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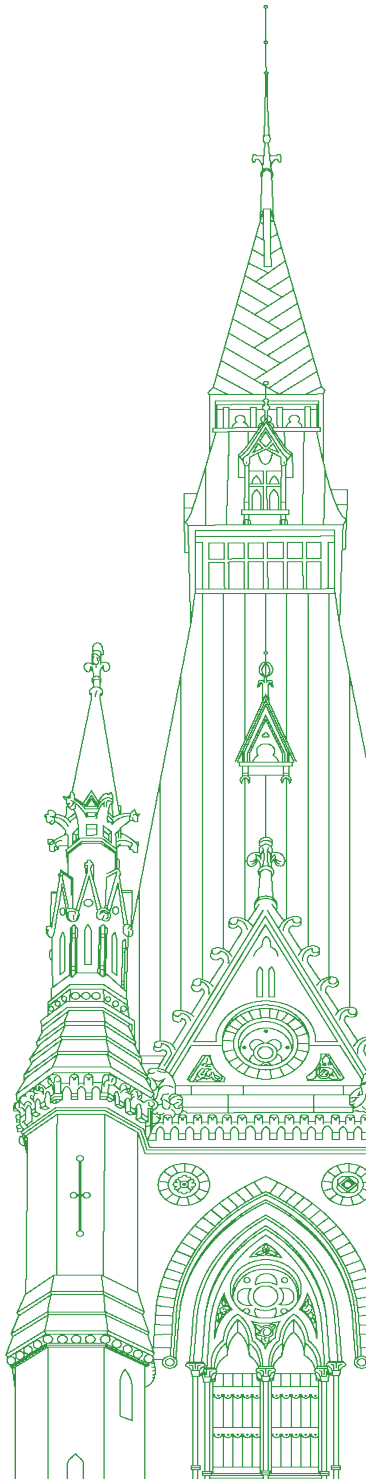

Chair: Ms. Yasmin Ratansi

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108, we are going to have a briefing by the Department of the Environment. Before us we have Ms. Geller, the assistant deputy minister of the strategic policy branch; Mr. Jones, assistant deputy minister for the pan-Canadian framework; Ms. Milburn-Hopwood, assistant deputy minister for the Canadian Wildlife Service; Ms. Ryan, associate assistant deputy minister of the environmental protection branch; Ms. Campbell, assistant deputy minister of the Meteorological Service of Canada; Ms. Gonçalves, director general, science and risk assessment; and Ms. Pelletier, chief enforcement officer.

How many of you are speaking, all of you?

Ms. Hilary Geller (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Madam Chair, those of us at the table will be speaking.

The Chair: Okay, and how many minutes will each of you speak?

Ms. Hilary Geller: We will not exceed the 30 minutes, which is what I understand has been put aside.

The Chair: Do you mean collectively?

Ms. Hilary Geller: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, thank you. You may begin.

Ms. Hilary Geller: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

My colleagues and I are pleased to be here today.

[*English*]

We are pleased to be here today to have a chance to provide an overview of Environment and Climate Change Canada and then to have the opportunity to respond to your questions.

We have provided you with a deck, which gives a high-level overview of the department. We don't propose to walk through the deck, but as just mentioned, colleagues at the table are hoping to spend a few minutes each to describe to you in some detail their area of responsibility. That way, before we respond more deeply to your particular areas of interest, we'll have a chance to talk briefly about nature, climate change, weather, environmental protection, including plastics, and foundational science performed by the department.

I'll lead off by providing a brief overview of the department, before turning it over to my colleagues here at the table in the area of their responsibilities as they appear in the deck before you.

ECCC's mandate at the highest level is to protect and conserve Canada's natural heritage and ensure a clean, safe and sustainable environment for present and future generations. Some of the services the department provides have been in place for many years. One of the most venerable parts of our department is almost 150 years old; that is the Meteorological Service of Canada, which was formed in 1871. The Wildlife Service, which Sue Milburn-Hopwood is here today to represent, is coming up to 75 years of age, and the department itself is going to be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year.

We are part of a portfolio that includes Parks Canada and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, which I understand you will be hearing from next week. Each has its own deputy head.

The department has approximately 7,200 employees. More than half are located outside the national capital region: 56%, to be precise. There are about 8% in the Pacific and Yukon region, 11% in the Prairies and the north, 18% in Ontario, 13% in Quebec and 7% in the Atlantic region. Forty per cent of our department is made up of scientists. Other specialists include enforcement officers, as represented by Anne-Marie Pelletier; regulatory personnel; international negotiators; wildlife biologists; and of course, economic policy, finance and HR professionals. We're also really pleased that about 15% of our staff are students or recent grads.

The minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada is primarily responsible for 29 acts, some of which are listed in the deck, not all of them, and has secondary responsibility in a further 18. Under those pieces of legislation, there are approximately 80 regulations in place that address issues as diverse as pollution prevention, weather modification and wildlife protection emergency management.

The last thought I'll leave you with is that when we think about our mandate, it's really important to underscore that we work in an area of shared jurisdiction with the provinces and territories. This fact means that we put a premium on partnerships and collaboration in all aspects of our work: with provincial and territorial colleagues, of course, but also with indigenous peoples, local governments, NGOs, other federal departments and industry. You'll hear that theme of collaboration come through in all of my colleagues' remarks.

With that, thank you, and I will turn to Jackie Gonçalves.

● (0850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jacqueline Gonçalves (Director General, Science and Risk Assessment, Department of the Environment): Thank you very much.

Good morning, everyone.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is one of the largest science-based departments in Canada. The Science and Technology Branch has about 1,400 employees in 24 science and technology centres across the country. Those employees carry out laboratory work, field work, research and environmental monitoring.

Science is the foundation of our department's work. It supports the development of our regulations, the enforcement of environmental laws, as well as our weather and climate services. It provides the evidence we need to make sound decisions to protect our environment, provides public interest services, and promotes economic growth and prosperity. The science developed at our department has an excellent reputation both domestically and internationally. Our work responds directly to needs in service delivery and regulation, and to other department policies and programs.

[*English*]

Our employees are passionate about the work they do serving Canadians. Our department publishes over 700 peer-reviewed journals and articles annually, which puts the department among the world's most productive environmental science organizations. Year after year we make a high-impact contribution to science across Canada and the globe.

To support the department's mandate, our environmental science has taken many forms. One of our priority areas is to model and assess how the climate is changing, and to understand the impacts of climate change. However, under the current burden of warming and under future scenarios, the challenge of understanding, predicting and tracking climate change is a team effort across all of our branches and scientific disciplines. It's also an area of high collaboration with other national and international organizations.

Our department relies heavily on research and monitoring of the presence and impacts of environmental pollutants and stressors to inform decisions. In this area, we are world-recognized innovators in new approaches, for example in the oil sands monitoring program, a productive collaboration among the Government of Alberta, local indigenous peoples, the oil industry and other stakeholders to monitor the environmental effects of oil sands resource development.

Another example is the elaboration of a draft scientific assessment on the pollution of plastic that was recently published. We hope to be getting comments and feedback on that report between now and April 1.

Another of our priorities is to support informed responses to threats and emerging priorities. We have many activities in a variety of different media that we collect information on, share information on, and collaborate with many other organizations to deliver.

To close, environmental issues are interconnected globally, and no single country or organization has the expertise or capacity to address them alone. Canadian collaboration in the international science community is key to delivering on our mandate's responsibilities.

I'll pass it now to my colleagues.

Thank you.

● (0855)

Mr. Matt Jones (Assistant Deputy Minister, Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office, Department of the Environment): My name is Matt Jones. I am the assistant deputy minister of the pan-Canadian framework implementation office, formerly known as the climate policy office.

Our group was involved in developing our national climate change plan, the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. We've since pivoted to supporting its implementation. It is quite a cross-cutting collection of policies and measures that are being implemented and led by colleagues across a number of federal departments.

I think you'll hear from many of our colleagues that part of their responsibilities are associated with the issue of climate change. It is a vast and cross-cutting issue with many subcomponents, and we're all involved in various ways. Our regulatory colleagues are obviously very involved in developing GHG-based regulations. We have an international negotiation team. We have a dedicated modelling team. There's a team that is exclusively focused on the issues of adaptation—how we adapt to the impacts of climate change. We have a technical team that does our GHG inventory. We have a dedicated modelling team that does our emissions projections and our accountabilities and reporting. Lots of my colleagues here at the table and others are very much involved in climate change.

My team has been put in place to try to pull together the pieces, to have a holistic view of the issue and to be able to provide advice on the issue of climate change. I have three primary groups.

