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—
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Mr. Bob Mills

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•(0935)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC)): I'd like to thank our guests for coming. Basically, I understand that you have a very brief presentation, and I emphasize that word. Then we can get to questions from the members.

Go ahead, Mr. Cullen

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Chair, this is just a procedure question. I was looking for some committee consensus to move my motion. Will that be now or after we've done the estimates?

The Chair: I think we should do the estimates, and we can discuss that right after.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Were you going to deal with the point of order?

The Chair: I'll do that afterwards.

Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Basia Ruta (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to make a few opening remarks. I'll try to be very brief. I also wanted to say that I'm very happy to be here, as Environment Canada's chief financial officer, to respond to questions on the department's main estimates.

[Translation]

That said, I can understand why the committee might consider holding another hearing to discuss the supplementary estimates tabled yesterday. I would be happy to appear before the committee again at a later date, if it would like me to do so.

[English]

Joining me today at the table are two officials: Mr. Hani Mokhtar, senior financial officer and director general of the financial services directorate at Environment Canada, and Mr. Craig Ferguson, director general of corporate management. We also have here at this meeting a few additional departmental officials, individuals who may also come forward, as appropriate, to answer some specific questions that committee members may raise if more detailed knowledge is required.

[Translation]

I would also like to mention that the Environment Canada main estimates also underwent a number of changes over the past year,

compared to the previous year, and I would like to briefly explain these.

[English]

First, in keeping with ensuring that our strategic outcomes and our results structure align with government priorities, our program activity architecture has changed from the previous year and will continue to do so as we work to ensure that the results we are seeking are being kept ever fresh on an annual basis. This is done in concert with the main estimates production cycle. Put simply, the main estimates for 2006-07 would have been largely aligned with the government priorities last fall. Table 8.5 provides a high-level summary of changes in the main estimates. Further, our report on plans and priorities on page 10 provides a useful crosswalk for changes from previous years, which I expect the members of the committee have.

Second, the main estimates are broadly similar, funding-wise, to previous years, considering our pattern of ongoing and sunset funding. What this means is that a good portion of our funding is based on known, ongoing funding. However, a significant portion is also based on temporary or sunset funding. Over the past several years, this sunset funding could have been anywhere from about 9% to about 22% or 25% of funding, annually, in terms of overall spending authorities. This latter element may cause fluctuations year over year and in funding being sought as a result.

Third, as with other departments, expenditure review has impacted Environment Canada. Our ongoing reference, or ongoing levels, are declining. The most recent exercise in 2006-07, just completed, will be felt mostly, over time, in our grants and contributions programs, where there is a total of \$7.6 million over three years.

Fourth, in our main estimates, our net of the spendable revenues... in 2006-07 we are budgeting some \$75 million this year. This deals with licences, permits, and tailored work for NAVCAN, DND, and other key stakeholders. So our spending patterns for 2006-07 are net of this amount.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

The Chair: Good. Thank you very much.

If we could start, I believe you're going to split your time.

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you very much for coming.

I'm looking at a couple of things. One is part III of the estimates: plans and priorities. I notice what seems to be a contradiction. On page 39, under "Program Activity Descriptions", under 4(b), the heading reads: "Canadians understand the impacts of climate change and adapt to its effects." Then the next couple of pages are a fairly graphic description of the sorts of challenges Canadians are facing, particularly in the north. And there's a call there for more resources for adaptation and for dealing with impacts.

If I then look at the four strategic outcomes of the department and their associated expenditures, I come to the fourth strategic outcome, which is, "The impacts of climate change on Canada are reduced." And I see that we're spending only 2.5% of the program budget of the department. There seems to be a dissonance, if I may say so, between the declared strategic outcome.... Everything else gets about a third of the funding. Natural capital, weather and environment predictions, and effects of pollution and waste each get over 30% of the funding. Yet the big one, the very big one, which you properly describe on pages 39 and 40 of section 3, gets only 2.5%, and indeed on page 42, you seem to have pretty much put out of business the Canada Emission Reductions Incentive Agency. Can you help us with this contradiction?

● (0940)

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you very much for the question.

I'd like to make a couple of points just to provide some context. We're a largely science-based organization. Something like 60% or 65% of our resources are based on that. In terms of our strategic outcomes, science deals with a lot of that. So in terms of what was actually captured under the climate change particular strategic outcome, that's not to say that it wouldn't be informed from the other strategic outcomes. I'll ask my colleague, Craig Ferguson, to provide a few more insights in a moment, but I can say, again, it's not to say that just solely the money on climate change, as we have there, is dealt with investment-wise in a very discrete sense.

A lot of this—for instance, "Canada's natural capital is restored, conserved, and enhanced", "Weather and environmental predictions and services reduce risks and contribute to the well-being of Canadians", and "Canadians and their environment are protected from the effects of pollution and waste"—deals with very basic science that helps inform in terms of the adaptation and the knowledge we need to bear in order to be able to model and deal with our commitments and also our objectives related to climate change.

In terms of ECERIA—thank you very much for asking that question—under the previous government, as you know, the priority was to establish this particular agency for the purchase of emission credits. Under the new government, as I think our minister mentioned in reiterating the government's policy, this would no longer be the case in 2006-07. The main estimates go back to the fall, so we do have \$49 million in there, but as we mentioned in our report on plans and priorities, there will be no money spent in regard to this as a result of the new priorities established by the government.

I'll ask Craig Ferguson to give you a bit more precision on what is contained within that fourth strategic outcome that would align with the 2.5% of the budgetary estimates.

Mr. Craig Ferguson (Director, Strategic Development Policy Coordination Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you.

Basia Ruta has already expressed most of what I would have added, but perhaps I can emphasize the fact that in terms of climate change programming government-wide, while Environment Canada certainly does provide some of the science activity and science analysis related to that, the department also tends to play a significant role in terms of broad policy coordination. The amount of resources in our main estimates has been a relatively minor proportion of government-wide expenditures. A lot of the actual program delivery related to climate change has been delivered through other departments.

So while it would appear to be a relatively modest proportion of the departmental budget, there is, as Basia mentioned, some spending also under other strategic outcomes across the department. Also, a lot of our work is related to policy coordination, which is not necessarily resource-intensive in the same way as direct program delivery.

The Chair: Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I guess what I'm a bit concerned about when I look at the estimates is that there is little bit of disconnect between what we've been hearing from the environment commissioner on what should be the priority. Of course, we all know the importance of climate change. It's the number one priority that's facing the environment at this moment. Just yesterday a British report came out saying that if we don't take care of this critical issue, the cost could be in the trillions of dollars in the long term. Government has to put money and resources at this very moment toward fighting climate change. That should be the number one priority for all those who really care about the environment.

My concern is that when I look at the estimates, only 2.5% is to deal with climate change. But we all know that should be the number one priority. There is a disconnect between what we're doing on the committee, what we're trying to achieve, what we saw in the report that came out from the environment commissioner, and what has actually happened.

Is this a lack of political will? Why is that number so small?

● (0945)

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll reiterate what I mentioned before. On its own, climate change is not something that you can deal with. It's an impact, if you like, based on a lot of other activities that we do. So in terms of how we organized our program activity architecture last year, which is essentially how you are reading the estimates, the climate change portion per se was really quite discrete and focused on some particular objectives, informed by the work that we're doing from the other strategic outcomes, and also informed by the horizontal nature of the activities we undertake with the rest of government officials. As you know, climate change per se and the environment are not just Environment Canada's responsibility. There are other departments involved with us on this.

In terms of the priority of climate change, I can tell you that as a public servant I am here to deliver on the government's priorities. I'm not one to make the policy; I'm here to make sure I follow what policy is being set. So I can tell you quite confidently, this is what we've done in 2006-07.

In the supplementary estimates, you will see that we are asking for a bit more money, but as the government said this year, they are rolling out the environmental agenda. As the government priorities get set and are approved in the House in terms of funding, those moneys will then find their way in terms of the estimates. That could be either for this year, but also starting in 2007-08.

Mr. Mario Silva: I realize that you don't set the priorities; the government sets the priorities. But how would you state that the government is setting those priorities, given the fact that there's been a very urgent call by the environment commission for action by the government on issues such as climate change, which are so critical for the environment?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Again I would say it's for the government to establish priorities, and as a public servant I'm here to follow them.

Mr. Mario Silva: I wasn't stating the fact that you're the one who is setting the priorities. I'm asking, how does the government set the priorities? How do you see the government setting those priorities?

Ms. Basia Ruta: I think our minister was here a couple of weeks ago providing the next steps. As I understand, over the next little while, 2006-07, it's really a matter of looking and consulting in a number of areas with stakeholders to be able to come up with a much more rigid environmental agenda.

There are some areas where the government has explicitly stated that they do not want to continue, which would be the priorities of the previous government. As we mentioned, that has to deal with things such as investing in international emission credits under the Kyoto Protocol, ECERIA.... As we noted in the report on plans and priorities, that money is essentially frozen. There was about \$49 million that would have been directed towards this agency under the former government's priorities. Basically this organization is in the process of being wound up.

Mr. Mario Silva: Am I to understand that there has been about a 16% cut to programs? Is that the case?

Ms. Basia Ruta: As I mentioned in my opening statement—I'll ask Mr. Hani Mokhtar to provide further details. I'd say that we're broadly similar. There's a real particularity with the environment budget. Personally, as chief financial officer, I'm hoping we can stabilize in future years.

Our ongoing core funding could typically be anywhere from 80% of the total funding we get through the years, because over the last several years we've been receiving a lot of temporary, sunset funding on particular initiatives, which last a few years.

