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# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia





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Wednesday, November 27, 2024

• (1630)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)):** Good afternoon and welcome to meeting number 135 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

The first hour of the meeting will focus on greenhouse gas emissions reduction policies in Canada, following a motion adopted by the committee on Friday, November 15.

Today, it is our honour and privilege to welcome the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister, unless I'm mistaken, you'd like to take five minutes for your opening remarks. Is that correct?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Honourable members of the committee, before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Let me first talk about COP29, which ended last weekend. Canada came to COP29 with a clear purpose: to demonstrate that climate multilateralism matters. Despite all the challenges, our climate ambition remains unchanged. While there, we successfully defended the interests of Canadians, as well as human rights, workers' rights and the rights of indigenous peoples. We pushed for greater mitigation ambition and we collaborated with island nations and the least developed countries on international co-operation. We also announced a new climate funding model along with my colleague Ahmed Hussen, the Minister of International Development.

By endorsing, during COP29, the high ambition coalition leaders' statement on nature and people, we have shown that, once again, the Paris accord is working. Now, we are preparing to assume the G7 presidency, starting January 1, 2025.

[English]

While the Conservatives are focused on some random international assessment that doesn't reflect Canada's policies and reality, we are continuing to get credit for the results of our climate plan. Over the past years, our climate plan has been assessed and reviewed by credible international institutions like the International Energy Agency. They have acknowledged, when ranking G20 countries, that our plan is "ambitious". Canada used to be one of the worst performers. That was nine years ago. Today organizations like Climate Action Tracker recognize that Canada's plan is credi-

ble and transparent. The latest "Emissions Gap Report" from UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, says that Canada has the first comprehensive road map to achieve the 2030 target. This was unthinkable nine years ago.

Our government has put forward very ambitious measures. International organizations have noted that at the end of 2022, Canada followed through on its commitment to end international public finance for fossil fuels—a commitment that was made, I might specify, under the previous Harper government—and that we've put forward some of the most ambitious regulations, with the goal of reducing oil and gas methane emissions by at least 75% from 2012 levels by 2030.

Building on the actions of millions of Canadians, the government continues to take action to reduce emissions to fight climate change while strengthening our economy with good jobs, clean industrial growth and a healthy environment for all Canadians.

First, let's talk about progress. Since 2005 Canada's emissions have dropped by 8%, according to the Canadian Climate Institute. Canada's emissions are at their lowest point in 25 years. We're on track to meet our interim 2026 goal, and we have a fair shot at meeting our 2030 target. At the same time, our economy is growing and inflation and interest rates are coming down. We are capping pollution, not production, from the oil and gas sector, a critical step toward fighting climate change while requiring investments in decarbonization.

Under a Harper-Poillievre Conservative government, estimates show that Canada's emissions would be 41% higher by 2030, the equivalent, in terms of pollution, of adding 69 million cars on our roads. Pierre Poillievre wants to slash legislation protecting our environment and allow Canada's largest polluters to pollute without limits, driving up the cost of climate change. We cannot let that happen.

Now let's talk about Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan, a sector-by-sector path for Canada to reach its reduction target of 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. The plan was introduced in 2022. It reflects input from over 30,000 Canadians, provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, industry and Canada's independent net-zero advisory body.

• (1635)

[Translation]

The Government of Canada has continued to make historic investments in clean growth and climate action since 2016. Pollution pricing is a big part of Canada's climate plan. A carbon pollution pricing policy that makes life affordable while growing a clean economy by providing money upfront to families. The majority of families are better off with Canada carbon rebate payments every four months, in provinces where the federal system applies.

[English]

Pollution pricing is estimated to contribute to about a third of the emissions reduction achieved under Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan. There's a reason countries around the globe implement a pollution-pricing system—it works. Let me give you a few examples.

The entire EU has a cap-and-trade system that is working. The price is 70 euros a tonne, which would make it a little over \$100 Canadian right now, higher than our current \$80 a tonne. Many other EU countries, including Finland, Switzerland and France, also have a price on pollution. South Africa has a carbon-pricing mechanism as does New Zealand, which is using cap and trade with a price of \$50 a tonne.

The ERP includes over 140 programs, policies and regulations to help Canada bend the curve, such as phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies; adjusting Canada carbon rebate amounts in line with the price on pollution, ensuring that the rebate continues to reflect the projected proceeds in each province where the fuel charge applies; having a 20% rural top-up available for households in rural areas and in small communities; having cleaner fuels to power our vehicles and industries; increasing the supply of zero-emission vehicles so that more Canadians can make the switch to cleaner and cheaper vehicles; adding more clean and reliable electricity to help our economy remain competitive; and releasing Canada's methane strategy to cut the emissions of this powerful greenhouse gas across the economy.

All parts of the economy have a role to play in meeting Canada's 2030 climate target, from transportation to the oil and gas sector, and from heavy industry to buildings. Everyone must do their part.

Measures such as the proposed pollution cap are crucial in addressing emissions from Canada's highest-polluting sectors. It also encourages the sectors to reinvest in clean energy projects that will cut pollution and that will create new jobs.

[Translation]

We're focusing on putting in place foundational measures for the future. It's more than just targets. The 2030 emissions reduction plan is the cornerstone of our emissions reduction. Once we have a 2035 target, Canada will work towards developing comprehensive

policies to help shape the measures and strategies needed to achieve it.

[English]

Canada has shown that it can reduce emissions while growing its economy and while supporting Canadians by creating new, sustainable jobs in emerging sectors; by driving environmental innovation; by providing economic opportunities for Canadian businesses; and by increasing investments in clean energy projects.

We cannot stop now. We need to continue pushing forward. Future generations—our kids and our grandkids—depend on it.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

I now invite Mr. Deltell to begin the discussion.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good day, colleagues.

Minister, it's always nice to see you at this table. Welcome. We're happy to have you here whenever you like.

Climate change is real and we need to adapt to it, but the ultimate goal is to reduce pollution and emissions. There are two ways to do that. First, there's the dogmatic approach we've been living with for the past nine years and which has done nothing; then, there's a far more pragmatic approach.

Last week, around the same time and in the same location, we put a very clear question to the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. We asked him if Canada was achieving its 2030 targets and his answer was categorically no. Yet, the minister says it is.

In his report, the commissioner concluded that Canada has the worst climate record in the G7, after nine years of this administration. He also talked about attending COP. I attended virtually and, one week ago at 1 a.m., COP tabled its annual report on the climate change performance index. For the second year in a row, Canada ranks 62nd out of 67 countries. That's the Liberal record, after nine years under this sanctimonious government that wants to tax Canadians.

Two weeks ago at COP, the minister mentioned the possibility of introducing not the first, not the second, but a third carbon tax, on shipping. Was he serious or was he just making a good joke? Quebecers and Canadians really don't want another carbon tax.

• (1640)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Are you done?

First, thank you for the question and for recognizing the reality of climate change. If we asked all your Conservative Party colleagues, I'm not certain we'd get the same answer. However, I'm delighted to see that you, at least, think it's an important issue.

As for the report by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, it's important to note that the report covers everything Canada has done since 1990. When the environment commissioner says that Canada has the worst performance of all G7 countries, it's against the 1990 baseline, which is quite true. However, if we consider the last few years, Canada has one of the best performances of any G7 country. According to E3G, an international organization—we can forward the report to the committee—Canada has the second-best performance of all the G7 countries.

You're telling me that COP presented a report putting Canada in 62nd place. Your comments need some clarification, Mr. Deltell. The Conference of the Parties didn't table that report; rather it was a German organization called Germanwatch, which doesn't report to the United Nations and whose report you have there. You must know that Canada's poor performance in that report is due to oil and gas production. Unless you're telling me that the Conservative Party is pushing for a reduction in oil and gas production to improve our ranking in that report, Canada won't have a very good rating as long as oil and gas production is being evaluated.

I'm going to share a one-page document with members of the committee. I have it here in front of me, in English only, and I apologize for that. It's an award.

[*English*]

The Climate Scorecard's 2024 Government Climate Leadership Award says, "The following award is presented to Steven Guilbeault, For leading advocacy efforts in reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

[*Translation*]

Canada received this award in 2024 in recognition of efforts by all Canadians and the Government of Canada to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I was given the award, but I think we won it thanks to efforts by all Canadians.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Minister, I'm happy for you and I congratulate you on being so modest. However, I asked a very specific question. At COP29, you raised the possibility of implementing a third carbon tax. It would apply to shipping. Are you joking or do you really intend to impose a third carbon tax on Canadians?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's not true, I did not say that.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** You're aware of all the statements by future President Trump, including the one two days ago on 25% tariffs on Canadian products. Will you give up on imposing a carbon tax that

would hurt our businesses and citizens even more in light of Mr. Trump's statements?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You know that carbon pricing in Canada is responsible for \$25 billion in annual investments by companies like Dow Chemicals and even the Pathways Alliance, which represents major oil sands producers. Alliance's new CEO recently asked your leader to clarify his stance on carbon pricing, because the uncertainty around the Conservative Party and its leader on that issue is jeopardizing \$25 billion in annual investments in the economy. You want to deprive the Canadian economy and Canadian workers across the country of that.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Minister, you spoke earlier about emissions from Alberta's oil and gas industry. Are you aware that emissions intensity has dropped 15% over the last 10 years for the same barrel of oil? What I mean by that is that production is increasing because consumption is increasing, but even though production is going up, emissions are going down. Aren't you grateful to see that audits are being done and major advances being made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, I gave you a few seconds more. Does the minister know that?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I don't have the numbers at hand. We can verify and provide them to you. Emissions intensity doesn't really matter. What matters is the total amount of emissions, and emissions in the oil and gas sector are rising.

**The Chair:** I'm in trouble, I've really gone over the time. It's my responsibility to ensure that we stick to the allotted speaking time.

Mr. Ali, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives and their leader are in denial mode. They don't agree that climate change is real, and they don't agree that pollution contributes to climate change.

