; our focus should be on protecting nature, on making sure we can halt biodiversity loss. The target was meant to protect more habitat, not to recount existing programs. I would suggest that's what we need to stay focused on.

● (1115)

The Chair: I'll let you know that you have about 30 seconds left in your 10 minutes. If you can, just bring it to a close.

Thanks.

Dr. Stephen Woodley: Okay. Then I want to focus on some solutions.

There are solutions available for systematic conservation planning. Probably the most applicable one for us is called Large Landscape Cooperatives. This is a program developed in the United States. It allows organizations that should be involved to self-organize around a pot of money and around an ecologically appropriate area. If we emulate that system, we have a chance of very high success, and those areas already come into Canada.

There are also other programs, such as the Yellowstone to Yukon program led by civil society and the Dehcho land use plan led by first nations, that give us clear examples of what we can do and need to do to be successful.

I'll stop there.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sure that in the questions we can probe some of that other information that you might want to share.

I'm going to go, just to solve some technical work.

Thank you so much for this. You obviously have a lot to share with us, and we want to hear it, but we have to move. We have six people who are supposed to talk today.

What we will do is move to one of the groups that is here. That will still give us a chance to solve technical problems, although we do now have the ladies from the Willmore Wilderness Foundation up with us.

Thank you, but we'll go to somebody in the room, and then we will come back to you.

Let's have the World Wildlife Fund. That would be Sigrid and Kimberley.

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund (Lead Specialist, Oceans, World Wildlife Fund): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is Sigrid Kuehnemund. I'm the lead specialist for oceans at WWF-Canada. With me today is Kimberley Dunn, our manager for national oceans governance. We're very excited to be here today to contribute to your study on protected areas.

For half a century the World Wildlife Fund has worked to protect the future of nature. WWF is Canada's largest international conservation organization, with the active support of more than 150,000 Canadians. We connect the power of a strong global network to on-the-ground conservation efforts, with offices in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax, St. John's, Iqaluit, and Inuvik.

Our mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans can live in harmony with nature by ensuring the sustainable use of renewable natural resources, promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption, and conserving the world's biodiversity.

With our mission in mind, we'd like to talk to you about the role of marine protected areas as they relate to your study on federal protected areas and conservation objectives.

You've heard already about the Aichi target: 10% marine protection by 2020. WWF-Canada supports the government's commitment to reach this goal.

In terms of quantity, you know that only 1% of Canada's oceans are protected. In terms of quality, not all sites are highly protected or offer the level of protection needed to benefit habitats, species, and coastal communities.

Science shows that in order to be effective, MPAs should be “no take”, large—greater than 100 square kilometres—and well enforced. This isn't the case for MPAs in Canada right now. Less than 7% of the area covered by our existing MPAs qualifies as fully protected, meaning that no fishing or other extractive industries, such as mining or oil and gas development, are allowed. Many of our protected areas are small and are not actively managed.

We're pleased to hear testimony from DFO and Parks Canada about doing things differently moving forward: that MPAs will be bigger and will be established faster, with a renewed focus on creating networks of protected areas and integrating that protection in order to manage our oceans effectively.

We believe the government is now on the right track when it comes to MPAs, but we have some recommendations to help Canada do things right in reaching our marine conservation targets: ensuring minimum standards for marine protection, protecting what counts, respecting indigenous peoples, and providing better coordination and streamlining within government departments.

The first theme is developing minimum standards.

WWF-Canada believes that protected areas must be more than just lines on a map. Protecting biodiversity needs to be the main consideration when selecting sites. Minimum standards for protection must be set in advance for all protected areas, rather than separately for each area.

We recommend that offshore mining and oil and gas activities should not be permitted within MPA boundaries.

We also recommend that commercial fishing should be excluded from at least 50% of each MPA.

Canadians don't expect to see oil rigs in protected areas. The Laurentian Channel, for example, is a proposed marine protected area that would allow oil and gas activities within more than 80% of its borders, if it were designated today.

While we do want to reach protection targets, we need to ensure that protection is meaningful. If our MPAs do not have high standards, it's doubtful that we'll succeed in protecting biodiversity and in helping to sustain the fisheries that Canadians depend upon now and into the future.

Minimum standards are also key to developing co-operative and co-management frameworks with indigenous communities. Setting standards before sites are selected can provide certainty to stakeholders, including indigenous communities, and speed up the consultation process.

To ensure that our MPAs have high standards, they also need to have management plans and to be properly funded to allow for active management, monitoring, and enforcement.

● (1120)

To protect what counts, the goal should not only be to get 10% but also to choose the right 10%, through strong protection and proper siting. We should not lose sight of the need for networks in the race to get to 10% by 2020. Networks are systems of areas that can accomplish much more for species and habitats than each site can do alone. The Aichi target is much more than just a number. It also dictates that areas be conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative, and well-connected systems.

While large MPAs are important, we must not simply designate vast expanses of the ocean that are not at risk from human use or that provide unproven or questionable ecological benefits at the expense of developing proper MPA networks. Canada's progress on MPA networks has to go further than developing a collection of sites without meaningful consideration of how they connect and complement each other, and without including representative coastal and offshore sites within all three oceans.

Government must not yield to political pressures. It must take those tough decisions and take a strong stance to protect areas offering the best biodiversity benefits.

Considerable effort must be made to respect indigenous rights while creating MPAs. We not only recognize the government's duty to consult, but also know that when nature thrives, people thrive. Victories for nature are also victories for people.

There is a particular need for caution for B.C.'s first nations and Canada's north. There is a great potential in the Arctic to assist Canada in achieving its objectives; however, we need an equitable and transparent financing formula for impact benefit agreements across all four Inuit land claim regions. These should be negotiated well in advance with Inuit representative organizations. Long-term financing must be secured to ensure progressive investments in community infrastructure to allow communities to manage and profit from marine conservation.

Streamlining government processes and working better together means streamlining regulatory processes for MPA designation and includes the need to speed up the development of mineral and energy resource assessments by NRCan and the preparation of MPA regulations, including work with the Department of Justice and the Treasury Board.

The federal family must work together on targets to support progress by DFO, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada to move the bar on MPAs and MPA networks. A coordinated approach will help with economic discussions with provincial governments and offshore petroleum boards and will possibly help with the designation of multiple sites at the same time.

I respect that time is limited and that there's much to talk about. I'd like to close by thanking the committee for the opportunity to present on this topic. WWF-Canada is pleased that our government is committed to protecting 10% of our oceans by 2020 within national and regional systems of marine protected areas. We recognize that a lot of work has been done, but a lot yet remains to be done to reach this goal.

We also recognize that the 10% by 2020 target is not an end point but rather a waypoint to something much greater, an opportunity to provide what science is telling us is needed to protect some of the richest and most unique and biodiverse underwater environments on our planet.

I'd be happy to take questions on the points I've raised or on other important issues, such as high standards for other effective measures and finding the balance between ecological value and socio-economic interests when selecting and designating MPAs.

Thank you.

● (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thanks for coming in almost exactly on the 10 minutes. That was great.

I'm wondering whether the Willmore Wilderness Foundation can hear us. Can you hear us?

Oh, you're coming up now. Good.

If the witnesses with us here don't mind waiting, we'll get them up just while they're on, and we'll try to get their deposition.

Let's introduce the Willmore Wilderness Foundation. Sue Feddema-Leonard and Stephanie Brown are here with us today.

If you would like to get started, that would be great. You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Sue Feddema-Leonard (Executive Director, Willmore Wilderness Foundation): Thank you very much.

My name is Susan Feddema-Leonard, and I am with Stephanie Brown, who is our environmental manager. I've been working in the Willmore Wilderness Park area of Grand Cache for the past 35 years. It's an area directly north of Jasper National Park. I am the director of the Willmore Wilderness Preservation and Historical Foundation.

While we are not an environmental group, we are an historical group preserving the traditions and culture of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Our foundation incorporates the concept of managing the environment as one of its key principles.

Early explorers such as Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson are legendary heroes in Canadian history. These men did not travel alone and were guided by French, Métis, and Indian guides who risked everything in their push westward. Many of these men were from the village of Kahnawake, near Montreal, and they were hired by the North West Company in their push westward.

In 1872, the Canadian census showed that Jasper House, which is just south of us, had 210 French half-breeds living there and 71 Shuswap Indians. Many of these Métis and French descendants travelled with Alexander Mackenzie on his journey north to the Arctic Ocean, as well as to Bella Coola on the Pacific Ocean.

