



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

ENVI • NUMBER 006 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, December 4, 2007

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Chair

Mr. Bob Mills

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC)): I would like begin this meeting of the environment committee and welcome the environment minister, Mr. Baird. Welcome to the committee. I know many of the members have been looking forward to your visit here to talk about the estimates.

Just so all members understand, the first hour will deal with the minister and the questions you have around the estimates. The next three quarters of an hour will be with the officials, to probe more deeply with them. The last 15 minutes will be for other business.

We'll begin with the minister. He has one hour with us; he will leave at 4:30 p.m. We'll then go to the officials for three quarters of an hour and then future business in the last 15 minutes.

Mr. Minister, welcome.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Let me first welcome you back. We're glad to have you back. Your vice-chair did a good job when you were gone, you should know. We're keeping notes.

I also want to acknowledge my friend from Hamilton Centre who's here. In the House of Commons I made a mistake I'd like to correct. I spoke of how strong and hard the members for Burlington and Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale had worked on Randle Reef. The member for Hamilton Centre worked very hard on that too, so I should acknowledge his good contribution in helping clean up Randle Reef in Hamilton.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you, but I'm still going to go after you.

Hon. John Baird: Let me begin today by saying that as Minister of the Environment, I'm very proud of the high priority Canadians are placing on the environment. Canadians understand the value of our environment and they're getting involved more and more in the protection of our environment, and that's great news for everyone.

There is a growing understanding today that the links between our environment and our economy are absolutely inseparable. How we manage and care for our environment directly impacts the legacy we leave for the next generation. Our government understands this, and we are not only listening attentively to Canadians, we're taking real action to get real results for Canadians and for our environment.

In Budgets 2006 and 2007, our government announced investments of more than \$9 billion in funding for priorities and initiatives

related to environmental initiatives that will be implemented over a span of several years. Of this funding, close to \$1 billion will flow to Environment Canada in the next five years to deliver on environmental initiatives.

This government has taken action on environmental priorities, actions that show beyond words and rhetoric that we are serious about protecting and improving our environment. Our government not only gets it, but we're showing the world that Canada is serious about reducing our emissions.

After 13 years of rising emissions, our government has put forward a plan, our "Turning the Corner" plan, which demonstrates real action, a commitment that goes beyond signing on the dotted line. For the first time in Canada's history, we've enlisted industry to take action and to implement mandatory, not voluntary, targets to reduce both greenhouse gases and air pollution. We are leading our country down a new path, and climate change has not been the only priority we're delivering on. We're also focusing on priorities like clean water, environmental protection, and something that's very important to me, conservation. We've been working to make sure that our natural legacy and ecosystems are conserved and that our wildlife and migratory birds are protected. Our government committed \$22 million in Budget 2007 to hire more environmental enforcement officers. Our commitment will ensure improved accountability in environmental enforcement: polluters will pay.

We are also working to ensure the safety of Canadians through our weather services and our storm warning systems. Protecting Canada's natural heritage has also been a priority, and we have targeted part of the budget funding toward supporting a massive natural areas conservation program, expanding protected areas in the Northwest Territories, and implementing the Species at Risk Act.

Let me give you a few examples of some of the important work we're doing at Environment Canada to protect wildlife. Environment Canada is doing research on the ecology of the polar bear as well as negotiating a conservation agreement among Canada, Nunavut, and Greenland.

As you may know, we expect the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada to report on the status of the polar bear population. We've engaged 18 of the top scientists from academia, government, and non-government groups across Canada to determine the critical habitat of the caribou of the boreal forest. This will not only help the caribou population but contribute to the biodiversity of the boreal forest in our great country.

•(1535)

We've completed a recovery strategy for two important seabirds, the pink-footed shearwater and the short-tailed albatross. And as my colleague, the member for Langley, recently announced, we will be taking action to protect the Scott Islands in British Columbia, which will further help these species.

We're also doing important research on another migratory seabird, the marbled merlet, a species that resides in the Great Bear rainforest, which this government contributed \$30 million to help protect. We're hopeful that this action will result in a downgrading of its status in the Species at Risk Act.

These are just a few examples of the excellent work done by the men and women of Environment Canada who are dedicated to protecting some of the most vulnerable species. Canada is fortunate to be served by such high-quality public servants who are truly dedicated to a noble cause.

Mr. Chair, our government promised to focus its budget on priority setting, and as you can see, we are remaining true to our word. Yet even with our numerous investments and environmental priorities, Environment Canada has been facing challenges to deliver ongoing programs and services to Canadians, notwithstanding the substantial investment being made by this government for the environment.

This does not mean that the department has grown in each and every area. When we look at the current departmental budget and supplementary estimates, we must recognize that we are only partway through the fiscal year. What we are looking at right now is not the total picture. The department's budget may still change as a result of funding from supplementary estimates later this fiscal year.

Right now Environment Canada's budget for this fiscal year stands at \$842 million. The supplementary estimates currently before the House of Commons include another \$290 million, which, if passed, will increase the department's budget to over \$1 billion.

It must be noted, however, that what we see in the present supplementary estimates is in large part funding that was associated with the new programs being transferred to Environment Canada from another department.

The largest increase relates to the transfer of the Toronto waterfront revitalization initiative to Environment Canada, a budget item that's previously been shown in Treasury Board Secretariat's estimates. The fact is it will include funding from supplementary estimates (A) without the funding for the newly transferred functions. The overall budget for the department will increase this year by approximately \$55 million.

Mr. Chair, what needs to be understood is that the new funding coming to the department is specifically targeted towards delivering on the government's environmental priorities. This funding does not add to the department's bottom line. Therefore, core funding remains constrained.

Even as the department is receiving new money, it is not allocated to legacy and existing programs and services in all cases. There are a number of reasons for the financial pressures on core funding at Environment Canada.

First of all, the 2005 expenditure review undertaken by the previous government resulted in a cut of about \$22 million, which is no longer available to the Department of the Environment year over year. The fact is that was made and approved by one of my predecessors in that year.

In fact, Environment Canada is feeling the effects of another spending restraint measure dating back to 2003, again under the previous government. This is a reality that we have inherited and we are doing our best to deal with.

In addition, because of the cuts made by the previous government, Environment Canada's budget has been limited by the amount of funding available for the department to carry forward into the next fiscal year. In previous years this amount totalled \$25 million to \$35 million; however, it went down to as little as \$13 million.

