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**Thursday, October 21, 2004**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Alan Tonks**

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## Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, October 21, 2004

• (0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.)):** Good morning, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen.

The agenda is really quite straightforward. This is sort of a planning meeting, if you will, open-ended with respect to items that members would like to bring to the committee's attention, the object of which is to work them into our ongoing agenda.

In terms of order of business, we have a notice of motion that Mr. Cullen has provided the committee. You have a copy of that on your desk: that the committee immediately begin a study on Annex 2001 and report its findings to the House no later than November 4, 2004. Perhaps in terms of order we will deal with that motion first, and then we will go into the open part of the agenda.

Mr. Cullen, perhaps you would like to introduce your motion for discussion purposes and then we'll take it from there.

Thank you.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to folks who contributed to this motion coming forward.

There seems to be a timeliness that I think affects many of the ridings we represent, and also just the general perspective on the environment, that we take a look at Annex 2001 in a timely fashion. I'm very interested in it being over a constricted amount of time. I don't wish for this issue to take the committee's time up for anything of great length.

In conversations yesterday with some folks, there was some consideration to alter this motion, to give it a constricted date between November 15 and 26, and also, to be clear, that there are some groups we are very interested in hearing from—for example, the International Joint Commission, Environment Canada, and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

I would also like to be explicit that there will be some other groups that of course will be coming up. I'm hoping we can have that discussion this morning rather than have the specifics in the motion itself.

That's the premise of it, and I want to put it back for open discussion.

**The Chair:** Are there any questions?

Mr. Paradis.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, about two years ago, Parliament passed a law which prevents the bulk removal of water from our lakes and rivers. An amendment concerning the International Joint Commission was also included. Where does this Annex 1 come in? I was told that this appendix concerned an agreement that was supposed to be concluded between the governments of Quebec, Ontario and of certain States. Where does that come into all of this? That is what I do not understand.

[English]

**The Chair:** I want to emphasize that, as I understood it, we're not going to get into the substantive aspects but just get some guidance. I think that question is well put, but in order to get to the next part of our agenda, we won't get into the substantive part. It's to get these onto the agenda so that we in fact can get the substance before us.

Who wants to answer Mr. Paradis' question? Would that be from a staff perspective, or is that internal to the...? Let's keep it internal to the committee.

Is it on that, Mr. Wilfert? If not, I'll go to Mr. Bigras.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, Mr. Paradis is correct. We do have legislation.

Specifically with regard to bulk water, I think the issue that Mr. Cullen had put forth—and I'm prepared to provide some specific information when you're ready—is with regard to simply looking at what is, I assume, the status of Annex 2001, what's currently going on. I'm prepared to provide a list of witnesses that I would suggest, as well as some decks that I think would be helpful for the committee, but until the motion is actually adopted, obviously I won't do that.

I think the issue of bulk water is a separate one in terms of the legislation. Obviously we can't do anything on the American side directly, but we can, obviously, through negotiations and discussions. But we have our legislation in place. It's very clear. Maybe the question would be directed to Mr. Cullen as to whether or not the issue of bulk water per se is part of this. I understood it was the larger picture that was being looked at, and obviously those elements may or may not come into it.

• (0910)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Chairman, it's the former. It's the larger picture and whether bulk water comes in, in the specific legislation affected.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** If you are referring to Annex 2001, I think that it is the agreement among eight American States and two provinces, Quebec and Ontario, who were signatories to that agreement. Its purpose is to put standards in place. The risk we are running is that we may facilitate water diversion. I think there is cause for concern.

We know that the level of the river is greatly influenced by that of the Great Lakes basin. We must thus ensure that this agreement will preserve the ecological integrity of the five lakes and not be conducive to their deterioration. I know that some consultations were held in Quebec, among other places, in midsummer. The participation rate was not very high. It would be a good idea to take a look at this issue, in my opinion. Should we examine it exhaustively? I am not sure of that, but we should at the very least, as parliamentarians, acquaint ourselves with the impact that this could have, and hear some organizations if need be. Why not?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Mills.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** If we're just looking at the Annex 2001 agreement, then of course you'd have to question really where the federal government comes in, because it is an agreement between eight governors and two premiers. If we're talking bulk water, of course that's another issue. But under the annex, one of the agreements is the water must be returned to the basin. Obviously the eight governors have to agree.

In going through it and reading through it, my question largely is, if the eight governors agree it happens, why aren't the premiers part of that? Why isn't it a group of ten instead of a group of eight? But that's not really a federal.... I mean, that agreement wasn't done for federal purposes. I think we should be clear if we're going to deal with this. If we're going to deal on the big picture, I think we should do it. If we're just going to deal on the annex, there are a few questions about whether that's really a federal issue. I think we may get kickback from the provinces if we do that. I just think we should think about that.

**The Chair:** I'm going to come back to you, Mr. Paradis. I'm just getting response back from the members and then I'll come back to you.

Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Just very quickly on the motion, personally it's very difficult to consider this motion because I don't know what we're talking about. I have not seen the agreement. I've not read the agreement. I don't know the merits and the substantive issues around this agreement. I'm picking up bits and pieces here. I think that's probably the situation for many of us.

Secondly, I'm a little worried about the timeline of this being completed by November 4.

**The Chair:** We have an amendment to that.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Okay. I would say that it's hard to consider this motion in a vacuum, in the absence of a longer list of issues to be treated by the committee.

My view is I'd certainly like to have a fuller discussion of the issues we should try to tackle and in what sequence, to get into the merits of this motion. That's my first reaction.

**The Chair:** Mr. Paradis.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** Mr. Chairman, I would like three clarifications.

Firstly, this is called Annex 2001. What document is it an annex to? I am wondering about that, a little like David. If this is called an annex, it must be appended to some other document.

Secondly, what is the legal basis of this annex? Is it expressing a wish that there be good cooperation among certain States, Quebec and Ontario? I think that the relationship between Canada and the United States is certainly the responsibility of the Canadian government. If the Canadian government had nothing to do with this annex, what is the legal value of this wishful thinking?

Thirdly, like David, I would like to have a copy of what is being referred to as the annex.

● (0915)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Christian.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** I think that what you have to say is a good argument for our studying the document here. You have raised a number of interesting questions we should study. This is probably an appendix to the agreements involving the International Joint Commission, but we will have to check that. Personally, I find it bizarre to have to say this here, but if Canada wants to verify whether its sovereignty, or the motion it adopted on bulk water withdrawal is truly respected in the annex and ensure that there is no way of getting around it to export water, it is our duty here at the standing committee to analyze that in order to clear this up and stake out an opinion on it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bigras and then Mr. Cullen.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** To add to what Christian was saying, I would like to quote a single sentence. It says here that this policy would facilitate the diversion of water from the Great Lakes to the extent that this would threaten the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes and seriously compromise Canadian sovereignty with regard to those waters. I am sure that this will inspire our colleagues on the committee. This is a statement by Steven Shrybman, an Ottawa lawyer who specializes in environmental issues.