Many of the descendants who live in this area are the descendants of the voyageurs who came west from eastern Canada. Their forefathers helped open Canada to make it what it is today in the spirit of trade and friendship. Many of these people homesteaded in the Athabasca valley, where Jasper is located, as well as in the Smoky River valley, where Grand Cache is located.

In 1907 the Canadian federal government signed an order in council to set aside the Jasper Forest Reserve, and the newly appointed wardens who arrived in the community removed these families, who had been there for over 100 years. The wardens did this by sealing the guns of everybody. The descendants of the founding fathers of Canada couldn't hunt to feed their children, so they had to leave the area after the guns were sealed.

They were removed into the Grande Cache area and to the Edson and Hinton areas surrounding Jasper, where they continued to hunt and fish and trap and live a traditional way of life until 1969, when the new town of Grande Cache was established.

I'm just going to read an excerpt out of the *People & Peaks of Willmore Wilderness Park: 1800s to Mid-1900s*:

> During the 1940's and 1950's, oil and gas leases were awarded in what is now Willmore Wilderness Park. The Hinton and Jasper outfitters and trappers were getting worried about the roads that the oil and gas sector were inflicting on the mountain trails. Outfitter, Tom Vinson stated in a July 19, 2003 interview, "So we pressured Norman Willmore (MLA) to do something about the oil and gas exploration, and he did. He declared the area a wilderness park where trapping, hunting, and fishing would be permitted. That was all—no motor vehicles. That's what we wanted, of course."
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> Due to the fact that no oil of any consequence was discovered, the pressure from the oil and gas sector subsided when [the leases expired]. In 1959, Norman Willmore was instrumental in getting legislation passed to protect the area. This legislation is now known as the Willmore Wilderness Act, one of the most unique pieces of legislation in North America. Due to the lack of Government dollars to do infrastructure work, education and promotion of the Rocky Mountain park, the Willmore Wilderness Preservation & Historical Foundation was formed as a non-profit society registered under the Alberta Societies Act in 2002. The Foundation became a Registered Charitable Organization in 2003. The Foundation preserves the history of the area; focuses on the advancement of education of the park; restores historical pack trails and sites; and enhances the use of Willmore Wilderness Park for Albertans, Canadians and international visitors.
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> Willmore Wilderness Park has a unique horseback culture, with traditions such as hunting and trapping; and a history that dates back to the Canadian Fur Trade. Travelling the old pack trails allows one to be independent and free to stop and make their home in a camp [anywhere they choose]; free to experience the sounds and beauty of the earth. The mountains give one the feeling of being at one with nature. Willmore Wilderness Park offers wide-open spaces that can be accessed by [either horseback] or by hiking. The area nurtures a man's spirit, leaving one with a deep connection to the earth.

● (1130)

The Willmore Wilderness Foundation has a mandate of educating the public in skills that were used to survive in the mountains, as well as educational programs. Our organization is especially focused on educating the young. We raise money and host, on a free basis, horsemanship clinics, colt-starting clinics, horse-packing clinics, basic farrier clinics, trapper education, and chainsaw safety clinics.

Each year we offer a youth mentoring program in which we take aboriginal elders and old-time mountain men and mentor young people in the age-old traditions of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. We teach youth about edible and medicinal plants, where the trails are, how to track, how to pack, and how to survive off the land as their ancestors did.

The Willmore Wilderness Foundation has been in collaboration with many different provincial initiatives. We collaborated with the Alberta provincial carnivore specialist in carrying out a six-year grizzly bear survey and provided the province with the best collection of grizzly bear photos they had ever seen. We also work with the Alberta Trappers' Association in providing educational programs, and these programs are used as tools in game management. We also clear trails, clean up garbage, do GPS work, and photograph and film the region.

The Willmore Wilderness Foundation has written four books, featuring 64 first-person interviews of old-time mountain men and women. The foundation also owns and operates its own film production program, called People & Peaks Productions, which specializes in high-definition educational documentary films. We share stories about the history, culture, and traditions of our Rocky Mountain region.

I want to thank this committee for giving us the time to share some of the history and culture of Willmore Wilderness Park, which is one of Canada's best-kept secrets. We are honoured to share with everybody here today, and I want to especially thank our MP, Mr. Jim Eglinski, and Jeannette Gasparini for inviting us to come to this and connecting with us. We share a unique perspective of the wilderness and of conservation and protection.

Thank you.

● (1135)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thanks for sharing with us another beautiful gem in the Canadian landscape that I certainly didn't know anything about. I appreciate your sharing it with us. It is another place I need to go.

We are going to move to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and Eric Reder, because he is now with us and we do not want to lose him again.

We are having real trouble with the video conference today, so if both Nadim and Lesley are patient with us, we will go to the video witnesses as they are able to be reconnected, and then we'll come to you at the end, if you don't mind.

Thank you very much.

Eric, could you please start? Welcome. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Eric Reder (Manitoba Campaign Director, Western Canada Wilderness Committee): Is my feed working?

The Chair: Yes, we can hear you fine, thank you. Can you hear us?

Mr. Eric Reder: Yes, I can hear you guys.

Thanks for having me in today. I am the Manitoba campaign director for the Wilderness Committee. The Wilderness Committee is the largest environmental citizens' group in the country that is member-based and citizen-funded. We believe in healthy nature and a healthy wilderness, and we support healthy communities in rural areas. That is what is going to sustain our well-being in Canada.

Our goal in the work we do is legislative protection for nature and wilderness. Speaking today to the committee, I will say that the simple, tough answer to the discussion regarding federal lands and their role in meeting Canada's targets to protect biodiversity is that we can't do it with the federal lands that exist. I am going to mention just a couple of species as an indication of problems that we would have.

One is the western chorus frog. In Ontario and Quebec, 2.8% and 8% of its habitat is on federal lands. Protecting that species, which is listed under the federal Species at Risk Act, couldn't be done only on federal lands.

Where I work, in Manitoba, there are no boreal woodland caribou on federal lands. There are 15 ranges and perhaps 5,000 animals in the province, or half that number, and we simply can't protect them with the work being done on federal lands.

What is left, then, in the view of the Wilderness Committee, is to look at the federal scheme of legislation and how we can apply the existing laws across Canada so that we can protect more of nature and wilderness.

With regard to the work that I have done in Manitoba, in 2013 we did a lot more work on the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Manitoba is filled with water, and when the Navigable Waters Protection Act was cut and its effect was limited to certain water bodies, a lot of the water in Manitoba was no longer protected. Of course, what went along with the Navigable Waters Protection Act was the gutting of the Fisheries Act. We have a document in Manitoba that was produced by the provincial government, which was used for industrial development on crown lands, public lands. It called out two pieces of legislation that were used to address actions around streams and stream crossings, and those two pieces of legislation were the Navigable Waters Protection Act and the Fisheries Act. We don't have provincial legislation that works on water, because there has always been federal protection.

Backing up a little, there are two things that transcend provincial borders and become federal jurisdiction. They are water and species —and air, of course, as well. They don't pay attention to provincial boundaries. That is why the federal government's role in protecting water has been so essential, and now that we have had a rollback on federal water protection, why it is essential that we have that protection replaced and in fact increased.

You can envision Manitoba as being downstream from everywhere, and Lake Winnipeg being a catch basin for water coming from the Rocky Mountains, from the south in the United States, and from Ontario. Everything flows downstream to Winnipeg, so everything that happens in all these other jurisdictions—Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario—affects Lake Winnipeg and the waters we have here, and of course, the rivers flowing up into Hudson Bay.

The decisions the Saskatchewan government makes about what they want to do with their water and what type of developments they are allowing along their shorelines affect Manitoba. We have no jurisdiction in Manitoba to say to Saskatchewan, “We want you to do something different.” What we need is for the federal government to have a strong hand in protecting our waters.

It is the same for Ontario. If things are happening in Ontario, we don't have any say in what happens there. We really need the federal government to protect the waters we have.

● (1140)

There's another piece of legislation that the federal government works on, the heritage rivers system. In 2006 the Hayes River was designated as a heritage river. That's a federal designation.

To preserve biodiversity, to protect the environment, and to work on our protected areas goals, the heritage river system could be, I suppose, improved. The protections it allows could be increased, perhaps protecting riparian areas. In a few instances in Manitoba, we look at protecting one and a half kilometres on either side of a river. That riparian area is far richer in biodiversity, especially in bird species, than most other forest areas. The federal government's protection or expansion of the heritage river system would be a real boon to protected areas goals in Canada.