I have a policy and coordination group that pulls together climate policies and works across all of the implicated federal departments. It also works with provinces and territories, and it chairs a climate change committee with environment ministry colleagues from the provinces and territories. It also supports three existing tables with first nations, Inuit and Métis on the issue of climate change. That is the central policy and coordination group.

I also have a programs team. They implement the low-carbon economy fund, among others, one piece of the pan-Canadian framework.

And I have the Canadian centre for climate services, which is a technical organization that really pulls together climate data and makes it available to Canadians in a usable format. I'd encourage you to check out its website. You can see both historical data and projected future impacts of climate change on a map. It's climatedata.ca, which is a very useful tool for understanding the local impacts, changes that we have seen in precipitation and temperature, both in the past and also projected into the future.

Those are the three main components of my organization. I'm happy to follow up on climate topics.

Ms. Diane Campbell (Assistant Deputy Minister, Meteorological Service of Canada, Department of the Environment): Thank you very much.

The Meteorological Service of Canada provides Canadians with authoritative information on weather, water quantity, ice conditions, air quality and other environmental conditions. We do this 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As Hilary said, we're poised to celebrate our 150th anniversary.

We also actively support the mission-critical operations of other entities. For example, we provide the weather services for our Department of National Defence, for the Canadian Coast Guard—particularly ice-related services—and for Canada's air navigation system. We also provide essential data to the provinces and territories to support their emergency management operations, including their government operations centres, as well as their provincial flood forecasting entities.

Canadians are avid consumers of weather data. About 90% of Canadians actively seek out weather data every day. For example, we issue thousands of products, and our weather website is visited about 50 million times per month. We launched a new service platform about a year ago: WeatherCAN is our weather app. We've had about a million downloads of that weather app since it was first introduced.

In addition to the products and services, we also make our data very widely available on some of our digital platforms.

I'll give you an example. On average, about 30 terabytes of data are downloaded every month. These are taken up by third parties, who either further distribute the data or create their own value-added products for their business purposes.

Partnerships are critical to our business. Weather doesn't stop and start in Canada, so the whole business model is based on international collection and sharing of data on a real-time basis. Every day, multiple times per day, there's a coordinated effort across the planet to launch weather balloons and to share the data in real time in a global telecommunications and information management system. Then we in Canada draw from that data in order to initialize our weather models.

In addition, back in Canada we work collaboratively at the local and regional levels with our provinces and territories. For example, for our water quantity program we manage more than 2,000 water quantity stations, where we measure the flow, the level of the water. That data is provided in almost real time to our provincial and territorial colleagues, who will then use the data to help predict floods and other hazardous conditions.

In order to deliver on this mandate, we run an integrated system, from the collection of the data all the way to the product and service delivery. It's based on a very large asset base of diverse monitoring equipment that includes weather radars, weather balloon launch stations, surface stations, water quantity stations, lightning detection systems, etc.

As a highlight, we're currently midway in a major project of replacement of our weather radars. We got an injection of funds in 2013. We have replaced 12 of our 30 radars and are on track to replace the rest.

The next part of the value chain is based on high-performance computing. We have one of the most powerful computers in Canada, one of the top 100 computers globally. It processes vast amounts of data every day. We run a top-tier global forecasting model—we're among the top five performers on the globe. Two years ago, we completed a replacement project of the current high-performance computing system. We've replaced it and we've done our first upgrade.

The performance of high-performance computing systems is pretty integral to how well weather models perform globally. The top-tier weather centres are always in the mode of planning the next supercomputer replacements. It's a small-knit community. We track each other's performance but also track the ability of the vendors to respond to our needs.

Finally, part of the chain is our experts, our meteorologists. Once we have the guidance from our computer models, our meteorologists take that guidance and issue the products every day, and that includes specialized products and services.

Overall in the meteorological service, we have about 1,400 employees, who are distributed in 50 centres across Canada. If we focus just on the weather business, though, there are about 300 meteorologists, focused in seven regionally based storm prediction centres. Then we have some additional specialized services for aviation, defence, etc.

● (0900)

We're very pleased to be here. The reason we exist is basically that extreme weather presents extremely high impacts to the global economy, and that's the same in Canada. The World Economic Forum recently identified that the highest risk, the most likely risk, is extreme weather. In Canada, the costs of disasters such as floods and fires are extremely high, so our focus is on improving the services, delivering more early warning information and having longer lead times to help Canadians and their institutions prepare for extreme weather.

Thank you.

Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): Good morning. I'm pleased to be here today.

I'm the assistant deputy minister of the Canadian Wildlife Service. The Canadian Wildlife Service is responsible for the department's nature agenda more broadly across the government. I'll go through our responsibilities and some of our priorities.

First of all, we have a significant mandate related to species at risk, and the Species at Risk Act provides a number of authorities and mechanisms for species protection and recovery. We have obligations for federal species like migratory birds, and then the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has that responsibility for aquatic species. Then we have provisions for a safety net for non-federal lands and non-federal species.

There are currently over 600 species at risk, and the list continues to grow. Tackling the species at risk issue is a bit of a daunting agenda. In 2018, Environment and Climate Change Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, developed something called the pan-Canadian approach to transform our approach to species at risk conservation across the country, focusing on some select priority places, some select species and some sectors and threats to try to build in more multi-species, ecosystem-based planning and delivery.

Unlike some of the other species—the terrestrial species that are largely managed by the provinces—we do have exclusive responsibility for migratory birds under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. Birds are in decline, particularly shore birds, grassland birds and aerial insectivores, which are birds that eat insects in flight. In North America, we've lost three billion birds since 1970, largely due to habitat loss and degradation. Habitat loss is the greatest risk, but we also have responsibilities for managing the hunting of migratory birds, and we are pleased to indicate that we are modernizing our approach to those regulations.

The next big area that I want to talk about is our work on conserving and restoring important wildlife habitats and ecosystems. We do that through a mix of conservation tools, providing funding and incentives for others to act. Sometimes we act on our own and sometimes we use regulatory action, all supported by science.

Environment and Climate Change Canada leads on the national efforts to expand Canada's network of protected and conserved areas. Our current target is to conserve 17% of lands and inland waters by 2020. As of January of this year, 12.1% has been achieved. That's an area twice the size of Alberta. That's a really significant accomplishment.

As we work toward getting higher amounts protected, indigenous protected and conserved areas are increasingly important. We've had significant investments, particularly in the last two years, to make progress in this area, but there's much more that needs to be done to meet the target. The government has indicated that we'll bring a plan to conserve 25% of Canada's land and 25% of Canada's oceans by 2025, working toward a 30% goal by 2030. In doing that, we'll be looking at science, indigenous knowledge and local perspectives.

As I indicated, we also have some direct responsibilities in this area. In Environment and Climate Change Canada, we manage a huge network of protected areas, more than 14 million hectares. Protected areas are essentially parks for wildlife, and Environment and Climate Change Canada is the second-largest land manager because of this responsibility. We manage 55 national wildlife areas and 92 migratory bird sanctuaries. They include not only terrestrial but also some of the marine areas outside of these areas, so they are both terrestrial and marine.

Those are really the three big areas. On top of that, we have an overall responsibility for biodiversity, and we lead collaborative efforts with other federal departments, provinces, territories, indigenous people, and stakeholders to develop Canada's national biodiversity strategy, both domestically and internationally.

● (0905)

The work that's under way right now is to prepare for the October meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity and to develop goals for the post-2020 period.

As Hilary mentioned, we share this responsibility with provinces and territories. The responsibility for addressing biodiversity loss is shared. Land use planning, natural resource development and wildlife management are primarily a responsibility of the provinces and territories. Forty per cent of the landscape is covered by indigenous land claims, so it's really important—

● (0910)

The Chair: I need you to wrap up. Otherwise, the other two will not get time to speak.

Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: I'm finished.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Helen Ryan (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Good morning. I am pleased to be joining you.

I am in charge of the Environmental Protection Branch at the Department of the Environment. Our purpose is to monitor, prevent and manage pollution from various sources, to prevent air and water pollution, and to manage risks associated with chemical substances.

We work with our counterparts from Health Canada and, as my colleague Ms. Gonçalves said, we provide scientific and technical support 24/7 to help better manage emergencies. We work closely with our federal, provincial and, in some cases, municipal counterparts. We also work on managing hazardous waste to ensure that it is properly managed and eliminated safely.

In addition, we also ensure the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as my colleague Mr. Jones mentioned.

[*English*]

This area is definitely one of shared jurisdiction. We work very closely with our provincial and territorial colleagues to help deliver on this important mandate. We also have a responsibility for managing environmental programs, such as the federal contaminated sites program, to help reduce the legacy and liability from past practices that have resulted in environmental contamination on federal land. We put in place regulations and other risk management measures. We work collaboratively with industry in helping to reduce and manage the pollution and pollution sources that we spoke about. We take regulatory and other actions under a couple of key pieces of legislation: the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, and the Fisheries Act, in terms of both the general prohibition and administration of some key effluent regulations, including pulp and paper, metal and diamond mining, and wastewater system effluence regulations.