The budgetary situation has further been compounded by new requirements, which are being addressed internally. The department has had to enhance its informatics operations required to provide the capacity and security in support of our science-based programs. The department moved forward towards audited financial statements, requiring additional investments to meet this requirement.

The department also underwent a significant reorganization less than two years ago. This reorganization aimed to move the department towards a new results-based structure to ensure that the highest priorities are being addressed. This came with financial impacts.

The transformation implemented in April 2006 has had an impact on the department.

Collectively, all of this has added to a tight but manageable financial situation. Prudent management dictates that a constant review of current operations is required, making sure that limited resources are managed efficiently and that funds for lower priorities are moved into higher ones.

Given that my timeline is coming to an end, I'll move to the conclusion.

•(1540)

The Chair: You're at seven minutes, 36 seconds.

Hon. John Baird: Is that what I have left?

The Chair: We'd like you to keep to 10 to 12 minutes if you can.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Chair, our government cares deeply about the state of the environment and this country's ability to monitor, manage, and protect our precious natural treasures. We are doing what it takes to ensure priority areas are addressed and cared for as they should be, and despite the legacy we have inherited, with careful planning, our government has continued to deliver on the most comprehensive environmental agenda that Canadians have ever seen. Most importantly, despite everything, the department is working tirelessly and it shows.

I believe we've made a tremendous amount of progress in a very short period of time. In the last two years our government has introduced a number of important initiatives, such as the launch of a national pilot of the air quality health index, the introduction of our "Turning the Corner" action plan, and the introduction of Canada's trust fund for clean air and climate change.

Canada has also become a member of the international Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking to address the illegal trade of plants and animals. We have invested in a national campaign to buy and to preserve ecologically significant land across southern Canada, working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Our government is bolstering the protection of our water and land to toughen environmental enforcement that will make polluters accountable, hiring another 106 environmental enforcement officers.

In short, the story is simple. Department officials have had to work extra hard to ensure that every financial decision is carefully considered for the greatest benefit of our environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you.

I did want to address one issue that came up at the last committee hearing. Mr. Chair, you weren't here, so I will read a quote.

The member for Ottawa South suggested that I had misquoted the former Vice-President of the United States, and I checked the record, and not only did I not make any characterization of the quote, but I delivered the quote exactly as he said it. And, Mr. Speaker, I know you're a sports fan. Sometimes you say when there's a doubt, you go to the videotape. So we can go to the videotape and it will show that according to Hansard, it will match up with the quote Mr. Gore gave.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Minister.

Hon. John Baird: And you have it coming up here.

The Chair: You were actually under 10 minutes, so I congratulate you on that.

Are you going to show us the video?

Hon. John Baird: I'm going to show a video. It's just that I know there were two allegations made that I had misled the House of Commons. I had given a letter that counteracted the second one, but we have a video clip, which we're ensuring—

The Chair: Quickly.

Hon. John Baird: We'll get it on. He'll continue to try. Maybe I can convince one of the members to...because I want to always be very clear.

The Chair: We'll be anxious to get it on.

Hon. John Baird: Just the facts.

The Chair: Okay.

Anyway, I would like to—

Hon. John Baird: There will be another corresponding opportunity for an apology.

The Chair: I would like to first really welcome Professor Toner from the School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Carleton. He has brought a number of students who work at Environment Canada studying public policy. Perhaps they could just stand up and be recognized.

Welcome.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: These people have a very definite interest in the environment and how this committee operates.

We will begin with Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, it's good to see you again. Minister, I want to pick up on the line of questioning put by the leader of the opposition to the Prime Minister just a half an hour ago. There was a report that was commissioned by Natural Resources Canada called *From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007*. Can you please tell this committee whether you can release that report, for example, today?

• (1545)

Hon. John Baird: I have not seen the report. I only learned of it this morning.

Mr. David McGuinty: Do you know what it cost?

Hon. John Baird: No idea. It was a report committed by another department, the Department of Natural Resources, and I encourage you to put that question to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. David McGuinty: Well, we did. In fact, he was put to question twice yesterday as well by journalists, and after question period, according to CanWest, Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn refused to explain why the report's release was delayed, and he said that all questions had to be sent to the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): A point of order, Chair. The questioning from Mr. McGuinty is not what the minister is here for, and he's also answered that it's the Minister of Natural Resources. So I would encourage you, Chair, to make sure we stay on topic.

The Chair: I would just remind members that this is about the estimates, so perhaps we can stick as closely to that as we possibly can. However, I do realize that questions can range fairly widely, and I think the minister is prepared to accept those, but not outside of his department.

Mr. David McGuinty: Just in conclusion, Minister, then, you're not responsible for this report?

Hon. John Baird: As it said in the paper, it's a Natural Resources Canada report, and I encourage you to place your questions to the Minister of Natural Resources. I have a big job on my hands as the Minister of the Environment and the Minister responsible for Parks Canada.

Mr. David McGuinty: So Minister Lunn is wrong.

Hon. John Baird: Correct.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, can we turn to another series of measures and spending that has been deeply troubling for members of this committee for a while now? That is the whole question of the former partnership fund that we created as a government, that you and your government renamed as the Canada ecoTrust for Clean Air and Climate Change. You just referred to it a moment ago. Is that right?

Hon. John Baird: That initiative is one for the provinces. It's a \$1.5 billion initiative. I could give you a quote from Premier Doer who said that he never got any money from the federal government. That was not a reinvention, and that's backed by Mr. Doer.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, I just want to go through something that was part of the 2005 economic and fiscal update, concerning the partnership fund. Of course, your party wasn't in power at the time.

One of the things the update said was that:

Taking into consideration the potential emission reductions, and the likely timing of the projects, the size of the fund could grow to \$2 billion to \$3 billion through investments in Budget 2006 and future budgets.

We know there was an Ontario-Canada agreement signed in 2005, and there was \$538 million set aside for climate change initiatives. You also know, of course, that \$325 million was set aside for Quebec. We know this money was booked as part of the partnership fund that year. However, this funding and the entire partnership fund was first cut in your 2006 budget, and then it reappeared. As one of my colleagues said, it was re-gifted in the 2007 budget as the ecoTrust fund.

Can I ask you directly, Minister, is it correct that at the end of the last fiscal year the total amount of \$1.519 billion for this fund was placed in a trust account, and according to the 2007 budget, this funding is scheduled to flow over the next three years at roughly \$500 million per year? Is that right?