I guess I should step back again. My notes aren't quite in order; I've been working on a few other campaigns.

We have two goals that we'd like to talk about.

In Manitoba, we've just published a report called “Keep it Wild! A Conservation Vision for Manitoba”. It comes out today. At the United Nations, one of the initiatives is a global goal of protecting 17% of lands and waters by 2020. The previous Manitoba government signed on to that, or decided that they were going to meet that goal. The wilderness committee has been calling for years for a further goal of 20% by 2020, and this conservation vision that we've just published lays out exactly how we would go forward in doing that.

Federally, across Canada we're sitting at around 10% for protected lands. We believe that hitting the 17% goal by 2020 is the right thing to do, and there are ways, by conservation agreements with the province and in some of the legislation that I'll talk about, for us to do that.

The second goal is about the boreal forest. It is a large supplier, I guess, of the things that we need in life. It's a carbon sink. It's one of the greatest sources of fresh water in the world, and we have vast sections of it. Scientists have been saying that 50% of the boreal forest needs to be protected in order for us to continue to get the sorts of building blocks of life that come out of the boreal forest. The wilderness committee has qualified that statement by saying that we really need to ensure that 50% of the biologically rich and culturally important areas of the boreal forest are protected.

We have two goals here. People have said that nature needs half—that's one organization—but 50% of the boreal forest and 17% of our lands in general need to be protected. Of course, in Manitoba you have a lot of provincial public land, or crown land, as it's referred to, and there are opportunities for protection, but that's not the case across Canada. As we get into developed regions of the country, we see that a lot of the land has been developed for agriculture, and the existence of nature really only occurs in ditches and small forested areas that haven't been plowed under. The last federal government abrogated its responsibility to protect some of the natural lands that we had when they got rid of the community pastures. In Manitoba alone, that meant 25 pastures and about 400,000 hectares.

If that federal land were still under the control of the federal government, conservation agreements could be written. There are agreements written for places like the Langford community pasture in Manitoba. It allows the land to be used for intensive grazing, and that's how the grasslands of that region would have lasted. That would have been the natural process as herds of bison had gone through. It would require some prescribed burns to keep the woody species down, but it would also improve the biological diversity. In terms of agricultural land in the developed regions, these sections of federal land that existed are the exact sort of thing that we need to look at to preserve nature and wilderness and meet the protected areas goals in Canada.

● (1145)

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds to wrap it up.

Mr. Eric Reder: Thank you.

The Species at Risk Act is one of the strongest things that the federal government can enforce. The Species at Risk Act requires the federal government to ensure that species are protected. I've mentioned the chorus frog and the woodland caribou. Of course, the legal case on the sage grouse is showing that the federal government has a requirement to step in and manage when the provinces aren't managing this properly.

The federal government needs to take a more active role in looking at the science, the recovery strategies, and the action plans that are handed up to the federal government from the provinces, because sometimes they're done on a socio-economic basis and look at what it means for rural development, when in reality the Species at Risk Act has to look at the science. The hard decisions about socio-economic need to be made in public and made through the cabinet and the federal government in a public manner.

I'm going to finish off with that: one of the things the federal government can do is improve the Species at Risk Act and enforce the legislation that already exists.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate all of what you shared with us today.

We are still having some trouble reaching the Cattlemen's Association, so we're going to go back to those who are in the room.

The Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada is with us today.

Nadim and Lesley, if you could get started that would be fantastic. Thank you.

● (1150)

Mr. Nadim Kara (Senior Program Director, Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee members. Thank you for this opportunity to speak here today.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, or PDAC, we represent the Canadian mineral exploration and development industry. Our mandate is to support a competitive and responsible industry both at home and abroad, so that our members can continue to discover and develop deposits of the minerals and metals that make modern life possible.

I'd like to begin our conversation today by outlining some of the factors that have helped Canada become a top global destination for mineral exploration investment. This will lead into some reflections on how the ability or inability to access mineral-rich areas can affect the investment decisions that are made by exploration and mining companies. Then, with that context in mind, I'll put forward some basic principles that PDAC hopes will guide federal decision-making processes with respect to the creation of protected areas. I'll conclude with a short discussion of how important it is to find the right balance between conservation and economic development.

As many of you know, Canada is actually a world leader in all aspects of the minerals industry, but particularly exploration. The industry is cyclical, however, and we are currently in the midst of one of the most prolonged downturns in Canadian history. I'll share just one stat to illustrate this. In 2012, over $27 billion Canadian was spent around the world on mineral exploration. In 2015, that number had fallen to just over $11 billion.

Countries compete to attract that investment in order to support the discovery of mineral deposits that might eventually become a mine. Canada and Australia have both been very successful at attracting exploration investment, with Australia currently attracting the largest share of global exploration budgets. It may interest you to know that Canada's share of non-ferrous mineral exploration—that's not including iron, potash, and uranium—has dropped from around 21% to around 14%.

There are a lot of different factors that influence how attractive Canadian jurisdictions are at attracting that investment and those mineral exploration budgets. Canada's geologic endowment is one of our primary competitive advantages over other countries. To capitalize on that advantage, mineral-rich areas need to be open for exploration in order to increase the probability of making a discovery.

One of the points I'd like to impress upon you today is just how difficult and rare it is to actually find economically viable mineral deposits. While there are a lot of mineral deposits in the earth's crust, most are low-quality deposits that are not worth mining. About one in 10,000 exploration projects leads to an actual mine, so the extent to which the land base is actually open will profoundly influence the probability of finding a deposit that could actually become a producing mine.

Not surprisingly, the availability of prospective land also profoundly influences the investment decisions that are made by companies. The geologic potential of a country or jurisdiction accounts for about 60% of the weighting with respect to CEO decisions about where they wish to explore and where they choose to explore. As land withdrawals remove accessibility to prospective areas, Canada becomes a less attractive place to explore, and companies go elsewhere.

Without exploration there aren't new discoveries, and without new discoveries there would eventually be no new mines. This would then mean a loss of the high-paying jobs, business development opportunities, and revenue flows to both communities and governments that are associated with production.

Notwithstanding the importance of land access to sustaining the existence of the industry in Canada and the economic benefits that it generates, PDAC does recognize that there is a diverse range of values associated with the use of land in Canada. We understand that governments must balance these values when making land use decisions, such as the establishment of protected areas. In order to achieve this balance, we believe that land use planning and land withdrawal decisions should be made through processes that are transparent, inclusive, evidence-based, flexible, and holistic.

By “transparent”, we mean that the process by which a decision is made should be clear to all parties and outlined well in advance.

By “inclusive”, we mean the use of multi-stakeholder and aboriginal consultation processes to develop proposals around the establishment of protected areas. Ideally, these would unfold within land use planning and community visioning processes, as are currently taking place in the Northwest Territories and Ontario.

By “evidence-based”, we mean that all decisions should have sound rationales drawn from adequate data as well as from the input from meaningful multi-stakeholder dialogues.

● (1155)

By “holistic”, we mean that decisions should be based on a comprehensive set of information that is comprised of environmental, social, and economic data, including traditional aboriginal knowledge. Economic data should include information on mineral and energy potential as well as other potential economic development opportunities, such as forestry. The interplay between these different types of information is more likely to lead to a sound policy decision.

By “flexible”, the last point, we mean that the process used to create new protected areas and other types of land withdrawals should contain built-in mechanisms for periodic review. The importance of building in flexibility cannot be overstated. For example, 30 years ago nobody would have believed that diamonds could be discovered in Canada. If those diamond-rich parts of the country had been withdrawn without the capacity to go back and reassess those decisions, the lost economic opportunities, for aboriginal communities in particular, would have been profound.

An example of a formal process that incorporates many of those principles is the federal mineral and energy resource assessment process, MERA, which is undertaken whenever a federal national park is proposed. We hope that a similar process would be established for further federal protected areas.

The PDAC also recommends to consider avoiding complete bans on all forms of economic activity unless it is absolutely crucial in protecting critical ecological or cultural areas. Exploration and mining can potentially unfold even near sensitive areas, with appropriate restrictions and mitigation measures. The Prairie Creek project, which is in the middle of Nahanni National Park, is a great example. Conservation and development may not be mutually exclusive if the right regulatory safeguards are in place.