We also support some of the work that my colleague Sue mentioned under the Migratory Birds Convention Act and the pollution prohibition provisions there. We are responsible for helping to support the department's work on the modernization of our legislation—the CEPA modernization, for instance—and we are working to help bridge the environmental gap that we find on reserves.

With respect to air quality, we work collaboratively with our provinces and territories to improve air quality. We are also working collaboratively with our colleagues at Health Canada in the development of an air quality management system that would help set standards and emissions requirements for industries and equipments. We also put in place regulations—

The Chair: Madam Ryan, I am sorry to cut you off, but I will not be able to give four minutes to Madam Pelletier unless we leave it for questions. You'll be able to expound on it then.

Ms. Helen Ryan: Perfect. Absolutely.

The Chair: Sorry. Thank you.

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier (Chief Enforcement Officer, Enforcement Branch, Department of the Environment): Good morning, members of the committee. It's a pleasure to be here today.

The mandate of the enforcement branch is to enforce the department's environmental and wildlife acts and their regulations in a fair, predictable and consistent manner. As my colleague mentioned, our work covers many pollution regulations, wildlife regulations, general prohibitions, national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries, among others. The enforcement branch, in collaboration with several Environment Canada programs, provinces, territories and national and international partners, works to ensure that companies and individuals comply with the environmental and wildlife acts and regulations. Our main objective is to bring regulatees into compliance. It's not about going out there and saying, “We got you”; it's more about bringing them back into compliance.

We are a young branch. We were formed only in 2005, following recommendations made in 1998 by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. It had tabled a report called “Enforcing Canada's Pollution Laws: The Public Interest Must Come First!”. The report made a number of recommendations, including that the department should establish an independent or centralized enforcement agency and that enforcement decisions should not be made by officials with managerial functions and responsibilities in areas other than enforcement. This is why the branch was created under the minister, reporting directly to the deputy minister.

The minister has a responsibility for management and direction of the department. Accountability for the branch rests with me, the chief enforcement officer. I report directly to the deputy minister. While the minister provides strategic direction to the entire department, the minister's role is independent from my role in enforcement operational decision-making. This distance was put in place to protect the integrity of the law enforcement process and protect all parties from claims of conflict of interest, influence or misuse of public office. This distance, when it comes to enforcement, is very important.

The branch itself is made up of about 430 employees, of whom 270 are enforcement officers, and they are across Canada. They have enforcement powers under the legislation, which they are designated for. We are dispersed into five regions, and we have about 27 district offices across Canada. Enforcement officers are designated with the powers of peace officers for the purpose of enforcing the legislation under which they are designated. Among other things, this gives us the power to seize evidence, with search warrants, and to issue summonses compelling people to appear in court.

The enforcement branch is organized into five sections. Of course, we have the enforcement on the environment side and the enforcement on the wildlife side. We have risk assessment, and we also have the training and the support officer safety section as well.

I'm going to leave it here. It's quite evident what we do as our role within the department, and we work very closely in collaboration with our regulatory people and also people from the wildlife section.

Thank you.

● (0915)

The Chair: Thank you very much. We maintained the 30 minutes.

Committee members, I'll allocate about five minutes at the end for committee business because something has come up.

We will go to first-round questions, and we'll have questions until five minutes before the end of the meeting.

Madame Findlay.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, all, for being here today. It's very informative, but very quick. I have many things I'd like to ask and won't have enough time to do that.

Because Madame Pelletier was the last speaker, maybe I'll just ask a couple of quick questions there. You mentioned there are five regions and 27 offices across the country. How many enforcement officers do you have across the country?

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: I have 270 enforcement officers across Canada.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Where are they trained?

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: We have a training system, a training program, so we work in collaboration with Algonquin College, with National Defence and with CBSA. As we are a young organization, we are building that component right now, but we have a very thorough training program for our enforcement officers.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Is there any one region where there are more officers than in another, a region that is particularly sensitive from your point of view?

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: I would say that it actually changes. There's no specific hot spot. Of course, there are some industries that are more predominant from one area to another. You would have the vehicle industry more on the Ontario side. There are more border issues. It all depends on the type of regulation you're looking at.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Would your enforcement be more with industry, individuals or a mix?

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: It's a mixture. On the pollution side, it is with the industry. On the wildlife side, it would be more with individuals and smaller companies.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you.

I'm not sure who should answer this question. I know that you developed a clean fuel standard. I understand that in your economic analysis you separated liquid fuels from gaseous and solid fuels.

Is that correct?

● (0920)

Ms. Helen Ryan: Yes, that is correct.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: What progress has been made toward setting regulations in this area?

Ms. Helen Ryan: We've been working collaboratively with stakeholders and have had quite broad consultations and discussions at a technical level both with provinces and territories and with stakeholders. We've put out discussion documents and the framework for how the clean fuel standard would operate. We're now advancing with the development of the first phase, which is the liquid phase; that applies primarily to transportation fuels. That work is under way and has been informed by the extensive consultation with stakeholders.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I'm aware of that consultation.

What are your timelines on that issue now? Is it now complete from your point of view? Is it ongoing? If it's ongoing, when do you see that being cut off?

Ms. Helen Ryan: The discussions with respect to the development of the clean fuels standard are ongoing. They will continue throughout the development of the regulatory proposal. We are expecting to be bringing forward draft regulations in the next while. When we do so, that will go out for further public comments and engagement to help inform that development.

In addition, conversations will continue to advance on the approach that should be taken for managing the gaseous and solid streams. We are advancing those conversations as well to help ensure that we have a comprehensive understanding of the issues at play and how that might unfold to help inform the development of those measures.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: You have partly anticipated my next question. You said in the next while.

When are you anticipating those regulations coming forward and being made public for consultation?

Ms. Helen Ryan: I don't have the specific time frame. We will see them out and we are expecting they will be coming forward in the near future. The ministers will be considering them in terms of the timeline for putting them out for public consultation.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: When you say near future, are you anticipating it to be this year, 2020, or do you mean near future in the next few years?

Ms. Helen Ryan: I anticipate they will be coming forward this year.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: With respect to the economic analysis you're doing, you said you have a phase one with liquid fuels. When would your economic analysis be made public?

Ms. Helen Ryan: We have already shared the approach that we're using in terms of the nature of the modelling that would be done. We worked quite closely with stakeholders in understanding their issues, how they operate and what the potential implications are. We did that over the course of the last year or so. When we put out draft regulations, we always put out the draft regulatory impact analysis statement. It contains all the economic analysis as well as the costs and benefits that derive from the regulations. That will come out at the same time as the draft regulations.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Yes, I'm aware.

If it's coming out and we're expecting regulations this year, then we would be seeing that economic analysis this year as well.

Ms. Helen Ryan: That's right. You will see them concurrently; when the draft regulations come, the RIAS comes with them. They go hand in glove.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Longfield for six minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for a tremendous panel. It's always too short, but very informative.

Considering some of the topics we might be studying in future meetings, I might want to test a few with you to see what you have to say. One of them is around recent rulings on Volkswagen. As a co-chair of the automotive caucus, I'm always interested in how government and industry work together to protect the environment. That being said, on January 22, Volkswagen pleaded guilty to illegally importing vehicles equipped with defeat devices in contravention of our environmental protection laws. Similar jurisdictions like the U.S. and the EU moved more quickly on this issue than Canada did.

Could you talk about the process we follow in situations like this, where we need to investigate the charges on industry?

● (0925)

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: Volkswagen was a very complex case, and it was also one of our largest. When the department found out about the situation in the U.S., there was a discussion with the enforcement branch and with the vehicle testing group.

Actually, I'm going to turn to Helen. Maybe you want to give a quick overview of what happened. Then I'll go back to the chronology of it.

Ms. Helen Ryan: Sure, absolutely.

In the administration of our vehicles regulation, we actually undertake the vehicle testing. We also work collaboratively with our partners in the United States. We actually have a shared testing program, and we share testing results. We were starting to see this information surface, particularly with the study that was done by the ICCT. Then we started to undertake purchasing and acquiring of vehicles so that we could put in place a testing program for them. Because of the nature of the defeat device, as we now know, it was programmed into the operation of the vehicle. What it did was this: The computer program would recognize that it was on a test cycle and would tell the vehicle to put on all its emissions control devices, but when the vehicle was on the road, it would take them off.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Yes.