You mentioned the pollution cap in your speech. Can you tell this committee why it is important to cap pollution from the oil and gas sector?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ali.

Well, as I said earlier in French, the oil and gas sector is the largest emitter in Canada—the largest contributor to our emissions. It is the sector that has seen the fastest growth in the past few years. It is anticipated that it will continue to increase its emissions. Therefore, there's no pathway for Canada to achieve any climate goals unless the oil and gas sector does what every other sector of the economy is doing, which is reducing their emissions. We're asking for efforts from every single sector, whether it's cement, steel, auto, electricity production or building.

We can't—and, I'd say, morally, we shouldn't—let one sector pollute as much as it wants with unlimited pollution while we're asking everyone else to make efforts. That simply doesn't make any sense. Now some CEOs are starting to say they need to step up to the plate when it comes to reducing their emissions.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Minister.

Everyone around the world and all scientists agree that climate change is real, except our Conservative friends and their leader.

During the last election, we committed to introducing an emissions cap on the oil and gas sector. Two weeks ago, you followed through on that promise by publishing draft regulations that would permit oil and gas production to grow, while lowering greenhouse gas pollution.

Can you explain how it is possible to do both?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you.

Yes, the documents and the regulatory impact analysis that were tabled show, in fact, that under this pollution cap, it is anticipated that production in the oil and gas sector would increase by 16% by 2030. Those who say we're trying to cut production.... That's not supported by analysis. While this is happening, the emissions would go down by 35%, which is significant. It is absolutely necessary, as I said earlier, for Canada to achieve our 2030 and subsequent targets for emissions reduction in order to get to carbon neutrality.

I should also point out that the Government of Alberta and all of the major oil companies in Canada committed to being carbon neutral by 2050. What the regulation does is to put out a framework to ensure that we start acting soon and not wait until 2048, then say, "Oh, we haven't started doing what we said we would do."

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you, Minister, for making tough decisions for our future generations while realizing that climate change is real.

What would the economic impact of the pollution cap be? Can you elaborate, please?

• (1650)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Well, we think it's going to generate significant investment in decarbonization projects. We're already seeing some projects being announced. Strathcona announced a \$2-billion project for decarbonization technologies. We're seeing more and more of these projects come online.

In the last two years, Statistics Canada has compiled data that shows that the oil and gas sector has collected more than \$100 billion in profits. We feel it's fair to ask them to invest some of those

profits as we also put money on the table to help this sector, as well as other sectors, decarbonize the Canadian economy.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you.

Talking about the economic impact, last year we gave a Canada carbon rebate to Canadians while putting a price on polluters. Eight out of 10 Canadians are getting more money back than they pay. We're also giving Canada carbon rebates to small businesses.

Could you please talk about how that economic impact is benefiting Canadians while also addressing climate change?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes. I don't think I have the data here for SMEs, but we can certainly get that to the committee.

We are in the process of returning proceeds from that carbon pricing to SMEs.

I'll find it and I'll be happy to come back to you on this.

**Mr. Shafqat Ali:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're essentially out of time.

Madame Pausé is next.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to welcome all the witnesses to the committee.

I'm going to talk about a measure that is long overdue—the emissions cap. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of an emissions cap on the oil and gas sector, but we disagree with the Prime Minister's statement at the United Nations this fall that Canada was the first country to do so. The fact is that it has yet to set a cap on greenhouse gas emissions.

In his report, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development says that the measure was delayed. It was proposed in 2021 and the regulatory framework was to be completed in early 2023. However, the regulatory framework was not published until December 2023. The proposed regulations were originally planned for December 2023 but have not yet been published, and the final regulations are expected in 2025.

The Bloc Québécois agrees with capping emissions, but we think the implementation is taking too long. It makes no sense. The commissioner's report finally confirms what the Bloc Québécois has been saying: The process is much too long. One wonders just what is going on.

Minister, in the regulations you published, the compliance period for oil companies is set for 2030–2032. However, the overall reduction target of 40% to 45% for Canada is for 2030. How can oil companies help achieve this overall target of 40% to 45% when they have up to 2032 to comply?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** First, you say that the Prime Minister said that Canada was the first country to set a cap, but that it had not done so. No other major oil-producing country is proposing to do so, not the United States, not Norway, not Great Britain, not the Gulf countries. Canada is the only country to do so, and some of these countries have commended Canada for this action. When you want to create new regulations, you can look at what other countries have done. Everybody does it that way. We learn from each other. That's how you develop regulations. In this case, we need to innovate. Canada is the first to do so.

For example, I'll remind you that, before I took office, it took almost five or even six years to adopt the clean fuel standard. Since I arrived, it has taken about two years, two and a half years, to develop new regulations, whether for electricity or cars. The one we're now talking about takes a little longer, about three years, which is not at all abnormal. It's even much faster than for other Canadian regulations that were adopted in recent years.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I understand, but if we ask less of oil companies, they cannot help Canada reach its target of 40% to 45%. That means all other Canadian companies will have to do more, including citizens, unlike the oil and gas sector.

From our point of view, it really is perceived as an injustice.

• (1655)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It is necessary to understand the regulations correctly; they start to apply on January 1, 2026. Companies will have to reduce their emissions by 35% between now and 2030. Those are the regulatory obligations targeting oil and gas sector companies within the regulation's framework.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** It is good that you are talking about 2026, because if that is the reference date to set caps for 2030–2032, oil and gas sector companies will increase their emissions production. They will take advantage of it until 2026, because they know they will have to cut their emissions after that date. It seems like an incentive for companies in that sector. It encourages them to increase their greenhouse gas emissions.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You must understand that, in this sector, oil is a commodity. A company may well decide to increase its production, but there has to be people to buy that oil. It is a balance between supply and demand. Currently, on a global scale, we are not in a context of increasing supply.

According to the International Energy Agency, by 2030, demand for oil will decrease by about six million barrels per day. Currently, production is at about 105 million barrels per day. Don't quote me on that, I'm telling you that from memory. A company could not increase its production, because it would have a very significant impact on prices. In fact, it would cause prices to go down, which would lead to lower company profits.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I will quote you Ms. Catherine McKenna, who preceded you as the head of your department a few years ago.

We, at the Bloc Québécois, always come back to fossil fuel and oil company subsidies, and tax credits, in particular.

When it comes to those tax credits, Ms. McKenna's opinion was that they never should have happened, but obviously, oil and gas lobbyists pushed for them. In her opinion, we grant privileged access to companies making historic profits. They do not invest those profits in the transition and clean solutions. They redistribute them to their shareholders, the majority of whom are not Canadian. These companies then demand that we subsidize the pollution they caused, while Canadians have to pay more for oil and gas to heat their homes.

There was a time when we talked about socializing risks and privatizing profits. Is that not what we are doing right now by generously subsidizing oil and gas companies through tax credits? I'm thinking of carbon capture and storage, obviously. It's a matter of billions of dollars.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I do not have the quote from Ms. McKenna in front of me, so I cannot comment on it.

As I was saying earlier, and many international organizations recognized it, we are the only G20 country to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, thanks specifically to the NDP's collaboration on this file.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we will have to stop there and turn to Ms. Collins.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister and the officials for being here today.

I'll just start with a yes-or-no question. Do you think Canada is on track to meet our 40% to 45% target?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** According to the Canadian Climate Institute, yes, we are.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Yet, the commissioner's report, in its first line, says, "Measures implemented in Canada's 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan remain insufficient to meet Canada's target".

Given that the commissioner is saying that the measures you've outlined are insufficient to get to the target, how is it that you and your officials continue to say that Canada is on track?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I believe that report and the commissioner—I don't have the report in front of me—specified that measures like the cap, and the clean electricity regulations would enable Canada to do more, and these measures were announced after the—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Yes, they would enable us to do more, but not meet our target. We are not on track. Every time you have come here, you have said that we are on track to meet our targets. Every time your officials have come here, they have said that we are on track to meet our targets. It is not true, and the environment commissioner has laid it out very clearly. We are not on track, and it is doing a disservice to Canadians to continue to say that we are. We need to do much better.

I want to switch for a moment....

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I disagree with your comment.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I'm not surprised.

[Translation]

From January to September of this year, Environment and Climate Change Canada met with oil and gas lobbyists at least 123 times. Could you share with the committee what those meetings were about, and possibly how many meetings with oil and gas sector lobbyists were on capping omissions?

• (1700)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We can provide that information to the committee. In any case, the meetings we had were public, thanks to the lobbyist registry. It is important for us to provide the big picture, which means meeting with indigenous peoples' representatives, NGOs, experts, workers, but also with industry representatives, specifically from the oil industry.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Please stick to the questions, because I have limited time.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That is exactly the question you asked, Ms. Collins. We can provide that to the committee, no problem.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Do you think the oil sector lobbyists' goal was to abolish or delay the emissions cap? After all, they tried to convince our committee that it was not necessary when they testified in June.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Whatever those lobbyists wanted, they didn't get it, because we tabled draft regulations on capping the oil and gas sector's greenhouse gas emissions, despite the fact that they did not want it.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Don't you think that constantly listening to big oil company lobbyists and giving into them is one of the main reasons your government's measures are still inadequate?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** In a democratic society, we have an obligation to listen to all the stakeholders in these debates. I have a hard time seeing how we can separate them and say we will meet with some organizations, but not others. As I was saying earlier, we will table with the committee information about all of the consultation meetings we held within the framework of setting the greenhouse gas emissions cap. You will see that we met with a wide range of players from different sectors.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** However, in the previous year, your government met with oil and gas lobbyists, on average, five times a

day. We've seen, time and time again, that your government has then watered down policies. It was reported, or leaked to The Globe and Mail, that your finance minister was considering an excess profits tax before the last budget and then backed down in the face of lobbying by CAPP, by the big oil and gas companies.