Hon. John Baird: You raised about seven questions before you got to your eighth. So what I would say is that the \$1.5 billion of funding announced to the provinces was all new money. No province ever got one dollar of funding from the federal government with respect to the issue of climate change and clean air. This is backed up by Premier Gary Doer, who will tell you that.

One of the first engagements I had as Minister of the Environment was a recognition that we had to engage the provinces. When you talk about a partnership fund, that had nothing to do with the initiatives we took this winter.

I can say with great enthusiasm that my premier was particularly happy with the investment.

Mr. David McGuinty: I'm sure he was, Minister.

Can you tell us, was the \$1.519 billion placed in a trust account?

Hon. John Baird: Yes.

Mr. David McGuinty: You stated on May 29 of this year, just a few months ago, "that money has left the federal treasury".

Hon. John Baird: It's in the trust fund.

Mr. David McGuinty: That is, it was "paid for out of last year's budget, and it has already left the federal treasury, so the cheque is

more than in the mail"; you said, "the cheque has actually been cashed. It was \$1.519 billion."

Minister, did you mean to imply that the provinces had already received the total amount of this funding?

Hon. John Baird: No, it was in the trust fund.

Mr. David McGuinty: Has the government signed any MOUs with the provinces for this funding, and if so, what criteria then exist in order for a project to qualify?

Hon. John Baird: It's fully available to the provinces whenever they want it. The two criteria are that it has to fight climate change and it has to fight smog and pollution.

Mr. David McGuinty: Have you signed any MOUs?

Hon. John Baird: The way the trust fund works, we don't have to.

Mr. David McGuinty: So has any money been disbursed?

Hon. John Baird: As much money as the provinces have asked for.

• (1550)

Mr. David McGuinty: Has any money been disbursed of the \$1.519 billion?

Hon. John Baird: As much money as the provinces have—

Mr. David McGuinty: How about a straight answer?

Hon. John Baird: That's the answer you've been getting.

Mr. David McGuinty: Can I ask the deputy minister, has any money left this trust fund and been put into provincial hands?

Mr. Ian Shugart (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): The way the trust fund mechanism works is that when the trust fund is set up, it is out of the hands of the Government of Canada and is drawn down by the provinces. That is essentially a private matter between the individual jurisdiction and the manager, the trustee of the fund.

Mr. David McGuinty: So you put over \$1.5 billion into a fund and you're telling us you can't tell us whether any money has been drawn down?

Hon. John Baird: I can tell you that for any province that wants the money, it's—

Mr. David McGuinty: You can't tell us whether any of the money of the \$1.5 billion put into a trust fund has been drawn down. Is that right?

Hon. John Baird: You can ask the question ten times. I've already answered it.

Mr. David McGuinty: For example, are there any firm targets or conditions with respect to a cost to greenhouse gas reduction ratio involving drawing down this money?

Hon. John Baird: One of the things that your premier and my premier has been particularly strong on is that the Government of Ontario, my premier says, is not accountable to the federal government. It is accountable directly to the people of Ontario. That was the position of Mr. Martin and it's certainly our position as well.

Mr. David McGuinty: Are you aware, Minister, of what the Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, said just two weeks ago in reference to your ecoTrust?

Let me quote what she said from an accountability perspective. She said:

We are [deeply] concerned about very large transfers being made purportedly for certain purposes, but when you look at the actual agreements, there are absolutely no conditions requiring the recipient to use the moneys for the purposes being announced.

Can you help us understand what your position is with respect to the Auditor General's concerns?

Hon. John Baird: I have a background in the Government of Ontario, in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as well. I know it best. That's the riding I also represent. The way federalism has worked in this regard is that the Government of Ontario, the provincial government, is not accountable to the federal government; it's accountable to the legislature and to the people of the province of Ontario. In this regard, I can tell you, I have no reason to doubt the integrity and the management of my premier to deal with these funds.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, why are public expenditures at the federal level—these are federal taxpayer dollars—considered to be private matters? What's the point of public accounts and public estimates if our expenditures can be private and you can't even tell us what's happened to \$1.5 billion?

Hon. John Baird: There's only one taxpayer, so it's not the federal taxpayer or the provincial taxpayer or the territorial taxpayer or the municipal taxpayer. There's only one taxpayer, and each level of government is accountable to the people that elected it. The government's accounting treatment was acceptable because the government had entered into the agreements with the appropriate authorities, had authorization from Parliament to make the payments through trust with the passing of the Budget Implementation Act before the financial statements were finalized, and had not included in the trust agreements or letters to provinces and territories any condition to be eligible to receive these funds that would have been met by the provinces or territories subsequently and that had known the amount to the transfer. This is the way it worked under the previous government, and we feel particularly strongly about it. It's a different kind of federalism, where the provinces do not work for the federal government. They're elected by people in their jurisdiction and they're the people to whom they're accountable.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, did your staff ever brief you on the fact that an agreement was not signed with Quebec under the former partnership fund because the environment minister of Quebec at that time refused to produce a list of climate change projects for federal scrutiny and approval? Have you ever been briefed on that?

Hon. John Baird: I'm not aware of any opportunities of funding—

Mr. David McGuinty: Because you—

Hon. John Baird: You asked a question; I want to answer it. If you want to make a speech, I'll turn it over to you.

Mr. David McGuinty: Fair enough. Go ahead.

Hon. John Baird: I'm not aware of any funding that flowed to a provincial government to fight climate change. That's what my friend Gary Dewar of the NDP—

Mr. David McGuinty: Our government wasn't prepared to transfer money without conditions.

Do you know who the minister of the environment was in Quebec at the time?

Hon. John Baird: If you don't trust the provincial governments and see the federal government's role as being the babysitter of the provincial governments...that's not my view of Canada.

Mr. David McGuinty: Is that your response to the Auditor General's concerns, Minister? Maybe you should take it up with her.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. Bigras, it's your turn.

[Translation]

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

Welcome, Minister.

When we talk to officials, present officials of the Department of the Environment or not, some of them talk about program freezes, reviews, reorganizations and cuts.

Are you confirming that there have been cuts in recent weeks and recent months, particularly around September, and particularly in the Canadian Wildlife Service?

• (1555)

Hon. John Baird: I want to answer that question. That file is very important for me as Minister of the Environment.

However, I'm going to answer in English because I want to be very precise.

[English]

There have been three reviews of spending. Two were conducted by the previous government and one was conducted by our government. As a matter of practice, I think it's generally a good idea to constantly look at whether your spending is matching the priorities.