So if you look at our public accounts, you would see that typically we spend about a billion dollars a year; our main estimates are about \$800 million. You have a whole slew of these sunset initiatives. So it's really difficult to say—have we lost or not?—because it's not really set in stone. That's something we really need to work together with our colleagues and central agencies on to help stabilize over the years.

The Chair: I do want to go on to Mr. Bigras.

But I would remind the members that when Mr. Cullen asked for us to have this review, he did provide us with some questions, which we then provided to the department, more or less to focus on. They were advised not to bring all the people who might be able to get into some of the details. I just want to clarify that. Our witnesses have been kind of honed in on the questions Mr. Cullen raised.

Mr. Bigras.

• (0950)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I understand your explanation, but there are nevertheless within the department people who are responsible for answering our questions. We know full well that they will very likely not have answers to all of our questions this morning. Nevertheless, they are welcome to take notes if they are unable to answer.

I am looking at page 45 of the main estimates in front of you. I am now reading the second line: "Purchases of international credits generated in other countries that are parties to the Kyoto Protocol. Planned Spending 2006-2007".

My question is the following. Out of this planned amount, have some expenditures been committed? Your note at the bottom says that even though they were originally included in the main estimates, the government would not be purchasing emission credits. Were some expenditures committed anyway?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to point out that if you ever need additional information here at the table, we would be happy to provide it.

As to your question concerning page 45 and the agency, concerning whether we have already spent the money in connection with the credits, the answer is no, and we have not done anything. As I mentioned earlier, this agency was established last year and was to begin operations on April 1. In view of the election of the new government, its priority in this area changed completely. Accordingly, there has been no spending.

Mr. Hani Mokhtar may have some further information to provide.

Mr. Hani Mokhtar (Director General, Financial Services Directorate, Department of the Environment): Yes.

I would like to point out that these credits were included in the main estimates while awaiting a presentation to the Treasury Board explaining how the agency was going to operate and what its mandate would be. These credits were therefore included, but they were frozen in the department's main estimates, subject to a future Treasury Board decision.

Of course, given the current situation, no submission was made to the Treasury Board. There were therefore no plans for any spending out of those funds.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I could not find the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy in the government's estimates. Is the government funding this round table?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Yes. The budget is approximately \$5,183,000.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Okay. Excellent.

According to the Treasury Board rules, any contracts valued at over \$25,000 need to be disclosed. The new rule was introduced on October 21, 2005, if I am not mistaken.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy prepared a report to assess what measures ought to be made available to us to achieve the objectives by 2050, and these closely resemble the objectives that the new government has adopted. The firm that prepared the report is ICF International, which is based in Washington in the United States.

How come this contract with a U.S.-based company, which of course has a small satellite office in Toronto, but which mainly receives contracts from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is not among the contracts that need to be disclosed?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you very much for your question.

On a point of information, I can answer questions concerning the activities and operations of our department, but not questions about the portfolio. I was under the impression that the questions would really pertain to our department.

I can ask my colleague, who is in charge of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, the NRTEE, to answer this question.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Ferguson, were you going to reply or get back...?

•(0955)

Mr. Craig Ferguson: No, I am not her colleague from the national round table, Mr. Chairman, but we will pass the question on.

The Chair: Yes, okay. You will get that back and send it to the clerk. Thank you.

Mr. Lussier, do you want to carry on?

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ): Yes.

Ms. Ruta, I refer you back to page 12 of your main estimates, in which you mentioned adjustments of \$34 million.

How come this \$34 million adjustment has been transferred under the heading "The impacts of climate change..." which initially had been approximately \$19 million and was suddenly increased to \$34 million?

What process led to increasing this \$19 million budget item to \$34 million? Did it involve breaking down the adjustments under different themes?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you very much for this question.

It's somewhat technical, but as you know, the previous government was in a position to assess all climate change programs. This review enabled us to determine to what extent the programs would go forward. The \$34.5 million and the amounts that were allocated to the climate change programs were approved by the current government.

As for the bridging program as such, I would ask Mr. Hani Mokhtar to provide further details.

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: Approximately 15 or 16 months ago, a decision was taken to do a full review of all climate change programs. This review was carried out by the Treasury Board Secretariat with considerable input from the department. There was a rather systematic process: 95 initiatives were reviewed. This process is what led to the recommendations made to the government or the department with respect to future changes.

The process had been scheduled for completion in the fall of last year, to allow for the time needed for it to be included in the main estimates for all departments.

In view of the elections, the process was not completed until the new year, and that is why some amounts did not appear in the main estimates and now appear in the supplementary estimates that were just tabled Monday.

If there are any differences, then, it is because some of the items appear in the supplementary estimates, at least for our department. This may be different for other departments.

Mr. Marcel Lussier: All right.

We thus have the four major program activities. Are there specific activities that combine significant amounts? What are the largest programs that you are currently studying?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: I'm not sure I understood your question properly.

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Of the 95 points you reviewed, which were the largest from the budgetary standpoint, in terms of the amount?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: For our department?

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Yes.

Ms. Basia Ruta: For 2006-2007?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: Can we return to this question later? The list is rather long and it will take me a few minutes to find it.

Mr. Marcel Lussier: They are not ranked in order of size?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: Once again, I need to check. Can you give me a few minutes?

Mr. Marcel Lussier: You can defer answering the question.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lussier, I suggest that the easiest way is to send that to us and have it distributed it to everyone.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: That suits me.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cullen, go ahead, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, to you, for coming today.

I have one question on the overall budget, just to get some context for this. Environment Canada spends \$800 million a year or so. What's the total budget for the department?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you for this.

As I was trying to mention before, if you'd actually looked at the public accounts, you'd have seen that we've spent pretty much a billion dollars a year. Our main estimates focused primarily on a lot of the ongoing expenditures over time, but we do have a lot of programs or initiatives that have sunsetted over three or four years. This is why you get a bit of a difference.

Comparatively speaking, in terms of the main estimates portion, I think we're about \$30-odd million less than last year. There are a few explanations for that. There are some minor changes, but typical fluctuations that you see.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Between the 2005-06 budget and the projections for 2008-09, there is the removal of about \$92 million in savings. Is that about right?

• (1000)

Ms. Basia Ruta: I'm looking at page 8-5 of the estimates, and here we have \$803 million versus prior years of \$835 million, so I'm not quite sure where the member came from with the \$92 million.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay, I'll present those to you.

I'm looking at full-time equivalents now, and a number of committee members have raised this. I understand you don't set policy, but you enact it. Around greenhouse gas reductions, you have a loss within two or three years of a significant number of positions. Who are those people and what do they do?

Ms. Basia Ruta: I'll ask Mr. Craig Ferguson to provide you with the contextual information.

Mr. Craig Ferguson: I'm not sure I'm going to be able to answer the member's question adequately.

Ms. Basia Ruta: If it would be all right, perhaps I'll just call on Mr. Alex Manson to provide that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Of course.

For the committee's context here, we have 55 full-time equivalents in this program area, reduced to 14 within a two- or three-year period.

The Chair: Mr. Manson, would you introduce yourself, please?

Mr. Alex Manson (Acting Director General, Domestic Climate Change Policy, Department of the Environment): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Alex Manson and I'm director general of the domestic climate change policy at Environment Canada.

I don't have the numbers right in front of me, Mr. Cullen, but I believe the decrease you're seeing in there is what Ms. Ruta was referring to earlier, and that is, there are a number of initiatives in the department, and particularly in the climate change area, that are funded to the end of this fiscal year, and the government will be making decisions about what should be continuing. So what you're seeing in there are reductions from what we refer to as B-based funding that terminates at the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So let me understand this. If the government has set out these prediction numbers, then I'm assuming that's what the government is—

Mr. Alex Manson: Those are what would be in our A-base, in our reference levels.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Going from 55 FTEs down to 14 indicates what?

Mr. Alex Manson: It just indicates that decrement or that reduction is in funding that terminates during this fiscal year.

If I could go back, the government indicated that \$2 billion from Budget 2005 is earmarked for the development of a made-in-Canada environmental plan. When decisions are made on how that money is going to be spent, then it will be put into the reference levels of departments, and I presume some of that money will come to Environment Canada. Until these decisions are made, I can't tell you whether it will be 55 or whether it will be 65, or what it will be in the out years.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Just so I understand—and I'm not casting aspersions here, but these numbers aren't accurate.

Mr. Alex Manson: No, they're—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: You're saying there's a certain amount of money out there that the government hasn't allocated to spending yet—

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to stall the discussion—there's good discussion happening—but I want to remind the committee that we're talking about main estimates, not supplementary, so discussion needs to be staying on the main estimates.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, you can't expect the witness to try to project decisions that haven't been made yet to that \$2 billion.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Chair, my only point was that the projections have been made, and I'm just curious as to why and what the reasoning is and where it comes from. The government can't plan just for this immediate year. It's always—

The Chair: But not on the main estimates.... I think that's the point, and that's what we're talking about. With the supplementals you'll see more of a game plan.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Great.

The Chair: Go ahead now.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Mr. Chair, I think my colleague, Mr. Mokhtar, wants to provide one comment.

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: I'll see if I can address the question.

In the opening remarks, Ms. Ruta mentioned that some of our programs are sunsetted and therefore our funding fluctuates. This is one of those programs where the decision was that there was funding until 2006-07 and subsequent decisions were going to allocate new funding for its continuation, or for continuation under another form. That's why these numbers look like they're dropping.

The other thing I'd like to bring to your attention is there is about \$14 million in supplementary estimates for climate change initiatives. A very big proportion of that funding is for paying the salaries of the people, because the decision was that nobody will be affected until the final decisions are made. So if the numbers look small, very few of the staff who are working on these programs have been told they have been funded and will continue to be funded until the end of this fiscal year.

•(1005)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you.