There may be some parties who would prefer not to have mineral potential factored into the decision-making process, arguing that the protection of Canada's natural landscapes and biodiversity should outweigh any economic opportunities that might be lost. In our view, this would be a short-sighted approach to decision-making, in three important ways.

First, the world needs the minerals and metals that we discover in order to improve quality of life globally.

Second, the world also needs those products if it is going to make the transition to a low-carbon economy. Mined materials are crucial for the batteries for electric vehicles and power storage, solar panels, and the rare-earth magnets used in electric cars and wind turbines.

Finally, exploration and mining companies are often the only private sector organizations that are creating economic opportunities in remote, rural, northern, and aboriginal communities.

Recently there was a report by an environmental organization that suggested the Sahtu community in the Northwest Territories should abandon its interest in mining and energy. The Tulita District Land Corporation, which is in the Sahtu region of the NWT, responded with the following statement, which I think is worth sharing today:

> There are those who tell us we should turn our backs on industrial development and focus instead on tourism, arts and crafts, forestry, and agriculture.
>
> The world is now in the early days of the *Fourth* Industrial Revolution and yet some apparently want us to return to times from before the *First*.
>
> We cannot do this. Our youth cannot do this. We want to live and work in a rapidly changing modern [environment] and our companies, our families and our governments need income to accomplish that goal.
>
> Growing potatoes won’t do it. Developing our petroleum resources will.

We cannot forget the human dimension of land use planning when making decisions about protected areas. An integrated approach is the only way to balance different land use values for current and future generations.

The PDAC looks forward to ongoing dialogue with the Government of Canada on how to establish protected areas while maintaining Canada's position as a top destination for investment in the minerals industry.

Thank you again for your time. I and my colleague, Lesley Williams, are happy to answer further questions at the right time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Nadim, for that thought-provoking approach. I am sure there will be lots of questions to probe that further.

We have a little challenge with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. They can hear us and see us, but they can't talk to us. We do have somebody in the room, John Masswohl, who is the director of government and international relations with the organization. If he could come forward....

I had the pleasure of meeting you before at a wonderful reception you hosted. If you could do the presentation they were going to give us, it would be very helpful. They are able to hear everything that goes on here, so they can always follow up if we have a question that can't be answered by John.

You are up for 10 minutes. Thank you.

● (1200)

Mr. John Masswohl (Director, Government and International Relations, Canadian Cattlemen's Association): Thank you. I feel like the understudy coming in.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Masswohl: They'll tell me later what I got wrong.

Of the folks who were going to present, one is Bob Lowe. Bob is a rancher from southern Alberta. He is currently also the chair of the Alberta Beef Producers. He chairs our environment committee. It's unfortunate that you don't have him here. He speaks from first-hand experience.

At the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, we represent approximately 68,000 cattle producers across the country. As you know, we work on any issues related to cattle producers. Whether they're trade, environmental, or other issues, you name it, we're interested in helping to form good policy.

With more than 98% of farms across Canada being family owned and operated, we know that these small business owners, these producers—and that's what they are, they're small business owners—care deeply for the land under their stewardship. One of the things we often hear them saying is that they want to leave the land in better shape than it was when they got it. These are people who talk proudly about how many generations their families have spent on the land. They know that they're there for just a short time, and they want to leave that land in better shape for their kids, their grandkids, and so on.

In the time we have, we want to cover three main points.

The first is that we do need to have a healthy cattle industry to help sustain rangelands and the habitats they preserve in both public lands and private lands. Second, producers and government need to work together to find solutions for species at risk on agricultural landscapes. The third point is that investing in research, innovation, and agri-environmental programming are excellent investments and are critical for us to continue.

First, a healthy beef cattle industry plays an integral role in helping to sustain rangelands. Canadian cattle producers support a healthy, diverse agriculture landscape, which is important for economic diversity as well as in maximizing delivery of ecosystem services from the land. Beef producers utilize varied agriculture landscapes across Canada, including public and private lands, cropland, grassland, forest, shrubland, pasture land, and riparian areas. Well-run ranching operations are truly an extension of Canada's natural landscape and contribute greatly to existing ecosystems.

While healthy rangelands form the backbone of the largest agriculture industry group in Canada by providing forage for cattle, they also provide critical habitat for native species, enhance water conservation, and sequester large amounts of carbon. Furthermore, rangelands form a vital corridor for North America's migratory and native birds and many other important species.

Rangelands also benefit human society and quality of life. There are examples of this. Rangelands reduce urban water treatment costs. They provide a buffer against the effects of droughts and floods. They increase economic viability and offer tourism and recreation opportunities that stimulate local economies.

But we can't take these rangelands for granted. Today less than 40% of Canada's grasslands remain intact, and continued economic competition threatens conversion into other uses of the land.

Effective partnerships between the ranching community and conservation organizations, governments, and academic institutions are all essential to our preservation efforts. Collaborations such as these champion innovative ideas for conserving and restoring native landscapes and enhancing ranch profitability. Together, we must ensure that cattle producers maintain ranch profitability so they can maintain their role on publicly and privately owned agriculture landscapes as stewards of these threatened grassland ecosystems.

To sum up that first main theme, continued access to federal and provincial lands for grazing, the development of risk insurance, and other incentive tools that help economic parity with alternate land uses are imperative in helping to maintain these landscapes. In essence, a healthy beef cattle market can play an integral role in helping sustain ranchlands, and vice versa.

● (1205)

We need to find mutually acceptable approaches to managing species at risk. Whether on public or private land, species at risk often find homes on Canada's ranchlands. This speaks to the quality of habitat maintained by Canada's beef producers, although given the loss of other habitat due to factors outside the control of the beef industry, we do carry a large burden in maintaining critical habitat for Canada's species at risk.

While we support the intention of the Species at Risk Act, we encourage the federal government to find ways for those on the land to be compliant with the act in an economically feasible manner. We have to bear in mind that the species at risk on the land are there because of what the rancher is doing, not in spite of the rancher. The Canadian beef industry encourages the government to do everything possible to implement the act in a way that is truly based on the stewardship approach, as we will be able to achieve much greater success through a collaborative stewardship than through cumbersome regulation. Rewarding ranchers for good stewardship practices will be far more successful than penalizing through regulation.

We also have to keep in mind that managing for individual species will invariably harm others. Whether it's sage grouse or swift fox, we have to take a holistic approach. The act has created a loss of real and perceived landholder rights and placed unjust liability on Canada's farmers and ranchers. For example, today a rancher could be held liable if he accidentally and unintentionally harmed a species at risk through a very normal agricultural practice, such as cutting grass to use as hay to feed his cattle.

We need better clarity on implementation for landholders. We encourage the government to look at existing infrastructure to help achieve the goals of the Species at Risk Act. For example, in Alberta we have grazing leases on public lands. Producers are already committed to a grazing agreement to ensure the health of the grazing lands. This is measured and monitored and could be considered a form of compliance with the Species at Risk Act. Furthermore, there are excellent programs that exist to work with ranchers on protecting species at risk. Another example is the MULTISAR program. It's a program that works with ranchers who have species at risk on their operations to achieve beneficial habitat outcomes in a non-threatening manner.

The third area is funding research innovation for agro-environmental programs. Through research, we have found that to maintain the quality of rangeland ecosystems, from time to time a natural disturbance such as a fire is beneficial. Obviously that's a risky strategy, but something that's more economically viable and manageable is grazing. The way that cattle ranchers operate can replicate these natural disturbances. Beef producers utilize cattle to replicate the important role that bison or other large ungulates used to play in natural rangeland ecosystems.

We're continually investing and advancing our knowledge with regard to how to best manage our resources, as it's widely understood that overgrazed or undergrazed lands benefit neither the habitat nor the profitability of the rancher. The industry invests significantly in research, education, and innovation, and we encourage the federal government to continue to do so as well.

How are we for time?

The Chair: You have about a minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. John Masswohl: Thank you.

I'm going to jump down to the summary. One of the things that Bob really wanted to express was a concern over some of the misinformation that's out there about the beef industry.

With regard to the beef industry globally, people have tried to project a certain image that is largely false, or at best not representative of the beef sector in Canada, so it's imperative that we have comprehensive research and data. Anytime policy decisions are made, we want to make sure that sound decisions made at all levels so that we can support the continued advancement of innovation and education.