Ms. Helen Ryan: To unearth that was very complex. We put in place a new testing program and started to see these odd results. We amassed a body of evidence, including the information that was coming from the U.S. EPA and CARB as well. We had evidence to support this, working in collaboration with our U.S. colleagues. That information took time because we actually had to put in place new testing provisions.

The other important consideration that differs between Canada and the United States is that the majority of our vehicles are sold concurrently in the United States, and to ease the administrative burden of our industry, we allow them to use the certificates that are issued by the United States. The United States has a body of evidence that we don't have. This allows them to move more quickly in some elements. We relied on that, developed our case, and transferred it over to our colleagues in enforcement.

I'll turn it back to you.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay. If we could hold on that, that would be great. That gives me a flavour for how we go back and forth on that. Thank you.

I have two other questions I want to get to, and we only have a few more minutes.

Last week, I held a climate change town hall in Guelph. I had our member of provincial Parliament there on a panel with me, as well as our mayor. All levels of government are working together on climate change initiatives.

One of the topics that came out over and over again was transportation. Guelph has recently been awarded funding for electric buses—we have 65 buses coming to Guelph over a period of time. We're looking at how to mitigate the pollution from vehicles on greenhouse gas emissions and how to coordinate across your department in terms of vehicle emissions—things like buses, transit fleets and city fleets, as well as business fleets.

Mr. Matt Jones: In terms of the transportation sector, as is the case with many aspects of climate change, there are many players there.

Certainly, infrastructure funding—and green infrastructure, specifically—is a critical piece of the puzzle, as electric buses and other more sustainable modes of transport are eligible through multiple streams of the investing in Canada plan. The low-carbon economy fund has made investments through provincial programs to top up existing programs, touching on the transport sector in some cases.

Of course, we have our vehicle regulations and other aspects that we manage as a department, and Transport Canada is a key player in all aspects of—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: That might be something for us to do further investigation on in terms of how we coordinate between orders of government.

Finally, I was at the climate change research centre up at PEARL in the Arctic, where we co-locate with Environment Canada and are investing in climate change research. What is the importance of coordinating Environment Canada's work with our research community?

● (0930)

The Chair: Please give a quick answer.

Ms. Jacqueline Gonçalves: We're very networked. All of our scientists who work on a particular area know each other and work quite well together. Collaboration is key to our investigations.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for your presentations.

Ms. Campbell, I am one of the 50 million people who consult Environment Canada to find out what the weather conditions are. I don't do it only to learn what the weather will be like tomorrow; I also look at the comparative data. I find that very interesting.

Mr. Jones, you say there is a committee on climate change the provinces and territories are involved in. I am from Quebec and would like to know with whom you collaborate at the provincial level. Do you work with people from Quebec's environment and climate change department and with the responsible ministers?

Mr. Matt Jones: Thank you for your question.

We work in a team with all our provincial and territorial counterparts, especially with representatives from environment ministries. There are a few committees within our organization, including a committee that brings together Canadian ministers of the environment. There is also a committee on climate change, most of whose members are assistant deputy ministers at environment ministries. Those committees exist at every level. They bring together technicians and experts, but also ministers and deputy ministers.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay, thank you.

I would like to check some data I heard earlier. I would really like to know the exact figures. I believe it was Ms. Milburn-Hopwood who talked about it.

Regarding nature, conservation and the restoration of natural habitats, you said that 70% of areas should have been protected by 2020. I assume we are talking about the end of 2020. I don't understand what areas you are talking about.

Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: Thank you for your question.

It's 17% of the land mass of Canada.

[*English*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay, now I understand.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ryan, I would like to ask you a question about hazardous waste. I think another organization handles nuclear waste, but I would like to know whether your department's regulations on hazardous waste cover nuclear waste, as well as the sites contaminated by it.

Ms. Helen Ryan: We are not responsible for nuclear waste sites. They are regulated by another organization. So that is not part of our portfolio.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Ms. Ryan, your overview talks about regulating the import and export of substances that present a risk to the environment and/or human life or health. I am very interested in the impact of pollution on health.

Could you suggest a specific document on that issue to me?

Ms. Helen Ryan: I will let Ms. Gonçalves answer your question, since environmental assessments are carried out at the Science and Technology Branch, in collaboration with Health Canada.

Ms. Jacqueline Gonçalves: Every year, we publish an annual report on the chemicals management plan. It contains a lot of information, including the substances we have assessed and the types of measures that will be implemented, including regulations. It would be a good source of information. In addition, if you want to ask specific questions, it would be our pleasure to answer them.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: My next question is very specific. It concerns the Outaouais region in particular.

Ms. Pelletier, you have perhaps heard about the chronic wasting disease in cervids. That disease is similar to bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly referred to as the mad cow disease, but it affects deer. It spreads very easily.

Could you tell me where I could get more information on this?

● (0935)

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: From the Canada Food Inspection Agency.

[*English*]

Ms. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: The responsibility for deer is a responsibility of the provincial governments.

[*Translation*]

However, we do have some responsibilities in government.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: So the responsibility is shared. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Pauzé.

[*English*]

Madam Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): First, thanks so much for your time and for your insightful presentations. I want to follow up on a couple of questions that have already been asked.

It was mentioned, on the pollution side, that the enforcement is predominantly targeted at industry, whereas I think it was more aimed at individuals on the wildlife protection or conservation side.

In the fall of 2018, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development audited the government's performance of controlling toxic substances under CEPA and identified several weaknesses in the enforcement.

One example was that 70% of the prosecutions were of dry cleaners, which are often small businesses and are less able to defend themselves in court. In addition to that, there was really no documented evidence that the substance presented a higher risk to human health and the environment than other substances—especially in the context of Volkswagen, a very large corporation having potentially huge impacts on human health.

I'm curious about that kind of gap or other gaps that you see in the enforcement of CEPA and what's happening on that front.

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: Thank you for your question.

We took these gaps very seriously. The enforcement branch is shifting how we're assessing risk. We are in the midst, in our first year, of developing a methodology where we're going to be identifying, with all the regulations that we have, which sectors are at higher risk for the environment. With that, it's going to be shifting our enforcement activities from knowing where to target to knowing where the highest risk is, so we look at areas that may not be the dry cleaner. It may be other areas where we know the risk is higher. We may not have all the information today. We may be going collecting. We may be going in areas that we are not predominantly going to. It's human nature to go where we know there is non-compliance, so we're shifting that.

I cannot give you any examples right now, because we are really in the middle of doing this. We are meeting with provinces and territories next week to share our methodology so we can work collaboratively, and we're looking at doing some joint planning as well.

This risk assessment-based approach is really going to be addressing the report and the gaps that were in the recommendations.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Can you flesh out a few of the other gaps beyond the one I mentioned?

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier: I don't have them with me or by memory. I'm sorry.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Not to worry.

My next question is around fossil fuel subsidies, particularly the lack of transparency in the approach to phasing out fossil fuel subsidies. I think ECCC identified four subsidies and identified them as efficient.

I'm also curious about the definition of efficient and inefficient, and whether or not you have taken into account the Auditor General's recommendations for a more comprehensive analysis of fossil fuel subsidies, including EDC and TMX, and if you're considering using our climate commitments and defining efficient and inefficient in line with those goals for net zero by 2050.

● (0940)

Ms. Hilary Geller: The issue of fossil fuel subsidies and the examination of them—both from a tax side and a non-tax side—comes from a G20 commitment that was made a number of years ago to identify and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2025. A framework was developed by our colleagues in the ministry of finance to do that analysis, and the application of that framework has led to eight tax initiatives being phased out over the last decade or so.

On the non-tax side, Environment Canada has been leading that work, in co-operation with a number of other departments. We applied the same framework and, as the member says, identified four non-tax fossil fuel subsidies that were determined not to be inefficient—if that's not a double negative.

As a result of two reviews by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, there is still work under way on this. The previous minister retained Michael Horgan, a former deputy minister of environment and finance, to have a look at the framework, consult with Canadians and provide some recommendations, taking into account the context as it has evolved since the time of the G20 commitment.

The short answer to the question is that we are still considering it, with the advice of Mr. Horgan, in light of the CESD recommendation, and of course the government's commitment to net zero by 2050.

I think it's fair to say that the surrounding context has evolved, and we're still considering how we may need to evolve with it.

The Chair: Ms. Collins, you have 15 seconds.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I'll wait for the next one.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to the second round of questioning, with five minutes.

Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): I have several questions regarding greenhouse gas pollution. I'm not sure who can answer them.

I'm looking for some insight into the deliberations inside the department when it came to drafting the legislation. I'm not talking about the political advice you may have received or given. Specifically, I'd like to know what discussions you had regarding the disparity between urban and rural areas of the country, and how the carbon tax would impact them differently.