I think there is something to be concerned about here, not necessarily worried, but certainly concerned. Just because the government did not ensure that certain guidelines were put in place, that does not mean that as a committee we don't have a responsibility to study this. We do have that responsibility, in my opinion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Cullen, would you like to sum up, please.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I have a small suggestion. I wonder if Mr. Comartin might step in for a few minutes, if it's acceptable to the committee. He's had some experience with this file.

I think the question, and I take Mr. McGuinty's point well, is around the timeliness of this. Is this pressing so much that the committee needs to go forward now? I've been under some advisement from Mr. Comartin and others that, yes, there is a pressing need for it. So I was wondering if he might directly explain it, or perhaps Mr. Wilfert if he has expertise on it as well.

**The Chair:** A suggestion has been made by Mr. Cullen. Do we have unanimous consent for Mr. Comartin to engage the committee?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Comartin, welcome back.

Mr. Comartin is a long-time member of this committee, and has played a remarkably important role in the past.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Thank you for those comments, Mr. Chair.

With regard to Mr. Paradis' question, this is an annex to the 1985 agreement between the same states and provincial governments. That agreement was very general. I think the urgency of this is that, one, this annex called for public response, community response, by this past Monday. A great number of people, and I'll mention in particular the first nations, have been very concerned about this, because this is going to impact a number of their land claims. So that's the urgency of it.

Mr. Bigras has already made the point, as has Mr. Mills, about the impact on the sovereignty of Canada. In that regard, I think you need to appreciate that there's a legal legislative framework within the United States, called a compact, that will allow the eight Great Lake states to reach an agreement, to the exclusion of the two provinces and both federal governments, to permit that group to make decisions as to whether water is going to be diverted out of the Great Lakes. If you read the annex, there is no question that there is a provision with the annex for a scheme to allow for diversions. Mr. Shrybman's report—he's one of the witnesses we would like to call—makes it very clear, as does counsel for the Sierra Club in the United States, that the compact will then make it unilateral for the United States, those eight states, to be able to divert water out of the Great Lakes.

We've never done that. The transboundary treaty has been in place since 1909. We just recently amended it, as Mr. Paradis made reference to, a couple of years ago. This has always been a federal jurisdiction.

I have to say, Mr. Paradis and Mr. Wilfert, I do not understand why the federal government on this side of the border has not taken a stronger position. You were very clear in 2001, when there was a different attempt made by the Great Lake states to take greater volumes of water. Now, that water would have stayed within the basin, but in terms of a greater volume, you opposed that, as did the Bush administration on the U.S. side. You were very clear at that time, and quite forceful, frankly. Since 2001 the federal governments on both sides of the border have not been engaged in this file significantly enough.

What I would hope, coming out of these hearings...and I understand that Mr. McGuinty coming into this...because it's a fairly complicated matter, and it's been ongoing. I think it's an appropriate time right now for us—when I say “us”, I mean this environment committee, although I'm just an associate member—to perhaps provide some encouragement that the federal government on this side of the border get more actively engaged in this process. I think a clear message has to go to the Great Lake states and the provinces that they are transgressing dramatically here onto what is clearly an international body of water. Both under the treaty and under international law the control of that water, the diversion of any water out of that basin, has to be a decision made at the federal level of both governments.

The urgency is that the annex is there. The deadline for submissions has already gone by. The federal government needs to get engaged. I'm hoping that this committee will provide the framework for some encouragement in that regard.

● (0920)

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

Any questions for Mr. Comartin?

Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** It's not so much a question as a comment. I would just point out to Mr. Comartin that his characterization of the role of the federal government is incorrect. The resolve of the federal government has not changed since 2001. In fact, a lot of what is going on is not necessarily in the newspapers. The lead agency is obviously DFAIT, working in conjunction and obviously watching this very carefully.

The reason I have no difficulty with this motion is that I believe there is a positive role this committee can play. I have a proposed list—obviously subject to approval—of individuals or organizations I think would be very helpful in this discussion.

I believe it's important and in fact incumbent upon the Government of Canada to make sure there is no deviation from the 2001 position. It is my understanding there is not, but I would again caution the committee that Environment Canada is not the lead agency on this. Obviously we have been briefed and we will continue to work with our colleagues in DFAIT, but it would be unacceptable to make any diversion, and I want to make that very clear.

But in the spirit of cooperation—and I appreciate Mr. Cullen agreeing to the timeframe—I'm prepared to move witnesses and provide decks for the critics that I think will be very helpful. As I'm sure members can appreciate, this all happened very quickly. I've tried to do my best to get the information for you to be able to move as expeditiously as possible.

**The Chair:** I'm sure we appreciate the parliamentary secretary's moving on that, too.

Mr. McGuinty; then I'll come back to you, Mr. Comartin.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** I'm having difficulty trying to situate this in a larger context. This is our first meeting. This is ostensibly an urgent issue. I'm very fond of Steven Shrybman. I've even hired him in the past from time to time, but I don't always agree with his opinions. I'd like to see what our foreign affairs and justice department lawyers have to say about this.

I'd like to see what other actors involved would have to say about this. I think there is a real necessity for us to go forward and to keep a strong balance. It is important to cite the work of Steven Shrybman. I'd like to see two or three other opinions in this regard.

I'm having difficulty understanding why this would take, for example, precedence over a national brownfields redevelopment strategy. There are 3,000 toxic sites in our cities. Why would this take advantage over the implementation of sustainable development indicators in the next federal budget? Why would this take precedence over, for example, backfilling the Kyoto deal?

What I'm trying to get to here is that this morning it's very difficult for me to say, yea or nay, that this is a good motion for us to follow up on, because I'm being asked to make a decision here in a vacuum. There are many issues we are going to have to tackle in the next little while with scarce resources. This is an important issue. I'm sure it is a very timely issue. But I suspect if we put our heads to it, we would come up with five or six such timely issues, and that's the difficulty I'm having.

• (0925)

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

I said I'd come back to Mr. Comartin.

Mr. Comartin, and then Mr. Mills.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Just so the committee is aware, I did speak to Mr. Gray, co-chair of the IJC, last evening. He's indicated both an interest and a willingness to attend as a witness—I just pass that on to Mr. Wilfert—and he said he would try to make himself available as much as possible.

Mr. McGuinty, in terms of responding to your point, if I could, Mr. Chair, just briefly, the other points you raised are all issues that are very important. You might even argue, in some cases, they're more important; I would argue maybe Kyoto is more important. The reality is you're going to be working.... I'm not telling the committee what they're going to be doing. It's going to be an ongoing issue for all of us in this country at various levels, as are the brownfields and other issues.

The problem is, this is going ahead right now. The time is up for submissions, and the governors and the premiers are going to be moving ahead on this. I believe the federal government has to take an active role in communicating.