In summary, the ability of the Canadian cattle industry to positively drive the economy and conservation targets on private and public lands should not be underestimated. The Canadian beef industry is a meaningful contributor to the Canadian economy, contributing $13.6 billion to our annual GDP. At the same time, we are also a cornerstone of environmentally sound agriculture practices that can assist you in the committee's and the government's mandate to achieve Canada's environmental goals. Indeed, we believe Canada can be a world role model as a solutions-oriented beef producer, committed to sustainable environmental, social, and economic outcomes, now and for future generations.

● (1210)

The Chair: That was absolutely bang on 10 minutes. Thank you very much.

We have about 50 minutes of questioning, if we do two full rounds. To do that and to be fair to everyone, I am going to be very strict on the time. We have a lot of video conference people and cards won't really work, so I am going to say “one minute”, and at time I am going to call time, because we need to move on to the next questioner.

The first questioner is Robert Sopuck, and he is standing in for Ed Fast.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you. I think what we have witnessed today is the two solitudes of conservation. The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, the Willmore Wilderness Foundation, and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association were very clear that human beings are part of the environment and very much a solution to many of our major conservation challenges. What I heard from the other groups, by and large, was that getting people out of the environment is the way to protect it.

I represent a farming and ranching constituency and I am firmly in the first camp. I want to focus on cattle production because I think the cattle industry has gotten a very bad rap that is clearly undeserved.

Interestingly, some of the very sophisticated conservation and environmental organizations in North America are starting to recognize that. In 2015, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, which is the NAFTA environmental group, published a report called “North American Ranching Industries, Beef Cattle Trade, and Grasslands: Status and Trends”. The report was very clear that sustainably managed grasslands are absolutely critical to environmental protection in northern North America. In fact, they went on to say that grassland ranching “is one of the most sustainable forms of agriculture.”

Mr. Masswohl, why do you think society does not recognize the contributions that the ranching and agricultural communities have made to environmental conservation?

Mr. John Masswohl: That is a thing we ask ourselves a lot. We think it comes from people who have an agenda or who make Hollywood movies, those sorts of things. People tend to get their information from celebrities as opposed to scientists.

We encourage people to come out and see. We encourage the committee to come out and see. I know you are talking about travelling, and we would love to have you come and visit some ranches. We operate a number of programs. We have our environmental stewardship awards every year, and many ranches are competing every year to get those awards. It is not hard to find winners. We think that if we can show factual information and educate people as to what is happening out in the countryside, far away from the cities, it would be very positive. We really encourage anything that can be done to improve awareness.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: In a previous life, I was one of the judges of the program you are talking about, and the conservation achievements of the ranching community are nothing short of astonishing.

I would also like to talk about a recent program by the Audubon Society called the working lands program. The Audubon Society is probably the oldest bird conservation organization in northern North America, if not the world. They have a working lands program. They finally realized that working with the ranching community in the United States—this is a U.S. program.... They are "partnering with ranchers who own remaining grasslands to develop market-based management that benefits prairie birds while sustaining the livelihoods of the ranchers." This is a very significant statement, in my view. Sustaining the livelihood of a rural community, in this case the ranching community, is absolutely critical to maintaining the ecosystem services that grasslands provide.

Mr. Masswohl, why do you think there is a view in parts of the environmental community that getting people off the land and negatively affecting the livelihoods of rural communities is an effective way to generate conservation? Why do people believe that?

Mr. John Masswohl: I don't know why people.... They think what they think.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It's some people. There are some people.

Mr. John Masswohl: I think the good news is that there are a lot of people who do know better. They are out there, and that is the sort of thing we are trying to encourage.

I think one of the things we have seen in the past—and the notes talk a bit about it—is that you have to take a holistic approach to the species. People are well intentioned, and they want to find things that are simple. They want to say, "That's the thing we need to fix there", but the reality is that this is a complex issue. Take the word "ecosystems". "Systems" tells you right there what you need to know about it. It is not about protecting this or that species. You have to look at everything from a broader perspective, and that is a difficult thing to explain.

● (1215)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I'd like to ask Dr. Woodley a question if I could have a very short answer, because I don't have much time.

In your view, can working lands, properly managed from a conservation perspective, be considered as part of a network of protected areas?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: I think the short answer is yes, absolutely.

What we're talking about is conservation systems, which include protected areas, working landscapes, and measures for connectivity. It really involves all parties sitting down and working this out through something called "systematic conservation planning", so the short answer is yes, absolutely.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I really appreciate that. That's a view, I think, that needs to permeate the notion of protected lands. It's all about ecosystem integrity. Having people managing the land in a certain way and in a proper way will contribute to ecosystem integrity.

Just one last point—

The Chair: You're not going to have time. I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay. Thank you very much. That's fine.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aldag is next.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): I'd like to thank all of our panellists for being here today. It's great to have the variety of perspectives we've had from the industry groups and the other organizations that have been here. Thanks to all of you for bringing your various perspectives.

I am concerned about the opening statements from the member opposite. Any time we set up a discussion in terms of camps, I find that we set ourselves up for failure.

I am personally not of the opinion that we need to pit people against nature. In fact, we as a society can work together and have a strong economy and a healthy environment. That said, it's a different perspective from what our first questioner has offered, and it's the framework I'm going to use for the question I shall bring to the table.

I wanted to talk first of all to Kimberley and Sigrid. In looking at some of the work you've done as an environmental group and in looking at how people can have an interplay within natural spaces, I am really curious about your thoughts on how, within society, we can try to coordinate our efforts on the creation of protected areas and also on how we set those priority areas. Could I have your thoughts on how we can coordinate efforts between the various segments we've heard here? Could you please start with that?

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund: Yes. My comments here today relate to marine protected areas, so I'll frame my answer within that context.

In terms of coordinating efforts, I do believe that the federal government has to come together and take on leadership in developing a network of marine protected areas and in respecting the different regulatory tools that are available to designate marine protected areas under the Oceans Act and the National Marine Conservation Areas Act, and also with Environment Canada in terms of the migratory bird areas.

There needs to be a consideration as to how particular sites may contribute to a network by perhaps benefiting from multiple legislation. Taking as an example a migratory bird conservation area that has great conservation potential, if you were to add a buffer zone around that migratory bird conservation area through additional legislation in using the Fisheries Act to restrict gillnet fisheries, for example, you could greatly enhance the protection value and the conservation benefits of that area. I think federal governments really have to take that view in terms of how they can work together using all the tools they have available to develop the best conservation areas.

Mr. John Aldag: I'd like to get your thoughts on any work you've done on identifying priority areas. We've heard from Fisheries and Oceans that they have a number of areas. We've seen through the Parks Canada system plan that they've identified a number of marine areas.

Have you identified priority areas that you feel would be ripe for some form of conservation? How do they overlie the federal government ones? I'm just trying to see what the interplay is between the work you've done and what you're aware of within the federal government.

● (1220)

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund: Absolutely. We are a strong advocate for continuing the designation process for all existing candidate sites for marine protected areas and national marine conservation areas. We are a strong advocate for protection within the Lancaster Sound proposed NMCA.

We are working on sites that we have a particular interest in. That relates to our work with connecting communities with MPAs and ensuring that MPAs deliver community benefits. As an example, we have a campaign whereby we are advocating for marine protected area status for the Sambro Ledges, just outside of Halifax.

We have some focus on specific sites that are of interest to the WWF and that we will push for in working with the federal government through their designation processes.

Mr. John Aldag: I'll leave it there, but I would invite all of the groups to please share with the committee any materials you'd like to provide to us in writing if you have priority areas, so that we can have the benefit of the work you've done as we have these deliberations.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. John Aldag: Dr. Woodley, you started to touch a bit on the idea of the other "effective area-based conservation measures" that we hear about from the IUCN or in Aichi target 11. I'm just wondering how you see the federal pieces fitting in with....

Actually, maybe I'll rephrase that. What are your thoughts on what the other effective area-based conservation measures would look like, and what role can they play in our overall conservation strategy in Canada?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: That was a clause that was added to target 11 at I think three o'clock in the morning, and the purpose was especially to ensure that indigenous and community conserved areas —remember, this is a global approach—could also be counted, even though governments didn't want to count them or they didn't want to be counted by government. You have to take that global thing into consideration.

I'm actually part of the task force that is developing guidance for the Convention on Biological Diversity, so it's a bit premature to say. I think—

The Chair: Could you please wrap it up?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: I think it's important that we do consider these other areas, but they won't be a major part of the solution.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm sorry to have to cut you off.