I have a question about the clean development mechanism. I'm trying to find it in the mains here, as to where that spending line appears. Can you direct me? Does it not appear under Environment Canada?

Mr. Alex Manson: No, there's no spending associated with the clean development mechanism or joint implementation in Environment Canada's programs. That comes in the programs of other departments, particularly the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Great.

This may be similar to that question then. In the 2005-06 public accounts, this is money that was spent on various non-profit organizations around the country. I assume it's not CIDA or DFAIT; this is ours. This is money to...well, some of them are international and some of them are domestic. I'm looking for efficacy of dollars spent. There's quite a bit of money here—grants to the Canadian

Federation of Municipalities is a very large one, but there are also many, many smaller groups.

Let me first establish that this is within your spending before I ask questions.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Yes, it is.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay. In terms of value for money, what type of auditing process do you use in going through how this money is spent, and what indicators do you use as to whether it was successfully prescribed?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you very much for the question.

Generally speaking, I think the whole government is looking at trying to make sure we get the best performance out of our grants and contributions programs. I think the results of the blue ribbon panel on that will be coming forward in December.

Part of our expenditure restraint does deal with grants and contributions. With the exception of moneys going through to foundations—of which you have mentioned one—which was a large amount last year, we don't have any this year. Typically, for the past few years, we've been spending about \$70 million in grants and contributions, and right now in the mains we are trying to manage that resource within \$47 million. We have a few class contributions that are broadly stated, and we are looking, as a priority over this year, to try to better align the performance of these contributions and establish priority setting so that it does align, in the best way possible, with the government's priorities.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Again, back to that in terms of evaluation; \$100,000 is given to UNEP in the United States—in New York, at the UN. What evaluation criteria did we use as to whether the money was well spent? I guess my specific question is, if we petition the department, could we have a specific look at any one of these different projects and the money that went out the door?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Absolutely, you can ask the question and we can provide you with further details on that.

I'll ask Mr. Mokhtar to provide further details, but a lot of our grants and contributions are not a large amount; a lot of them are a small amount, going to a wide variety of stakeholders. But there are some that are a bit bigger than others.

In terms of a contribution—and we are respectful of the Treasury Board guidelines on that—we did go through and the Treasury Board did agree to the broad objectives of the class contribution programs we do have. But on any of the specifics, we could surely provide you with additional information as you require.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, I'm sorry, your time is up. That is a list the members, again, would probably wish to have.

Mr. Harvey.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Ms. Ruta and all the witnesses, thank you very much for being here today. I am pleased to see you.

You spoke a little about the trusts and foundations established by the Canadian government. Significant amounts have been paid into these foundations. Where do we stand?

Ms. Basia Ruta: I have a short summary here. For the 2006-2007 fiscal year, we are not planning to make any payments to any foundations. Last year, we paid \$150 million into the Green Municipal Fund mentioned by Mr. Cullen.

I could add that from 1999-2000 to 2005-2006, the average was \$122 million. In 2000, it was only \$12 million; in 2001, it was \$112 million; in 2003-2004, it was \$175 million; and in 2004-2005, it was \$100 million. This included an investment in the Sustainable Development Technology Canada foundation.

I am giving you those figures from memory. I will ask Mr. Hani Mokhtar to provide details. However, according to the government's budget and priorities, a transfer is effected for straightforward objectives, but not on an ongoing basis. It is very limited, but the amounts are rather large.

•(1010)

Mr. Luc Harvey: I am more concerned about monitoring. After giving the money to these foundations—and that's \$150 million each time—we need to know where the money went and what was done with it. I would image that there are ways of checking where we stand.

In Ms. Gélinas' testimony before the committee, she said that it was difficult to monitor spending and to identify the actual results.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you very much for your question. Here again, I would ask Mr. Mokhtar for the details, if there are any.

These amounts related somewhat to the basic rules and principles governing our contributions and grants. Ms. Gélinas and the Auditor General mentioned that more was needed. Nevertheless, the foundations as such are not at this time part of the federal government's portfolio. We are therefore rather limited in how far we can go.

As to the evaluations, we can check whether any have been done. Perhaps Mr. Mokhtar can provide us with further details.

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: In 2004-2005, towards the end of the year, a number of concerns were raised about one of these foundations. The Department of Natural Resources and we took it very seriously and carried out an evaluation. The group representing the foundation came and had to give us an explanation about the terms of our contract with them.

In fact, all of the agreements specify that Canada has the right at any time to audit the books, etc., and we invoked this clause. The group came to explain themselves and we were satisfied with the

answers given. Consequently, we have the right to do it and we do it from time to time.

Mr. Luc Harvey: There was talk of a \$6.4 billion-total amount paid to the environmental foundations and trusts. Did that turn out to be the correct amount?

Ms. Basia Ruta: An amount of \$6.4 billion?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: Not to my knowledge. The amounts we are citing here represent our share, and for most of them, there was another share paid by Natural Resources Canada.

Hence the figure could be doubled, but I'm not sure that it was \$6 billion?

Mr. Luc Harvey: There is another thing. It may not necessarily be correct to say that carbon credit purchases were made. However, there was international aid to various countries to determine whether it would be possible to reduce carbon emissions.

Would you be able to give me the details about these expenditures? Was money sent to Panama, China, India, and just about everywhere around the world? We might be speaking of approximately \$100 million to \$130 million.

•(1015)

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you for your question. I will try to answer it accurately and clearly.

For discussions of carbon, I will continue in English because I am more familiar with the technical terms in that language. I would simply like to specify that with respect to

[*English*]

...emission credits for Kyoto per se, we have not spent any money on that. As for carbon offsets, my understanding is that Environment Canada may have spent some very small amounts. I can't speak for other departments. But these would not qualify for emission credits under the Kyoto Protocol.

This would be part of our due diligence on programs and managing conferences. If we wanted to show that we were keen on being green, we might try to tabulate how much, in terms of effects on greenhouse gases, certain conferences might take and then try to purchase some offsets on carbons. But these cases have been very few and far between. If memory serves, we have not done much at all in this regard. Offsets are not emission credits, as we understand them, for Kyoto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Harvey: I know that these are not pollution credits. I am rather speaking of expenditures that were made to support or set in motion the very principle of carbon emission exchange rights between countries. The purpose of my question was not to ask whether we had obtained carbon pollution credits, but rather whether we were able to evaluate whether the amounts in question were in fact spent and spent effectively. What I am mainly wondering about is the degree to which the expenditures were effective.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you for the question. From memory, and—I will ask Mr. Mokhtar if he has more information to provide—the amounts we are speaking of are not very high, and I would be surprised if research has been conducted into measuring the effectiveness of the investment. I believe that it may represent a few hundred dollars, or at most a few thousand, but no more than that.

Mr. Luc Harvey: I will check into it myself.

As for the Montreal Summit held almost a year ago, do you have information about the total expenditures committed?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Mr. Mokhtar?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: At the Department of the Environment, I would say that the expenditures totalled approximately \$40 million, more or less; I do not know the exact amount. There were some expenditures by other departments, for security measures, for example, but these were not expenses that we had to cover.

Mr. Luc Harvey: So it was more than \$40 million.

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: Yes. A little more than that.

Mr. Luc Harvey: All right. But at the Department of the Environment alone, it cost \$40 million?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: Roughly, more or less.

Mr. Luc Harvey: What did these expenditures include? How was the money spent?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: There were expenditures, of course, on implementation, and on renting facilities. Amounts were given to non-profit groups, to environment NGOs, for their participation. We also gave a grant to the United Nations Secretariat, which was responsible for the conference. It was not our conference, but theirs: part of the amount paid to them was for administering the conference. There were contracts for procurement, security, that kind of spending, in other words everything needed to hold a conference on this scale.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Forty million dollars; is that a reasonable amount, according to you?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: I am certain that it cost a little less than \$40 million, but it was approximately that amount.

Mr. Luc Harvey: That was not my question. Do you feel that this is a reasonable amount? Is that what is usually spent on a conference of that kind?

Mr. Hani Mokhtar: I am not an expert in conferences, but I would say that there are conferences that cost a lot more than that.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Harvey, your time is up.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Ms. Ruta, I know you're a financial person, but maybe you should be in communications. I like your slogan, "keen to be green". You can take that back to your people.

• (1020)

Ms. Basia Ruta: Thank you.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: There's an interdepartmental committee—I'm not sure whether it's a Privy Council committee or not—a kind of coordinating body that's supposed to meet from time to time to see how we can get all departments working together for environmental objectives. Are you aware of this committee?

I'm told it's quite dormant. It's been in place for a long time, but if you're not...I imagine that's all right, because it's probably more at the level of the Privy Council. I raised it with the environment commissioner a couple of years ago, and she concurred that there needs to be more action in coordinating policies and strategies across departments.

You're not familiar with this, then?

Ms. Basia Ruta: I'm not sure I'm familiar with that particular one. But I could say this, that Environment Canada works in such a horizontal manner that we work very much on many different files horizontally with a number of organizations.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I appreciate that, but sometimes when things are too horizontal there's no focal point. As we say in French, there's no *point de chute*; there's no anchor.

Going back to horizontal operations, you were mentioning that many of the programs that tackle environmental issues, especially the problem of climate change, are being run out of other departments, and I guess for the most part it's Natural Resources Canada, if you think of EnerGuide and so on. Also, there was another program funding an environmental research network in Canada that I guess was also being funded by Natural Resources Canada.

Going back to your comment that you're working horizontally with other departments, my question is this. To what extent do you interface with, say, NRCan over programs? What is the level of your input? Do you have a kind of veto power or approval power vis-à-vis these programs and what they should be? If so, what are the criteria you use?