You came to be an expert witness here at the environment committee in 2006. I imagine at that time you might have understood and might have believed that the unfettered access, the constant lobbying from the oil and gas sector, has an impact here on bureaucrats and on politicians. It's surprising to me, now that you are a minister, that you don't see that same influence happening in your government.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm saying that despite those meetings, they've been unsuccessful because they didn't want us. You've heard them. They said that it wasn't necessary and that we shouldn't have a cap on emissions, yet we're moving forward with it. Therefore, they've been unsuccessful.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** You're moving forward with it, but with—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We're the only country in the world—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** —compliance flexibility that allows them to emit 20% to 22%. That's half of what the rest of the Canadian public has to do. That's half of what the other sectors—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —that is moving forward. It's 35% in our emissions reduction target, or 40%.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** However, with compliance flexibility, it brings it down to the low 20s.

The oil and gas sector has a disproportionate impact on our emissions. It is the top emitter in Canada, yet—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That is why we're putting in place a cap on the emissions of the sector.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** —it's one that is watered down. Similarly—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I disagree with you. Flexibility—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I hear that, but similarly, if you look at the clean electricity standard—

**The Chair:** I really find this to be an interesting discussion, but I can't follow it.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Maybe, let's have a question and answer, alternating between one and the other individual, because I find this to be a very interesting discussion.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I'm hoping that you'll give me a few extra seconds for your intervention.



In the same way that we've seen the emissions cap be watered down, in the same way we saw—if you'll let me finish, Minister—your finance minister back off from an excess profits tax, we've also seen the same pattern when it comes to the clean electricity standard, the clean fuel standard and so many other policies that could be strong, robust climate action.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay, we're really over time, but I'll give the minister 30 seconds.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I disagree with just about everything the member said. We have the most ambitious climate plan in the history of Canada. Our emissions are at their lowest point in 25 years. It's never happened in the history of our country that emissions have gone down while the economy is running full steam ahead, never. It's the first time ever.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Mazier will kick off the second round, please.

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Thank you.

Is it five minutes?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

Minister, the United States is threatening Canada with 25% tariffs that would cripple our economy. Will you cancel the carbon tax so that our economy can be competitive, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I will repeat what I said earlier to your colleague: Putting a price on carbon means \$25 billion of investment in the country each year. Cancelling it would be cancelling \$25 billion of investment. We therefore will not do that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, according to your own department, actually, the carbon tax is going to cost our GDP \$25 billion. I don't know where you're getting your numbers, but your own department is reporting that number.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I will be very pleased to present to the committee all the documents supporting the statements I made.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, 40% of Canada's economy is due to trade with the United States. Is it your personal opinion that the carbon tax should remain in place even if Donald Trump imposes these tariffs, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Of course, we will continue to move forward with carbon pricing because it creates jobs, promotes investment and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Therefore, you're going to continue crippling our economy with the carbon tax, even though Donald Trump... Are you not standing up for us in Canada?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I strongly disagree with what you just said about carbon pricing. Even the Alliance Pathways representative asked your leader to be clearer on the issue of pricing carbon, to avoid threatening investments by companies like Dow Chemical and Strathcona Resources Ltd., who invested \$2 billion into a carbon capture and storage project. Oil companies invest in these areas with the federal government's support.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Has your government made a decision on whether it will increase the carbon tax over \$170 a tonne past 2030?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No decision has been made for after 2030.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Is it something you're considering?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I just told you, no decision regarding carbon pricing after 2030 has been made.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Will you rule it out today?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I repeat: No decision about carbon pricing after 2030 has been made.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, is it possible for Canada to meet the 2030 emissions targets without a carbon tax, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Theoretically, it would require investing billions and billions of dollars. What we can't do through the tax system—

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Is it possible, Minister?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —it would require very significant investments. I don't have an analysis in front of me, but I can tell you that carbon pricing will help us cut emissions by 30%, so any alternative mechanisms would have to bring about a 30% reduction. Frankly, what are those alternative mechanisms?

[English]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, I asked you a simple question.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's not a question—

[English]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, I asked you a simple question—

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Excuse me. We have a point of order.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Of course you would....

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** The member asked a question and the minister is responding. I think a little bit of decorum and—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** It was a yes-or-no question, Chair.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I don't believe he's providing the minister with adequate time to respond in a cordial manner.

**The Chair:** I've stopped the clock. We can't oblige a witness to answer yes or no, but we can ask.

Anyway, I've stopped the clock. We will now resume.

Again, I find this discussion fascinating.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Chair, on the same point of order—

**The Chair:** I find this discussion fascinating, but it becomes hard to follow it when everyone is talking over everyone else.

I have Ms. Collins.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** On the same point of order, if one of us asks a yes-or-no question and the minister understandably can't answer with a yes or no, then I think it's fair for the questioner to move on to a different question—

**The Chair:** Of course it is—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I would like to make sure that it remains our time.

**The Chair:** It's the questioner's time. They can move on to another question. They cannot force the witness to answer with a yes or no, but they can go on to another question.

I will resume now. I will turn the clock back on.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, will you rule out raising the carbon tax by over \$170 a tonne today for 2030?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I said this already, but I will say it again: No decision has been made on carbon pricing past 2030.

• (1710)

[English]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, your government gave away \$8 billion to megacorporations through the net-zero accelerator fund. Your government claimed that this would reduce emissions.

However, the environment commissioner revealed that over 70% of the companies received money without any commitment to reduce emissions. That's 70%, Minister. Since learning this, have you personally read any of these funding agreements?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As you know, the fund falls under the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. I would be glad to ask him to send the committee the results of the investments that were made through the net-zero accelerator fund. I don't have those data readily available.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, right in your mandate letter it says, "Support the Minister of Innovation, Science and...in the implementation of the Net Zero Accelerator". It is actually your responsibility to monitor emissions.

Here, you have an \$8-billion program, over 70% of the contracts gave no commitment to reduce emissions and you haven't looked at the contracts. You didn't even flag.... Did you even question that? Did you talk to the minister who was responsible?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You're right that my mandate letter instructs me to support the innovation minister in relation to the fund, and that is what my department and I are doing. However, as I pointed out, the innovation minister is responsible for the fund, so he has all those details. We would be happy to provide them to the committee.

**The Chair:** We actually have a meeting scheduled to discuss that.

Mrs. Chatel, you may go ahead.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister.

I must say, I'm a bit confused. Mr. Deltell was talking about the importance of protecting the environment earlier, but his party wants to get rid of the best tool we have to reach our environmental targets, carbon pricing. The policy has the support of conservative economists all over the world. I worked at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and economists agree that the policy is one of the most effective measures out there. What does the Conservative Party want to replace it with? Who knows. It's radio silence.

Earlier, you brought up the Pathways Alliance, an organization that represents the big oil and gas companies. According to the organization, investments in clean energy could help the companies it represents reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, which is what all taxpayers want, businesses and individuals alike. The Conservatives, however, voted against such investments in the main estimates. In his disinformation campaign against carbon pricing, the Conservative leader is attacking investments like those, which we need. I find it all very confusing.

Can you help me understand the Conservatives' logic? There must be some logic behind their position, or are they just being irresponsible?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I have to say, trying to explain the Conservative leader's thinking on this issue is asking a lot.

I didn't have this earlier, but I have in hand an article containing a quote from the new president of the Pathways Alliance, which represents 95% of oil sands production.

[*English*]

He said that reducing emissions from the production of oil is critical to the sector's future and that Pierre Poilievre's lack of clarity on industrial carbon pricing is jeopardizing the economic basis for the clean technology that provides the only viable pathway to do so.

[*Translation*]

That's not Steven Guilbeault, the environment minister, saying that. It's the president of the Pathway's Alliance, an oil sands consortium.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** According to Mr. Deltell, this is an important issue, and Quebec shouldn't be doing all the heavy lifting for Canada. However, the Conservatives don't want a price on carbon, and they don't want any investments made either. What is their plan for the environment?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Perhaps they think the situation will magically fix itself. Do the Conservatives have a magic wand hidden somewhere?

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Maybe, but if they do, it's well hidden.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Maybe they've got some pixie dust up their sleeve. Honestly, I have no idea.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** I'd like to talk about what the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development had to say. The committee met with him to discuss his report. He said that Canada was on track to miss its 2030 emissions reduction target by 4%.

Can you give us more information on the progress Canada has made in recent years? What are you going to do to make sure we reach our target? There is a 4% shortfall.

• (1715)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The idea behind the plan we put forward in 2022 is that it would evolve over time. A number of new actions have been added, either investment initiatives or regulatory measures, to help us make progress over time in the fight against climate change.

The commissioner said that we needed to move forward with a cap on greenhouse gas emissions, and we have put forward draft regulations that do just that. Probably in the next few weeks, we will be finalizing the clean electricity regulations. Early in the first quarter of 2025, we will be focusing on the regulations to reduce methane emissions in the oil and gas sector by 2030.

That is how we are going to achieve our targets. Every year, we have to keep moving forward, supporting new measures and, in some cases, tightening up existing measures. That's what we did with carbon pricing two years ago. We strengthened certain standards after seeing that we could improve some of the things initially put in place.

We are a responsible government. I don't think we get everything right the first time, so it's important to change and adjust measures accordingly as time goes on.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds or so.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Minister, why do you think the Conservatives are opposed to the cap on oil and gas emissions?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm just speculating, but perhaps it has to do with the fact that the CEOs of a number of big oil and gas companies have put on fundraising events for Mr. Poilievre, the Conservative leader, on at least two occasions. I can assure you that they don't organize fundraisers for me.

**The Chair:** We have to leave it there.

Go ahead, Ms. Pauzé.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Do I have two and a half minutes, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Minister, my drift will be a bit different from Mrs. Chatel's.

Last year, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development submitted his first report, in which he said that the measures taken by the government were not sufficient to reach Canada's 2030 target. He also said that the main reduction measures were delayed or had not been prioritized. This year, he said more or less the same thing.

Weren't you surprised by the commissioner's finding that nothing had changed in a year? Still, this year, he is saying that Canada is not on track to meet its targets.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I agree with the commissioner that we need to do more.