Mr. Stetski is next.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Thank you.

I was the manager of the East Kootenay conservation program in my riding of Kootenay, which was looking at conservation on private land, and yes, absolutely, well-managed ranches are important contributors to conservation. I wanted to say that right up front.

My first question will be for Dr. Woodley. We've heard from a number of stakeholders that the federal government has a significant role to play when it comes to conservation leadership and fostering collaboration among key partners. In your view, what measures can government put in place to ensure that stakeholders are all on the same page and working together to reach these conservation targets? Are there models from other countries around the world that we could look to for guidance?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: In my view, I think the role is a convening one, because there are so many players, many of which we've heard from today, that have to be part of this.

An example from South Africa is important. They did a national systematic conservation planning exercise. They brought together all parties—miners, loggers, everybody. Everyone put their values on the table, and they used sophisticated planning tools in order to come up with the best solutions for society in general.

The key thing is that fundamentally we need a life-support system. We're talking about prioritizing a life-support system and then working within those priorities. We need that for climate change adaptation and we need it so we have healthy economies and healthy agricultural systems.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: One of the things I've been playing with is that in Canada we have a health accord that provides funding across the country and brings together all provinces and territories around common objectives. I wonder whether something like a conservation accord might work, whereby the federal government would provide funding to provinces and territories, because sometimes there's nothing that brings groups together like money.

● (1225)

Dr. Stephen Woodley: I think it's fascinating that you bring that up. I tried to bring that up in my discussion at the end on landscape conservation initiatives that are being developed in the United States. They put federal funding on the table and allowed groups to self-organize around ecological units. It put everybody on an equal footing. It's been extremely successful.

In fact, many of those landscape conservation co-operatives, or LCCs, come over into Canada. I think it's a model that we should take a hard look at as a solution to bringing all interests to the table to do this kind of systematic conservation planning.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I have a question for the World Wildlife Fund.

As you know, the government has committed to restoring ecological integrity as a priority in our national parks system, which includes national marine conservation areas. What is your assessment of where things are at currently in terms of ecological integrity in marine protected areas? What are some of the threats, and how do we mitigate them moving forward? This is specific to marine conservation.

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund: In terms of ecological integrity, referring to a national marine conservation areas example, one of the suggestions that we have would be to speed up the designation process for NMCAs. On average, it takes about 20 years to designate an NMCA. For ecological integrity, we have a strong view that you would need to restrict extractive uses. NMCAs are great at restricting oil and gas activities, but there is no standard for restricting commercial fishing activities within NMCAs.

As well, with marine protected areas under the Oceans Act, WWF-Canada calls for minimum standards that would restrict extractive uses. We feel that restriction will go hand in hand with ecological integrity.

In terms of threats to marine protected areas, there are certainly human impacts related to commercial fishing activities and oil and gas activities. We also have a view that there are certain activities that can be conducted sustainably within marine protected areas, and we support MPAs that provide community benefits in that respect.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I don't know if I can get the answer in, but I have another question for WWF. A growing number of scientists and stakeholders suggest that in order to provide real protection for biodiversity and to achieve sustainable balance, we need to protect half of our land and water.

What should the greater conservation vision look like?

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund: I think our conservation vision is to have a steady focus on achieving our conservation objectives, such as our Aichi target 11 to protect 10% of our coastal and marine areas by 2020, but that's just part of the process. We must also have a longer-term vision for a much broader level of protection. The science is there, and it is telling us that at least 30% of marine areas need to be protected to ensure the conservation of biodiversity.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

We'll turn it over to Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for being here. This is great. As Mr. Amos said, there is a very wide range of perspectives, and I appreciate you all.

This is a question I have asked in the past of previous witnesses, and I would like to ask it again. As we race to hit our targets—kind of the quality-over-quantity debate—what suggestions do you have as to how we can ensure that we're protecting the best, most worthy land? I guess I'll go to Sigrid and Kimberley first, and then maybe Dr. Woodley would like to chip in afterwards.

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund: Well, Canada has done a lot of work in identifying ecologically and biologically significant areas, and those areas, called EBSAs, are really the foundation of any marine protected area planning process. In terms of conservation value, I think that's certainly the first step.

I'm sorry. I've lost of my train of thought, in terms of your question.

● (1230)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Quality over quantity.

Ms. Sigrid Kuehnemund: Quality over quantity, yes.

It appears that just in terms of designating very large-scale MPAs, it's certainly one option to reach the Aichi target, but we really have to consider that the MPAs have to be well connected, they have to be representative, and they have to occur within our ocean areas from coast to coast to coast.

The federal government does have a system for developing networks of marine protected areas, and we need to ensure that this process is respected as we start getting MPAs on stream to contribute toward our conservation targets.

We should really focus on planning a network to ensure well-connected systems and representative areas that are adequate and viable in contributing to biodiversity.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Does Dr. Woodley want to offer any suggestions?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: Yes. In Canada, we're very fortunate to have a lot of good data on our biodiversity. We have conservation data centres in every province and two of the territories. IUCN has just completed a new guidance on key biodiversity areas, in fact, and we already have a number of them identified in Canada. If we enter into systematic conservation planning, that's exactly the kind of input that goes into this kind of exercise. We're in excellent shape to use that kind of information as long as we organize to do it.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. I have a really quick snapper for Dr. Woodley. You spoke to one of the other members here about the balance of uses. Do you have examples of conservation efforts being successful alongside community or industry use? I was interested in your comment that they could coexist.

Dr. Stephen Woodley: Yes. I am sitting right now in the Czech Republic in a category 5 protected area where traditional agriculture is part of the zoning of the park I am in. It has done really well. Nature is always the first priority, but there are always solutions found to incorporate human use of this landscape. It gets six million visitors a year, and the biodiversity values of this place are in fact increasing. There are lots of solutions.

People are part of nature, and we live because of nature. It supports us. When there are 7.3 billion of us on the planet, we have to find those kinds of solutions. We are not going to do it with the business-as-usual approach that we have today. We have to change the way we do business if we want a happy future.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, if there are—

The Chair: There are two minutes left.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I would love to give my two minutes to my very handsome friend on my right here, for one of his great questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Fisher. I do not disagree with anything you just said.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: My question is for the Prospectors and Developers Association.

I think there is a lot of merit to a lot of what you said. It would be very foolish of me to suggest that we don't need minerals and we don't need to be properly mining in order to live in a society with the demands that we have today. Hopefully, one day we will get beyond our need to extract finite resources in order to fulfill those desires.

I am curious. I didn't hear you speak much about balance. Where do you see the balance? Is it going to be...? How do you see the balance between the need to extract these resources and the need to take care of the environmental concerns we have?

Mr. Nadim Kara: Thank you for that question. The focus for us is really on the process. The way you find the balance is by bringing the diverse perspectives together. We believe in that landscape-scale dialogue process, which will allow the people who are directly impacted by the landscape to share their different values and balance out where those ecologically sensitive areas are that really shouldn't be touched, along with where, as Dr. Woodley was saying, you can have co-existence with human activity, whether economic or recreational, within a sensitive area.

For us, that is what the focus is really on—the process by which protected areas are selected. There is some phenomenal work in Canada happening in the provinces and territories already. At the federal level, it is going to be important to build on what they are doing, because they are the ones that manage the land use planning processes. These balancing acts are struck at that level, and we want to make sure that those tables involve the right people and incorporate mineral potential. The risk is that in some processes we have seen—

The Chair: Nadim, I am going to have to cut you off.

Mr. Nadim Kara: —the potential is not included.

● (1235)

The Chair: I am sorry about that.

Mike Bossio, you can pick up that questioning if you want, or you can—

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): It is hilarious that among Wayne, John, and Mark, I just had all my questions taken away.

No, actually, there is one.

Does industry see areas that could or should be protected, areas that are off limits?

Mr. Nadim Kara: I think there is no argument from PDAC that there are going to be areas that have such ecological or cultural significance that they should be withdrawn from the claim-staking system.

For example, in Ontario, Lesley and I have been very involved with the Mining Act reforms, and one of the things there was no argument from industry about was that sites of aboriginal significance should be taken right off the map. Aboriginal people in Ontario, working with the Government of Ontario, identified those sites, and that information was not shared broadly. Those pieces of territory were taken right off the map so that there could be no staking of exploration or mining in those areas.

Like Mr. Gerretsen, I think it would be foolish of me to say that there aren't parts of the country that should be protected. It is the process by which those sites are chosen that we want to focus on.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you.