Mr. Wilfert, in that regard, when I attended the public session in Windsor on this with members of the staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources in Ontario, who were in effect acting as the conduit for the Ontario government, their answer to me when I posed the question to them "Where is the federal government in this?" was they'd had no communication from them.

I know there's a letter from the government in 2003 that I have to say I feel is equivocal, though you may feel it's stronger than that, but the message of the federal position on this has not gotten through to the governors and the premiers. I don't think we have been strong enough up to this point; you may feel we have. I think the only point.... I won't disagree with you on that just for this purpose, but the reality is the governors and the premiers have not heard it.

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

Mr. Mills, then Mr. Paradis and Mr. Wilfert.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** I have just a couple of comments on David's point. The submissions just ended last Monday, and obviously they're going to take some time to go through those and come up with a report. Then the eight governors, some of whom will be new because they will have just been elected, are going to have to deal with it in a couple of weeks. They all have to agree before anything happens. We are talking some timeline here. I don't know exactly what it is.

But also, having read that agreement yesterday, that 41-page document, it seems to me that for whatever reason, while the U.S. Congress has to approve what the eight governors decide, the Canadian government doesn't have to approve what the two premiers decide. Now, I don't know why it's written that way, but that's certainly how I interpreted it.

So we do have an area, as Mr. Comartin says, where what is the federal role? It doesn't seem to me the same as in the U.S.

When it comes to looking at all of these issues, the timeline may not be the most important thing and maybe there are some things that could be ongoing, and I think we should look at these. I think we should maybe look at the whole package of what we really want to deal with and narrow it down to the four most important ones—and I would say this probably could be one of them.

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

Mr. Paradis, and then Mr. Wilfert.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Firstly, I would like to thank Mr. Comartin for having explained how this annex relates to the agreement between governors and provincial premiers. However, this does not tell me much about the legal basis of this agreement or the annex, insofar as we Canadians are concerned. I don't see a legal basis for it because this concerns international matters with our neighbours, the Americans. In any case, I have some doubts as to the legal validity of this annex, because it is an agreement between Canadian provinces and American States. I think that Annex 2001 is being given a very high profile.

I was among those who insisted that we adopt this law preventing diversion and the bulk removal of water from the Great Lakes. Did the law we passed a few years ago in this regard have all of the necessary instruments to protect our Canadian waters against any diversion or bulk removal?

In the motion, we should perhaps talk more about water diversion, both in relation to the Canadian law, the American law and the treaty we have with the Americans. Then, we would be giving less importance to an annex to which the Canadian government is not even a signatory.

• (0930)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Wilfert, then Mr. Bigras.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, it would be my suggestion, if there's an agreement and this motion were to go forward.... I have a list of potential witnesses from Ontario and Quebec, from Environment Canada, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, from the Department of Justice, and from non-governmental agencies, including the Canadian Institute of Resources Law, the Environmental Law Association, the IJC. I also spoke with Mr. Gray, and at some length with the minister last week.

Obviously, I think the first thing we want to do is to bring ourselves up to speed as to the details, then to be able to hear from these witnesses. I assume the objective of this motion is essentially to educate all members and to see what recommendations, if any, we can present.

Clearly the timeframe, as Mr. Mills said, is quite clear: nothing is going to happen overnight. We have no difficulty as far as the department or minister are concerned in looking at this. I think it's actually rather timely to do so. Why we want a tight timeframe is exactly for the reason Mr. McGuinty has actually pointed out: there are other issues we need to deal with. It would be my hope that as a model, when we are going to deal with issues, we are going to be very prescriptive in what we're looking at and also in terms of the timeframe, so that we can be as effective as possible.

Obviously, the list that I will present is not exhaustive, but it is one that I think will probably answer most of the questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bigras.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I tried to provide explanations earlier, but obviously I have not convinced Mr. Paradis.

There is a legal opinion which states that there would be a loss of Canadian sovereignty and a risk of seeing our water diverted. Since such a legal opinion exists, we must at the very least ensure that the Department of Justice has one as well. I am ready to amend the motion with regard to the deadline. However, I want that study.

Mr. Chairman, if the motion carries, I will submit the names of witnesses to you. I am thinking among others of the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature and of Stratégies Saint-Laurent, organizations which would most certainly be interested in coming here to give us their viewpoints on the matter.

As to the substance, I agree with the parliamentary secretary for the environment: it is indeed urgent that we study the situation in

light of the deadlines. We must not forget that the consultation took place in the month of July. Things are just clicking along, and we have a very good reason to study Annex 2001 here.

[English]

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

Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC):** Quite frankly, I agree with Mr. McGuinty. I understand the concerns over this particular issue, but Kyoto is of paramount importance in the west, and of course that's moving forward as well.

I would like to have an idea of priorities and have all of us more or less prioritize them based upon need, but I don't want to see us move forward on this without really having an opportunity to see what else is a priority. I think right now the environment across Canada is a priority, but Kyoto is certainly going to be at the forefront of our economic condition in the near future and is of great concern and should be addressed as well.

• (0935)

**The Chair:** Mr. Richardson, would you take the chair? I'd like to speak on this one.

Thank you.

**Mr. Alan Tonks:** Members of the committee, this is, in my view, the kind of issue that begs an answer to the question of who does what: when there is something of interjurisdictional challenge, how does the system respond and who responds?

There have been newspaper columnists who have been writing on this issue, which has come onto the radar screen of our early warning system. Mr. Comartin brought to my attention several weeks ago the Munk institute at the University of Toronto reporting publicly on their concerns with respect to there being no response to the issue of water diversion within the Great Lakes. There's no question there is a legal implication here. There's an environmental implication. There are a lot of implications that cross into other areas. But where does it start? It starts from an environmental concern. And who activates the agenda for an environmental concern if it isn't the environment committee?

You're going to find this in a number of other areas, but this is a prototype. This is a case example. When we talk about Kyoto, we will find there are issues that will relate to housing, to transportation, to fisheries and oceans, to natural resources. And it isn't a case of legally fettering the committee; it's a question of how the committee can, in a more responsive way, activate itself to deal with these issues.

My experience has been frustration that these issues have come forward and too many times we've said that's a transport issue; let transport look after it. Or that's an issue of natural resources; let them look after it.

I think it's important for the committee to assert itself and understand how it asserts itself, and I'm not suggesting this is the most ideal issue. We won't know that until we become more familiar with it as an environmental issue first and how we wish to put out direction to the rest of this huge organization in terms of the legal issues and so on. But where does it start? It starts with a member bringing it forward as an issue.

And how does the committee respond? With great respect, I would hope that members of the committee would start driving some faith into these issues without expecting an exact return or knowing where we're going to end up, but some faith that we start a process. It's not a singular process. There will be a whole confluence of a number of issues we're going to be dealing with, but this is one we start with. It really is a sort of case study, and we will reach points along the way where we will have to say to the foreign affairs committee, take some direction, start proceedings in your committee, or as appropriate, come to this committee, or let's have a joint discussion on it, let's have a joint report.