Ms. Helen Ryan: In the context of putting legislation in place, the department has a broad responsibility to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the potential implications, not just in terms of regional disparity, but also in terms of issues of gender and the like. Analysis is undertaken to support the drafting of the legislation, and considerations are laid out with respect to that.

If you look at the actual development of the legislation itself—

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Sorry to interrupt. I kind of understand that, but specifically on rural and urban.... Was work done in that area?

Ms. Helen Ryan: As I mentioned, there was specific work done. There are elements within the legislation itself that reflect some of the ways the government decided it wanted to help address that. For instance, with respect to farmers, there are some specific exemptions that relate to their considerations.

In terms of the way in which we manage the revenues and the return of the revenues, there are specific considerations given for residents of small communities in rural areas, particularly in recognition of their special needs.

I'll turn to my colleague, Judy Meltzer, who is the director general of the carbon market bureau, for further elaboration on this.

Ms. Judy Meltzer (Director General, Carbon Pricing Bureau, Department of the Environment): Thank you very much for the question.

With respect to the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act specifically, consideration was given under of part 1 of the fuel charge. I should note that it was Finance Canada that led the development and the implementation of part 1, along with the Canada Revenue Agency.

There are exemptions for farmers, in terms of coverage. In jurisdictions where it applies, the federal fuel charge does not apply to biological emissions from livestock, or to gasoline or diesel used on farms in trucks and farm machinery. Similarly, for the related policy, in terms of the return of direct proceeds from the fuel charge, in jurisdictions where it is returned directly—primarily to households—there is an increasing 10% supplement for rural areas. There is a front-end and a back-end consideration of rural communities.

● (0945)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Were there work products related to this issue inside the department?

Ms. Judy Meltzer: I would point to the consultation period. Draft versions of the legislation were posted for consultation on January 1, 2018. There was significant engagement through the process of developing both the legislation and related regulations with a wide range of stakeholders, including from the agricultural sector. We continue to be very engaged with the agricultural sector. We developed, for example, the federal carbon offset system.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Are there work products that we can have access to?

Ms. Judy Meltzer: I would point explicitly to the details of how this is implemented for rural areas. I'd point explicitly to the legislation and the regulations. There are also some products that are in the public domain that certainly elaborate on that relief, so we'd be happy to share that with you.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: If you could provide that to the committee, that would be good.

Is three weeks a reasonable time frame?

Ms. Judy Meltzer: Yes, it is.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you.

Very quickly, in the gazetting process for the regulations, did you receive submissions from the provinces?

Ms. Judy Meltzer: With respect to the regulations for...?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: For the greenhouse gas pollution.

Ms. Judy Meltzer: Finance Canada was responsible for part 1 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, so I can't speak to the fuel charge specifically.

I can say that with respect to the publication of the output-based pricing system regulations, under part 2 of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, which was published in June 2019, we certainly received input from provinces. Equally relevant, we were engaged with provinces through the years while we developed the legislation and regulations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Saini, for five minutes.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Good morning, everybody. It's great to have you here.

I want to go back to last summer. There was an issue, as you're well aware, with our offloading some garbage to the Philippines. I received a lot of emails and letters from constituents regarding that issue.

There has been some concern with Canada offloading some garbage to developing countries. What is the department currently doing to prevent waste like this from being exported to other countries, and what are we doing to better manage our waste and ensure that it's sustainably disposed of?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you very much for that question.

In the context of the earlier issue, when the waste was brought to the Philippines, we subsequently made an amendment to our regulations to put in place a requirement that where a jurisdiction defines a waste as hazardous, even if it's not captured under our regulations as being hazardous, we will consider it hazardous and then subject to the same requirements and provisions that hazardous wastes are.

That means they are required to obtain a permit from us. In order for us to issue a permit, we reach out to the country they're exporting to and where the final disposal will occur. We look to obtain prior informed consent, which is also part of the provisions of the Basel Convention. Once we have the prior informed consent, then the permit will be issued and the waste will be tracked.

The other thing I should note is that for countries that are not members of the Basel Convention—for us, our big exporter is the United States—we have a memorandum of understanding so that we put in place the like provisions with them as well.

Mr. Raj Saini: Have we agreed to the Basel Convention? Are we part of that dialogue? I know we waited a bit to sign that, so are we a signatory to that?

Ms. Helen Ryan: We are a party to the Basel Convention.

The elements that I'm speaking to are with respect to a change that was made to the control and export of hazardous waste and hazardous recycled materials. Recycled material and domestic waste are not included in the definition of hazardous waste or hazardous recycled products. However, in the country of the Philippines, their regulations define plastic material as hazardous, so we had to amend our regulations to mirror a provision that says "but if a country does this, we will allow it." That brought us into full conformity with the Basel Convention.

● (0950)

Mr. Raj Saini: Okay, thank you very much for that. I'm glad we signed it.

Ms. Geller, I have a question on food waste, which is of particular interest to me. We know that in Canada about 20% of all the food produced becomes avoidable food waste in a year. This is a significant problem because it emits about 21 million tonnes of CO_2, which adds to our annual emissions. Fortunately, we've signed on to the UN 2030 sustainable development goals, which have set a target of halving food waste by 2030.

What is the department's opinion on that, and in what direction are we moving, just so we have an idea?

Ms. Hilary Geller: I am going to turn it over to my very busy colleague, Helen Ryan, who, among all of her other responsibilities, also deals with food waste from a regulatory perspective, working closely with Agriculture Canada. She'll be happy to talk about that.

If we have time, I'd be happy to talk about some of the concepts around circularity, of which this is a part.

Ms. Helen Ryan: One of the things that I would say with respect to this area is that we collaborate very closely with our provincial and territorial counterparts under the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. We have a waste working group, and one product that was recently developed is around food waste and the practices that can be put in place to help reduce and manage food waste. Under that working group, there are also commitments to help reduce our overall waste, which includes food waste.

In addition, as Hilary mentioned, we work collaboratively with other departments, and Agriculture in particular, around what we can do to target the reduction of food waste, both at the table and in the production of it upstream.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Mazier, I'd like to pronounce your name in a French way.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): What is it in French? That's okay, not a problem. I have to learn it anyway. Duolingo gave up on me a long time ago.

Thank you. Those were great presentations.

I'm from Manitoba, right in the middle, by Brandon, Manitoba. My riding is Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Modelling is a very interesting topic, when we have all of this data and we look at it, looking at different studies and the results of them over the years. When the modelling becomes something, how do you look at it, and what become the criteria for looking at modelling?

Across many departments—there was one statement Mr. Jones made—do you use the same model? Do you use the same criteria when you're analyzing? When you go across government departments and you say, these are the criteria we're going to use for all departments, from Parks to space and technology, how do you determine what model to use and what is going to be in those models?

Mr. Matt Jones: I can probably take the answer only so far.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay.

Mr. Matt Jones: There is a dedicated economic modelling team within our organization in the strategic policy branch, and the head of that modelling group isn't here with us today.

I can tell you that we have one climate model that we use for multiple purposes within Environment Canada. We don't have competing models across different departments. There has been agreement for quite some time that the one model, for the sake of consistency and completeness, is the E3MC model.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay, when you're looking, for example, at food production, you would ask what the climate model looks like in food production, or what the climate model looks like for automotive production, or what the environmental impact is of mining aluminum in Canada.

Do you look at the environmental impact, or do you look at the economic impact? What is the wanted outcome of those models?

● (0955)

Mr. Matt Jones: It would be helpful to have the experts here.

I can tell you that the data sources for the model, which are the foundation of the analysis, come from a number of sources—everywhere from Statistics Canada to other federal agencies—so that we have credible and consistent data sources. They're run through the model. It is a general equilibrium model that produces both economic and emissions outcomes. When they run scenarios, particularly when we do regulatory impact assessment, they can look at the impacts on the economy and the GDP.

The key is to have a credible model, consistent data and credible assumptions. We try to be very transparent with that. We do release publicly our big analyses, in terms of both our emission projections and the regulatory impact assessments for each of our regulatory measures.

Mr. Dan Mazier: The government has implied or suggested that it wants to get to zero emissions by 2050.

What model are you going to be using? How would that impact all your departments? How far do we have to go with that, to say that we're zero emissions? What criteria are we going to be using to actually make that realistic?

Mr. Matt Jones: Net zero by 2050 is a driver for a lot of the analysis we're doing right now. Of course, there are a number of different pathways that can get you to net zero. Related to that is what the definition of net zero is. There are a number of definitions out there, both within the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the UNFCCC and other academic approaches. In general terms, it's emissions minus removals. Removals can be from natural sources like trees and soils. It can be from technological sources, like carbon capture and storage technology or direct air capture. It could even potentially be minus offsets, such as emission reductions achieved elsewhere.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay, great. Can we have the team lead person come before the committee and present on modelling?