A second question related to that first question is this. When the government announces drastic cuts like these to environmental programs that were tackling climate change, and I'm thinking of the EnerGuide program, the one-tonne challenge—I guess that was being run out of NRCan as well, although I'm not sure, and maybe you could clarify that—what role or say does Environment Canada have? Is it totally out of your hands? Are you working with NRCan? Are you working with PCO? And what criteria do you apply before you say this is a good program or this is a bad program, if you have some input.

Ms. Basia Ruta: I'll provide some contextual comments and then ask my colleague Mr. Manson to provide further details. Generally speaking, concerning your comment about whether we work together horizontally, I'd like to say that our policy branch chairs a committee that sets objectives for sustainable development. There's also a committee chaired by our deputy minister on sustainable development with I think colleagues at the DM level. It is really meant to bring an all-of-government perspective and it is quite active.

As to who has veto power or whatever, I would just say that deciding on particular programs is very much a policy orientation, so there's information to bring to bear. On the criteria and the general process, I'll defer to Mr. Manson to provide further explanations.

Mr. Alex Manson: Thank you, Basia.

Environment Canada works very closely with other government departments on the climate change file. Organizations such as PCO are constantly seeking our advice on the types of programming that should be put in place. The decisions at the end of the day on that programming are made by cabinet, not by Environment Canada.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But would your advice on EnerGuide have been solicited, for example?

Mr. Alex Manson: Our advice on the EnerGuide program? No, not on—

• (1025)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's funny; that's not—

The Chair: Mr. Scarpaleggia, very briefly, please; your time is up.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes. I just find it odd that on an issue like EnerGuide, which attacks the problem of climate change, the environment department doesn't have very much of a say. I find that odd.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the witnesses being here this morning and the plethora of information we have before us. I just want to read from the background material that was provided to us in preparation for this. It says that the main estimates:

...are usually tabled, along with the overall government expense plan, on or before 1 March. However, because of the election on 27 January 2006, the 2006-2007 Main Estimates were not tabled until 25 April 2006. However, at the time, the Treasury Board Secretariat stated that "The 2006-2007 Main Estimates reflect decisions taken by the previous government rather than the current government."

And I think that's the salient point. So the decisions taken in the main estimates that we're talking about are from the previous government.

It goes on to say that this government's decisions will be announced in Budget 2006 and will be reflected in the supplementary estimates to be tabled in the fall, which were just tabled and which we aren't discussing today.

Dealing with the main estimates, I'd ask you to turn to page 8-5, about halfway down the page, where we're looking at "Reduced

Greenhouse Gas emissions". If you look to the far right of the page, under "2005-2006 Main Estimates", there was \$53 million in last year's main estimates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, yet in this main estimate, which was from the previous government, they have zero dollars for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, from \$53 million down to zero.

The next line down has "Improved air quality"; there was \$103 million, and in these main estimates, which are from the previous government, there's zero again. Then the next line down is "Reduced risk from toxics and other substances of concern". There was \$192 million in the previous 2006 main estimates, and then for this budget that we're dealing with, the main estimates for this year, it was again reduced down to zero. So we see a trend.

The next one, "Biological diversity is conserved", was reduced from \$117 million to zero. On the next line down, "Clean, safe and secure water for people and ecosystems", \$65 million was reduced to zero. The next line down has "Priority ecosystems are conserved and restored", and \$55 million was reduced to zero. The next line down has "Reduced Impact of Weather and Related Hazards", and it shows \$155 million reduced to zero. Then there's "Adaptation to Environmental Changes", \$92 million reduced to zero.

My question is why? We've heard over and over again from the opposition themselves that these are all issues of high priority to the previous government, to the opposition, particularly to Canadians, and absolutely for this present government. But as I pointed out, the salient point is what we're talking about, the main estimates, were from the previous government. So why would we on one hand say these are important issues and yet reduce millions and millions of dollars from the main estimates?

The Chair: Could I ask for a one-minute answer, please?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Yes, I'd be very happy to. Thank you very much for raising this question.

If you turn to page 8-5 in the main estimates, this relates to the first comment I made in the opening remarks, that we did change our program activity architecture. I know that's technical. What that means is that how we define our results was changed. That is why you see that there's nothing in there on the bottom, from reduced greenhouse gas emissions to adaptation, as you listed; there are no investments. However, there's a new activity architecture on the first nine categories that are presented in the main estimates. So what you would have if you turn to the report on plans and priorities on page 10, to the crosswalk...there you could see where the moneys have been aligned. For what would have been categorized under reduced greenhouse gas emissions, you have some...I think it's in the order of \$18.5 million in net emissions of greenhouse gases are reduced. It's just a different way of defining it. If you like, we would be happy to provide you with a copy of that crosswalk and further information to explain that mapping.

•(1030)

Mr. Mark Warawa: But the bottom line is that there was a major reduction in the budgets between the previous year and this main estimate.

Ms. Basia Ruta: I think it's like Mr. Mokhtar has said. We had a number of programs in, let's say, climate change and other areas that were sunseting, for which they were to get further priority established this fiscal year under the previous government. The current government is looking at setting priorities, so we'll see what will happen in terms of funding.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warawa.

I would like to thank our guests. I trust that you will get back to us with the various items raised by the members. Thank you very much.

We'll now go back to business.

In starting, I would like the members to know that the committee will end at eleven o'clock. The status of women committee is here at eleven o'clock. So I'd just advise everyone of that.

Also, in terms of dealing with the point of order raised earlier regarding Tuesday, October 17, Mr. Rodriguez' motion, I've checked with the clerk and with the head clerk, and I was incorrect in accepting that motion in that there wasn't 24 hours' notice, French and English, sent to all the members. However, that really becomes moot at this point because we have a new motion—just to put that to an end, just so the members know that.

Also, Mr. Cullen has requested a moment to ask for a unanimous motion. This would have to be agreed to by everyone.

Very briefly, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What I'm seeking is to move my motion—which has since been changed slightly—up to the front of the order.

The Chair: Yes, and the reason it went to the back was because of an amendment. It was first in the order because it was from the last meeting, and it did move, because, as you know, as they come in to the clerk, that's the order in which they appear. So Mr. Cullen's was first but was amended.

What are the members' wishes on that?

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, in the spirit of cooperation, I would accept that Mr. Cullen's motion be dealt with first. I think we can deal with it very quickly. Basically, it's an invitation to the minister to come and speak, which I think is a priority for the committee too. So I'm in favour of dealing with it right now.

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez, do you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Unless we were to refrain from debating it and move simply to a vote, I would be opposed.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

It has to be unanimous.

The motion was to put Mr. Cullen's motion to be discussed now, at the front of the order. So we then go to—

•(1035)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): I would ask for a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: We will have a recorded vote. This is on consent to Mr. Cullen's request.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Can we know exactly what motion is to be voted upon please?

[*English*]

The Chair: We do not have consent.

Mr. Mario Silva: What's the point of the vote if there's no consent?

An hon. member: I thought there was consent.

The Chair: No, there was not consent. Mr. Rodriguez did not consent.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So do we have a vote or not?

The Chair: We do not have a vote.

A voice: There is no need for a vote if there is no consent.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I have a serious concern. It's a sincere concern. It's not meant to be in the nature of a filibuster, but I do think we need to clarify the issue of the 24 hours.

I don't know whether in fact either of these—any of these, for that matter—came in an actual 24 hours. I understand there is some precedent in respect of the chamber. Committees are masters of their own destiny, and it does make the point that having these motions placed before a committee with this advance notice type of thing is so that we don't receive them without warning.

I think we do well to consider the fact of possibly moving to a 48-hour notice. But with this issue of it coming in the door just prior to six o'clock, supertime, or whatever, and that being regarded as 24 hours, I think in the absence of an explanation to say that we have it understood in that manner, we should be viewing it as an actual 24-hour notice. The clerk, for that matter, should also have a paper trail—

The Chair: I would suggest, Mr. Vellacott, that this can be put as a motion. We can vote on it. The rules are, as I understand them from the clerk, that motions are received by six o'clock in order of priority. So if one is received at eleven o'clock, it's first. Another at two o'clock would be second, and so on. We have one night's sleep and then it's a legitimate motion to come before the committee the next day.

In reality, that's not 24 hours, but that's the way the rule works. That's what the journals use. We could accept a motion that could be submitted, circulated, and voted on at a future meeting regarding changing the 24 hours to two sleeps, 48 hours, or whatever the committee wants. We could do that at a future date.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Notwithstanding the remarks of the clerk, under footnote 366, page 851, in the well-known committee book, *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, Marleau and Montpetit make the point that committees have varied in their use of notice requirements.

This is why we go to the default in the chamber, which is different from committee. It's so that we have that warning. It says:

In some cases notice has been required for any substantive motion, in others only for new business, unrelated to the subject before the committee at any given time.

We have nothing with respect to distribution or dissemination of that information. In the absence of any specifics, we need to understand this one-sleep business. That's the literal...

The Chair: I would like to comment on that, but let's hear from Mr. Cullen first.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: It sounds like there's a motion here. To give due notice to the committee, that's what's occurring in the committee's procedure. Your comment was right. We should move on. If my motion to move forward has been defeated, then we should move on to the other orders of the day.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I'm on a point of order, actually.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh, are you?

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez, did you have a comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I simply want to say that his point of order has nothing whatever to do with Bill C-288 which we are studying today, because my motion was submitted on Thursday, thus almost five days ago, in both official languages. I simply wanted to point that out.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's what I suggested. I've been on the committee for five or six years, and we have never really set that 24 hours, or 22 hours. We have operated on the basis that they are submitted in a certain order. At six o'clock they must be submitted to the clerk. Then we have 24 hours. But I think members would consider a

motion on this. It could then be given 24 hours, debated, and dispensed with. This way we could move on.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Was Mr. Rodriguez' motion submitted 24 hours in advance, literally?