In what I'll call the third review conducted by our government, reductions were made in the department's budget, and that was not to the Canadian Wildlife Service.

There were two previous reduction exercises that reduced funding for Environment Canada. One was led by John McCallum and another by another member of cabinet. Those reductions were never made. They were just cash managed for a period of years—carrying money forward, doing some prudent financial management.

As a result, when reductions to the Canadian Wildlife Service were being eyed, I was not comfortable with them, so I reviewed the issue and ordered that no reductions be made.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I understand, but can you confirm that programs have been simply stopped? I'm thinking in particular of the Wildlife Viewing and Research Program.

Can you confirm that there have been cuts of nearly 100% to the Canadian Wildlife Service, which oversees the national reserves? I'm thinking in particular of the Lac Saint-François National Wildlife Area.

Can you confirm, Minister, that there have been cuts at your department? And yet, today, for 2007-2008, the Department of the Environment is seeking \$13,329,361 from its 2006-2007 operating budget.

How can you justify the fact that you're proposing to carry over budgets when you've cut expenditures? Do you find that acceptable? Do you admit there's a budget forecasting and management problem at your department?

Hon. John Baird: You asked some questions before the last question. So I'm going to respond to your address and your questions.

With regard to last year, there is a 13% increase for that part of our department. This year, we're spending—

[English]

We're spending \$84.5 million on the Canadian Wildlife Service compared with \$75 million last year. I see it as a priority. I think it's important for Canadians. As minister, conservation is a huge personal priority. We're spending hundreds of millions of dollars more on this area, and I wasn't prepared to support any reductions in this regard.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: That nevertheless does not explain your carry forward request from the 2006-2007 budget to 2007-2008. I don't understand that.

Furthermore, where is the \$350 million that you agreed on with Quebec for fighting climate change? When will Quebec receive its payment so that it can achieve Kyoto Protocol targets?

You know that Quebec has a reduction plan that would make it possible to reach the Kyoto targets. The Government of Quebec is waiting on this commitment that you made to it at the time.

What's standing in the way, and when will you meet your commitments?

• (1600)

Hon. John Baird: I believe Minister Line Beauchamp will announce today precisely what she will be doing with the \$350 million. That's her—

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Have you paid the money to Quebec?

Hon. John Baird: The money is available for Quebec. It's there whenever it wants it.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: All the projects have been approved by the federal government?

Hon. John Baird: No.

Ms. Beauchamp is responsible at the Quebec National Assembly for Quebec's taxpayers and voters. She doesn't work for me. She is an elected representative, as I am. This is a shared file.

We respect the provinces' jurisdictions. We are not here to be the boss of the provinces. That was the former regime of the Trudeau and Chrétien years, not ours.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Lussier.

Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ): Minister, I'd like to continue by talking to you about the National Water Strategy. You have an overall budget of \$10 million for that strategy.

Would it be possible for you to provide the committee with a copy of the National Water Strategy statement? Do you have that document with you?

[English]

Hon. John Baird: With respect to that question, I'll be happy to get you any and all information that's available.

What we're doing is a number of things. We're looking at, first, the banning of raw secondary effluent going into our water, lakes, and streams; we're looking at major initiatives with respect to the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Simcoe; we're looking at initiatives with respect to water on first nations; and there will be some other initiatives that we haven't yet announced that I'm excited about that we're working on. And we'll get you all the information we can with respect to your question.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Can't you table a document today?

[English]

Hon. John Baird: I said we'll get you all the information we can on that issue.

The Chair: Minister, you can send that to the clerk and we'll distribute it to all members.

Go ahead. You have two minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: In talking about the National Water Strategy, you mentioned the Great Lakes, but it seems to me that, in the House, I mainly heard about waste water.

What is your objective for waste water?

[English]

Hon. John Baird: We've been working cooperatively with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, where all 14 ministers of the environment come together. It's not a joint federal-provincial committee; it's a committee because all 14 of us are ministers and it's a shared jurisdiction. They've been working for many years, but we have not been able to bring conclusion until late on essentially the banning of raw secondary effluent into our lakes, waters, and streams. We're working with the provinces, and that should be gazetted in short order.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Lussier: When we talk about waste water, we often think of very costly infrastructure, such as purification plants for waste water treatment.

Are your budgets included in infrastructure projects exchanged between the provinces and federal government? Is infrastructure part of your budget? Are you transferring amounts from your budget to municipal infrastructures?

Hon. John Baird: No. We worked with my colleague Lawrence Cannon, from the Council of Ministers, who is responsible for the infrastructure file. It is very important to work with the provinces and territories and to negotiate an agreement. I believe we've already announced an agreement with British Columbia. We have to work together with the provinces. We accept the fact that this jurisdiction is shared with some of the provinces.

I was very pleased that my colleague Mr. Cannon could work to reach an agreement with Quebec. We're awaiting the priorities of the Province of Quebec. Part of the strategy, \$8 billion, was available to meet new regulations for the first time this year.

Mr. Marcel Lussier: Will the Department of the Environment grant funding for infrastructure out of that \$8 million?

Hon. John Baird: They were ready in Mr. Cannon's department. It's very important.

Mr. Marcel Lussier: All right.

Hon. John Baird: That's why we're working with the provinces. These files aren't simple, and we respect the provinces' jurisdictions. That's something that's very important for us, even for former provincial ministers like me.

Mr. Marcel Lussier: In your—

[English]

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

I will go on to Mr. Christopherson, please.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

I would like to pick up on questions asked by my Bloc colleague and push them a little further.

In your opening remarks—I was disappointed we didn't get copies of those, by the way, because normally we have those to review, but we didn't get them—you did make reference to many lofty goals your government has set for the environment, things you want to achieve, and yet you have a little over \$13 million that wasn't spent in 2006-07 and you want to carry that over into 2007-08.

What I'm having trouble understanding is that with all the pressures you talked about—you told us your budget is limited—and, as we understand it, there's freezing of certain expenditures happening within the ministry, some cuts and reallocations.... With those taking place, and with your goal for the environment being the protection of Canada's environment, there was \$13 million that didn't get spent in that fiscal year. I'm concerned that perhaps you're more concerned about pleasing the finance minister and the Prime Minister, in terms of having money left over, than you are about pushing to fight for the environment.