I would also like to accentuate the point that this whole conversation started the way it does way too many times. I don't blame Robert. It is a societal shift that needs to occur.

Is there anybody here who actually believes we are in an us-against-them scenario anymore? I think we all recognize that we have to get beyond this and that we need to move in a more sustainable viewpoint.

One thing that was pivotal in the whole COP21 process, which most people don't look at, was that it wasn't just about climate change and GHGs; it was about the 17 sustainable development goals, which we all need to start to work towards if we are going to have a sustainable society. Those three main pillars—social, economic, and environmental—need to take equal consideration in every decision we make as a society moving forward.

Is everybody on that page now? John, go ahead, please.

Mr. John Masswohl: I think that's a really excellent point. It's not that people are out to get you or anything like that. It's that people who are very well intentioned tend to focus on a single issue or a single aspect of sustainability. I think the example you just gave about climate change.... Climate change is one aspect of sustainability. Biodiversity is another, as are species at risk, clean water....

Mr. Mike Bossio: They're symptoms.

Mr. John Masswohl: It's all of these things. I think that sometimes you get into these adversarial aspects when you have one group that is trying to achieve one of those objectives and one group trying to achieve another one, but sometimes it's a balance between the two.

One of the things we've tried to do to address it is create the Canadian round table on sustainable beef production. I'm glad to say that we have the WWF as a partner in that, along with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Nature Canada, and a number of other stakeholder groups. By having that sort of dialogue, you can get everybody's perspective and try to find a path forward by working collaboratively.

Mr. Mike Bossio: That's great. Thank you.

I'd now like to direct this same thing to Stephen and Eric.

Stephen, you've now seen this rolled out successfully in the Czech Republic, in Brazil, and in Botswana. Has that been really the key framework that people have worked from, that three-pillar aspect of sustainability that drives through the process to the success?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: I guess I would say that the model of the three-legged stool is a bit of a simplistic model because, while all of those elements are important in a solution, we have to put nature first as a solution. I think that's the key to sustainability. If we don't put nature first, then we lose. We don't support economies and we don't support people.

Somehow in this mix we lose the fact that we're only here because of nature. It's the only thing that's keeping us alive on this planet in space. Unless we learn to do this as a first priority, we won't be successful. Things aren't going well. The global trends are not happy, and we have to change the way we do business. I think this conversation is an entry into really rethinking our priorities there. A lot of countries are doing this. The sustainable development goals in the UN are trying to do that.

● (1240)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Eric, would you like to add to that?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Eric Reder: Thank you.

Those are exactly the same points, and I think it's very important. On the three legs of the pillar, one of the things that's important is that nature is more sensitive than the other pillars. Nature is more sensitive than the different ways in which we can develop an economy. Nature needs a lot more care. In this nature-versus-people thing, if a developer or somebody who's working on the land acts in a certain way and we say that isn't good for nature, they're going to have to find other ways to act. We still can do economic development, but we can't affect nature as much.

That's the biggest part of it. Last night in eastern Manitoba I did a presentation on neonicotinoids and pesticides. The last slide in the presentation shows a picture of a bee on a wall and says, “When we go, we're taking you with us”. That very simple point is that when nature goes, we're gone.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're moving on to Mr. Eglinski.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the presenters today. It was very interesting to hear from all of you. One thing that I get from this committee and that I hope our committee passes on—I think we're getting this message from all groups—is that we need to have a good, strong, national strategy and pull all the diverse groups together to meet our Aichi goals. I think we can do better than that. I think this country can do better than the 17 Aichi goals. It's going to take a little work, but we can do better.

To my friends from Willmore Wilderness Park, thank you for presenting today. Thank you for what your aboriginal group does on the land in making sure that people get back to the land and conserve the land at the same time.

You're in a unique position in that you're right next to a national park, one of Canada's greatest national parks because it's in my riding—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I'll throw that in.

You have a lot of overflow from Canada's national park, especially on the trail systems you've developed. Whether it's hiking, cycling, walking, or horseback riding, you people focus on taking youth back to the land.

This question is going to swing over to your partner Stephanie, because she hasn't had a chance to talk. I know that Stephanie has a career in the environment, and she also worked in the industry located within the boundaries of your park.

In the years that you guys have been there, is the ecosystem improving from what you've seen in the past with the number of people utilizing that area? Either way, have you seen a change or a drastic decline, or is it remaining where it was?

Ms. Stephanie Brown (Environmental Manager, Willmore Wilderness Foundation): It seems to have remained quite stable. Over the years, with improvements in industry, there has been an increase in what people view as valuable and a push towards protecting those areas that are valuable. The areas within the park have been stable and really very good despite the number of people who go back there.

Ms. Sue Feddema-Leonard: Industry has opened up dinosaur tracks. Also, we have some of the greatest wildlife habitat at Cadomin and some of the reclamation at the mine has created more wildlife habitat, so we're seeing increased populations of wildlife as a result of the industry. It's a co-balance, a dance where the two are working together, I think. It's a holistic approach, as the gentleman said earlier.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: You have a unique situation there in that you have the endangered species, the caribou. I believe they roam through your area. Are they staying in the area? They seem to be focused around the Willmore.

Ms. Sue Feddema-Leonard: The caribou population has decreased. There are a lot of people who have a lot to say about it, but our elders said that back in 1949 there were no elk here, no ravens, and no whitetail. The cycle of life keeps changing. The caribou are declining, but other populations are increasing, and that's just part of the cycle of life. That's the way elders up here view it.

● (1245)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Thank you.

How much time do I have left, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I'll go to our mining association.

My riding of Yellowhead has a fair number of coal mining activities, coal-generated electricity, and of course oil and gas. The mining industry has been very active for many years and has reclaimed the land, in particular in an area called Wabamun. I remember that when I was a kid there was a big black hole there that was uglier than sin, but when you drive through there now it's pristine rolling farmland. It's agricultural land and cattle land that people come from Edmonton to enjoy.

Do you find that industry is very co-operative towards reclaiming the land after they've looked after the natural resources that they've tried to pull from it? In Canada, are the standards very strong compared to those of other countries?

Mr. Nadim Kara: That's a great question. Thank you.

I should start by clarifying that we do represent exploration and development, so our sister association is the Mining Association of Canada, and they do some phenomenal work in supporting their members to work on reclamation.

In general, what I can say is that in every jurisdiction there are strong closure plan requirements as part of the mining acts, so today's industry is not the same as it was 50 years ago. The regulatory process now mandates that reclamation be considered right from the beginning, and there are financial assurance requirements to ensure that the public doesn't have to hold the bag if it doesn't work out, if a company goes bankrupt and so on.

What we're seeing is that the combination of societal expectations is changing, which leads to regulatory change and corporate behavioural change. Together they are coming into the regulatory system to mandate those sorts of things. There is phenomenal innovation from the technology side. Across Canada, you can see some great stories of biodiversity actually increasing after a mine closure on a particular parcel of land. At a later date, I'd be happy to share some examples of that in writing with this committee.

The Chair: We're out of time.

Next is John Aldag, but I should introduce Jean Rioux, who is with us and is standing in for Will Amos.

Thank you for joining us today.

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you.

I have a short question for Mr. Eric Reder.

You spoke about a species at risk, the caribou, and to my knowledge there are caribou in Quebec and Labrador. You say that there are not many on federal land. Am I to understand that the province doesn't do its work to ensure the conservation of the caribou?

Mr. Eric Reder: Thank you for the question.

I have been working on caribou for nine years now. I will give you an example of the work the provincial government has done. In 2011, it released an action plan for the most at-risk caribou in Manitoba, which are those on the Ontario border. It was put out as a draft in 2011; now it is 2016, and we have never seen the updated version of it. The federal Species at Risk Act said that caribou were supposed to have federal recovery strategies in place years ago. We had to bring legal action to the federal government, through the Wilderness Committee and Ecojustice. We got them to improve their recovery strategies from what was put in place, but a lot of what happened federally was that it was deferred to the province.

The simple timelines the province has put forward.... Even though we have an Endangered Species Act in the province, there is a caveat that says the minister can decide otherwise, so there are no real legal teeth to hold the province to account. What we find with the Species at Risk Act—and this goes across caribou and all species; on the west coast, orcas are a really important one that we are working on—is that the science coming from the provinces that the federal government accepts is often being assembled with industry, and the socio-economic decisions are getting mixed into that science before it even gets to the federal government.