The Chair: The clerk is saying that it was last Friday.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I sent it last week at 4:50 p.m.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I would beg to submit at this point a notice of a motion, if the clerk could frame it, that we have this discussion in respect of the 24 hours as well as the distribution.

The Chair: You are now entering into debate, Mr. Vellacott. What you have to do is put forward a motion and circulate it to members in both official languages. Then it can be debated and voted on.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Right. I was on a point of order.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Rodriguez mentioned that he presented it five days ago.

• (1040)

The Chair: The clerk is telling me Thursday or Friday of last week.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Would the procedure not include having it distributed? If you've received it but it hasn't been distributed...I think in the future we could have a healthy debate on this and see what we want to adopt in the way of procedure.

The Chair: There could be a misunderstanding here. If we want to clarify that in a motion, I think we should do it. Right now the clerk has received it, and in the past this has been how we have accepted motions.

Mr. Mark Warawa: That's fine.

The Chair: If we want to clarify it right down to the exact timing, it's up to us to do it.

Mr. Mark Warawa: We could look at that in the future, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I would suggest that a motion come forward. Let's debate it at that time.

Let us move on to Mr. Rodriguez' motion. Do you wish to speak to that, Mr. Rodriguez?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I will be brief, Mr. Chairman. It is a subject we have been discussing for a long time. I am speaking of Bill C-288. First reading was in the month of May. We then debated it. The House would like our committee to seriously study Bill C-288 and to report back to the House for third reading. That is where we are now, Mr. Chairman. In deference to the will of the House, I introduce my motion and ask that a vote be taken.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I think there's a major concern that's been expressed going forward, so it's no particular secret here. It's the fact that we have a CEPA review, which is a mandated thing. We've had witnesses in. That's pretty crucial, and it's a requirement for us to get it out. It's long overdue in terms of getting it out.

With due respect to the member, I don't know where he intends to go with this; this is kind of left off to the side. I think we should be prioritizing the CEPA review, then getting to his thing, if that's the will of the committee. We have simply far too much important business, and we have witnesses to call who are now on hold in respect of that. I think the Canadian public actually wants something practical, tangible, on the ground, in terms of the completed CEPA review. We should have the witnesses in and so on.

Now we're getting into something that's rather different altogether. In fact, as has been pointed out, it's not respectful of the government's bringing a bill forward that deals with a lot of these things. That's the nature of what the member is up to. I think it gets down to pure politics. The environment commissioner made the point well that the Kyoto targets were very difficult to keep. That was very plain. There have been members all around the House, from all sides of the House...in fact, one of the other members, Mr. Ignatieff, who I think is being supported by the member opposite, expressed grave concerns about whether we'd be able to reach those targets or not.

To me this is a lot of mischief when we had good work that we were on before. The minister now needs to come in at one point again. I just feel that for getting at the practical stuff, what we can do that's before us immediately, this deflects and distracts us from that and really takes us off in another direction entirely.

From my point, I want to be on the record to say that I think we should get back to prioritizing the CEPA review. That would meet with a lot of support in the public and certainly with those who have testified here over many meetings. Now we're not going to be able to complete that work and get a report out by the end of December, or by the deadline.

So I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that this particular mischief that the member is up to now is really not in the best interests of the Canadian public or the work that we've been mandated to do in the committee.

The Chair: Mr. Godfrey.

Hon. John Godfrey: Well, Mr. Chair, we have the possibility, if the members opposite will respect the rules of the committee, to discuss that very proposition after we discuss the first motion. The very subject matter, Mr. Vellacott, is on that. We cannot get to it until we discuss the first item of business.

We have been accommodating, I think to the extreme. We have accepted the filibuster that took place. We have resubmitted the motion. We were told by the Conservatives the last time out that if we submitted it in the correct form, they would not then begin again the games of filibustering, that they would accept it.

We will be able to achieve Mr. Vellacott's purpose if we get on with voting today, move forward with the work plan, and have this report out by November 23. That will allow us to resume the work

on CEPA. We understood that having made their point last Thursday, they would be acting in good faith to allow this to go forward. The clerk has contacted witnesses for Thursday. We particularly are anxious to hear from Mr. David Suzuki, who can come only on Thursday. We think if there are witnesses, which we assume the Conservatives would wish to put forward—in two official languages, we would need to have an explanation—of course they would be accepted.

But I think we should know now if the group opposite is willing to do what they said they would do last week, having made their point, and allow this point to go forward. If not, let us know.

● (1045)

The Chair: Mr. Godfrey, I just want to correct one thing you said, and that is that the clerk had contacted witnesses. He has not contacted any witnesses.

On a point of order, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

I just want clarification. I didn't want to interrupt, but Mr. Godfrey made a very salient comment when he said that the clerk has already invited Mr. Suzuki—

Hon. John Godfrey: No, I misspoke. I saw that somebody else had contacted him to confirm interest. I apologize. I misrepresented the position of the clerk.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa, you're next.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

I think Mr. Vellacott made some very good points. It is the responsibility of this committee to deal with the CEPA review. We have ENGOs that want us to deal with the CEPA review, and we have a legislative requirement to deal with it. The committee, right from day one, said we were going to begin the CEPA review.

We now have a motion before us to deal with Bill C-288, which is a private member's bill that we have until February to complete. It appears that the committee now wants to put a private member's bill, Bill C-288, from the Liberal member. The previous government had the reputation of not doing very much on Kyoto, on the environment. Basically we have the previous government trying to railroad this committee and force us to abandon our legislative requirement, which is the CEPA review. I'm quite concerned about that.

I'm also a little concerned about Mr. Godfrey's comment on a work plan. He passed out a work plan last week. It involves a list of themes and recommended witnesses and goes on until November 21. We have a requirement to deal with CEPA, yet what was proposed on Thursday of last week was this work plan from Mr. Godfrey. We're changing from meeting to meeting. If we're going to deal with Bill C-288 and there is a genuine desire to deal with it in a proper way, we need to take a serious look at Mr. Godfrey's work plan.

What's being proposed by Mr. Rodriguez today is to fast-track, ram it through, we don't care what witnesses have to say, let's just deal with this in a couple of meetings. This government takes the environment seriously and hearing from witnesses very seriously. If we're going to deal with Bill C-288 it needs to be done properly and not haphazardly. The previous government had a reputation for doing things haphazardly, making plans on the back of a napkin, and we don't support that.

What Mr. Godfrey proposed last Thursday is a reasonable approach, but it needs some work. We need to enhance the themes and the list of witnesses. So we have prepared a list of witnesses and themes to add to the work plan.

But this committee has a legislative requirement to deal with CEPA and a moral responsibility to deal with CEPA for the coming generations and the environment. So I'm going to move an amendment to the bill on the floor right now. We have a motion, and I would like to move an amendment in both official languages. We have handed it to the clerk. It removes everything after the word "bill", which is about halfway through the motion, and inserts the following:

after the mandated 5-year review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) is complete or until after the winter break (Christmas recess), whichever comes first.

That is my motion for an amendment.

• (1050)

The Chair: We're dealing with the amendment now. We'll get a copy of that amendment around to everybody right away. It is an amendment, so it is in order...in both languages, yes.

Mr. Harvey.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey: When I asked to have the floor, an amendment had not yet been submitted. Unless I am mistaken, we are already two years late with respect to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

As it is perhaps appropriate at this time to submit a report on the subject, I would like to finish with the CEPA file. I think that would be appropriate. I am new here; I may not understand all of the workings, but I think that it would be useful to deal with the CEPA. I would like that very much. Theoretically, we have until February to respond to Mr. Rodriguez's proposal. It has been dragging on for a number of years, and I do not think that two weeks more will make a difference. We have been talking about the CEPA since I have been here. We met people about this once again last week. I believe that it is a priority to finish dealing with the matter, to complete it and report the bill back to the House. That is my opinion and I believe that, objectively, it is the manner in which we ought to proceed.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, I believe we have Mr. Watson speaking to the amendment.

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

I'm obviously going to speak in support of the amendment.

Let's remember that the Liberals made the legislative requirement for a mandatory review of CEPA. This is actually part of CEPA itself. They had a majority government, and they established that every five years, CEPA will have a mandatory review. I understand that in the last Parliament they were a minority government and they chose at that point not to follow the rules, if you will. I guess that's their prerogative as to whether they want to play fast and loose with legislative requirements. They certainly chose to do that in the last Parliament.

But here we are in a situation now, Mr. Chair, in which they're still playing fast and loose with the rules. They think we can just keep putting this off to deal with other issues first. They want our government to be in a position where we're suddenly not going to respect the rules. Mr. Chair, I don't think that's a good trend or direction. We certainly want to abide by the rules as they've been set. We respect the laws of the land, even laws passed by the Liberals when they were the government. I think it's important that we continue to demonstrate that we're a government that plays by the rules. It's important for this committee to respect that. I think this is an incredible hypocrisy by the Liberals. There are rules that they themselves established and suddenly they don't want to play by them—or they want to continue not playing by them, I guess.

I think the amendment to the motion is important. It's going to re-establish that the CEPA review should be completed. Let's just get on with the business. We haven't said that we're not going to deal with C-288; we've simply said we're going to postpone it. Let us finish the legislative priority first, and then we'll get on with the other issue. We're serious about tackling the issue of greenhouse gas reductions, but let's get the legislative requirement out of the way first. Let's cooperate to work quickly on that particular measure. Then, after Christmas, when we reconvene, we'll get down to business on the other issue, Mr. Chair.