Since last year, however, we have finalized the zero-emission vehicle regulations. We submitted the draft clean electricity regulations to achieve net zero, and we'll be finalizing them in the next few weeks. We also submitted the draft regulations on the greenhouse gas emissions cap for the oil and gas sector.

If you consider all those measures to be nothing, then I don't know what counts as something.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** The 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan: Clean Air, Strong Economy came out two years ago, and it doesn't set out any targets, deadlines or measures for reducing emissions.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Quite the opposite. It is the most detailed plan I've seen anywhere in the world. Granted, I may not have seen every single plan, but I challenge you to compare it with the plans of most G7 countries similar to Canada. You'll see that it is the most detailed.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** All right.

I want to get back to the oil and gas sector. You want the industry to reduce emissions by 35% by 2030, but below 2019 emissions. The government's entire plan, however, uses 2005 as the base year. For the regulations, why is the oil and gas sector's 2030 target based on 2019 levels, not 2005 levels? That illustrates what I was saying earlier about oil and gas companies having to do less than all other businesses.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I urge you to look at the new, 2022 plan. You will see that emissions are coming down faster in some sectors and slower in others because of technology availability and price.

The electricity sector, for instance, has made significant reductions because the cost of solar and wind technologies has come down a lot in recent years. As a result—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to Ms. Collins.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I listened with interest to your response to Mr. Deltell regarding Canada's rankings. I was looking at the performance index that was put out. Canada ranks 62nd out of 67 in the 2024 performance index on climate change. Your response didn't completely make sense to me, because there are other oil-producing countries in that ranking. Norway is number 12. The United Kingdom is number 20. The U.S., even though they are low down on the list at 57, are still doing better than we are.

I'm curious. How do you respond to the fact that we are ranked so low?

• (1720)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Again, as I said to Mr. Deltell, the report focuses notably—not solely, but notably—on oil and gas production. It's true that oil and gas production has been going up. However, I could talk to you about the Climate Action Tracker that looked at our performance, Climate Transparency or the G7 accelerator—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Do you not agree that your government, Minister—

**The Chair:** Go one at a time, please.

I'll give the floor to Ms. Collins.

You can ask a follow-up. Go ahead, please.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Do you not agree that your government is responsible for regulating the oil and gas industry and ensuring that we are reducing our emissions in that sector?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's why we put forward a cap on emissions.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Yet, we continue to fail, time and again. You water down those policies.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That cap has just been introduced. In fact, it's in draft form. We will finalize it in 2025.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Okay. Great.

You've come here before. I asked you this question, and you refused to answer: At this point, do you feel comfortable acknowledging that the Trans Mountain pipeline was a mistake?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's a decision that was made before I arrived in politics.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Yet, in 2016, at the Liberal Party convention, you said, on pipelines, "The atmosphere and our climate certainly don't need them. Many of us believe we cannot build pipelines and meet our international climate commitments at the same time."

Given that this government bought a pipeline and that you are a minister representing this government, can you at least admit it was a mistake now? It's \$35 billion later and increasing our emissions. Can you honestly tell Canadians that you didn't think it was a good idea in the beginning, but that now, clearly, it is an economic and environmental disaster?

**The Chair:** We're over time.

Mr. Leslie.

**Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to circle back to your comments on the idea of creating a global carbon tax on international shipping, which would amount to Canadians' money being sent abroad, I guess.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I made no such comment. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Well, I was just looking.... I know you said this earlier, Minister: “We are very supportive of the discussions that are happening at the International Marine Organization to put in place some kind of levy on international marine transportation”. Now, in a Canadian context, what you call a carbon “levy” here is a carbon tax. We all know that. I have to assume this is a global or international carbon tax you are espousing here.

My question to you is this: We go out and talk to our constituents. We get a sense of what's going on on the ground. Do you honestly believe Canadians can afford another carbon tax right now?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** What you're saying is simply not true.

What I said is that there are discussions at the International Maritime Organization, and we're part of those discussions.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Why would you be discussing it if you don't plan on doing it?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There's discussion on a number of issues at the International Maritime Organization.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** What do you discuss if you don't plan on doing it? Why would you have international discussions if you don't plan on acting on them? What an odd waste of time.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's a complex problem. We're looking at different—

**Voices:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Order.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There are conversations on a number of different issues that Canada is a part of.

**Voices:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** I'm stopping the clock here.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Some of these things will take place, some won't.

**The Chair:** Excuse me. I'm stopping the clock.

**Voices:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Order. Excuse me. This is disintegrating.

I have stopped the clock. We need to have one person speaking at a time in a Q and A format.

I'll start it up again now.

You had the floor, Minister. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** What I was saying, actually, is that the International Maritime Organization, which Canada is a part of, discusses a number of issues. We talk about a number of issues with our international partners. That's all I was saying.

[*English*]

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Okay.

Let's turn to the carbon tax we know exists here in Canada. I'm from Manitoba. Right now it's cold, and it's going to get colder.

When I talk to seniors, families or anybody, they're legitimately in tears at times, saying, “I have to heat my home and prices are going up. I also want to feed my kids, or me, reasonably nutritious food.” They're having to make tough choices. To go back to what I suggested to you earlier, when we talk to people, we're aware of the challenges that people are facing. We can look at GDP numbers and things like that, but when we talk to a human, we understand the challenges they're facing, or at least I hope we do.

As a government that espouses the idea of compassion, how do you think it's reasonable to further drive people into energy poverty with a continuous increase in the carbon tax year over year while, as per the environment commissioner's report, it's not successfully hitting the targets you're aiming at?

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I disagree with just about everything the member just said, Mr. Chair.

In places where federal carbon pricing is in effect, it puts more money in people's pockets than it costs them. If the member is so concerned about what life is like for his constituents, why did he vote against increasing the Canada child benefit? Why did he vote against the Canadian dental care plan? Why did he vote to lower the retirement age?

[*English*]

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Thank you, Minister. We have veered pretty far off the question. I'd like to bring it back to my time.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I have trouble understanding that, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Minister, can I come back to the relevance of the emissions reduction targets, which is the focus of this meeting?

Last week one of your officials said that additional measures need to be adopted to meet your emission targets. Earlier in your testimony, it seemed to be very much at odds with what we've heard you say, your parliamentary secretary say, in terms of.... To quote the parliamentary secretary, “we are ahead of our initial 2030 target and firmly on track to meet the targets set out in our 2030 emissions reduction plan”.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but you said earlier that “we have a fair shot at meeting our 2030 target”—

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** —in your opening remarks.

How would you connect those two different statements?

**The Chair:** Mr. van Koeverden has a point of order.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I know that this member is particularly fond of misinformation, but he's used that quote a couple of times out of context. I think it's really important that if we're going to quote each other in these types of debates, we stick to the facts.

**The Chair:** I understand, but it's not a point of order.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** When it comes to the repetition of inaccurate information, chapter 3 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* talks about how, when inaccurate information is repeated again and again and again, it can actually be considered unparliamentary.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. I don't know if it's accurate or not, to be honest with you.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Thanks.

I appreciate that. I know that we're not supposed to accuse members of lying, but when they mis-characterize especially each other's comments...and in this case, it's been brought up a couple of times. There is an original—

**Voices:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** I don't know what.... I mean, this is why we have a discussion. It's to get to the bottom of it and find out the truth.

I'd like to keep the discussion going.

Mr. Leslie, you had the floor. Go ahead.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That same environment commissioner's report talked about a failure to conduct value-for-money audits on your climate programs broadly speaking. Obviously, that is concerning, particularly with the current green slush fund that has gridlocked Parliament in your refusal as a government to hand over the documents on the net-zero accelerator fund. We are trying to decipher through, despite our parliamentary request of this committee, very much redacted documents.

Will you commit to having in the future—and, ideally, going backwards—value-for-money audits and, particularly as it relates to the net-zero accelerator fund, an actual number of emissions to be agreed upon as part of those contracts?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Obviously, for most emissions reduction programs, we work with all of our partners to make sure that the businesses meet the targets in the contracts. We use various

mechanisms: tax measures, direct investment and regulation. It's simplistic to say that we have just one mechanism to achieve our targets. That is not the reality.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

We now go to Ms. Taylor Roy.

[*English*]

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to the minister for being here today. We really appreciate your standing up for us in Canada by putting in place these provisions to try to address pollution and protect our green spaces in Canada.

I want to continue on the price on pollution for a couple of moments.

First, I want to put into context some things we've heard and ask if they are correct. We heard a comment that GDP in 2030 would be decreased by \$25 billion. That was in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report. This is a projection that's many years out, obviously. The projection without the price on pollution program, I believe, was \$2.68 trillion, with the price on pollution being \$2.66 trillion. There's a difference of about 0.5%.

Sometimes, when people put out numbers and don't put them in the context of the absolute numbers, they sound exceedingly large and scary. I just wanted to see if I'm correct on that.

Secondly, the Parliamentary Budget Officer hasn't compared what our economy would be like if the climate events continued to increase at the rate they are increasing now. Is that correct?

● (1730)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's correct, and I believe the Parliamentary Budget Officer himself acknowledged that in his report.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Okay. We don't really—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Nor does he take into account the benefit of investing in decarbonization.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Right. We simply have the cost of one program versus a baseline projection, but we don't have that projection with the benefits that are coming from the program in there, so this could easily change.

As we all know, statistics and projections are only as good as the assumptions. We're projecting out to 2030 and we have a 0.5% difference. I would say that for the benefits Canadians are getting from reducing pollution and living up to our international obligations, this is a very small price to pay.