This is really a good example of how, in my humble opinion, we need to start reorganizing ourselves. And I would hope we would support the crafting that Mr. Wilfert is suggesting, the amended form, and that we understand that we're doing it not at the expense of these other issues—because, Mr. Jean, these other issues absolutely have to be on the agenda—but this is in addition to those we will be working on. We will have an open discussion, obviously, in the next part of our meeting on those.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Chairman, the Great Lakes Charter Annex is an agreement signed in 2001 by all eight Great Lakes governors as well as the premiers of Ontario and Quebec to help protect, conserve, restore, and improve the Great Lakes basin for future generations.

I want to go on from the act and from the annex itself, which said that there are many threats to the waters of the Great Lakes basin, and they promise to increase, and that the Great Lakes basin waters are critical to the health of the region and its economy. The governors and premiers created the forward-looking annex to take steps that will help avoid conflicts and shortages in the future and protect the resource and related ecosystems.

I, like Mr. McGuinty, had this dropped on me. I'm from Alberta, and we don't pay attention to the problems of the Great Lakes every day out there, but obviously it's of great concern to all Canadians. My sense, frankly, of what we have here in the annex of 2001, something that was agreed to by these eight governors and two premiers of our Canadian provinces three years ago, is not an urgent matter. We did have three years for discussion.

I don't know where you were then, Mr. Comartin, but I personally speak against any urgency to this matter.

Second, the overall premise and suggestion is that this annex is about some imminent diversion of water. My sense of the matter is that this was really a gathering of these governors and premiers, representatives of Canada and the United States, to set up a mechanism, a way to deal with concerns of water diversion. This is not a specific diversion we're talking about. There is no imminent or

immediate proposal for some massive diversion on the table today. What we have in annex 2001 is a process for dealing with any proposed diversions, something that is quite legitimate to have, rather than taking an ad hoc course with any proposed diversion by any municipality in the United States, whether that be Chicago or Cleveland or somebody wanting to drain the water for municipal benefit. These matters now are defined in the agreement, Annex 2001, a way to look at and deal with those proposals.

It seems to me that in terms of trying to raise political points or scare tactics about great diversions, you've missed the boat by three years. What we're dealing with now is a rational plan for how to deal with these in the future. I don't think it's something we need to immediately deal with here. I'm not suggesting it's not something this committee might take an interest in, and over the course of time, as we form an agenda, we can have a look at it, as with any number of things. But for us to second-guess the premiers of Ontario and Quebec without a whole lot more information on the table is not only presumptuous, but it has taken us a little too far at this time.

• (0940)

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

Mr. Watson, and then Mr. Wilfert.

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Joe, you can probably imagine when they used to have to sandbag on Riverside Drive. Great Lakes water levels at one time in our region used to be quite high, and notwithstanding any agreements in 2001 or any recent year, I know they're still dredging marinas. Some water intake locations are being threatened in terms of the level of the lakes.

I agree that it's a pressing issue. I'd like this committee to study it as one of its priorities. I would agree that we have to have a framework of what our top two or three priorities are, and I'd like to see this at the top of that list, but as the first procedural thing of this committee to commit us to one course of action without having the context is a bit premature.

I'd probably like to see this defeated at this moment, and then establish maybe three or four issues we want to tackle. I would certainly put my vote forward that this be at the top of those three or four. But we need a little context for the fuller direction of the committee.

That's the position I'm taking.

**The Chair:** Could I just exercise some judgment here? Do I take it that the committee would like to get on with the other part of the agenda, talk about the other priorities, and then come back to this one?



• (0945)

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** That would be my sense.

**The Chair:** Okay, I think we could do that.

Mr. Comartin.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, because given the comments by Mr. Richardson, I think I'm entitled to a response. The level of his ignorance is obvious, because of his inexperience.

The reality is that this agreement, this annex, was published for public consumption in the middle of July of this year. It doesn't go back to 2001; that's just when the negotiations started. I'm aware of that because I have been involved with this issue since that time. I did oppose the fight that was going on to try to divert more water.

The second point you make that's erroneous is that in fact this is about diverting water out of the basin. Simply taking water out of the basin for Chicago or Cleveland or Detroit or Windsor or Toronto is not what this is about at all. We can already do that, and the annex is going to allow them to continue to do that. In fact, it's going to allow them to take even more. This is about Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin, who have areas of their states outside the basin, in the Ohio Valley and the Mississippi Valley, who are desperate for water. They can't get it from any source, at this point, other than the Great Lakes. If they take that out of the Great Lakes, it doesn't come back into the basin. We have 1% of renewable water in the Great Lakes basin.

This is a very timely fashion, and I resent, quite frankly, your comments that I'm doing this just for fearmongering. I'm not. This is a major issue, and it's one this committee should be dealing with, historically. Mr. Tonks knows this. Even before I was here, the bulk water treaty amendments that went through originated from this committee as a result of a major study by the committee over two terms of office, between 1993 into 2000. That prompted the federal government to take the initiative and send the new legislation to the foreign affairs committee. I sat in on the foreign affairs committee. Quite frankly, I have problems with some of that legislation, but at least it was a step forward.

I have been involved in this issue, Mr. Richardson. I do know what I'm talking about.

**Mr. Lee Richardson:** So this is about you—is that what we're talking about?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** It is not about me.

**The Chair:** Through the chair, please. Order.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Your attack was on me. I just want the committee to be clear.

Mr. Tonks' point is very well taken about the role this committee has played historically. Mr. Paradis and Mr. Wilfert may both, I think, probably agree with me on this. You'll initiate this, the committee will probably initiate it, it will probably go to foreign affairs at some point, or it may even go to justice at some point. But Mr. Tonks' point is very well taken. The role that the environment committee has historically played in this House since, I would say, from my studies of it...I've only been here since 2000, has been to initiate exactly this kind of activity, and that oftentimes gets picked up by somebody else.

For instance, Mr. Jean, on Kyoto, it's quite possible that the amount of work we did right before the election on Kyoto in this committee may get shifted over to natural resources. We actually need some direction from the government as to what department is going to be controlling it. So you may end up not dealing with that.

Mr. McGuinty, you may not end up dealing with Kyoto. It may get shifted over to natural resources. Or you may have to do some joint work with natural resources. Clearly it's a major energy issue.

I'm sorry; just to go back, it is a very timely fashion. This isn't political, this is non-partisan. We all should be onside on this one.

**The Chair:** I would ask members, go through the chair, please. Let's try to stay with the substance of what is under discussion.