So obviously I'm going to be supporting the amendment as it's worded. I would encourage the Liberals to rethink playing fast and loose with rules that they themselves put in place when they had a majority government.

I would also like to caution the opposition members, whether they are in the Bloc or the New Democratic Party. I'm not sure why they would want to support a Liberal bill, Mr. Chair, unless of course they want to help the Liberals' chances, either in Quebec or against the New Democrats. I guess that's their prerogative. We would think they'd want to get on with doing CEPA and other issues. Let's get on with strengthening those.

• (1055)

The Chair: Members of the committee, when I started off I said we would end this at eleven o'clock, as we were informed that the status of women committee was coming here. I understand there is a filibuster going on in that committee, and therefore they have found another room and are not coming here at eleven.

So at this point the committee will have to decide what to do. Personally, I have something on at twelve o'clock and would have to ask a vice-chair to step in if it goes past twelve o'clock.

I would ask for a vote. I think that's the only fair way, to ask for your decision as to whether you want to continue this until whenever and come to a decision.

We should realize that we are probably not going to have witnesses on Thursday, that there will be a discussion of the timetable, and that it could be a fairly lengthy discussion. The option, of course, is to do this on Thursday, or to carry on; that's the decision the committee needs to make.

Mr. Vellacott, on a point of order.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Mr. Chair, my understanding is that we have a notice of meeting until 11 a.m., and I don't know where we can necessarily get off in terms of an extension. We have to have another call of the meeting.

The Chair: The clerk advises me that we can't cut off debate, but we can move rooms, can set another time, and can do whatever.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Well, the meeting is supposed to end at eleven o'clock, according to this.m

The Chair: Those are the rules of the committee.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: But the notice of meeting says until 11 a.m.

The Chair: That's correct, but debate is still going on. We haven't come to a vote on the motion that's on the table.

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Chair, on the rules, until we come to the vote, the debate continues on the amendment and then on the main motion.

The Chair: That's right, and I do not have the power to cut off debate.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: The meeting concludes at eleven. There is nothing about.... You're not doing anything—

The Chair: We need a motion to adjourn. In effect, that's what I'm asking the committee, to make that decision.

The decision, basically, is whether we continue in this room or come back on Thursday with some commitment, I hope, from everybody that we would settle this issue and get on with it.

I do not think it's to Canadians' advantage to carry this on forever. Obviously I think we should get on with the plan, but that is the decision of the committee to make, and as your chair, that is what I have to ask you.

Do you wish to adjourn the meeting now?

• (1100)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Do we have a citation from one of the reference books? This is rather interesting.

Can the clerk pull up those references?

The Chair: Can the clerk give me a...?

Just let the clerk have a minute to—

Mr. Mario Silva: May I just make a comment, Mr. Chair? I have another committee to go to, of which I'm the vice-chair, so I'll be leaving. But somebody else will be coming to replace me. I presume that if the meeting has to go on—

The Chair: Mr. Bigras is also vice-chair.

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Bigras could take over then.

Thank you.

The Chair: Unless he's leaving too!

We're just looking for the reference you've requested.

Are there any other comments while we are waiting?

Yes, Mr. Rodriguez.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chairman, there is a simple way to put an end to the debate: by taking a vote. I presume that this is not the intention of the Conservatives. Although they say they do not want to filibuster, they are continuing to do so. If we adjourn now, I presume that they will start over with the same manoeuvre on Thursday, Tuesday and the next Thursday. They have never demonstrated their good faith. Quite the contrary, Mr. Chairman. We will therefore be forced to continue the debate.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez, maybe you can clarify your understanding as you explained it to me, the fact that if this motion passes, the second part of it is to discuss the work plan; therefore, the work plan would be the subject of Thursday's meeting, at which time witness lists and so on could be put forward.

That is Mr. Rodriguez' understanding, if I've translated that correctly.

Mr. Harvey.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Harvey: Mr. Chairman, to finish with the CEPA, how many meetings do we still need? When would we be ready to submit a report?

[*English*]

The Chair: CEPA needs to be reported back to the House, I believe, on May 10. This bill is reported back to the House in sixty working days, which is some time in February, so those are your timelines on the two pieces we have in front of us. And of course at some point in there, the Clean Air Act could come to the committee as well. Those are the things we've got in front of us, plus I believe there are several other private members' bills that will be coming forward.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: As we're waiting for the clerk to share some guidance with us from the procedure manual, I do have a question. Again, in the spirit of wanting to cooperate with Mr. Rodriguez' motion, we were talking about the amendment, and we'll go back to that. I do have a question.

Mr. Rodriguez' original motion said we would begin studying his bill, Bill C-288, no later than Thursday, November 2, which is this week—two days from now—and that we would proceed to clause-by-clause no later than Thursday, November 21. I'm looking at the calendar and see that this would leave us, with a break week in between, only two meetings. I am ensuring I understand the original motion and why I have raised an amendment. What the work plan would do would allow for two meetings for witnesses. Am I interpreting that right? If I am, that's why I have great concern.

The original work plan presented by Mr. Godfrey had seven meetings; what you're proposing has only two. There are only two scheduled meetings, which would be November 7 and November 9, and Mr. Cullen's motion was to invite the minister before she went on her trip to Kenya, and that could be on November 7 or November 9 as well.

We have a lot of pressure on the committee. I think your original motion is not realistic. It does not provide adequate debate, adequate witnesses, adequate meetings. That's where I think we're having a huge problem, in that Bill C-288 needs to be done properly.

If we vote on my amendment, which we will do—when, I'm not sure—and then go back to your original motion.... If the amendment doesn't pass—hopefully, it will pass—but if it doesn't and we go back to the original motion, what are you proposing? That's my question to you.

• (1105)

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez, I think that part of your schedule is Thursday. I don't think it's realistic to expect that we'll get through the work plan and have decisions made so that we can have witnesses on Thursday. Obviously, there is a problem in terms of timing. Do you want to address that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Of course, asked me the question directly, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, we accepted the government's word, which is to say that we placed our confidence in the government when it said there would not be a filibuster. We may have made a mistake in the first place by trusting the government.

Second, if we were to work on Tuesday and continue until the 23rd, that would represent five working meetings and not two, if you tally up the meetings. Mr. Chairman, if there had not been filibustering today, we would have begun on Thursday, hence the 2nd, and there would have been another meeting on the 7th, and then the 9th, then the 21st and the 23rd, which would have been five meetings and not two. We calculate the number of working meetings.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: How many meetings would you have witnesses at?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: How many meetings? Three, four—

[*English*]

The Chair: Perhaps you would direct your questions through the chair, please, otherwise—

Mr. Mark Warawa: My question to Mr. Rodriguez is, at how many meetings would we have opportunities to have witnesses? What Mr. Godfrey proposed was six or seven different meetings. We have a list of witnesses. Again, the opposition, in the spirit of cooperation, needs to consider our list of witnesses, our topics, too. But what you yourself had proposed was seven. Where are those seven days? What are you proposing?

The Chair: I think it's obvious we have Thursday, we have two more days next week, we then have the break week. We're now into

November 21 and November 23 for clause-by-clause, which we finish on November 23. I think that's how the work plan, as I read it, said. So there is...to make sure we're talking about the same days and so on.

Anyway, Mr. Scarpaleggia, I think you had something to add here.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I think there are a couple of salient points here. One is that the government side of this committee broke its word. I think that should be on the record. It's not a good precedent to be setting.

Secondly—

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Chair, I have the floor.

Mr. Mark Warawa: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chair, the government did not break its word.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: No, I said government members did.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I would ask the honourable member to provide information to support his claims, because they are not accurate.

An hon. member: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: Let's get back to—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'm not finished my point, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Finish your point, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: The second point is that we are not here today to discuss the work plan.

The third point I'd like to make—and, Mr. Chair, you know this, having sat on the committee when it was chaired by Charles Caccia—is that if members really want to tackle a problem, they can double up on meetings in a given day. I've been part of other committees that have done that, and you have as well.

So I don't think that's an issue. I think this is a red herring and that we should go back to the original motion and talk about the work plan another time.

The Chair: Okay. We're still waiting on the ruling that we...

Are we getting close?

Does anyone else...?

Yes, Mr. Godfrey.

Hon. John Godfrey: Clearly we can't be accused of submitting an incomplete work plan when the other side is preventing the work plan from going forward. We actually reduced the number of sessions to accommodate the government side, so that we could return to CEPA as quickly as possible. We can't both be accused of delaying things in the CEPA review and at the same time be told we don't have enough sessions and that we need to have more.

The government will have to decide which of those two propositions it supports, but we will obviously adjust. Once we get our work plan, we will clearly work as a committee in the spirit of cooperation to adjust, to accommodate witnesses from the other side, and to give the thing sufficient time. If we need more time, we'll take more time. But we can't even know when to begin until we actually decide that we're going to move ahead.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Godfrey, just to reply to that, the government side also has a list of witnesses, a list of dates.

Obviously we would have to meet, in answer to Mr. Scarpa-leggia's point, literally every day for many more hours to accomplish this by the dates that are set out—just so the committee realizes that this in fact is what we're going to have in front of us, moving forward, when we discuss the work plan.

Mr. Bigras.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chairman, I would like you to place stricter limits on the debates in the orders of the day. I get the impression occasionally that we are discussing the work plan for reviewing Bill C-288. I would suggest that you accept proposals and addresses concerning the motion we are debating. We are establishing a work plan even though this is an item that is farther down on the orders of the day. I don't mind discussing the content of the motion, if required, but I would ask you to keep the discussion under tighter control.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bigras. Basically what we're doing is waiting for the clerk to come up with the facts. That in fact is why I have allowed debate to go so loose. These are all subjects that are, of course, going to have to be dealt with.