The Chair: Yes, we can discuss it at committee business next week.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, you have five minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, congratulations on this extraordinarily clear and detailed presentation. It's very succinct and rich in information.

My question will interest my colleague, Mr. Schiefke, because his riding is contiguous to mine—upstream from mine. My question is for Ms. Campbell.

You talked about predicting environmental conditions, including with respect to water. Can you take us step by step through how you would approach a flooding situation like the ones we've experienced in the last two out of three years along the Ottawa River, Rivière des Prairies, the St. Lawrence River and so on? How do you work with the provincial authorities to help predict what the water levels will be? That's my first question.

Ms. Diane Campbell: Sure. Thank you for that question.

It's a multistep process. It starts with actually monitoring the environment. The data that we start with is what's happening with water levels and flows. We run the stations. It's a bit of a collaborative program, so there are stations that are of interest to the provinces, like Ontario and Quebec, and ones where the water is moving interprovincially or internationally where we have the most interest. We collect all the data, though, and it's supported through a cost recovery program. We maintain the data quality control. We maintain the data flow to make sure that the information—the data itself—gets to the provincial governments very quickly.

Quebec is a little different from the rest of the provinces because they collect their own data and we acquire it and make it available. That's a small difference, but it doesn't materially change the speed at which the data is shared.

It starts with data, and then, in those two jurisdictions, the provinces have their own flood forecasting centres. We feed the forecasting centres in two ways. The weather part of the enterprise is continually doing the forecasting of what the conditions are, such as how much rainfall there is. We look, on a season by season basis, to see whether we're going to have a wetter season ahead of us. There's a fair amount of uncertainty with a seasonal scale prediction versus a daily weather forecast, but nevertheless that's part of what we will give them. We will update that on a monthly and then weekly basis as it starts to get to the spring freshet season.

The other thing we do is track the amount of precipitation that has happened in the winter. The snow pack, the rate of melt and the intensity and duration of rainfall are all the major conditions that determine whether we're going to have a flooding kind of event like the ones we had in the region for those two years you've described.

That's the principal engine. You spoke about modelling generally. I described the weather modelling enterprise. It's a very complex atmosphere, ocean and ice model. The last component that we're working on now through our science is to bring in the hydrological modelling component. Our vision is that, within a few years, we hope to provide the same kind of predictive outputs to the provinces and territories as we do with weather forecasting. The science isn't quite there.

● (1000)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Could you clarify a bit? When you say “hydrological”.... My understanding is that you are saying the Province of Quebec has its own model. Is its model considered hydrological? I'm not clear on that.

Ms. Diane Campbell: Yes. They're considered hydrological models, which means they are fairly time-bound and near-term models, so they're very short-term predictions that will really give something in the order of days.

Our contribution to improving that would be that, by coupling and bringing forward these more sophisticated global models, we would try to advance the early predictions further upstream into multi-days, and maybe into weeks or seasons.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Does that use satellite information?

Ms. Diane Campbell: We definitely use satellite information in the basic weather—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: In terms of water flows....

Ms. Diane Campbell: Actually, we're looking at that in terms of exploring new techniques for water levels and flows.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's interesting.

Ms. Diane Campbell: It's validating whether in situ measurements can be supplemented by satellite imagery.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I understand.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds. You might as well give up your time.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'll come back, because Mr. Schiefke has kindly given me his last three minutes.

The Chair: Madame Pauzé, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Madam Chair. My first question is for you.

We have not discussed the issue of international cooperation on environment. Will we talk about it after this round of questions?

[*English*]

The Chair: Ask the witnesses if they could speak on it because we do not have it on our schedule. Perhaps on Tuesday, when we do committee business, we can discuss that. You can ask the question.

Madame Geller is willing to answer.

Ms. Hilary Geller: Madam Chair, if I might, I'm going to suggest that our colleague Catherine Stewart, who is the assistant deputy minister of our international affairs branch, could join us at the table.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Good morning.

I saw that there was a slide on it, but it has not been discussed.

The fourth bullet says the following: “Delivering and reporting on Canada's international climate finance with Global Affairs Canada”.

Am I to understand here that the focus is on commitments related to international funding under the Copenhagen conference?

Ms. Catherine Stewart (Director General, Climate Change International and Chief Negotiator for Climate Change, Department of the Environment): In terms of climate change, we work with Global Affairs Canada. We are currently implementing our contribution in that area. We are talking about an investment of $2.65 billion, provided until 2021. We are currently disbursing the money and thinking about our future contribution.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have time for a quick question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: That would be too long.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Collins, you have two and a half minutes.

● (1005)

Ms. Laurel Collins: I have a quick follow-up. Canada is also currently undertaking the peer review of the fossil fuel subsidies with Argentina to identify inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. The review is currently behind schedule, based on the precedent set by countries to undertake the process.

Is the government or ECCC going to be giving an update on the status of that review, and are you committed to completing it during 2020?

Ms. Hilary Geller: Madam Chair, I will have to defer that to our colleagues in the Department of Finance because they are in fact the leads on the peer review with Argentina. We're feeding into it, but I'm afraid I'm not able to answer that question.

Ms. Laurel Collins: That's okay. In that case, I have a question on the strategic assessment of climate change.

Many stakeholders who were consulted for the strategic assessment expressed disappointment in the draft. They feel that what was proposed was not aligned with the strong foundation that was laid out in the Impact Assessment Act.

Can you give an update on the progress of the SACC and explain how the assessment will provide a useful and clear guidance for decision-makers when considering projects that are consistent or inconsistent with Canada's climate commitments?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Yes, thank you very much for that question.

We did publish the draft strategic assessment of climate change and have received a number of public comments. It went out in 2019. Now the importance is to reflect on those comments to figure out how we then finalize the guidance and also how it interacts with the new Impact Assessment Act, because those two things need to come together.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Just a clarifying question, are you thinking about radically transforming the draft or starting fresh with the comments you've received, or are you just tweaking in small ways the current draft you put out?

Ms. Helen Ryan: The government will consider the comments that have been brought forward to them, and then in light of the implementation of the new Impact Assessment Act, we'll consider whether or not more substantive changes are required. I'm not in a position to comment further with respect to what may be decided in that regard. We'll see as that file evolves in terms of the publication of the final guidance.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We go to the third round of five minutes.

Mr. Aitchison.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is about the Paris targets. I know that all signatory countries are required to submit updated reports every couple of years. Can you tell us when the next report for Canada is due to the UN?

Mr. Matt Jones: As you can see, lots of us are involved in this process. Three sets of reports go to the UN. One is annual, the inventory of greenhouse gas emissions, which are historical emissions. That's done every year and made public. Jackie's team is responsible for that report. There's another one called the national communication, which is quite a comprehensive report. That's every four years. Then there's the biennial report, which is every couple of years.

Beyond that, Canada voluntarily does emissions projections, which we either embed in one of those reports, or, in years when there is no formal report to the UN, we publish it independently. We look at future projections of emissions and air pollutants.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: The last few reports showed that Canada was getting further and further behind in reaching our targets. What do you anticipate the next report that we submit will indicate? Will it indicate that we're starting to make some progress or...?

Mr. Matt Jones: The most recent report went out in January, I believe, or the end of December, which showed 77 megatonnes of emissions unaccounted for with definitive measures. It's important to note that's based on our modelling of projections.

Not everything is modellable. Investments in clean technologies we know will help decrease emissions over time, but it's difficult to forecast how much and how fast and at what rate. Also, there are significant investments in public transit, but until all those projects are known with some specificity, it's difficult to forecast what the resulting emission reductions will be.

Some important elements are not included there. The government has been quite clear that additional measures are needed to continue to make progress. We're also optimistic that our provincial counterparts will continue to implement effective policies to be able to help Canada collectively close that gap.

● (1010)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: In following up on that last point, the government has also said it intends to exceed the 2030 Paris targets. Do you know by how much it intends to exceed them?

Mr. Matt Jones: This is a subject of discussion and analysis right now. I think the government has been quite clear about its ambition. Certainly, if you look at the science, the need to drive further emission reductions is certainly there for all countries. The definitive figures, in terms of a sharp definition of what “exceed” means, those decisions haven't been made yet. We're doing analyses, and we intend to do some engagement with people on that as we move forward. We're preparing to do that work now.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Can you give me examples of what's being considered to help achieve whatever that definitive target might be?

Mr. Matt Jones: We're just initiating our analysis now to help identify some potential possibilities for achieving additional emission reductions. We're starting with the mandate commitments. A number of measures are in various mandate letters for many departments, everything from electric buses to retrofitted buildings, tree planting and so forth. We're certainly starting there. We'll be doing analyses to see how far that gets us, and what, if anything, beyond that will be required.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: It sounds to me as though you're suggesting that the focus would be on investments in technology, as opposed to, for example, an increase in the carbon tax or something like that.