Mr. Wilfert, Mr. Jean, Mr. McGuinty, and Mr. Paradis. Then let's try to bring this to a close.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, it's my impression, or it seems to me, that the committee would like to look at a work plan and then come back to this issue. That's fine with me. There's an old saying in teaching, as you know, Mr. Chairman, that the way you start out is the way you end up. Quite frankly, I thought I'd like to start out by being certainly responsive to the wishes of a colleague with regard to this issue. It may be the silt in the St. Mary's River that we'll be dealing with next, between Alberta and Montana. Or the IJC, that may be an issue. In other words, the Great Lakes today, something else tomorrow.

It would be my view, as the parliamentary secretary, that if there are issues this committee is interested in dealing with, and we can be proactive in working together, then let's deal with them. If it's the larger picture that we want to deal with first in terms of priorities, fine, but keep in mind that not everything is a priority. You can't have five priorities. What is the top issue that you want to deal with today? That's why I appreciated...in speaking with the chairman yesterday, and obviously with Mr. Cullen, in terms of a very strict timeline, that we line up those presenters, we get the information, and we go from there. If that's the way we can operate in the future, obviously I'm here to assist where I can.

Thank you.

• (0950)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Jean.

**Mr. Brian Jean:** I was just going to mention that I respect Mr. Cullen's position, as I respect yours, Mr. Comartin, and I appreciate your input.

The point is that my ignorance is there, and I admit to it. I was aware of this issue in the annex, and of course I have done some reading on it, but I don't know whether it's a priority, and that's the very issue I think we need to deal with—what are the priorities? I don't want to jump into something with both feet forward when I don't know if that's necessarily the priority for me or for my constituents. I found, quite frankly, that Kyoto is on everyone's lips and that it's a dirty word put in with all other four-letter words, and it's not even four letters. So that's my concern, but I do very much respect your opinion. And I think we are all here for the same purpose, the purpose of the environment, which I hope we can work together on and that we don't end up the same way we started out—but we're a little bit more efficient than that.

**The Chair:** Hope springs eternal.

Mr. McGuinty and then Mr. Paradis.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Thank you.

I'll try to go at this again. I want to be sincere in thanking Mr. Cullen for bringing the motion forward—and for the insight, Mr. Comartin.

I'm having a difficult time. I need to know why this issue is more important than mercury at OPG, and more urgent. Why is this issue more important than the salmon-spawning tributaries in B.C.? Four or five out of seven major tributaries are no longer carrying natural salmon. Why is this issue more important than the report released in the United States two days ago showing that the total load concept in the multiplicity of chemical exposure to the human body is now of serious concern?

I just don't understand why we should pre-empt a larger discussion about what we're trying to get at in this committee in terms of priorities and seize upon a single important and timely issue around the ostensible bulk water exports from the Great Lakes, if I understand. And I go back and say again, for every single legal opinion I've read, I've seen three or four other competing legal opinions, and I'd like to hear much more than simply relying upon a selective statement taken from one opinion written by an environmental activist named Steven Shrybman.

It also takes me, Mr. Chair, to a comment you made a moment ago, which is what is the role of the committee? And I'm not so sure I agree with the characterization of the committee. I'm not sure if this committee's role is to be an activist committee. I'm not sure if this committee's role is to be an advocate committee. I'm not sure if our job is to simply put things on the front pages of newspapers. I'm not sure that actually amounts to very much at the end of the day, when we're making actual serious recommendations for change and providing advice to the government, in terms of having an impact.

This is a discussion I'd like to have with my colleagues, because, going back and drawing on the experience of appearing before this committee in the past on numerous occasions and working with its findings, I think there can perhaps be a mixed assessment about the effectiveness of the committee and whether the committee became marginalized as an environmental committee, or whether it should be looking at environment and economy balances, as our minister is suggesting. This is a discussion I really would like to have as part of the general discussion before we move forward and choose areas.

What is our role? Are we going to be trying to deliver up to the government operational options for change, or are we simply in the business of raising the profile of crisis issues that need to be addressed by yet other committees?

I don't have an answer. I'm not sure, as I'm newly elected. But I think this is something we ought to look at if we want to be as effective as we possibly can.

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

Mr. Paradis, Mr. Cullen, and then Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have been greatly impressed by Mr. Comartin's presentation, as well as by the urgency of the situation. The Committee on the Environment has to be proactive and since the environment is such a broad issue, we have to set priorities.

In my humble opinion, water, Canada's immense wealth, is certainly an issue that is more than important: it should be at the top of our priority list. That is why, aside from the November 4 House deadline, it seems to me that we should make it our immediate priority to undertake a study of diversion or the possible removal of water from the Great Lakes. That is why I suggest, quite humbly, that we broach this topic as quickly as possible.

•(0955)

[*English*]

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

Mr. Cullen, then Mr. Simard.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I'll be brief in the comments.

This is interesting. This was actually an attempt to have some non-partisan work go around the committee. It's interesting to watch. I come from a process background, so this is fascinating.

I'm going to actually support the chair and suggest that we move to a more open discussion about where our priorities lie. I'd also suggest that we receive some sort of briefing paper by the time the committee sits next on this particular issue, because I respect what Mr. Jean and Mr. McGuinty are saying about having to make a decision without having the information—although hearing some of the more experienced members around the table, it is important to have some leap of faith, as the chair has suggested.

If people are suggesting this, I don't think this is about grabbing a front-line headline. It surely would be a shame if the environment committee were caught with its proverbial pants down two weeks from now, as decisions are going forward and suddenly we have to deal with our constituents—whether it be in Red Deer, Ontario, B.C., or wherever—about a suggestion from the United States otherwise. The Mississippi does concern me.

As for the role of the committee, I imagine it to be a very proactive one. I imagine it to be a very strong one. Mind you, this is a practice: this is the committee asserting itself in such a way that, when we step to the large issue of Kyoto, who is going to take the lead on it? Are we going to be able to exert the power and influence, be it within cabinet, be it within the House in general?

Kyoto should be ours. That's the place we're taking, and this is the strength of the movement forward. I think this is a good place for us to start in that regard.

I would like to move to a more open discussion. The nature of the tight timeline was just this: that we don't go down a sinkhole. The last thing I would like to do is get into a very generalized discussion and research about Kyoto and wake up six months from now with some general feeling about where we're headed on Kyoto, and still not knowing where the jurisdictions lie within the rest of the departments within the House.

It's a tight timeline. It's a tight timeframe. It's extraordinarily important right across the country. I come from northwestern B.C. Don't worry, the Great Lakes don't come into the mindset of my constituents very often: this is extraordinarily important for the country.

And I am going on the advice of people who have gone through the experience already. I'm not necessarily interested in doing an interview with the *Globe* this afternoon. This is about pushing this interview forward. I think as a committee we need to assert a certain role within this Parliament and hit the ground running, not wait and be reactive to what other committees are sending us, but be very strong in our role, so that when we do hit Kyoto we have a certain sense of authority and position within the House and so that people look to us for direction.

Those are my comments.