Are we ready for the...?

We're just getting further clarification. But let's keep in mind what Mr. Bigras has said and not get too far-ranging in our comments.

I think, Mr. Cullen, you haven't said much in this debate.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No. As fascinating as it has been, Chair, I've resisted at every turn.

I think what the committee has to establish is the number of hearings we need for—

The Chair: Now you're into the work plan.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No, no. Allow me this.

In all this confusion and debate about the number of days available prior to CEPA and all the rest of it, there is urgency to get CEPA out the door before Christmas. I think we can accomplish that.

The committee simply needs to decide on the number of suitable hearings we need to have, schedule those hearings, and not be limited purely to the nine to eleven o'clock time slot on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Many committees have done this in the past. Opposition parties have worked with government to make it happen in the past.

Finally, I'd say, regardless of the ruling coming back from the clerk and you, that we call the question and get on with it.

The Chair: One of the problems I have, Mr. Bigras, again from experience, is that I don't recall ever spending this much time discussing a private member's bill when there is government legislation in front of us. It is rather unusual territory that we're into at this point.

Anyway, I think the clerk is—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, there's an important point, though. There isn't any government legislation in front of us.

The Chair: Well, there's the CEPA review.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: But that's not legislative. It's a non-legislative review.

It's very important for people to realize that there is no other pending work, other than the CEPA review we're going through, which is non-legislative.

The Chair: If I can quote:

The chair cannot adjourn the committee on his or her own authority; only the committee can decide when it will adjourn. The chair may ask if the committee is ready to adjourn and if no one objects or wishes to keep speaking then the chair may adjourn the committee. Many chairs and members do, however, believe that the chair has this authority and a number of chairs have acted on that belief. In the event of disorder, the chair may suspend the meeting until order can be restored. Or if the situation is considered to be so serious as to prevent the committee from continuing with its work, the meeting may be adjourned.

So if you get too rowdy, obviously I can adjourn the meeting. If you stay civil, then you heard the ruling.

This is a handbook used by clerks to find citations. They're now going to give you chapter and verse and the whole bit you want. Just one minute.

Yes, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: On that last point, I asked for the question to be called on this motion. It feels as if we're simply spinning wheels here and delaying.

The Chair: Okay. Let me finish this point of order, and we'll get the citation. Then that's dealt with, and then we'll get to the amendment.

Let's try to get on. Is there any more debate on the amendment? I think you've all seen the amendment. Obviously, we're going to give you the exact.... Are there any more comments on that amendment? That's what we'll be voting on when we get this citation.

Mr. Warawa.

• (1115)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, the reason for the amendment is that I expressed concern moments ago that what's being proposed in the original motion does not give adequate opportunity and time. Mr. Godfrey did make a comment, also a moment ago, that he would be willing to provide adequate time, more time. If the mover were willing to provide an amendment to his original motion, that would provide adequate time for witnesses. And as I pointed out to him, what's being proposed with the wording of his motion is it only allows two meetings for witnesses. Yes, there are meetings for clause-by-clause. As of this week, there is an opportunity to table a working plan and also to go over the list of witnesses. We could do that in one meeting, next Thursday. But then we need more than two meetings to deal with all the witnesses. We could resolve this.

Mr. Chairman, at the same time as doing Bill C-288, we may also want to consider doing the CEPA review, so both are ongoing. We can be creative as a committee and deal with both, because I sure hope I'm right in that there is a genuine concern that we deal with the CEPA review and that we continue it. Maybe they could be done in parallel. We could be creative and come up with a solution that this committee could move on and deal with all the issues, not just the plans and aspirations of the opposition, but also the requirements of us as parliamentarians.

The Chair: So you're proposing we do Tuesdays—whichever order—on CEPA, and then on Bill C-288, and we alternate. That's your proposal?

Mr. Mark Warawa: We have an amendment on the table now, and before we vote on that, could I hear some comments from the other members, if there's an appetite to be a bit more conciliatory?

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chairman, in the spirit of cooperation, we would be prepared to spend a number of additional meetings discussing Bill C-288. There is no problem on that score, I wish to assure you. We ought not to go so far as to alternate meetings to also discuss the CEPA, because we are clearly not obliged to give priority to the CEPA over Bill C-288. We have until May to study the CEPA whereas we have only 60 working days in the House to deal with Bill C-288.

That said, let us set aside the CEPA file and return to it as soon as possible. We will do solid team work and get back to it as soon as possible. But if the government wants to extend work on Bill C-288 by a few days, we are prepared, in good faith once again, to spend a little more time on it, but strictly to speak about Bill C-288, and not to mix in all kinds of other subjects.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Godfrey.

Hon. John Godfrey: If Mr. Warawa would withdraw his amendment, we could amend the motion to read simply, “begin its study of the bill no later than Thursday, November 2”, understanding by this that the session would be to discuss the work plan. We don't put a final limit; we will allow ourselves to establish the work plan, which will tell us when we would have our clause-by-clause.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: And we add “as soon as possible”.

Hon. John Godfrey: We could add, “begin its study of the bill to be concluded as soon as possible after the establishment of the work plan”—something to that effect, which allows us to—

The Chair: Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I appreciate the good work that's happened at the committee today. I think it's a good compromise approach from all parties, and I would be glad, under those understandings, to remove my amendment.

Hon. John Godfrey: Mr. Warawa, you don't want us to go on indefinitely about this bill. Nobody does.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Absolutely not.

[Translation]

The Hon. John Godfrey: Yes, but we're going to add these words to the motion as soon as possible. We are going to complete our study as soon as possible, in accordance with the work plan that we are going to establish on Thursday, because Mr. Warawa has just told us that he does not want to extend the debate on Bill C-288.

• (1120)

[English]

If we have those concepts in the amendment that capture the sense that we will not set a final limit, but that we will try to do it as quickly as possible—taking into account the work plan, which shall be established on Thursday—then I think this covers off the notion that we're not going to go on about this indefinitely, but we're going to give it the time it needs to take into account other witnesses.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Again, if I could get clarification, I'll remove my amendment. The amendment now is what?

Hon. John Godfrey: It's to “begin its study of the bill no later than Thursday, November 2, and to conclude it as quickly as possible after the committee has established its work plan”.

The Chair: We need consent for Mr. Warawa to remove his amendment.

Hon. John Godfrey: I have one question. In order to get a level of comfort for everybody, do we need to have a final “no later than”? Do you have a date in mind that you would not want to go to, no later than a certain date?

Mr. Mark Warawa: We have a legal requirement to deal with it by February. I don't think anybody wants it to go to February, but I think we could deal with it at the work plan on Thursday of this week.

The Chair: May I just interrupt this for a minute with the ruling to Mr. Vellacott? This is a ruling given by the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on April 19, 2005: “A point of order was raised regarding the time of adjournment of the meeting.” The ruling by the chair was: “Unless a motion to adjourn is moved and adopted...”.

So it was what I read before. This was put by Mr. Gary Goodyear, the chair of the committee at that time.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Well, that's an example from another committee, with due respect. I can't find a thing in these manuals here. I don't find anything in Marleau and Montpetit. There's nothing in here with respect to that.

The Chair: This is a ruling by the chair of the—

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Another committee happened to make that as a ruling, but in terms of written authority, procedure, and mandate, there isn't that. There's only one similar case that happened.

Mr. Jeff Watson: It's just one example.

The Chair: The clerk advises me he can come up with findings from other cases where this same ruling has been made.

Can we move on, and the clerk will provide us with that information?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I think we're invalid for the past twenty minutes here. Some of us have appointments we've already missed as a result of this.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Set the date on Thursday.

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott, I agree, but I really don't think this is the issue here. The real issue here is, are we going to get on with this motion or not?

The background information will be provided.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: As the right and privilege of a member of Parliament...you sent a notice with respect to our concluding at eleven o'clock. This means nothing; it's totally without point if it means that we go on and on.

The Chair: The problem is that the rules say I can't cut off debate. That's what the problem is.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: The rules say the authority of the chair is to do either one or the other.

The Chair: No. That is only if it becomes disorderly. There is a grey area, I admit, Mr. Vellacott. The grey area is in the event of disorder. I trust this is not that disorderly, so I have ruled that we are carrying on with debate.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Prior to that there was a reference that gave you the latitude, and in fact it was stated specifically that you could go on.

The Chair: Many chairs and members do, however, believe that the chair has this authority, and a number of chairs have acted on that belief.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: You mean the authority to conclude the meeting.

The Chair: That's right, to conclude the meeting, but I have ruled that we are carrying on. We are now close to a compromise, and I trust that is more important than the point of order in helping this committee to function well, so I am going to carry on with the negotiations. I believe we have the wording now.

Hon. John Godfrey: I think we are all on the same page. We want this thing to be out of committee and back to the House before the Christmas break, so we're now discussing a way of expressing that, because we know that the session comes to an end in mid-December. We want it out of committee and reported back to the House before the Christmas break.

•(1125)

The Chair: I would hate to see us tie our hands by a set deadline, but if Mr. Warawa can agree to that deadline, then—

Hon. John Godfrey: He's agreed to the principle. We're just trying to find a way of expressing it that doesn't inadvertently tie us up so we finish on the last day and can't get it back to the House. That's the only concern.

The Chair: We're soon going to need to get this wording down clearly. We have had several versions.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I have clear wording, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Could we please listen to the wording that Mr. Rodriguez is proposing and then go from there?