Of course, we know that socio-economic considerations are going to drive development decisions and conservation decisions, but we need to see the science and the proper plans put forward, and then be able to say, publicly, as a society, “Can we afford to save this species?” When we have that conversation in public, more people understand the state we are in and the number of species that we are driving to this place.

The answer to your question is that the Province of Manitoba has not done enough to look after woodland caribou in Manitoba.

● (1250)

Mr. Jean Rioux: What about Quebec and Newfoundland?

Mr. Eric Reder: We get into a different subspecies of caribou, migratory versus the stationary boreal woodland ones that I specifically deal with. In the science we see going to the federal government from British Columbia, where we specialize, and from Manitoba, we see the same problem, which is that sometimes the science is a little clouded before it gets to the federal government. If I were to hazard a guess, I would say that the federal government should pay closer attention to the stuff that is coming from the provinces. Obviously, the provinces have a vested interest in ensuring they continue to have development, and sometimes the caribou get in the way of that.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you very much.

Mr. John Aldag: I have a question for John.

I grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan that has been in the family for over a hundred years. When you speak about the ethic that landowners have, I completely understand that.

I would like to know from the Cattlemen's Association perspective if there are any incentives or other practices that work for you that you would like to see continued to ensure sustainable practices. Are there programs that don't exist right now that the Cattlemen's Association has talked about and would like support for from the government to be able to implement to help the sustainable practices?

Mr. John Masswohl: There certainly are. I probably couldn't name them all off the top of my head here for you, but we can follow up with that.

There are a number of things. I mentioned our award program to reward people for doing the right things. You hear a number of things.... For example, you want to conserve riparian areas, and there are certain practices that farmers might undertake so that they don't have to have the cattle go to the streams and drink. In terms of putting equipment in, could there be financial assistance so that they can do that instead of what they might have done in the past?

One of the things that we are working on right now.... You may have heard in the last couple of weeks about the Earls restaurant, for example.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. John Masswohl: There is a scenario where, again, very well-intentioned.... They wanted to focus on one aspect, humane treatment of animals. Of course, that is a huge concern of ours, but we want to look at it in the whole context of sustainability. We have been working on taking our verified beef production program, which is how we help farmers do certain things and tell them what the good practices are, and developing that into verified beef production plus. There will be certain capital costs and equipment costs associated with that, and we would be looking for some government assistance as we roll out verified beef production plus to help farmers implement some of those concepts and practices.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Shields, you're up.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate all the witnesses today. There are varied opinions and information. It's really good.

I think one of the things that came up from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, which John mentioned, is the holistic report.

John, you mentioned the sage grouse and the swift fox. A few years ago they said, “Let's put the swift fox back in here”, and the ranchers in the area knew, “Yup, you know what's for breakfast—sage grouse.” Then along come the protected species authorities to protect the sage grouse. That's the isolation piece.

You talked about wetlands. When they were worried about the leopard frog disappearing, they were fencing off wetlands so that the cattle couldn't use them. The ranchers said, “The buffalo stir up the mud. What are you guys doing? We were doing the same with the cattle.”

They fenced off those wetlands and the leopard frogs were gone, because the cattle were doing the same thing as the buffalo.

Your concept of a holistic view, I think, is really good. Is there anything more you'd like to say about that?

Mr. John Masswohl: I guess we just have to remember what was happening before the Europeans came, settled, and domesticated the land. The buffalo were there and the native people were there. The practice of having cattle on the land is replicating what was natural before we were out there.

If Bob were here, he would remember names, places, and dates. I remember the concepts.

There are areas that have just been left and set aside to go wild. We have taken the cattle and the animals out of those, and those places have become completely unproductive and uninhabitable for anything. The species at risk that were there have left because that habitat is no longer suitable for them anyway. You have to ask yourself why the burrowing owl is where it is, and why the sage grouse is where it is. It's because ranchers are taking care of that land and providing habitat for them.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

To the mining industry, in a sense of investigation, the guy who spent 20 years looking for diamonds.... There was a lot of prospecting and a lot of work. He is also the largest donor to the University of Toronto, as a former graduate there. At $50 million, I think he is the largest donor to a university.

With regard to the piece about the Diavik diamond mine, could you tell us a bit more about the co-operation among people and what it does for the industry and the aboriginal people there?

● (1255)

Mr. Nadim Kara: Thanks for that question.

One of the most profound impacts of those diamond mines has been multiple generations of aboriginal people around those sites being able to participate in the economic opportunities that were generated to leverage those economic opportunities to improve quality of life and to advance future generations' ability to do it. What we've seen with some of those mines is that as employment levels increase, families of aboriginal people from local communities start off doing fairly basic work, and then, because these are long-life mines, their children and grandchildren get educated and move up that employment chain.

There are business development opportunities that those mines have created. A significant portion of the revenues that come out of the mines are ploughed back into the local communities through procurement. With these long mine lives, aboriginal people have been able to establish scores of businesses that would not exist in that part of the world without the economic leverage of the diamond mines.

Those are two very specific examples.

All of the communities around the mines have signed agreements with the companies that establish the mines. Those agreements have provisions for both skills training and employment. There are business development opportunities such as having first choice to get into the supply chain, and communities can use revenue streams from the diamond mines to build up their own capacity as a community.

Those are a few examples.

This is not restricted to just those areas, of course. There are about 400 agreements, I think, between communities and companies around Canada. Each of those agreements is an opportunity for aboriginal people to leverage the development of natural resources for their own well-being, while including provisions for mitigating any potential environmental impacts or impacts on their aboriginal and treaty rights. We have quite a phenomenal architecture of informal and formal governance mechanisms in Canada to take care of the social and environmental impacts while creating the opportunities.

Mr. Martin Shields: It took him 20 years of prospecting to find it, though.

Mr. Nadim Kara: It did indeed.

Mr. Martin Shields: Prospecting has to be part of it. It took 20 years to find those locations, and what an economic benefit it has been in that region.

Mr. Nadim Kara: They had to roam quite large surface areas before they could find what they were looking for.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The Chair: The next questioner will be Mr. Stetski, and he has three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

First of all, for Eric of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, I have a request. Could you send to the committee copies of “Keep it Wild! A Conservation Vision for Manitoba”, your new publication?

Madam Chair, how many would we like?

The Chair: Yes, we need that. Could we get it electronically? That would be great.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Okay. That would be great.

The Chair: Is that okay?

Mr. Eric Reder: Yes, that's fine. It might be emailed out to you at 3 p.m. Manitoba time. You're on the list.

The Chair: That's awesome.

I'm sorry, Mr. Stetski. Carry on.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Woodley, I want to give the last opportunity to you. I'm already picturing the “sustainability means nature first” T-shirts, which I'm sure are coming shortly.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wayne Stetski: When we look at other countries around the world, where does Canada rank currently in terms of its conservation efforts? If we're not at the top, how do we move up the scale?

Dr. Stephen Woodley: There is something called the state of Canada's environment report, which was done by Environment Canada in collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments. It basically shows that all of the major ecosystem types in Canada have significant problems. We have a level of species at risk in Canada that is equal to anywhere else in the world. It's as bad as the global average, and it's as bad as Australia or the United States, so although we have the idea here that we're clean and green, we have significant problems.

There are great examples—and we've heard many of them today—of real sustainable actions, such as ranching. I'm a huge fan of conservation ranching, which is done really well, but overall, the state of grasslands in Canada is going down.

There are many solutions. One of them is to look at all the Aichi targets. Target 1 is to look at subsidies, for example, but when Canada reinterpreted the Aichi targets, we left that one out, which I think is unfortunate and maybe should be revisited.

I think the bottom line is that systematic conservation planning is a discipline. It's not well used here. I think that with federal leadership we can use it to generate a real bringing together of all interests so that we can move to sustainability—and I'd like to order a T-shirt.

● (1300)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds if you have anything else.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: That's fine, thanks.

The Chair: I want to thank all our witnesses today. It's excellent to hear the diverse positions. You've all had very unique and diverse positions that were presented to us today, and to have the chance to ask these questions with everyone in these different contexts was really nice.

Also, your patience was great while we were trying to get all the video conferences up and going. Thank you for hanging in there with us. We really appreciate it.

We have done really well with a very packed agenda. We've landed right on time, so I will end the meeting. Thank you so much, everybody.

The meeting is adjourned.