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

Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Simard:** We all agree that this is an extremely important matter. We are talking about the largest freshwater basin in the world. Already, certain climate change scenarios are predicting that there could be up to a 30% decline in the water that flows from the Great Lakes Basin into the St. Lawrence. This is directly related to maintaining an acceptable level of water in the St. Lawrence and throughout the Great Lakes Basin. The precautionary principle dictates that we study this matter. So, I would like us to undertake that study.

I am generally in agreement with what Mr. Paradis said about amending the motion to allow us to begin work now without necessarily setting a date for the conclusion of our work. I think that we should pass that motion. For our part, we are going to insert this item at the top of our priority list. We think that this motion deserves to be passed, perhaps with Mr. Paradis' amendment, with which we are generally in agreement.

[*English*]

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

I think that was a full discussion. What I take from what Mr. Cullen and Mr. Paradis and others have said is that we should just table this for the moment. Let's talk about the other issues that, in fairness, the meeting was called for, and then we'll allocate the last ten minutes of the meeting to come back to this and put an amended motion or whatever we have before us.

Does that meet agreement?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Since we seem to be headed toward an agreement, why don't we settle this motion now? Afterward, since it is implicitly clear, why don't we move along? We seem to be moving towards a consensus.

• (1000)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I see some heads nodding this way. The chair takes the direction from the committee.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** I call the vote on the motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I take it to be a friendly amendment to something that doesn't run contrary to having the discussion on other priorities. As long as it's understood that we're not dealing with this issue at the expense of other issues that are raised, I think the committee can be assured of that.

Then the friendly amendment, Mr. Wilfert—

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, just so that I understand, can you read me the exact motion? If it's the motion that Mr. Cullen originally moved, obviously I don't support it. If it's the amended motion, which I believe Mr. Cullen agreed to, obviously I will support it. So I need to know what it is.

**The Chair:** The clerk has informed me that his take on the friendliness of the discussion leading to the amendment is that the committee begin a study on Annex 2001 and report its findings to the House as soon as possible. I think the understanding there is that the steering committee possibly could work on a list of people, but that perhaps you could offer up the briefing, Mr. Wilfert, and that—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Was the spirit of Mr. Paradis' amendment that we act as soon as possible, or immediately? There is a difference between the two.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Paradis.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** I mentioned that we should not let the pressure of November 4 be our guide.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** After we study Annex 2001?

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** After studying Annex 2001. We have to prepare this report as quickly as possible. We could do so when the steering committee has set up a tentative agenda of witnesses and decided on the manner in which we are going to proceed.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Mills is suggesting that we should put a time. He is suggesting November 26, that we at least work towards that date. So we have two perspectives.

Mr. Wilfert, do you have a problem with that?

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** On the amended version originally we were looking at November 15 to November 26. We were looking at bringing in representatives from the IJC and I went through a number, which I don't have to go over again, and the committee would report back to the House of Commons with recommendations on how to further protect Canada's Great Lakes by November 26.

It's a very clear timeframe, Mr. Chairman. In the meantime, I'm sure they'll be a couple of items we're going to look at prior to November 15. But I think in order to line up the appropriate individuals, it's a very clear timeframe.

I'm prepared to agree to that. I'm not prepared to agree to an open-ended....

**The Chair:** All right.

Mr. Wilfert is suggesting we go back to what Mr. Mills suggested and use November 26 as the target date.

Are you in agreement that we put the motion then?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Again, I just want to go back to a couple of context setters.

I looked at, for example, the detailed committee expenditure report for 2003-04. Except for the liaison committee, the environment and sustainable development committee is the least funded, or the least expeditured committee. Before we commit to tackling a particular, can you give me a sense of what kinds of resources are available to us to commission reports, analyses, pay for witnesses to attend in front of this committee? Before we set timelines and dates and drop-dead dates for giving reports to the House, will this be then at the exclusion of, for example, some of the other issues that we may want to look at? Will this pre-empt expenditure-wise some of the other issues we want to look at? Will this get in the way if we're calling witnesses or reports? I don't understand.

**The Chair:** My take on that, Mr. McGuinty, is that the committee is in total charge of what it wishes to do and the resources can be reported out from a research perspective. But I think it goes without saying, and so I talked about the faith, that this will not be at the expense of an overall work program.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** So our budget this year is \$14,100, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** That's the chairman's budget, I think.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** That's the chairman's budget. That's not the committee's budget.

**The Chair:** We haven't had a budget yet, Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Well, there's \$7,700 here if you look at the sheet that's been handed out. There's \$7,689 for reports, \$380 for witnesses, \$1,074 for miscellaneous.... Just to get a better picture, is that our basic overall budget as we go forward?

• (1005)

**The Chair:** Well, I think that it's part.... Am I correct...?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Simard:** Before we discuss the estimates, I would like us to deal with the motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Simard. Your point is very well taken.

Mr. Mills, with great respect, I'm going to deal with the motion now.

Mr. Clerk, could you just read what your take is, since you're the one who is going to have to account for it.

[*Translation*]

**The Clerk of the Committee:** I am going to read it in French for Mr. Bigras: "That the Committee immediately undertake a study of Annex 2001 and that if possible it report on its conclusions to the House on November 26, 2004 at the latest."

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, you've heard the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, again, if I might, my understanding was that Mr. Cullen had put forth November 15 to November 26. Now it sounds like it's just open until November 26. Is that correct?

**The Chair:** No, November 26 is the date.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** But the starting date....

**The Chair:** It's the reporting date. We can start next week, or tomorrow—or tonight, as a matter of fact, but I wouldn't suggest that.

Mr. Mills.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** I just think we're not going to find it that difficult once we get into it, and I really think that's realistic.

**The Chair:** I will be calling the steering committee together to expedite and to try to put that together, and I think we'll find you're right, Mr. Mills.

We're at that part of the meeting for issues that you'd like to raise, such as what Mr. McGuinty has suggested with respect to the estimates, getting a clarification in terms of that process. Is there anything that members would like to bring to the attention of the committee?

It's open. Do I have any speakers?

Ms. Ratansi.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** I'd like to have a copy of the agreement and the annex. I don't have it, and I would like to know where to get it from. I would like to read it so that we can have an intelligent discussion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wilfert had indicated that he was going to try to put that together in—what did you call it?—some sort of file.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Actually, Mr. Chairman, I didn't agree to that. I agreed to provide an overview of the Great Lakes program, decks that I have for each critic. If you're asking for something new, I would suggest that lies with the clerk.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Wilfert. I'm still a little adrift in terms of who is responsible to do what, and I appreciate your redirecting me.

Mr. Cullen indicated a briefing, and Tim, our researcher, is also indicating that he could put that together in terms of the committee.

Going back to the other part of the business, are there any issues that members wish to bring to the floor at this time?

Mr. Paradis.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** As for our future business I suggest that we examine ways to improve our agreement with regard to the joint International Commission on Boundary Waters. How could we improve this agreement with the United States?