I want to get back to a comment made by the member opposite on the Canada carbon rebate and the idea of energy poverty. I know the member opposite lives in a rural riding. Heating fuel was exempted for the next three years across the country because it's a very expensive fuel and, usually, those who don't have a lot of money use heating fuel, in fact. Their homes haven't been renovated, etc. We've exempted that altogether so there's no carbon levy on this heating fuel.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer stated that eight out of 10 households get more back than they pay through the Canada carbon rebate. If this member is asking for the price on pollution to be cancelled, does that mean that the cheques his constituents are getting for the Canada carbon rebate, which gives them more than they pay, would also be cancelled?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, which flies in the face of helping people in a time of affordability issues.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** It would hurt affordability.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Lastly, as I said, Mr. Leslie's in a rural riding. Perhaps you could comment on the top-up for rural Canadians, because I understand that in these backstop provinces, there is a top-up for rural Canadians, understanding that they have more difficulty with alternatives at times.

Is that correct?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There's a famous video from two years ago of Danielle from Alberta, who said she did the calculations herself and came to the conclusion that she was getting more money than she was paying in carbon pricing. On top of that, because she lives in a rural area, she gets a top-up, and now that top-up has been doubled from 10% to 20%.

That Danielle is the Premier of Alberta.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Her calculations would show she even does better now than when she made the video a few years ago because she has a top-up of 20%.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, that's according to her calculations.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** I also wanted to confirm that as the price on pollution or the carbon levy goes up, so does the rebate, so that amount would be compensated through the rebate that constituents in all of our ridings receive.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That is correct.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Thank you very much for clarifying that.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

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

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Perfect.

I want to ask a bit about clean electricity and the grid we need to expand by 2050. I know that many companies have invested in Canada because we have clean electricity and we're trying to expand that further.

Could you share with us what is being done to grow and decarbonize our grid?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The Canadian electrical sector is really a model for decarbonization. While the sector has grown substantially over the last two decades, its emissions have come down substantially. Now, we need to basically double the size of the grid between now and 2050 to meet the demand and the needs for electricity in the transportation sector, industrial sector and building sector, and—

**The Chair:** Thank you. I have to stop there. This concludes—

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** This has been a really good debate. I want to thank all of my colleagues from various parties for engaging today and to thank the minister for joining us.

As parliamentary secretary, I didn't engage today, but our colleague and friend Mike Morrice from the Green Party, is here. I would like to ask my colleagues from all parties for unanimous consent to generously provide Mr. Morrice with 90 seconds to ask the minister one question.

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Do I have unanimous consent?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** [*Inaudible—Editor*] does it add a total round for everybody, because it's going to take away—

**The Chair:** No, it will not.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Why don't you just give up a round?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** To answer Mr. Mazier's question, I didn't have time today to share—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Do we have agreement to do another round? Does the minister have time?

**The Chair:** I don't think we have the time for that, because we have to go into our second hour, which is on Bill C-73, with the minister again with us.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Will the Liberals agree to just give up their time for Mr. Morrice to ask this question?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** To clarify, I'm just asking the Conservatives to be generous—

**The Chair:** Let's cut to the chase. Do we have UC or not?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** No.

**The Chair:** We're going to pause for a couple of minutes.

Thank you to the officials who accompanied the minister.

We're going to pause and then have a changeup of the officials. The minister will remain with us, but the topic will be different.

• (1735)

(Pause)

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Welcome back.

[Translation]

Once again, we welcome the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Joining him for this second hour are Heather McCready, director general, legislative and regulatory affairs; and Basile van Havre, director general, Canadian Wildlife Service.

We will be spending the second half of today's meeting on Bill C-73, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in relation to certain commitments Canada has made under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Now, without further ado, I will turn the floor over to the minister.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you, again, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the committee for the invitation to discuss Bill C-73, an act respecting transparency and accountability in relation to certain commitments Canada has made under the Convention on Biological Diversity, also known as the nature accountability act.

[English]

I was very happy to see that Ms. Collins finally let the motion of the prestudy of this bill go to a vote after she worked with the Conservatives to block it several times.

Canada's identity is deeply connected to—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** What's the point of order?

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I'm just so curious that the minister is allowed to present inaccurate information in his opening statement.

**The Chair:** I don't know if it's accurate or not, Ms. Collins. I don't know how you voted.

Let's just keep going.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Canada's identity is deeply connected to its natural environment. Our forests, lakes, coastlines and wetlands are more than just landmarks. They are the lifeblood of our economy, culture and communities.

Canada plays a vital role in safeguarding the world's ecosystems. As the second-largest country on earth, Canada stewards 25% of the world's temperate rainforests, 24% of boreal forest and 37% of freshwater lakes, along with the longest coastline in the world. As a result, our domestic action has global implications.

The growing impact of environmental degradation—from biodiversity loss to climate instability—cannot be ignored. Forestry, agriculture, fishing and aquaculture are directly threatened by ecological disruptions, with implications for jobs, food security and public health.

Despite the progress we've made, such as the protection of 300,000 square kilometres of land and inland waters since 2017, our work is far from over. That is roughly half the size of Manitoba, and just two weeks ago, we announced the largest indigenous-led conservation project in the world, Mr. Chair, which will span more than one million square kilometres in the Northwest Territories.

• (1740)

[Translation]

In 2022, Canada played a key role in securing the ambitious Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known as the GBF. The GBF outlines a 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature and sets four goals for 2050, with 23 global targets to halt biodiversity loss by 2030.

In June 2024, Canada was one of the first countries to publish a national strategy to outline how it will implement these targets domestically. At the same time, the government introduced Bill C-73 in the House of Commons. This bill reflects Canada's commitment to advancing efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, by establishing a framework for accountability and transparency in delivering on the GBF commitments and ensuring sustained action at the national level.

[English]

If passed, Bill C-73 would codify Canada's commitment to contribute to these global targets, as well as future targets and long-term goals. The bill would require me, as Minister of Environment and Climate Change, as well as future ministers, to develop and submit national biodiversity strategies that align with international commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity. These strategies will outline federal measures and provide opportunities for provinces, territories, indigenous peoples, municipalities and other parties to highlight their actions, ensuring a collaborative approach to biodiversity conservation.

[Translation]

This is essential because no single level of government within Canada can achieve targets alone. Provincial, territorial and indigenous partners, as well as industry and civil society, must work together to secure a prosperous economy based on resilient ecosystems.

This involves ensuring the safety and security of communities, because nature-based climate solutions contribute to both sequestering emissions and mitigating climate change impacts such as heat domes and flooding.

[English]

To strengthen accountability, the minister will also be required to prepare national reports that align with international commitments under the CBD, and assess Canada's progress towards global biodiversity targets.

[Translation]

These reports will assess Canada's progress, highlight where we need to course correct and ensure that we continue to improve. Both the strategies and reports will be tabled in Parliament and made publicly available.



Bill C-73 places significant emphasis on indigenous leadership. The Government of Canada recognizes that indigenous peoples have long safeguarded the nation's lands, waters and ice.

[English]

As such, Bill C-73 requires the integration of indigenous knowledge into conservation efforts, and mandates respect for indigenous rights, as affirmed by section 35 of the Canadian Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

[Translation]

To support effective decision-making, the bill also requires that an advisory committee be established. This committee will provide independent advice to the minister on the most effective biodiversity measures to put in place. The committee will ensure that decisions are informed by scientific disciplines, indigenous knowledge, and biodiversity policy expertise at the national and international levels.

The composition of the committee ensures representation from indigenous partners, whose knowledge will complement scientific research, creating a comprehensive approach to biodiversity conservation.

[English]

This body can monitor Canada's progress towards achieving biodiversity targets, and recommend course corrections when needed. It will also help ensure the minister can stay aligned with emerging developments in science and policy.

At the heart of this bill lie a number of principles, including the principle of intergenerational equity, meaning that our actions today shape the world we leave for future generations. Bill C-73 ensures that future generations inherit a thriving environment.

The bill does not impose obligations on provinces and territories. It provides a framework for consultations and co-operation across all levels of government and society. Biodiversity conservation is a collective responsibility requiring the participation of governments, industry, indigenous partners, workers, environmental organizations and citizens alike.

To maintain the relevance and effectiveness of this legislation, Bill C-73 mandates a parliamentary review every 10 years. This review cycle aligns with the Convention on Biological Diversity's timeline for setting new global targets, ensuring that Canada's efforts remain responsive to emerging challenges and evolving commitments.

Mr. Chair, Bill C-73 represents a critical opportunity to reaffirm Canada's leadership in biodiversity conservation and environmental accountability. It provides the structure we need to deliver on our commitments, while fostering collaboration and transparency. It is also an opportunity for opposition parties to step up for Canada. This bill is being held up because the Conservative Party of Canada is holding up our important work in Parliament right now. I am calling on all parties to prioritize this bill. I hope we can come together. I look forward to working with all of you to move this important piece of legislation.

• (1745)

[Translation]

Together, we can build a future where nature thrives, ecosystems are restored and citizens have access to a prosperous future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

[English]

We'll do our first six-minute round, starting with Mr. Soroka.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you painted a very nice picture of what Bill C-73 is supposed to do. My concern is about Liberals talking about things that sound so nice and wonderful. This summer, you proved that concern with the mismanagement of the forest system. There was a lack of biodiversity, a lack of prescribed burns, and no getting rid of the mountain pine beetle and dead trees. One-third of Jasper burned.

Could you please explain to us why Canadians should believe this bill is going to protect the biodiversity of our ecosystem when you've proven that you don't have the ability to do it right now?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Chair, the members of the Conservative party should be ashamed of asking these questions. Between 2011 and 2015, there were zero hectares of prescribed burns or mechanical removal around Jasper under their watch. They did nothing for four consecutive years, slashing the budget by \$30 million every one of those years for forest management measures around Jasper, Mr. Chair.

Since we've been in power, we've invested in almost a thousand hectares—

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Mr. Chair, this is my time, and I've had the same amount of time to ask the question.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —of managed forest around Jasper, after they did nothing.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Mr. Chair, I guess he's not going to answer the question. He's just going to put blame on others.

You've been in government for nine years already—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Chair, I would love to table in this committee the report from Parks Canada that shows exactly what I just said.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll go back to Mr. Soroka now.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Thank you.