Mr. Rodriguez, you have the floor.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I propose we simply take the motion and replace "November 21" with "December 5" and "November 23" with "December 7", which brings us almost to the Christmas break. I think that's a very good compromise.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Christmas break starts on December 15. I would prefer that those dates be set two days from now at our Thursday meeting so that we'll have a good opportunity to provide a work plan. It may be that the dates you're proposing work fine, but then again we may need a little more time. In the spirit of ending on December 12 or 14, the last week before the committee does its work and forwards it to the House, we could do our clause-by-clause study on December 12 or December 14. I think that's what I would prefer at this point, but I would prefer first that we deal with this on Thursday. However, if you want your motion changed today and dealt with today, and if you want to put in specific dates, I don't think it's necessary for us to do it on Thursday; you could just end the motion with the idea that we begin the bill no later than Thursday, November 2, which I think was the original proposal from Mr. Godfrey.

Would you not be comfortable with that?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Not really, no, but we're getting there.

The Chair: Mr. Bigras, do you have some constructive additions?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I think we agree on one thing: the bill needs to be reported back to the House before the Christmas period. We all agree on that. We still need to set the dates. My fear, with respect to December 12 and 15, is that the work of the House will have already been adjourned. Thus, there is a risk that, unless I am mistaken, we would not be able to get back to our work until the end of January, hence almost in February.

I suggest instead that we do a clause-by-clause study of the bill no later than December 5 and report on December 7. This would ensure that the bill is reported back in time, in the form in which the committee has submitted it. I feel that the December 14 date is very risky.

[English]

The Chair: Just so you understand, you know it has to be reported back to the House by February. That doesn't mean it's dealt...we will have fulfilled that commitment.

I believe Mr. Warawa is just consulting. We'll let him answer your comments, Mr. Bigras.

While we're waiting, Mr. Vellacott, disorder is the only reason—the only way—that I can stop the meeting. Basically, our clerk's boss has said that the time is a working document. The time is not written in stone; it's by agreement of the committee, and we did have agreement by majority to carry on.

I could read you this entire paragraph on the rules for disorder. The chief clerk is watching this proceeding right now, as many other viewers are, and I don't believe there is the level of disorder, as described here in this paragraph, that would give me the authority to stop this meeting.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: What are you citing from?

The Chair: I'm citing from chapter 20, page 858, of *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, by Marleau and Montpetit, the heading being "Disorder and Misconduct".

Mr. Warawa.

• (1130)

Mr. Mark Warawa: On Mr. Rodriguez' proposal, could you clarify that for me, please?

The Chair: With the input from Mr. Bigras?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Correct.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It is team work, Mr. Chairman. All that is involved in the motion is replacing the November 21 date for the clause-by-clause study of the bill with the December 5 date, and to replace the following date, November 23, with December 7. That would take us almost to the end of the time remaining to us. We have a satisfactory extension of the number of hours. I think this is a good compromise on our part. If necessary, we can add more hours.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Warawa says he agrees with that.

Does anyone else have any comments or additions? I almost hate to ask.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Do you need unanimous consent for that?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Just consent to withdraw the amendment.

The Chair: We need consent to withdraw the original amendment. Do we have anyone objecting?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I do.

The Chair: There is no consent, so we now have to vote on the first amendment.

On that first amendment, those in favour—

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I'd like to see it in writing.

The Chair: Do you want to repeat the amendment?

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'll read it.

The Chair: This is the one we were going to withdraw. We need consent to withdraw it and we've been denied unanimous consent.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The amendment would insert, after the word "bill":

...after the mandated 5-year review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) is complete or until after the winter break (Christmas recess), whichever comes first.

We want to deal with CEPA first. We had a gentlemen's agreement. I'd like to remove that, but we don't have unanimous consent.

I will be supporting the motion, because I do support it in principle, but it appears we're not going to be successful.

The Chair: Is there any more debate? No?

We have a request for a recorded vote on this amendment. Those in favour?

Mr. Jeff Watson: Are we voting on the amendment?

The Chair: We're voting on the original amendment. We asked for consent to withdraw that, as the mover wanted. We did not get unanimous consent because Mr. Vellacott opposed it. Therefore, we now have to go to a vote to accept or oppose the amendment, and it will be a recorded vote.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey: Mr. Chairman, with the translation—

[English]

The Chair: I asked if anyone wanted to speak on the amendment. Hearing no one wanting to speak, I went ahead to call the vote.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I thought you had a new thing on withdrawing it and it was a vote on that.

The Chair: No, this is on the original amendment, because we were refused consent to simply remove it. We're now voting on that amendment put forward by Mr. Warawa some time ago.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I'd like to speak to that.

Hon. John Godfrey: The question has been asked.

The Chair: I placed the question, I received no replies, and I'm therefore moving forward with the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

• (1135)

The Chair: We now go back to the new amendment, which is being proposed, I believe, by Mr. Rodriguez.

Could you read that amendment to us again, please?

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: The initial motion mentions at the bottom of the page that the study of the bill should commence no later than Thursday, November 2, 2006, and that there should be a clause-by-clause study no later than November 21. That is where the first change goes: we replace this latter date by December 5, 2006. And then we add that the report of the bill to the House must be no later than December 7, 2006.

It is therefore a simple amendment which replaces November 21 by December 5 and November 23 by December 7.

[English]

The Chair: Do you want a recorded vote on this?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: There will be a recorded vote on this. Is there any discussion on this amendment?

Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: We'll go back to the original here. Obviously we have some different points of view, certainly on our side, and probably over there as well. As an individual committee member, I have a major concern. We have already moved to pre-empt CEPA. I think we're setting a precedent, and I think it's a very unhealthy one at that.

By way of the previous amendment that was just defeated, we've already agreed to the fact that we were going to be looking at that in the month of February. For us to have that kind of agreement is better than any other private member's bill that I know of. Normally it's off into the distance, with some vague or ambiguous kind of a future.

We've even gone so far, Mr. Rodriguez, as to agree to when your bill is going to be up. That's certainly far ahead of any other thing I've seen in the way of private member's bill dealings around here in a long time.

As was mentioned and stressed, the fact is that this CEPA review was mandated every five years, by your own government, no less. It wasn't something put in by the new Conservative government. CEPA, 1999, was a Liberal initiative in a previous mandate here, and we're already two years behind your mandated review. These delays now are even making it later and later.

This is crucial stuff that concerns the health of the public, including children, who are the most vulnerable population among us. I have family and relatives and constituents in my riding of Saskatoon—Wanuskewin who are concerned with getting on with this and getting it moving so that we can take the kinds of steps necessary under the CEPA review to deal with the issues.

I thought there was that great heart and passion to get that done by members all around the table—members on the government side and members of the opposition as well—in a diligent, aggressive, assertive approach with respect to that, but now we're delaying that. We're already two years behind that mandated review, and now this kind of stuff wants to put us into a corner, making it even later.

We've been mandated to carry out that review of CEPA, and the committee can't afford to waste time and delay the CEPA review. I think it should be the priority. We should continue that CEPA review and try to finish hearing from witnesses by December. We're already up against some timelines here.

The tentative schedule for CEPA witnesses had already been formed. Witnesses were contacted for the next number of weeks. I think it's very unfair to witnesses to have things rescheduled, as that creates a great deal of uncertainty as well.

As we know, for the consumer, the taxpayer, if you will, there are considerable costs incurred. As a result, that's also at issue in respect of this. We had a number of items to discuss, and we need to take the time to properly look at those other priorities instead of at a coercive plan that has come before us now.

With respect to the intent that we had by way of giving the promise to put it off and do it at a later point, we were of the view that the committee can't afford to waste time and delay that review. Therefore, we wanted to finish hearing from witnesses by December. We need to write the report for CEPA, and that tentative schedule had already been formed, witnesses were contacted, and so on.

• (1140)

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott, if I might interrupt, we have heard all of these arguments and it's time for us to now move on. I believe you're straying away from the amendment that has been worked out between the two sides. It's ready to be voted on. Unless you have something very new to add, I think we've heard all of those arguments already.

Does anyone else have any comments on the amendment?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I have actually not made my case.

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott, I believe you have made your case, and I think it's very clear.

Unless someone else has a comment on the amendment, we should go to the vote. I would like to know if it's the will of the committee to do that.

Hon. John Godfrey: Yes.

The Chair: We're all clear on what we're voting on. We're voting on the compromise friendly amendment that has been made, so that we do in fact have timelines now set. Obviously, on Thursday we'll be looking at the schedule, the witnesses, and so on, and then we'll move on from there, with the 5th and the 7th being the end of the discussion point. Is everybody clear on that?

Will this be a recorded vote?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Yes, please.

The Chair: This is on the motion that has been amended—

Hon. John Godfrey: Is this on the thing as amended?

The Chair: No, this is the main one as amended. Because it's a friendly amendment, we're going to have one vote, and that vote will be to move on with those dates being changed.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I have one very quick comment, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate what has been accomplished here in the compromise. We do have a list of witnesses that we will be presenting to the clerk in both official languages and a proposed work plan. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

The Chair: Great.

Everybody be prepared for Thursday, and hopefully we can work out that work plan, get on with the job, and do what all of us want to try to accomplish.

We'll go to the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Excuse me, Mr. Chair, is there unanimous consent to deal with Mr. Cullen's motion, which could be dealt with very quickly?

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to deal with Mr. Cullen's motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Mr. Cullen, very briefly.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Committee members have seen this motion for some time now. It has been slightly amended, but the essence is the same: to recall the minister to the committee. There were a number of questions raised in her testimony. You can read them there. Four points are made, and I look for the will of the committee to invite her back.

The Chair: We will have to fit her into that schedule, of course.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That is assuming the schedule the committee is working with right now.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa, did you have any comments on that?

Mr. Mark Warawa: No, I'd like to call for the vote on his motion.

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott wants a recorded vote on the motion by Mr. Cullen, and I now call the question.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

The Chair: Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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