Mr. Matt Jones: The final decisions about what measures to close the gap will be in that package moving forward haven't been made. We're looking at all policy tools, including our existing funding programs. Most funding programs are time-limited. When they come up for renewal, are there opportunities to change their terms and make them more focused on the greatest sources of emissions and so forth? We are looking at the mandate commitments and our existing policy suite.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Are you also looking at private sector businesses, green technologies that are actually using private sector investment? Would you try to highlight them as well?

Mr. Matt Jones: Yes, for sure.

I think there's great enthusiasm for the potential of homegrown Canadian technologies that can drive emission reductions. One aspect of the PCF, one of the four key pillars, was clean technology. Our view was that Canada has invested in research, but what about deployment? What about demonstration? What about export?

There has been quite a focus on accelerated deployment of clean technologies, ideally Canadian technologies, that can hopefully be exported around the world.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Earlier, we were talking about....

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry, I have the wrong guy.

Mr. Baker, you have five minutes.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, you had the floor first.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Nice try, Francis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I thought we were on the third round. I apologize.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thanks very much, Chair.

Thank you all very much for being here.

It's interesting. Briefings such as this, conversations such as this, allow us to go a mile wide and an inch deep, and you can see some of us trying to scratch the surface and go a little deeper.

I have questions on two topics. Hopefully we have enough time in the five minutes to cover both of them at least at a high level.

I represent a riding called Etobicoke Centre. This is a suburban riding in the 416 area, in the city of Toronto. Back in 2013, there was flooding throughout the GTA. That was well covered; you would be aware of that. Etobicoke was hit particularly hard. There was flooding inside people's homes, transit was shut down, and so on.

I understand that the city is responsible for mitigating the risk associated with flooding such as that. There's the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. There are a number of entities involved in that.

To what degree, if at all, is the federal government involved in mitigating that? What are some of the steps the federal government takes to do so?

Ms. Diane Campbell: There are many factors that contribute to flooding in an urban area. We really monitor the weather. In that flooding incident you described, we had a very intense precipitation event. Basically, that water is flowing through a concrete landscape that hasn't been built in a manner such that it is actually able to absorb that amount of water. In order to mitigate this, we have to have effective planning that starts within a municipal planning context, and it has to take into account what types of conditions would exacerbate or create the risk. This is where the culmination of the information—in our case, us working with the conservation authorities and working with some of the cities to provide the right type of data and assess the risks—is part of the chain.

The other part of it is really the longer-term view of the municipalities or cities with respect to climate change and adaptation. Cities can be quite proactive in that sense, looking at what their adaptation planning needs to address over time. Having good information from us and others on the nature of extreme events and how they could affect their cityscape is part of what needs to be done.

● (1015)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you.

The second topic goes back to climate change. Mr. Jones, I think this is a question for you, but please feel free to delegate it to others if appropriate.

I wonder if you could share briefly where we're making the most progress in terms of policy development, but especially in terms of execution, the execution that's required to make sure that we tackle climate change.

If I think about what I hear from constituents in my riding, to them climate change is the existential issue of our time, so I'd be curious if you could share briefly where we're making the most progress.

Mr. Matt Jones: I'd be happy to. I'll try to be brief. That's certainly a big question.

In terms of emission reductions, we do have some good public data on this that we could provide. I think the electricity sector is one where we have seen the most significant reductions, mostly from a switch from coal to alternative sources, everything from natural gas to renewables. Frankly, most of our emission reductions have come from the electricity sector, although there have been reductions across most sectors of the economy.

The transportation sector is one where we've been able to stop the growth and achieve some reductions. That's not an easy thing, given the current that we're swimming against there, where the number of vehicles on the road and the amount of freight shipped have increased over time.

On the flip side, one of the areas where we do need to make more progress is really around the question of adaptation: how we're adapting to the impacts of climate change. The science is clear that there are impacts in all scenarios. There's a certain amount of warming baked in, no matter how global emissions go in the future, and that's an important area.

My colleague Helen is reminding me that methane emissions are another area where we have made some good progress and are continuing to do so. In many countries, that's generally considered a low-hanging fruit in terms of low-cost emission reduction opportunities. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas. If you're able to capture it and keep it from being vented to the atmosphere, it is a saleable commodity, of course, so that is an important area.

I'll maybe turn to colleagues if there are other topics.

Ms. Hilary Geller: Maybe I'll just add that—

The Chair: We'd love to hear your input, but we're running out of time. You can answer it when somebody else gets it.

Madam Findlay, you have five minutes.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you.

If I understood your testimony correctly, Mr. Jones, the government has stated that it wants to exceed the 2030 targets, but we actually don't know what that looks like. That analysis has just begun, and that is not something measurable or specific that we can speak to today. Is that correct?

Mr. Matt Jones: I would say that certainly we've been looking to exceed the target for some time. Actually, we've talked about meeting and exceeding the target for some time. That is certainly the goal. We have a collection of policy measures in the pan-Canadian framework that was originally intended to meet the target in full. There have been, since that time, various factors that have worked for and against progress on this issue. Certainly some provincial measures have been eliminated, which has necessitated greater action, ideally by all levels of government but certainly by the federal government—

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Excuse me, you said it was an ambition, and I understand that, but you've also said that you don't know what that specifically looks like today. You're just working on a number of measures. It kind of depends on how it all plays out. Is that correct?

Mr. Matt Jones: We have the existing suite of measures, which is the foundation, which in our original expectation was going to take us all the way to the target. We realize now, with the various developments since that time, that additional measures are needed. The government has signalled that in this mandate it intends to bring forward new measures in order to meet that target and to exceed it. At this stage, I can't tell you what those additional measures will be, other than the ones that are in the mandate commitments, which are in the process of being implemented now.

● (1020)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: As I said, to say you're going to exceed it is an ambition that's stated. We don't know today what that exactly looks like.

Mr. Matt Jones: That's right. I don't have a number.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: One of the programs we've heard a lot about is tree planting. I'm not sure who wants to answer this, but my understanding is that the government has stated that it intends to plant two billion trees over 10 years. Has that planting started, and if not, when will it start?

Ms. Hilary Geller: I'll take that question, Madam Chair.

Tree planting is part of a bigger bucket, which we call nature-based climate solutions. It's about how trees, grasslands, wetlands, agricultural soil, etc. can contribute to the sink that takes carbon.

Our colleagues at Natural Resources are leading the work on trees—the Canadian Forest Service, which is part of Natural Resources Canada—and we're working closely with them in terms of some of the co-benefits that the trees could provide to caribou and nature in general.

We are doing a lot of analysis right now on the other part of that equation, which is wetlands, grasslands, building on some existing programs and looking at more. In addition, Agriculture Canada, of course, is involved in the soil.

I would say that it's a relatively new area. The world is paying a lot more attention to that side of the equation, and I think there will be a lot more detail that colleagues at NRCan will be able to provide, probably in the next month or so.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I understand it's part of an overall program. I'm familiar with bogs and grassland, because I come from an area where we have those, which is great.

You can't tell me today when that program on the trees is starting. Is that what you're telling me?

Ms. Hilary Geller: I can tell you that the program needs money to implement, and—

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: So it hasn't started.

Ms. Hilary Geller: It hasn't started, except that the analysis is well under way, so it will be ready to go.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I also understand that the tree planting will be incremental—I believe that's the wording—in other words, where trees cannot already be planted. I'm trying to understand where this is going to take place. If there's already an obligation to plant on Crown land, does “incremental” mean that the planting would be done on other than Crown land?

Ms. Hilary Geller: Madam Chair, I think it may be most useful to the committee if we asked our colleagues at NRCan, who really are most familiar with the details, to provide some information.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Well, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I would just like to defer to Mr. Baker for a few seconds, so you can get the rest of his answer.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you very much.

I'm taking up Mr. Scarpaleggia's time, so please answer in 30 seconds maximum. I just want to give you the opportunity to finish answering the question that you were hoping to get to.

Ms. Hilary Geller: That's very kind. I just wanted to say that we are really excited about some sectors of the economy that haven't been superactive participants in the climate change challenge up until now. The one I was going to reference was the financial sector, where there is real interest, real movement and real momentum. I think we'll be seeing more there.

That's what I was going to say. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It was said earlier that Water Survey of Canada was one of the cornerstones of the department. It was created several years later, in 1971. However, when the topic was water surveys, only the quantity of water in Canada being measured was discussed.

Does Environment and Climate Change Canada have a similar alternate program to measure the quality of water across Canada?