•(1605)

Hon. John Baird: I'll turn this over to my deputy, but I will say that if I was that concerned about \$13 million, I wouldn't have asked and received \$1.5 billion for the money to go to the provinces to help

fight global warming. I wouldn't have asked for the \$220 million for the Nature Conservancy of Canada; \$30 million for the Great Bear rainforest; the Northwest Territories protected areas strategy; I wouldn't have asked for money to clean up Randle Reef, \$30 million; I wouldn't have asked for money for Lake Winnipeg, for Lake Simcoe, for the Great Lakes, amongst many other things.

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm glad you chose not to answer, Minister.

Hon. John Baird: No. I'm telling you, on a budget approaching \$1 billion.... As a former minister yourself, you'll understand that you don't come right down to the wire, but I'll ask the deputy to—

Mr. David Christopherson: You gave a partial response. Many times, a well-spent and well-placed \$1 million can have what some would see as a \$1 billion impact in terms of keeping a lot of groups going, meeting their staffing needs or all kinds of things. So \$13 million may not seem like much to you, but to the people who pay the bills, that's a lot of money.

With the environment being the priority, how can you come here and say that you have all these fiscal stresses happening within your areas of responsibility but there's still money left over that was already allocated from a previous year?

Hon. John Baird: I'll ask my deputy to respond.

Mr. Michael Horgan (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): In fact, \$13 million is actually pretty close to running the department close to the line. In Environment Canada, the carry-over from year to year has been in the order of \$25 million to \$40 million per year, so a \$13 million carry-over from last year is actually a reflection of how tight the situation is.

It does show that the department is conscientious in terms of trying to reduce its carry-over, but the carry-over in the previous year was, I believe, \$35 million. It's down from \$35 million to \$13 million. Departments are allowed to carry over operating expenditures from one year to another up to a certain limit, and \$13 million is actually fairly....

Hon. John Baird: Your point, though, I think is well taken. There are a lot of needs and there are a lot of priorities.

Mr. David Christopherson: That's my question. That's just my point. I haven't heard it yet. I've heard about circumstances and comparisons to other years, but either the environment is a priority and we need to put every resource....

The money was already approved. It's not like you're in here with new money. So give me a little bit more than just....

Hon. John Baird: Let me just respond. There may be somewhere in the department where someone has left and the position goes unfilled for two or three months while they're seeking a qualified candidate. There may have been some money set aside for someone to take French language training and they weren't able to go for certain reasons. There may have been a group that couldn't spend it by the end of the year. I'll ask my ADM, Basia Ruta, to also respond.

Ms. Basia Ruta (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Environment): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

We can only spend money that Parliament provides to us. As you know, we get money in dribs and drabs through the year. We have the main estimates, and then we have supplementary estimates. So just about every single organization will carry forward an amount. It's a timing difference. Managing to one percent, as our deputy said, is basically what we have to do, or we would not be complying with authorities. We do get some money that comes in at the end of the year.

In terms of your question about what we've done with the \$13 million, well, of course we've allocated that to other priorities, including the Canadian Wildlife Service. We have supplementary estimates before the House. If they are approved, then we'll be able to use that money. Otherwise, we are in a position of only being able to budget and spend the amount of money that Parliament authorizes for us. Indeed, we've done that.

If I could, I'll just provide a bit of a skeleton in terms of our main estimates and our supplementary estimates. Included in our main estimates is also about \$74.5 million that's dedicated for new work. So we have to spend it on clean air initiatives, on toxics, and on the clean air agenda. It's also decreased by a certain amount of temporary funding we had for species at risk, but our supplementary estimates are fixing that. There's a bit of a timing difference. Also, as our minister said, there's an expenditure reduction of somewhere in the order of \$10 million.

So that brings us to a net increase of about \$38 million. Now our supplementary estimates, as we said, are close to about \$290 million, but there's a big item in there for Harbourfront Centre, which we can't use.

So it's a bit more than last year, but we are doing everything we can to reallocate. One other area that we did focus on department-wide was one of our larger expenditures, which is travel and correspondence, and not just in one program. We believed we could create efficiencies, and we've done that as well.

• (1610)

Hon. John Baird: There's no coordinated effort to underspend, let me assure you.

Mr. David Christopherson: I hear you, but I just heard about the expenditure reduction of \$10 million. Is that what you said?

Ms. Basia Ruta: It's just an increase over last year, because in effect, what we have for this year is about \$37 million in total, and that includes...

Mr. David Christopherson: A total for...? That's the expenditure reduction?

Ms. Basia Ruta: That's accumulated. That's right. Basically, it affects our core activities. We're like other departments; we're not the only ones. We would have \$9 million from the expenditure review exercise a few years back, the first round, and in the second round, as our minister has said, there's about \$22 million. Some of these also were government-wide efficiencies that departments had to absorb.

Mr. David Christopherson: Can I get more specifics on what was cut internally to achieve those expenditure reductions?

Ms. Basia Ruta: The vast majority, really, weren't identified at the time from any specific program, so we've been trying to gather efficiencies as we can.

Mr. David Christopherson: I'm sorry, but what does "gather efficiencies" mean? We're hearing, as opposition politicians, there are cuts, there are freezes going on, there are reductions going on inside the ministry, and we have money being carried over, and now I'm hearing about the line expenditure reductions, but you can't tell me exactly where they came from, that they were just cherry-picked along the way. I thought that's how the \$13 million got created.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Well, we've had a very deliberate exercise of going through all of our programs and activities to make sure we understand where the spending is. We've taken some broad-based initiatives, as I mentioned, on travel and conferences, where we have some discretionary spending, to see how much we can reallocate to higher priorities. We've also looked to see what activities we might be able to defer.

Mr. David Christopherson: Like? For instance? Could I please get some details? I'm not hearing anything. With great respect, I'm hearing no detail.

Please tell me, what did you cut? What kinds of things? Somebody?

Hon. John Baird: I'll give two examples. When I arrived at the department I said I was committed to more action and less talk, so I'm not interested in having conferences to discuss a program but in taking action on the program.

In my involvement with the Federal Accountability Act, I said I was not interested in excessive travel, but that it should be focused on important business, such as environmental enforcement and real needs. So I put some markers down on that.

We have some very competent managers within the public service. At the end of the day, you're correct, I'm accountable, but at the same time, we let the managers manage. They're operating a program—

Mr. David Christopherson: Minister, I still haven't heard one program reference, one actual example of where the money was cut.

Hon. John Baird: I gave you two examples, travel and conference spending.

Mr. David Christopherson: And how much is that worth, roughly, in the ballpark?