Minister, it's easy to put blame when you've been in government for already nine years, but yet you still haven't done anything. The mountain pine beetle happened under your watch. You didn't do enough. Could you please explain how many acres of Jasper National Park are affected by the mountain pine beetle?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Chair, with your permission, I would like to table the report to this committee that was prepared by Parks Canada, which shows how many hectares in the last 15—almost 20—years have been managed around Jasper. It shows exactly what I just said. For four consecutive years, they did nothing.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Okay, that's nice. Thank you. If he can supply that information then....

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We've invested in preparing more than a thousand hectares, in managing a thousand hectares around Jasper.

**The Chair:** You can table it, yes, and we'll distribute it.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** The answer, then, is that about 154,000 acres were affected, and with that, to the northwest of Jasper, there are still a lot of trees that were not burned. They were not touched at all. There are a lot of dead trees there from the mountain pine beetle.

What is your plan to deal with this so that we don't have another catastrophe and have another section of Jasper burn, if not all of the town of Jasper? What's your plan for these dead trees and for the protection of the town?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** While they've invested in zero hectares for four consecutive years, since we've been in power, we've invested to better manage a thousand hectares. Zero versus 1,000 is the difference between their approach and our approach, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** That sounds very nice. You want to bring out numbers, so let's bring out numbers then.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'll be happy to table the report that shows that in this committee.

**The Chair:** Please do table the report. Yes, please.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** We're looking at the fact that there are 32,000 hectares or roughly 80,000 acres that were burnt in this last fire in Jasper National Park.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I question the relevance if we're going to focus entirely on—

**The Chair:** Well, I must admit, it's a stretch, but it is about biodiversity. I'm not an expert in biodiversity, but biodiversity affects the health of forests. I suppose the health of forests determines how vulnerable forests are to fires.

I'll let Mr. Soroka continue. You have a little less than three minutes.

• (1750)

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** My question is on the fact that the minister even spoke in his opening comments about forests, so I don't understand this.

With that, they are planting about 5,000 new trees within Jasper National Park. Five hundred trees per acre is what it takes for a healthy forest. Therefore, out of 80,000 acres, you've planted roughly 10 acres to restore the forest.

Don't you think that it's basically a joke and that you're really not doing much for biodiversity there at all?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The joke, Mr. Chair, is that these members are of a party that doesn't even recognize that climate change is real and that is perfectly happy to let the planet burn by doing nothing to tackle the impacts of climate change. It has no plan, whatsoever, to help Canadians and our ecosystems adapt to the impacts of climate change. They come here and take some kind of moral high ground on something they've done nothing on, Mr. Chair, for years. That's a tragic joke, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Okay, that's very nice, Minister.

I have another question. Former minister Randy Boissonnault was appointed as the ministerial lead on Jasper's recovery. Now that he has resigned in disgrace, who is actually in charge of helping Jasper to recover, in the Liberal government?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The committee is still ongoing and still meeting. In fact, at our last meeting, we invited the mayor of Jasper so that he can be part of the conversations we're having for the reconstruction of Jasper.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Therefore, you don't have anyone named yet. The former minister resigned last week.

Are you going to be the person in charge? Who would we actually be able to contact? This government has lacked, quite significantly, in assisting the town to recover from this fire.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Your government has lacked: You're right.

You can call me. You can call the Minister of Emergency Preparedness. There's a number of—

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Okay, we're not in government yet, Minister: You do realize that you've been there for nine years, correct?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You realize that you did nothing for five consecutive years to help prevent—

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** For five years—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —forest fires in Jasper—nothing. Nothing....

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** If the Conservative government did nothing for the years you're talking about—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You're absolutely right. The Conservative government did nothing.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** —and then from 2015 to 2024 is nine years, can you explain what you have done that has protected Jasper?

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Absolutely. We would be happy to—

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Minister.

Mr. van Koeverden, it's hard enough to follow this two-person exchange without the intervention of other members.

I stopped the clock. You have 30 seconds, Mr. Soroka.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** To go back to what I was saying, then, do you have a lead as to who is going to help Jasper? The municipality is suffering substantially because of the fire that was started in Jasper National Park and affected their municipality.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** A fire that was likely, according to scientists, a result of climate change, something that your own party denies as being real....

**The Chair:** Okay. We're out of time.

We'll go now to Mr. Longfield, who is online.

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

Thank you to the minister for being with us for two full hours and for showing us your commitment to our committee, as well as for the fine work you're doing on climate change and the exciting legislation that we're going to be discussing today and, hopefully, in future meetings sequentially, so that we can get to the crux of the legislation before us.

Thanks to Mr. van Koeverden for introducing his motion several weeks ago. We've been trying to have this conversation. The Conservatives are blocking. The NDP are putting other motions on the table.

It's great that we're finally starting the conversation together, because halting and reversing biodiversity loss is one of the great challenges we face, on top of climate change. This is a parallel challenge. If we get it right, we can transition to a nature-positive Canada in working with indigenous people, knowing that their knowledge will contribute to our solution together.

We have some profound impacts happening on our collective well-being. The University of Guelph looks at "one health" and says that the one health initiative is important. On biodiversity loss, through the Biodiversity Institute, we're tracking the results of that loss, but we have to start recovering from the loss that we have in front of us.

Can you tell the members why Bill C-73 is so crucial, so that our committee can really grab hold of this study?

• (1755)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you very much, Mr. Longfield.

I could certainly answer this question, but we have with us today Basile van Havre, who was instrumental in helping the world secure the agreement in Montreal in 2022. He was one of the main architects and negotiated this agreement for years, years and years. I was thinking that, with your permission, I would ask him why this bill is so important.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** While we have him here, let's do that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Basile van Havre (Director General, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an honour to be able to address you.

The world got together in Montreal two years ago and signed a historic agreement, setting itself four goals and 23 targets.

Coming back to Canada, it is now time to implement them. Minister Guilbeault spoke about the action plan and, together, this project that we have here. This is an important way to see how we're going to be translating those commitments into actions and how those actions will be seen by all of you.

I'm actually very pleased to see, after having spent four years of my life coordinating for the global community and being seated in front of you, how this is going to come to the ground and be put into action.

Thank you.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** That's great. Thank you.

Thank you for your passion to get us here and for all the work you've done to support the efforts of the minister and the department.

This is very similar to a study we did a few years ago, during the pandemic, on the net-zero accountability act. This is a nature accountability act: having audits built into the act so that future governments will continue the work we're doing, and future Liberal governments, for sure, will be working on this.

We have about eight months or so before our next election, and I'm hoping we can see this across the line so that we can talk about how we can build in the same types of protections on nature as we have on climate change.

Minister, in the first panel, you talked about Canada's emissions reduction plan and the results from the net-zero accountability act. Can you talk about the parallels or maybe the positive impacts on the net-zero act?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you very much, Mr. Longfield.

I think it is correct to make a parallel between Bill C-73 and the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, in the sense that the act imposes a certain number of things on our government and future governments. We have to produce action plans like the emissions reduction plan produced in 2022. We have to update those plans. They have to be tabled in the House of Commons. They have to be made public. We have to do consultations in the lead-up to that. We already have targets for 2022, but we have to set targets for future commitment periods, whether it's for nature or climate.

I think it's about accountability towards Canadians. It's about transparency. It's about ensuring the government puts in place the necessary measures to achieve the targets we set for ourselves.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Great. Thank you.

I was part of the committee then. I'm part of the committee now. The NDP was a very important part of our discussions. Taylor Bachrach was very good at helping us work together. We always need dance partners. The Bloc Québécois, for sure, is always with us on sustainability issues. We know we will struggle with Conservatives. However, it is democracy. We need to have alternate views at the committee.

Could you say how important it is to try to finish this legislation in this Parliament?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I think it is essential to ensure we are on the right track to meet our 2030 targets when it comes to nature protection and restoration.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

[*Translation*]

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

We now go to Ms. Pauzé.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you for being here.

In your presentation, you said that every government had to assume its responsibilities and that everyone had to work together. I think the Bloc Québécois fully agrees with that. Quebec and the provinces take care of the land, and the federal government takes care of the oceans.

Oceans come under federal jurisdiction, so I'll take you back in time and talk about the Bay du Nord project. All the environmental groups had asked that this project not be approved, but you approved it. Of course, environmental groups were disappointed and criticized you. However, this project may not come to fruition because of a lack of investors and a lack of financial viability.

Basically, Bill C-73, under our consideration, is sort of a framework bill that involves the government's participation in what was signed in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. However, if this bill were turned into framework legislation, but public policies were different and oil development was promoted, would this bill prevent the development of a project similar to the one in Bay du Nord?

• (1800)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You're talking about ocean protection. I want to remind you that, when our party came to power in 2015, Canada was not protecting even 1% of our oceans, of our coastal areas. We're at about 16% now. If all goes well, that protection will be at about 20% in 2025. Therefore, we are well on our way to achieving our goal of protecting at least 30% of our lands and oceans by 2030.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Figures on paper are all well and good, but what about drilling being allowed?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Ms. Pauzé, we're moving toward the 20% in terms of protection. That's not insignificant. I mean, we've gone from 1% to almost 16% in eight years.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I understand that, Minister. However, these are just numbers. I want to come back to something concrete. I'm going back to the Bay du Nord project, which was—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** These conservation areas are very concrete.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I want to come back to the project in Bay du Nord, which is located in an area recognized as ecologically and biologically significant by your government, but that project was still authorized. So I think it's all well and good to have framework legislation, but we still need to have policies that follow and that won't encourage maximum oil development.

The Bay du Nord project will not go ahead, but the drilling continues. In early 2021, Equinor received federal authorization to conduct 12 exploratory drilling projects in an area associated with the very important Grand Banks of Newfoundland fishing area, where 40 drilling projects by various companies have been authorized.