The basic text goes back to 1909, as everyone knows. I will give you an example. In my riding there are two international lakes that straddle both Canada and the United States, lakes Champlain and Memphrémagog. There is a problem in Lake Champlain. About 50 years ago, the Americans built a causeway which blocks the circulation of water between Canada and the United States. There is another problem in Lake Memphrémagog. In Coventry, in Vermont, the Americans want to expand a sanitary land fill site. They want to triple it, in fact. So there is a danger that waters on the Canadian side would be contaminated. In the greater region of the Eastern Townships which I represent, 200,000 people drink that water.

As we speak there is no mechanism between Canada and the United States that forces one of those two countries to consult the other if it wants to do something within 10, 15 or 20 km of the border.

In my opinion the relationships between countries are such that we should perhaps see to it that if certain things happen or if projects are planned 5, 10, 15 or 20 km from either border this treaty with the United States would make it mandatory to have consultations with the other country. Whenever anything comes up, we have to fight to have either the Canadian government or the American government agree to give a mandate to the International Joint Commission, in all cases. Tradition dictates that we need the agreement of both countries to provide a mandate to the International Joint Commission.

I thus suggest that we examine the International Joint Commission Treaty to improve it and update it, in order to see to it that there is much more automatic reciprocity in the environmental relations between our two countries.

•(1010)

[*English*]

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

Mr. Cullen, Mr. Mills, and then Mr. Bigras.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** A question I put to the minister yesterday I'd like the committee to consider as well; that is, the proceeds of the sale of Petro-Canada. I haven't heard a strong commitment from the

government yet as to what portion of the sale is going. It's a significant amount of money.

We have the Wind Energy Association in town today, and I think there's a certain sentiment across the country that a huge infusion of cash would certainly go a long way in terms of the R and D, especially for Canadian manufacturers. So I'd like the committee at some point to take up the issue of this \$2.6 billion and where it's going to go, when it's going to go, and the nature of that, to make some recommendations out.

I don't know if that's proper procedure for the committee, but what type of investment impact could we have and what recommendations could we make to the minister along those lines?

**The Chair:** All right. Actually, I'm making notes and research will be making notes.

For example, the first issue was—I take it, Mr. Paradis—the role of the IJC, the updating in terms of its relevance, and so on. The second issue raised is the proceeds of the sale of Petro-Canada.

At this point I don't think we should get into the substance of the debates, but have the steering committee and research perhaps meet in terms of how these would be put on an agenda and bring that back in a report to committee.

For example, with respect to the relevance of the proceeds, I don't really know what the government has stated in terms of the linkage, but I think the steering committee and research should have an opportunity to look at that and report back on how we could deal with that, if the committee wishes to deal with it.

We're not throwing these off the agenda. We're not including them at this point, but it's to gather these and then come with a report saying these are some of the issues, and if the committee wants to put that, this is a schedule that we could have and some suggestions.

Does that make sense? I don't want to get into a debate on substantive issues around what either Mr. Paradis or Mr. Cullen raised, but these are ideas for an agenda that could be developed and reported back to the committee through the steering committee.

Mr. Mills, and then Mr. Bigras.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** If I had to pick the key things that we should be doing, one would be around the Kyoto Protocol and what it means to Canadians. I would include air, air quality, the auto industry, alternate energy, getting into the ways we can actually affect carbon dioxide. So I can see that being a huge area that we could really get into.

Mr. Chair, you know how I pushed the alternate energy aspect, actually, so we understand it. Take the committee on the tour that I took this summer and you'd learn a lot about alternate energy.

Secondly, I'd look at the cross-border issues. I would take several case studies—say, Mr. Paradis' example of a definite cross-border problem.

I would take Sumas in the Fraser Valley as my air quality transborder problem, and some of you have heard me speak at length about that. That's now going before the B.C. courts. It's going on the 28th. It's in Washington State for hearings. A new governor is going to be named there. It's a perfect case study of how things between the U.S. and Canada haven't worked very well and how we could make them work better. It would have terrific impact. We'd actually accomplish something. I believe we'd influence both governments because a committee of Parliament was doing that.

So take two or three case studies—maybe the Great Lakes could be in that as a case study too—and we'd actually do something and probably even visit those sites. Along with that, the international agreements could all be reviewed. I've heard that come up a number of times.

If we did those two things, we would accomplish pretty well everything I've heard here this morning. You could incorporate them and massage them. So that's what I would recommend at this point.

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Regarding Sumas, the committee may not be aware of what that is.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Basically, and very quickly, 500 yards from the Canadian border a 550-megawatt, gas-fired power plant has been proposed and approved by the U.S. government. All of the air blows into the Fraser Valley, which is a closed canyon and the second most polluted airshed in Canada. This will increase the pollution there dramatically by five tonnes per day, and all of it will come to Canada. They're using the water from the Canadian aquifer. They're dumping the sewage into a river that drains into the Fraser or comes across the border. And there are many people in Whatcom County opposed to it. There are 8,000 people who show up at a rally every time you have one in Abbotsford.

The overhead power lines will travel into Canada, down the main street in Abbotsford and then down to California. The reason they don't go across Washington and Oregon is that they're not allowed to have high tensile lines over people. You can have them over Canadian people, but not U.S. people.

So there's a whole issue here. There have been huge numbers of public hearings. There is now a new set of public hearings starting on October 28. It's just the perfect case study of how things haven't worked very well: how the IJC hasn't got involved; how the Canadian government hasn't got involved; how the environment commissioner hasn't gotten involved; and how both federal governments haven't gotten involved. Everybody's taken their hands off, and it's just a perfect case study of how things.... You can see how it should have worked. It hasn't worked.

That's Sumas, in a nutshell.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much, Mr. Mills.

Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't want to draw up a shopping list since our colleagues' priorities probably overlap. At a dinner where Minister Dion was present, I asked him what we should study at the committee in order

to be able to give him the necessary clout in Cabinet to be able to move things along. He replied that he would like—and I don't mean that this is worthwhile just because Minister Dion said it—the committee to study the Canadian energy policy.

From the perspective of attaining the Kyoto Agreement objectives, it would be time, it seems to me, that we study this matter as well as our past results. This conversion to renewable energy would meet our concerns, in my opinion. Earlier, Bob spoke to us about the importance he attributes to alternate sources of energy. We would have the opportunity of studying alternate energy sources within this framework.

There is also the matter of tax incentives. Let us compare Canadian tax incentives associated with renewable energy, and American ones, simply with regard to wind power. Even if the Speech from the Throne said that Canada would quadruple production, fiscal incentives for wind power in Canada are far from being comparable to the American ones. So we would have to examine Canada's energy policy in relation to the Kyoto objectives, which would I think bring together various aspects because climate change does have an impact on both water and air. This could be an interesting priority.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Paradis.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Paradis:** Mr. Chairman, I think that the department has just inherited a new entity, that is Parks Canada. Previously, Parks Canada was a part of the Department of Canadian Heritage, I believe. If we have time I would like to propose that we take a look at the situation of our parks in Canada, province by province, and see how we can best take our concerns into account in that context.