Ms. Basia Ruta: About \$8 million. We used the \$13 million in carry-forward to reallocate as well. We've had some other areas where we've put more money into programs, but we funded it through some of these—

Hon. John Baird: As a provincial minister, I can remember one social services ministers' meeting where 60 people were part of the federal delegation, and I had seven from Ontario. When it's a ministers' meeting, we try to take smaller delegations. When it's international travel, we try to look at the bare minimum. Where we can use opportunities to use resources locally, we do so. For example, there was a conference in Lisbon, Portugal. Rather than send a delegation from the department, our ambassador represented the government, and I met with Premier Campbell, who was there, to get a debriefing afterwards.

So we're constantly—

Mr. David Christopherson: Let me ask it in this way, then. Have any operational or core responsibilities or functions been trimmed, cut, reallocated?

I'm having some trouble understanding how you met those expenditure controls by using the very techniques you said created the \$13 million. All of this connects.

• (1615)

The Chair: Be very, very brief, if you can.

Your time is up.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chair, I think the main strategy in the previous reductions the department faced was not to affect or terminate specific programs, but to distribute, as best we could, reductions through general restraint. For example, in this last year we deferred a very substantial portion of capital, I think in the neighbourhood of \$6 million. So what was part of the capital plan in the department, for example, for fleet renewal was cancelled for this year. Our objective was to reduce travel by 20% and hospitality by 10%. Our general restraint would have affected our training expenditures, for example, so conference attendance, regrettably, would perhaps have been delayed or restricted to a smaller number of people. We evaluated what meetings we might have had people at but decided, unfortunately, were perhaps less essential than others.

Those are the kinds of things that have been distributed across programs.

Mr. David Christopherson: None of those things—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. You were here last week, on Thursday, and now again, so I appreciate your commitment to providing answers to this committee.

Minister, I'd like you to set the record straight. You tried to do that earlier. Some Liberal members accused you of misquoting Mr. Steiner and Mr. Gore, and I believe you have some quotes, or possibly a video.

Hon. John Baird: I'm not perfect, I do make mistakes, but I'm an honest person. The Liberal critic basically accused me of dishonesty, of making things up. He used two examples the other day, for one of which I gave him a written letter with a signature on it and he was still totally going full speed ahead.

He also said I "misquoted", was the word he used. Mr. Gore said I "mischaracterized". My response to the question in the House of Commons from which this quote was raised just simply didn't characterize it at all; here's what he said.

[*Video Presentation*]

An hon. member: It's well edited.

Hon. John Baird: I'll give the full videotape. The reality is, I think there could be some honour. You spoke something that wasn't true and you were caught in a lie.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I have a point of order, Chair, and I don't want this coming off my time.

We had a presentation from the minister. We were polite, we listened to your questions, some of them were not very good, but, Chair, I do not want them using our time.

The Chair: We're just about finished our time. I would really like to hear the minister and give him every opportunity.

Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I understand what the parliamentary secretary has just told us, but I remind you that questions must be directly related to today's subject under study and agenda. I believe the video is unrelated to today's study. I understand my colleague's point of order, but I also ask you, Mr. Chair, to call the minister back to order when he speaks off topic.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bigras, I've been on a lot of committees, and I know that when a minister comes we've always tried to make the range as broad as we can, and I believe that's the way most members want it.

So I would ask Mr. Warawa to continue.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Just for clarification, that's not coming off my time, right?

The Chair: No, agreed, I've reduced that.

Hon. John Baird: I'll put the transcript of the various quotes here, which will show that it was exactly, 100% exactly, as I said and another person was exactly wrong. If they don't have the honour to apologize and take it back, that will speak to their integrity, not mine.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Minister, thank you so much for that clarification, and thank you also for providing those quotes to the committee.

Minister, on September 25 you instructed Environment Canada to provide the Canadian Wildlife Service the financial flexibility needed to deliver critical programs and services. Can you tell us why you felt it necessary to make that release?

• (1620)

Hon. John Baird: Conservation is a significant priority for me, for the government, for the Prime Minister, for our caucus. The Canadian Wildlife Service's budget will be increased by 13% from last year. But, inevitably, from year to year, one year you may focus on certain species, on certain activities, and the next year you may focus on a different one.

Across the 8,000 people who work in the department, sometimes people may not be thrilled that their project isn't where the resources were going this year, but the bottom line is a 13% increase in spending. It's gone to \$84.5 million compared to \$75 million last year. This is a significant priority, and we're doing our best to meet the challenges.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Minister.

Funding to outside stakeholders to take action on protecting species at risk, monitoring migratory birds, preserving habitat, and supporting science has seen an increase as well. Can you tell us how much the increase is and the importance of the outside stakeholders?

Hon. John Baird: Could you address that, please?

The Chair: Could you identify yourself, please?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Stewardship Branch, Department of the Environment): I'm Cynthia Wright. I'm the associate ADM of the Environmental Stewardship Branch.

For the area of the Wildlife Service and conservation programs, we're now spending \$30 million. I think you're asking about grants and contributions, but overall the departmental grants and contributions budget also increased. That's the largest amount we've ever spent dedicated to wildlife and biodiversity.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Minister, the salary budget for staff at Canadian Wildlife also has increased, is that correct?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: Yes, the budget for CWS in the salary budget, with the approval of the supplementary (A) amount, will be \$35.9 million, which is the largest it's ever been. Just to give you an idea, five years ago it was \$23.4 million.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So doing the math here, we've seen spending for Canadian Wildlife increasing, Minister, you said from \$75 million to \$84.5 million, and that was a 13% increase. We've seen funding to outside stakeholders to take action on species at risk increased by 46%, which is really good news. Also, the staff budget at Canadian Wildlife has increased by \$7.5 million, a 24% increase.

The work at Canadian Wildlife is very important. I did a little research. Their work includes developing a recovery strategy for species at risk, like the caribou recovery strategy. It includes work on migratory bird regulations, on destroying nests. It includes supporting bird surveys in priority areas such as birds oiled at sea and the red knot wild bird influenza survey. It includes measuring toxic substances in species, and it includes management of protected areas, including the Portobello Creek national wildlife area in New Brunswick and Last Mountain Lake national wildlife area in Saskatchewan, and on and on. It's been very involved and very successful.

Minister, you came out to British Columbia, I think it was about a year ago now, and announced the Great Bear rainforest...which I was very happy about because it was an opportunity that the previous government passed on, and talked about and thought about. But it was you, Minister, who came out to British Columbia and made that announcement. You had a long record of protecting very fragile environmental areas in Canada, and you've accomplished an amazing amount in this last year.