Bill C-73 has the virtue of promoting biodiversity and protecting it, but it does not propose concrete public policy measures. Will it prevent future exploratory drilling in protected areas?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As a member of the Bloc Québécois, you are in a good position to know that, under the Canadian Constitution, natural resources are a matter of provincial jurisdiction. You mentioned it in your introduction. So the federal government can't tell a province that it can't use its oil, just as it couldn't tell Quebec that it can't use its hydroelectricity. It's the same thing. Provinces are sovereign in the use of their natural resources. However, the federal government can and must take action on pollution, and it is doing so.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** However, you will agree that the federal government must protect the oceans and that it does intervene in issues related to overfishing, increased marine transportation, plastics—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The goal is to protect 30% of our coastal areas by 2030.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I'm going to go back to another bill, Bill C-49, which changed the name of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Energy Regulator.

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board auctioned oil exploration licences covering over 100,000 square kilometres off the coast of Newfoundland. This encroaches on eastern Canada's largest marine refuge, which is supposed to protect marine biodiversity.

The high seas come under federal jurisdiction, but the federal government said it was going to relinquish that management to the provinces. We feel that it did so to accelerate oil and gas development. That's why you passed on your responsibilities to the Atlantic provinces.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No, not at all. We have an agreement with Nova Scotia and an agreement with Newfoundland. As part of those agreements, there is a joint committee. Bill C-49 allowed for the first time in Canadian history the development of offshore wind power. Major offshore wind projects are currently being developed in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia as a result of this bill. I think that's a very desirable thing.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** However, Minister, you know that it's also to develop offshore oil projects.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No, that's not the case, as the provinces already had that jurisdiction before Bill C-49 was passed. Passing this bill didn't change anything about that, but it added the possibility of developing wind energy, which couldn't have been done before. The Conservatives are opposed to that, by the way.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** According to our understanding, the federal government has relinquished management to the Atlantic provinces in order to have oil and gas development. At least, that's what we're seeing.

Could Bill C-73 prevent the Atlantic provinces from continuing to develop offshore oil and gas in sensitive areas?

• (1805)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** If an area is protected, no oil development and no mining can take place. Some regulated commercial activities, such as tourism or fishing activities, can take place.

However, as I have already said, you should be in a good position to know that the federal government cannot tell the provinces how to use their natural resources. That's in the Canadian Constitution. I don't need to explain that to you, since you are a member of a separatist party. It seems to me that it should be natural for you to know that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Collins, you have the floor.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Minister, maybe you can explain this to me, because you approved the project. When you approved it, you said it wouldn't cause significant adverse environmental effects. You actually referenced net-zero emissions by 2050. On the one hand, you're saying that the provinces get to decide, yet on the other hand you approved Bay du Nord.

I want to give you the opportunity to respond because you didn't get a chance to answer my other question. Are you—

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I have a point of order. My intention is not to disrupt, but I'm wondering if Bay du Nord has anything to do with biodiversity. I've worked very hard to get biodiversity on the agenda here.

**The Chair:** I think it's a relevant question. I find it quite interesting how this law will interact with provincial jurisdiction and rights over resource development. I think it's relevant.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Chair, how much time do I have? What are you starting me at?

**The Chair:** You have five and a half minutes.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Given the interruption, would you mind if I started from the top?

**The Chair:** No. You have five and a half minutes. I'm sorry.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Minister, maybe you can explain how you can be saying right now that you have to throw up your hands, as those decisions are made only by the provinces, when you approved Bay du Nord.

You made the decision. You referenced emissions reductions when you were talking about it. In your explanation, you referenced that it wouldn't cause significant environmental harm. Now you're saying to Madame Pauzé that you couldn't have done anything.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I will answer in French so that I can express myself properly. What I said was that, in the Canadian Constitution, the use of natural resources is a provincial jurisdiction. There are a number of things the federal government can do—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I'm specifically asking about your role, though.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm getting to that.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'd like to hear the minister's answer, because it's really important to understand.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I was just clarifying my question so that he would understand the question itself.

**The Chair:** Yes, I understand. I think this exchange is very interesting.

Please go ahead, Mr. Minister.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The federal government, when it comes to impact assessments, has a role to play on certain projects. As you know, the Supreme Court asked us to redefine our role in project impact assessment—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Just so that we don't get too much off track with the Supreme Court—

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Ms. Collins, I'm trying to answer your question. If you don't want me to answer, that's your prerogative; it's your time.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** The core of these questions, for me, goes back to the question that you weren't able to answer, which I asked you. Do you regret approving or being part of a government that approved and bought the Trans Mountain pipeline?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We were talking about the Bay du Nord development project, but the member is talking about the Trans Mountain pipeline. Mr. Chair, I'm a little confused.

[English]

**The Chair:** I think we're getting off topic. I think the Bay du Nord is very relevant to the discussion of Bill C-73, but I don't think, personally, that the Trans Mountain pipeline is.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Climate change and weak environmental policies have driven a biodiversity crisis. I hope that the minister would agree that is threatening essential ecosystems, that in your own words, "The atmosphere and our climate certainly don't need them", when talking about pipelines. Many of us believe we cannot build pipelines and meet our international climate commitments at the same time.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Are we back to the pipeline, Mr. Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes.

Could you veer back to biodiversity, Ms. Collins?

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I am not sure if you want me to read my same question again, which started off with "Climate change and weak environmental policies have driven a biodiversity crisis."

**The Chair:** Go ahead—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** I have a point of order.

This is a bill that we will be debating in committee. There are provisions, and we will probably make amendments. Can we talk about that, please?

• (1810)

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I do understand that the Liberals don't want to hear the minister's answer to this question.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** No. I am sorry, but I understand that you don't want this bill to pass.

**The Chair:** Ms. Collins, why don't you continue?

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I would just like an apology and for the member to withdraw....

**The Chair:** I didn't even really hear what the member said.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** She was imputing motives to my questions—

**The Chair:** Well, this happens a lot in this committee.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** —and it is against the rules, and it is unparliamentary.

**The Chair:** Listen, let's put that behind us, and why don't—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Chair, I've asked the member to withdraw her comment and apologize.

**The Chair:** I didn't hear what the member said.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** I'll say it again.

[English]

I said that she doesn't want to talk about the bill that we are supposed to talk about. It's Bill C-73, and I—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** No, Madame Chatel, you said—

**The Chair:** I see a question mark at the end of that. Does she not want to talk about the bill?

You can answer that, Mrs. Collins, and go on with your question.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I asked the chair to make a ruling on this. It is unparliamentary to impute motives to another member, and so I would appreciate a ruling, first of all. The member said that I don't want the bill to pass. This is a very important bill to me.

**The Chair:** I'm sure you want the bill to pass.

Madame Chatel, tell me that that wasn't what you meant, and then we can move on. You do believe that we all, as members of the committee, want the bill to pass.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** I honestly wondered whether we could talk to this, and it begs the question that if she doesn't want to talk about the bill—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** This is actually a conditional.... It's clearly not a withdrawal, an apology—

**The Chair:** This is really not productive.

Let's start over.

Ms. Collins, why don't you ask your question from the top?

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Just for clarity, Mr. Chair, are you ruling?

**The Chair:** I am ruling that we should not impugn the motives of others on this committee.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Can I ask for an apology and a withdrawal, please, then?

**The Chair:** You can ask for an apology, but I—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I am actually asking through the chair. Can the chair ask for an apology and a withdrawal?

**The Chair:** Madame Chatel, I'm sure you didn't mean it.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** I apologize. I didn't mean it.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I did stop the clock, but let's keep going.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Minister, this is a very important bill to me.

Biodiversity is incredibly important. Emissions reduction is incredibly important, and these things are connected, and I think you know that deep down. I think you know that when a government buys a pipeline that will expand the oil sands, to ship—

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** I have a point of order, Chair.

She is imputing some things with regard to the minister, that he's thinking something that he hasn't expressed.

**The Chair:** Once again, I must tell you that I intend to be done here at 6:30, so we may not get to a second round of questions at this rate.

Ms. Collins, I think you had a good question there, and I think the answer would enlighten all of us, so can we just move on with the question?

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I would like to ask the minister if he's ready to admit that buying the Trans Mountain pipeline was a mistake.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** I have a point of order.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Oh, come on.

**The Chair:** What's the point of order?

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** I understand Ms. Collins' point on biodiversity, but asking for an admission of guilt about something that was done or an admission statement.... I have no idea how this helps us discuss Bill C-73 or helps with the biodiversity issue at all.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Chair, you allowed the Conservatives to ask about Jasper. You allowed Madame Pauzé to ask about Bay du Nord. Please give me the same leeway that you have given to the other committee members.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Absolutely, it's the Liberals who are stopping it; it's not the chair.

**The Chair:** This is very hard to sort out, I must admit.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Just let her finish the question.

**The Chair:** Can we just ask the question? Then—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I'm sure the minister's quite capable.

**The Chair:** —the minister, I'm sure, will have a good answer.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Liberal members seem to think that the minister needs protecting somehow.

**The Chair:** No, he doesn't.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** No, you are not allowing him to answer the question.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** He's asked for an apology and a withdrawal.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I apologize and withdraw....

• (1815)

**The Chair:** I'm going to pause.

• (1815)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1815)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Collins.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I'm giving you the opportunity to answer the question.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** When we reformed the Impact Assessment Act in 2019—so before my arrival—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I'm sorry. Did you hear the question about whether you regret the Trans Mountain pipeline?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm trying to get to your answer, if you'll allow me.

[Translation]

I will answer in French; it will be simpler.

When we reformed the Impact Assessment Act, we said that we would depoliticize the assessment of projects in Canada, that we would create an agency and that would give it the means to do its job. That is the agency that assesses projects and conducts consultations. The agency worked for four years on the project—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Minister Guilbeault—

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Up until now, as Minister of the Environment, I have respected—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** This is for my clarity so that I know that you are answering the correct question so that we're on the same page. Are you answering about the Trans Mountain pipeline?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No, I'm sorry, I was talking about the Bay du Nord project. I wasn't there at the time—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** You are currently part of the government right now.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I was elected in 2019—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** However, you are currently a minister in the government that is spending \$35 billion on the Trans Mountain pipeline. Do you think that was a mistake?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I've answered your question several times—

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** You have never answered this question. That's why I'm asking again.