• (1020)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The issue around marine parks, Mr. Paradis, is also something that is very, very current and interesting.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** We're just going to have to meet ten hours a day, seven days a week.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Wilfert and Mr. McGuinty.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, these are all very interesting ideas and suggestions. However, I'd just like to remind the committee of a couple of things that we will be mandated to do: one will be the review of CEPA early next year, by March 2005; one will be the estimates; and one will be the report coming out by the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development. I would suggest that we invite here the Minister of Finance, the Minister of International Cooperation, the Minister of Natural Resources, and the Minister of the Environment. In other words, for those of you who will get it, this commissioner's report will not be specifically to environment, but will be across the jurisdictional and departmental issues raised. I think it is very important that all of the departments be plugged into this, because, as we all know, and Mr. Mills knows very well, not everything is compartmentalized to the degree that maybe some of us might like to see. I would like to make sure that we have as broad a spectrum as possible.

Those are suggestions, Mr. Chairman, and obviously we don't have to agree immediately. It was just to flag three areas that I think we will have to deal with specifically, notwithstanding all of these other lovely suggestions, which is why I'm very keen on specific timeframes.

As for Mr. Mills' suggestion, I would never accept ten hours a day. That was the last committee, and I don't think you want to do that. I'm being facetious, of course.

But really, Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of good ideas other than those that are mandated, and we can certainly look at those other proposals.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. McGuinty.

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There is a long list, and I would rather table a longer list for Monsieur Bigras and the other members to hear rather than narrow it now. But I really appreciate the parliamentary secretary's intervention about CEPA, the commissioner's report, and the estimates being three obviously heavy-lifting files that we may have to consider in the next six to eight months.

I think one of the things we should consider is whether or not we should put a certain amount of effort into reviewing the government's overall city and community deal as it goes forward, the ramifications of that deal, given the pace at which the country is urbanizing, which is quite quickly.

And I think linked to that, of course, is this notion I raised earlier of a national brownfields redevelopment strategy. There was a major report, a major strategy given to the government by the Prime Minister's national round table a year ago. Located also under the rubric of the city deal are some of the fiscal disincentives that are in place. If you buy a new home in a Canadian city today—most of these homes are being built on farmers' fields on the outskirts of cities—you get a one-third GST rebate. If you buy a triplex in the inner city of Calgary and you decide to retrofit it, you get no such incentive. So I would say that somewhere the notion of the city deal would be important for us to consider.

The second proposal I would make is to pick up on Monsieur Bigras' suggestion, which is that the country desperately needs an energy foundation paper. There isn't an energy foundation paper. The U.K. government, driven chiefly because it's running out of North Sea oil and gas, came up with a white paper on energy that was written out of the Prime Minister's Office. Canada has no such view. There appears to be an energy challenge in the country. It's chiefly an Ontario-based challenge, but as we go forward, talking Kyoto is talking energy, with 86% of all greenhouse gases coming from digging up, converting, or consuming fossil fuels.

So an energy foundation paper or something akin to that would, I think, be very useful for the country, something that would examine where we are, building on the National Energy Board's report from two years ago and some of the other work that's been done already.

The third thing is I strongly agree with Monsieur Paradis. Now that national parks have been, in my estimation, rightfully moved back to Environment Canada, the whole question of ecological integrity and whether or not our parks system is working is a question that hasn't been resolved. The work I've seen over the last ten years indicates that you could set aside 25% of Canadian territory in national parks and you still wouldn't reach ecological integrity if they're not connected and buffered. So I would think the whole question of ecological integrity in the parks system would be another.

The fourth question I would table is this whole question of the Prime Minister's requesting, as Minister of Finance, a new suite of environment and sustainable development indicators in his budget of 2000, this government's budget of 2000—the previous government's budget. He requested that new indicators be devised and be included in the budget. These indicators would be used to report alongside classical economic and social indicators, a new suite of natural capital indicators. These indicators were devised for the now Prime Minister. They are at Statistics Canada. They are with the Deputy Minister and Minister of Finance. I would like to see us take a look at those and the extent to which they are being implemented so that in the next national budget, federal government budget, there could be some reporting back to Canadians on how well we're doing economically, socially, and environmentally.

Those would be my suggestions.

• (1025)

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

Are there any other speakers, other input?

I've made some notes with respect to the various issues that have been raised. On the last point, for example, natural capital indicators, I had no idea they existed. We have had a problem from time to time with corporate memory, and those are the kinds of things that can be brought forward. That information can be brought forward. The committee can then have discussion around the use and the role of natural environmental indicators.

Those are issues that I think are subsets of larger issues. The cities agenda that Mr. McGuinty mentioned with brownfield approaches and so on is also part of the Kyoto strategies.

What we will attempt to do is synthesize these for the steering committee and attempt to develop something that is related to an agenda and who we'd need to come in if it works out that there's a priority rating on them, how we can chronologically put them into the agenda, having noted, though, that we have fixed commitments—for example, the estimates, the sustainable development commissioner's report—and all of those have to be on the agenda.

As we do that, it will be the committee's direction that we put some of these other very relevant issues up for discussion and consideration of the committee. I will work with research, the clerk, and with the steering committee to bring that back to the committee. Okay?

If there's nothing else before the chair, I'd just like to ask the clerk to get a copy of the OECD report, which has just been made available for members of the committee. You'll have an opportunity to look through the executive summary on the recommendations. That will be very helpful when we have before us the commissioner for sustainable development, who does the audit on how we're progressing on sustainable development. There are many recommendations that relate to sustainable development in the OECD report—and this is just on Canada. They do it on a number of countries. On the rotation, it was Canada's turn to have sustainable development put under the microscope, and you'd be interested in the recommendations there.

I'd like to thank those who were at the reception last night for the International Joint Commission. I didn't have a chance to circulate

around, but Mr. Jean appreciated your being there, and Mr. Watson. I know that Yasmin was there, and Mr. Paradis. It's not possible for everyone to get to these things, but it is appreciated. It shows the importance the committee places on meeting people in the environmental area who we'll be working with on a day-to-day basis. I appreciate the interest of members of the committee.

Mr. Wilfert.

• (1030)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, I'll probably wait until Tuesday, but I have decks on the Great Lakes in English and French for each of the critics. Obviously the timeframe is pretty tight, but I will attempt to have copies for everyone on Tuesday—that is, all members of the committee. If you would like these handed out now to the critics, that's fine. If you don't, we'll wait until Tuesday. I'll also on Tuesday present a list in English and French of suggested witnesses.

**The Chair:** Good. The clerk is indicating that he could distribute those to the—

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I have three in English and French for the critics.

**The Chair:** Oh, you have them now. I don't see any reason why you can't go ahead and do that.

Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

The meeting is adjourned.

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