My question to you is, why would the NDP vote against protecting the Great Bear rainforest?

Hon. John Baird: This was something some groups I met with pointed to, both the Great Bear rainforest and the Nahanni National Park reserve, that if you wanted to show you were serious about the environment, here would be two quick actions you could take, and we delivered on both.

Why I'm so big on it is not just the great conservation move, but it's \$30 million from the federal government. We're leveraging \$30 million from the province that's been sitting there for two years, and they raised \$60 million, much of it from the United States. People felt so strongly and passionately about protecting this great area of our country that they were putting up their own money.

I'm very big on leveraging additional resources, and that's why in a plan with the Nature Conservancy of Canada we put up \$220 million. They have to match that. We made an announcement in Essex recently where \$1.4 million is leveraging almost \$7 million, between the conservation authority, the local community, the province, and the federal government. So we're able to go a lot farther a lot faster, which is a good use of dollars.

The exciting thing about conservation is, people are passionate about it in this country and they're prepared to make charitable contributions in this regard. We saw some of the tax changes that were made by the Minister of Finance, which have helped assist this. We want to encourage more of this for people to understand that they have a stake in our environment and that government has an important role to provide leadership. But we've got to see real action on the ground from Canadians, and we're seeing it.

• (1625)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Minister.

I believe I have a few minutes left. I'd like to give Mr. Watson an opportunity to ask a question.

The Chair: Very briefly, Mr. Watson.

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

The question of fiscal management is always important, ensuring you have the adequate resource levels to get the priorities you want efficiently.

You mentioned a cut at Environment Canada caused you some problems in funding, that one being attributable to the now leader of the opposition when he was minister in 2005. What effects did those cuts have on your department?

Hon. John Baird: It put the department in a squeeze. I understand difficult decisions have to be made from time to time—that's the case in every government—but if you're going to cut the budget, you should implement the budget cut and not just slough it off on someone else, and that's what I felt was done here. That caused me great concern.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Separating fact from fiction, there was a rumour in the media—

Hon. John Baird: That makes it a phantom. It's taken from the department, and then the good people in the department are left to juggle the balls and try to deal with it, and they did that successfully for two or three years.

The Chair: One final question, Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you.

There was a recent rumour in the media about a contract for \$60,000 to improve morale. Can you set the record straight on that? Is that true?

Hon. John Baird: One television network keeps reporting this, and in fact there was never any money—\$60,000—spent on morale boosting. There was \$60,000 spent on values and ethics in the public service, which is a big priority for this government, a big priority for leaders within the public service. I think it was money well spent. I think it was shameful that this misrepresentation tried to mischaracterize the judgment of people in the department and me.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watson.

I'll now go to Mr. Godfrey. Could you take about three minutes, and then we'll end this session?

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): I'd just like to be clear about the famous Al Gore situation. You're quoting him on February 6, 2007, but that's actually before you released your climate change plan on April 26, 2007. Wasn't that when you issued the "Turning the Corner" climate strategy?

Hon. John Baird: I made no reference to the strategy. I did not characterize the quote. I just delivered the quote as it was written. If you read Hansard—and I've provided a copy for you there—the Liberal member had quoted Goldman Sachs. I said—

Hon. John Godfrey: Well, I guess the question is how you explain the fact, then, that on February 12, following your quoting of him, Al Gore says, "I understand that last week Canada's minister of the environment, John Baird, mischaracterized comments I made last summer"—that is to say, the summer of 2006—"as praise for the... government's actions on global warming". He was saying what he hoped you would do would be in fact to carry on the good work of the previous government.

Hon. John Baird: I expect some Liberal researchers were in touch with the former Vice-President's office on this. I'm not taking issue with what Mr. Gore said later. It was said here at committee last week that I misquoted the man. It is factually incorrect. It was said last week that I misquoted Achim Steiner—factually incorrect. If a member is going to come and lie to this committee, I'm going to call him to task.

There's a pattern here with this family. One of my cabinet colleagues had to sue his brother for lying, and hundreds of thousands of dollars of legal expenses later, he finally apologized.

Hon. John Godfrey: I'm not here to discuss families, Mr. Baird. I just want to point out the importance of putting quotations in context, in their time.

I do have a quick question for you.

An hon. member: [Inaudible—Editor]

Hon. John Godfrey: My quick question is—

An hon. member: [Inaudible—Editor]

The Chair: Order.

Hon. John Godfrey: Look, by training, I'm a historian and a journalist, and all I ask is that quotations be given in their context.

The question I really want to ask you is, showing the concern you have in recent times for issues concerning climate change, why have

you actually cut funding to or ceased funding with new money two organizations, the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences—which, at a time when we need to know more about these things, I would have thought deserved more funding—and the Canadian Climate Impacts and Adaptation Research Network, which lost its funding in June 2006 and then was closed for good on June 30, 2007?

As we're trying to understand climate impacts and climate science, why have you cut funding to science?

• (1630)

The Chair: You can answer very briefly, Mr. Minister.

Hon. John Baird: I'll address the first one. I probably won't have time to go through them all.

The previous government had given money to Dr. Gordon McBean, a well-respected scientist. As it was presented to me by the public service, that money was to last him till 2010, and he spent it before then and expected to be able to come back, despite having been given money to last until 2010, to get more money.

I have to scratch my head sometimes and wonder, was there some sort of a strategy to do everything but reduce carbon? We have a gazillion reports, a gazillion science...that says greenhouse gases are going up and here are the terrible consequences. We're focused on getting greenhouse gases to go down.

Hon. John Godfrey: So you don't think we need any more scientific investigation.

Hon. John Baird: I think science is fantastic. We need a lot more—

Hon. John Godfrey: On the subject of adaptation and climate change...?

Hon. John Baird: And mitigation? At some point, though, you have to do something to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases going into the mix. We had been doing everything in this country but reducing greenhouse gases.

Every single mitigation study has said the best thing you can do is reduce the amount of carbon going into our atmosphere. As someone who has read the science, been briefed on the science, and is passionate about this, I say we must at some point actually have the rubber hit the road and reduce greenhouse gases going into our atmosphere.

We have to do it here in Canada, and we have to do it around the world. Long since past are the days when we just studied the problem to death. It requires action. That's the mandate I was given by the Prime Minister and that's what I'm doing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I guess I could bring that message from London last week as well, that we all have to do something. There is not a single country in the world that doesn't have to do something.