**The Chair:** I don't really know what this has to do with biodiversity.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It may not be the answer you want, but I've answered it several times.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Clearly, the minister is not going to answer the question.

**The Chair:** Clearly, that question has run its course. Can we go on to the next question?

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Clearly, the minister will not answer that question, so, yes.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I've answered the question several times. That may not be the answer you want, but you can't say that I didn't answer it.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Minister, on Bill C-73, I would like to see improvements on accountability, on the biodiversity shield and on the advisory committee's independence. I'm curious as to whether you are open and, hopefully, committed to ensuring that targets, timelines and mandatory reporting on biodiversity and nature protection are built in with audits by the environment commissioner and parliamentary oversight to ensure government accountability.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As a legislator, I'm always open to proposals to improve the bills that are introduced. So, if what you are proposing will help improve this bill, of course the answer is yes. The commissioner of the environment and sustainable development doesn't need something to be put in a piece of legislation to audit federal acts or regulations. He has all the powers he needs.

Do we need to add that? We'll see, but I'm entirely in favour of improving the bill.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Canada has made very limited progress when it comes to protecting 30% of our lands, oceans and water—

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I don't agree with you.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** —with only a 1.1% increase in protected areas between 2020 and 2023. That brings the total from 12.5% to 13.6% over three years.

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You have to be careful. You're talking about protecting terrestrial areas, but as for the proportion of marine protected areas, as I reminded Ms. Pauzé earlier, it went from less than 1% in 2015 to nearly 16%.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Right now, we're not on track to meet our 25% target by 2025 and our 30% target by 2030. Given this limited

progress on lands and if these targets are not met, what mechanisms are you going to include to hold the federal authorities accountable?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, the time's up. We're well over time here.

What I'm going to do is this. We have six questioners for the second round. I'm going to limit it to one and a half minutes per questioner, and we're going to end at 6:30.

Mr. Leslie, you have a minute and a half.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** It's disappointing that the minister's refusal to answer has limited my time to offer questions on a prestudy that is.... I heard a swipe from the minister previously that this has somehow anything to do with politics, when the reality is that the parliamentary gridlock has to do with the green slush fund documents. The Auditor General found nearly \$400 million of misappropriated funds, with 186 different conflicts of interest, while only sampling 25% of contracts.

• (1820)

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** I have a point of clarification.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** The fact that this is an excuse for why we need to do a prestudy is appalling to me. If you hand over the documents, you would be much better off and we could move things forward.

**The Chair:** Ms. Taylor Roy.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Thank you.

I don't believe we've ever introduced a green slush fund, so perhaps the member opposite could explain what he's talking about.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Thank you for that point of order

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** I want to come to the aid of my NDP colleague a little bit. The impugning of her motivations—

**The Chair:** Your time is running out.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** That's fine. I find the impugning of her motivations regarding this bill appalling. I don't know why the Liberals are finding it so hard to believe that my NDP colleague is actually just trying to improve this legislation.

What this legislation appears to be is a plan to make a plan, which I can only see leading into a whole bunch more government bureaucracy. Since taking power in 2016, the number of executives at ECCC has risen by 53%, which I find absolutely insane.

Minister, to implement this legislation, will you commit to identifying internal savings rather than new money to make this legislation enacted?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, Minister.



[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm not sure the question is relevant to the bill. However, as I explained earlier, this framework legislation is important because it will subject our government and subsequent governments to a series of actions that we will have to take in terms of transparency on the nature—

[English]

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Can I just ask a simple question?

What do you expect the cost to be for enabling this framework?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I think it's important to have targets and action plans to achieve those targets. That's how we'll get there.

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

Mr. van Koeverden, you have the floor for a minute and a half.

[English]

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I've been quite eager to ask a question of the minister on biodiversity. I thank all members who supported the prestudy for Bill C-73 to come to this committee over the last couple of weeks.

Minister, thank you for coming here to talk about how important Bill C-73 is to protect biodiversity.

As we've discussed, the corridors funding is very important to me personally. I live in a part of the Niagara Escarpment that is one of the most biodiverse areas in all of North America. That is surprising for people who live there because it doesn't seem like a rainforest or anything like that, but it's beautiful.

Today, actually, on behalf of you, I should offer that I was able to call a gentleman by the name of David Flood, who is an indigenous man in northern Ontario. He's part of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, which is something I have tremendous respect for. They are fabulous and a great solution for climate change and for the biodiversity loss that our environment is facing.

I was able to call him and congratulate him on over \$1.3 million in funding for the Wahkohtowin organization. It's like a B Corp. He was describing it to me on the phone. They do amazing work. Across the traditional territories of the Brunswick House First Nation, Chaleur Cree First Nation and Missinabie Cree First Nation, they are going to support the Wahkohtowin height of land ecological corridor project. It's in partnership with various first nations.

David Flood is an amazing leader and somebody who cares deeply about biodiversity and cultural preservation. He's working with Parks Canada.

Could you elaborate on why this—

**The Chair:** Your time is up, unfortunately.

Madame Pauzé.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** The federal government needs to protect the high seas and oceans. The Liberal government has authorized drilling in and around protected areas. As was mentioned earlier,

drilling is allowed in protected areas because natural resources fall under Quebec jurisdiction.

Minister, are you telling me that this country is ungovernable?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Not at all. However, we have different roles and responsibilities. That is the case in all countries. Different levels of government have different roles and responsibilities. Canada is no exception. Go and see around the world, in the European Union, in the United States of America, or in Germany with its Länder. We're not a global outlier or anomaly. That's the way it is everywhere on the planet.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** There is protection, but drilling is being done.

Do I still have a bit of time, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have a few seconds left.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** There are protected areas, but the government accepts drilling in protected areas. Therefore—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's not true. In protected areas, there are commercial tourism-type activities, such as fishing. In protected areas, there are no heavy industrial activities like mining or oil development.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** What about offshore drilling? What about licences that have been issued for exploratory drilling in areas recognized by the government as protected?

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Ms. Pauzé.

Ms. Collins, you have the floor.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Accountability requires independent oversight and advice. When we were first looking at the climate accountability act, the government wouldn't make a commitment not to have industry stakeholders on the net-zero advisory body. Eventually, after some pushing, your government made that commitment. I'm hoping that you'll make the same commitment with this biodiversity accountability act.

• (1825)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I said earlier, I'm very open to improvements to the bill as tabled. I think the purpose of this committee is to debate potential amendments. I'm very open to that.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I hear that you're open, but I guess I want a commitment from you. What safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the committee's recommendations are going to be based on scientific evidence and expert analysis rather than industry pressures?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Other than our commitment that the advice from the committee will be based on scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge and best scientific advice—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Can you assure this committee that corporate polluters, which would oftentimes rather prioritize their profit that may destroy nature, won't have a seat at this advisory committee?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm very open, again, to recommendations as to what the composition of the committee—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** So that is a no, you will not make that commitment today.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's not what I'm saying.

**The Chair:** The time is up.

We'll go now to Mr. Soroka.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was asking you about the lead for recovery in Jasper, and you said that it's still at the committee to determine who that is. I was wondering if you asked the Prime Minister to remove your name from that list of being the lead on recovery because of how you failed at Jasper with the mismanagement of the forest.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I've answered that question many times. As I said, your government did nothing for four consecutive years and slashed funding by more than \$120 million. We've invested more than \$600 million since we've been in power in measures to protect Jasper.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** So I guess that's a—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There was \$120 million in cutbacks versus more than \$600 million in investment. That's what I have to show—

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** You're basically saying that you did not talk to the Prime Minister about whether or not you would be the lead from the government side.

I also asked a question about the northwest of Jasper that has not burnt. All you gave me was an answer that your government had done nothing, but yet, like I said, you've been in charge for nine years.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Chair, can the minutes reflect that I'm in complete opposition to what the member just said? He's saying that I said something that I simply didn't.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** I'm standing corrected.

The Harper government did do things, just not as much as you'd like.

Back to my original question—

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Chair, the member is putting words in my mouth. I didn't say anything about what he was talking about. Looking at—

**The Chair:** Mr. Soroka's time is up anyway.

Mrs. Chatel, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I want to talk about Bill C-73 and start by thanking you for your leadership on biodiversity.

Back home in the Outaouais, your department funded a project called Kidjimaninan, which means “our canoe”. It's a project, led by indigenous communities, to protect biodiversity in the Outaouais and meet our regional targets. So thank you for your leadership. Without you, it wouldn't have happened.

Now let's talk about the bill, which I would really like us to pass and about which Ms. Collins finally asked an important question: Are you open to amendments? We will study this bill here in parliamentary committee. I look forward to it and I would like to study it thoroughly. What will the process be if the committee decides to propose some recommendations?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I said earlier, I'm very open to amendments. I have introduced a number of bills in Parliament, and I think that the objective of the work of the parliamentary committee, the House of Commons and, eventually, the Senate is to come up with the best possible legislation. So I'm very open to amendments.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you very much.

What did you hear from stakeholders? How do they feel about this bill?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we don't have time for an answer.

That brings us to the end of our meeting.

I'd like to thank the minister for his time. I would also like—

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Just a moment.

I would also like to thank the members for their questions, which have led to a better understanding of the subject.

Mr. Mazier, you have the floor.

● (1830)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I just wonder if the minister could table his expenses from his COP29 trip.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** The question has been asked. I think it takes some time to calculate the expenses of any trip. However, I would assume, Minister, that once that exercise is done—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's always made public, Mr. Chair—

**The Chair:** Your expenses will be made public.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —like all other expenses.

[*English*]

On that note, I would like to adjourn the meeting.

**The Chair:** They will be made public. It just takes time.

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