Ms. Jacqueline Gonçalves: Our colleagues from Health Canada have programs to measure and monitor the quality of water.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is that done for waterways from coast to coast to coast?

Ms. Jacqueline Gonçalves: Yes, it is done across the country.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay. You say that it is not only done for drinking water, but is applied generally, correct?

● (1025)

[*English*]

Ms. Hilary Geller: Our colleague Diane Campbell would be interested in a word or two.

Ms. Diane Campbell: Yes, I'll just supplement that. With respect to general water quality conditions in rivers, we do have programs at the federal level. There are several ministries that collect water quality data in rivers, lakes, etc. Some of the initiatives are broad. For example, there are programs that have been carried out for decades that measure water quality conditions in the Great Lakes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That would be very important, given the evolution of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and of toxic substances management.

My second question is about subsidies related to fossil fuels. I did not quite understand the concept of inefficient subsidy.

Can you give us an example of a non-tax inefficient subsidy among the four elements you have defined as being inefficient subsidies?

[*English*]

Ms. Hilary Geller: Thank you very much for the question. There are various definitions, but an example of an inefficient fossil fuel subsidy would be one that would encourage the production of fossil fuels. You'll see, for example, that one of the subsidies that have been eliminated is around the tax advantage for production of oil from the oil sands.

An example of something that is not considered inefficient, and it is sort of contemplated in the G20 context, is subsidies that support remote, perhaps economically disadvantaged communities so they have an energy source to heat their homes. You do see programs like that, which, by some definitions, could be considered an inefficient fossil fuel subsidy, but it's contemplated under the G20 rules that this sort of thing would not count.

Those are just a couple of examples.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay, I understand. That answers my questions.

Mr. Saini, do you have anything to add?

[*English*]

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you very much, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

I have a question on the international dialogue that we're having. As we know, at COP21 there was a debate on article 6: article 6.2, and beyond that, article 6.4.

With these two articles, I think we lost—I'm not saying Canada, but collectively as a world—a huge opportunity, because these internationally transferred mitigation outcomes could have been used as leverage, not only for helping developing countries, but also for helping the companies we have here in Canada.

There has been a failure to reach an agreement—COP22, COP23, COP24 and COP25—and I'm wondering what the issue is, per se, and whether there is an opportunity for Canada to show leadership. Four years have gone by. With article 6.2, and especially article 6.4, when you're inviting the private sector to participate in these outcomes—

The Chair: Do you want them to answer the question?

Mr. Raj Saini: Yes.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds, please.

Ms. Catherine Stewart: Thank you very much for your question. As chief negotiator for climate change, I am certainly very keen to see us get good rules on article 6. I think the key part of our negotiations is to ensure that whatever we do, if there are internationally transferred mitigation outcomes, we need to make sure that what we are trading are real and verifiable emissions. Part of the problem in our negotiations is how we do that and ensure that we have a credible system set up. There are some parties that want to bring credits in from the Kyoto protocol era. A lot of those credits, frankly, are very questionable, and there is a big push to bring these into the new system. That is one area where we are having difficulties.

The Chair: Thank you. I am sorry to cut you off, but I have to look after the others as well.

Madame Pauzé, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Many very interesting things have been said. I would like to come back to a question by one of my Liberal colleagues.

Regarding climate change, it has been said that one of the areas where the most progress was being made was electricity. In Quebec, we have never had coal. I know that Ontario has closed coal-fired power plants, and that has clearly improved things, but it was several years ago already. Have there been any more recent changes?

Of course, we are thinking about the electrification of transportation, but we are still far from putting words into action. There may be more real and faster measures in that area. The issue of electricity also affects transportation, one of the sectors that emit the most greenhouse gases. It is said that progress has been made. I like that, and I would like to be positive. Right now, I am not, but perhaps your answer will help me become more positive.

● (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Matt Jones: Maybe I could start, and I will turn to my colleague Helen as well.

We see electrification as one of the key pathways to deeper emission reductions. You are correct that the regulations phasing out coal-fired electricity were introduced and then amended and strengthened in the past, most recently as part of the pan-Canadian framework.

There are a number of other initiatives that target the electricity sectors. Colleagues at NRCan have programs on smart grid, battery storage and other things that can help improve the utilization and optimization of the electricity system for vehicles, for movements, everything from meters and pumps to other things that consume energy. That can be either fossil-fuelled or electric.

If it's electric and comes from sustainable sources like hydro, it's an opportunity to achieve quite significant emission reductions in the future. We are very focused, through infrastructure investments on the grid and through programming, on making greater use of renewable energy, non-emitting energy in this country.

Helen, did you have something to add?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Helen Ryan: Yes. I would add that it is true, in Ontario, coal-fired plants have closed, but many exist elsewhere in Canada. We have regulations that require them to close by 2030 or by the end of their normal life cycle. That is why my colleague said that there were measures in place, but that the closures have not yet occurred. That brings significant reductions. A number of our regulations have been implemented, and reductions will follow. Among other things, we are talking about regulations on methane in the oil and gas sector.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay.

I have another question....

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Pauzé, two and a half minutes goes by very fast.

Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: My first question is for Ms. Stewart. First, thank you for your work at COP25. I saw the valiant efforts of our Canadian negotiating team.

We are expected to come back in 2020 with enhanced NDCs and support and enhance the federal climate ambition. Where are we with that?

Ms. Catherine Stewart: I can speak to COP26 and what we expect there, and then maybe I'll turn to Matt Jones, who can talk about enhancing NDCs.

Ms. Laurel Collins: If possible, I do have one other question.

Ms. Catherine Stewart: The COP presidency, the U.K., has not formally given us their priorities, but we do expect that ambition will be a very prominent theme, and countries have already indicated their intention to come forward with more ambitious plans, like net zero.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Have we indicated the same thing?

Ms. Catherine Stewart: We have not.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Out of curiosity, are fossil fuel subsidies and subsidy reform going to be included in our NDCs?

Mr. Matt Jones: The exact nature of what we will be putting into the NDC is a hot topic right now, and we have a lot of analysis, engagement and work to do to inform every piece of that.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Is it under way?

Mr. Matt Jones: Yes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: This is my last question. My understanding is that we're not currently in line with the G20 global agreement around inefficient and efficient subsidies as a definition.

Ms. Geller, you gave a few examples, but what is the exact definition we're using?

Ms. Hilary Geller: There is no definition that the G20 gave, so every country is coming up with its own definition.

Ms. Laurel Collins: What is ours?

Ms. Hilary Geller: I would have to send it to you, because it's long and complicated. It deals with specificity, materiality, etc. Perhaps I can undertake to send you the language.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay, great.

Are we in any way reviewing that and determining a more robust definition of inefficient and efficient fossil fuel subsidies?

● (1035)

Ms. Hilary Geller: We're in the process of reviewing the framework in light of the consultation that was held, led by Michael Horgan, and it's in train.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much to the witnesses. I know I cut some of you off when you were doing your presentations. The committee has asked if you could share your notes where applicable, and the clerk will also send you an email for follow-ups.

As the committee knows, we have a meeting on Tuesday, and we will allocate 20 minutes for committee business, when we will look at all the follow-ups of NRCan, etc., and we'll discuss moving forward our agenda.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here. Share your notes with us if you can, and sorry to have cut you off, but we have to maintain time.

With that, I'll excuse the witnesses, and we will have five minutes for committee business.

Committee members, Madame Pauzé has a proposition to make, and we will all listen to it.

Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am asking the committee to immediately proceed to the election of the second vice-chair. That has been done in a number of other committees, and we are waiting for the decision of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to proceed with the election of the third vice-chair. That is what I am proposing.

[*English*]

The Chair: The normal process is that we would have the first vice-chair for sure and the second vice-chair, but we listened to Ms. Collins, who asked if we could wait until PROC. However, it's up to the committee to decide whether it wants to proceed.

Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I just spoke to Madame Pauzé, and I'm comfortable going forward now. Once PROC has made its decision, we can update if it's different.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Yes, Mr. Schiefke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): I nominate Monique Pauzé for second vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk tells me we're not there yet. Sorry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Okay. I will do it when the time comes.

[*English*]

The Chair: It is the clerk's responsibility, not mine.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Roger): Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member from an opposition party other than the official opposition. I am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

So it is the right time to nominate Monique Pauzé for second vice-chair of this committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Schiefke that Ms. Pauzé be elected second vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

Are there any further motions?

[*Translation*]

(Motion agreed to)

I declare the motion carried and Ms. Pauzé duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Bravo.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: The clerk is going to send a revised timetable, because we received some information from Ms. Findlay regarding the subcommittees, so we will discuss it after the Tuesday meeting. Once the witnesses have gone, we'll allocate the time for committee business.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.