I want to thank you for being here.

We'll now go to the officials for three quarters of an hour and then we will go to future business.

Mr. Regan, five minutes.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

When the minister was here last week I asked him to direct his officials to prepare and provide to us a chart similar to the graph he had on the fourth page of his presentation. This chart, though, would show us in per capita terms the projected growth of greenhouse gases in the major countries across the world that are major greenhouse gas producers. The one last week showed the comparison between China and India and Canada and the U.S. and so forth in total volume terms. Obviously we have a much smaller population, and in terms of looking at our share and doing our share, each of us as individuals, it's much more valuable and more relevant, it seems to me, to look at a per capita graph in that sense.

I'm wondering when I can expect to receive that.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chairman, we have noted that request in the department and are working on that. I'm not sure when exactly we'll be able to provide that to the committee, but the request has not been lost.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you.

I'd like you to give us an update with respect to an Inuit impact and benefit agreement for Nunavut. I'm looking for it verbally today, if you could, but also for any and all background and supporting documentation that you could provide for us.

As I'm sure you know, Inuit organizations and the Canadian Wildlife Service began negotiations in 2002 for an umbrella IBA, and this included migratory bird sanctuaries in national wildlife areas in Nunavut. In fact, I understand there were a total of 13 conservation areas with nine affected communities. These negotiations were completed in 2006, and there was supposed to be a Treasury Board submission in February of this year that would have concluded the agreement and allowed the funds to flow. But apparently officials did not get the Treasury Board sign-offs, so that didn't happen.

The question is, when does the Canadian Wildlife Service expect the funds to flow? There are a lot of questions about a funding cut or a funding freeze for the Canadian Wildlife Service, of course. Is this connected to the IBA not moving forward?

• (1635)

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: That agreement is still going through the approval process. It was finalized early in this year, so it's not part of the Canadian Wildlife Service budget that's before you. We're still finalizing the approvals through the government process.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Has, in fact, a proposal gone to Treasury Board, and if not, will there be one going to Treasury Board soon? If so, what's the timeline you're looking at, and what's the next window of opportunity to make a Treasury Board submission?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: We hope to be able to take it to Treasury Board as soon as possible, and that would be early in the new year.

Hon. Geoff Regan: So January, you think?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: We hope so.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Okay.

The question for me is, if it was supposed to be February of this year, it suggests the possibility of a problem. I take it that means you are still committed to this agreement. Is it your impression that Treasury Board is looking favourably upon it, and furthermore, will funding come through INAC through its land claims envelope for this kind of program?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: I can't speak for how Treasury Board will speak about it, but it is part of a larger discussion on a land claims envelope that INAC is in charge of.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Let me turn to the question of the Atlantic coastal action program, which has provided funding for a lot of groups that are doing worthwhile work on the coastal areas of Atlantic Canada, such as environmental rehabilitation and other kinds of activity.

My understanding is that officials have indicated that the department is committed to ACAP for another two years. Generally speaking, in the past, the commitment has been for five years, which of course allows stability for these groups in their planning. The question I have is, why not five years again? Is this an indication that this government is not that committed to it? Is it in fact being phased out?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: It's not that it's being phased out. You're right that normally we had these plans on a five-year cycle. But we had various kinds of plans. We've had Great Lakes, St. Lawrence, northern ecosystems, boreal forests, as well as the ACAP and the Georgia Basin.

We're trying to put them all on the same cycle—for those that were going to end, we just extended them for a two-year period—so we can look at them all collectively and make sure we're trying to achieve the same kinds of objectives and outcomes across the department on all of these six major ecosystems.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to know when the last audit of the department was conducted.

Mr. Ian Shugart: We have a complete internal audit program. An annual plan is used to examine programs, a kind of reference framework for determining in advance those programs that are to be audited in terms of risk. We've also established an outside committee responsible for audit. It took up its duties this year. I don't know whether we exactly have the last audit, but, as regards programs, here we're talking about an ongoing plan based on a risk analysis.

Ms. Basia Ruta: I simply want to add that, once the reports are completed, they are available on our Web site.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: What is the planned date of the next one?

• (1640)

Ms. Basia Ruta: A number are currently underway.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: All right, but are there deadlines?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Yes.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: What are they?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Everything depends on the scope of the evaluation.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Could you file the planned deadlines for the internal audits underway with the committee?

Mr. Ian Shugart: That's in our audit plan. We can do that after the committee meeting.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I'm going back to the national wildlife reserves once again because there is a lot of pressure on this subject in our ridings. I'd like you to tell me about budgets in recent years and to tell me if I'm mistaken. I was told that the budget was previously in the order of \$1.9 million, but that it had undergone major cuts on Canada's national wildlife reserves.

Is it true that this program has lost a lot of its funding and that it could even lose it completely?

[English]

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: With regard to the total budget that we spend on all of our protected areas—we have national wildlife areas and migratory bird sanctuaries—our total spending is about \$3.6 million annually. That is a little down from previous years just in the area of the operating budget. The salaries have stayed the same and grants and contributions have stayed the same. We're doing more ourselves, and there are groups that have

[Translation]

formed presenting themselves as friends of a given reserve. We occasionally give them money to do work.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I see you refer to reserves in a broad sense. National wildlife reserves had a budget of \$1.9 million, I believe.

Can you confirm that?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: No, it's more. It's approximately \$3.6 million a year.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: And how big is the budget now? I want to know whether budgets have increased or decreased in recent years and by how much?

[English]

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: In the operating budget, the budget has gone down slightly. In the salaries budget, our people stayed the same.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: What do you mean by “has gone down slightly”?

[English]

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: I'd have to get the details for that particular program area. I only have—

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I see you have some figures before you. Can you table them?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: They are simply the figures for this year. I've already told you that it was \$3.6 million.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: And how much was it last year?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: I don't know the details for last year.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Can you table the figures for last year and the last two years with the committee?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: We can do it at least for 2005 and 2006.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: All right. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bigras.

Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you, Chair.

I have a couple of small matters first, and I'm not laying any traps; I really am just looking for an answer. I'll let you know when it's different. I will.

On page 143, at vote 1a (g)—these are transfers under operating expenses—it says, “the payment to each member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada who is a Minister without Portfolio or a Minister of State who does not preside over a Ministry of State of a salary not to exceed...”, etc. Is that just for ministers related to the environment?

Ms. Basia Ruta: I'm just trying to.... I have an excerpt here of page 143.

Mr. David Christopherson: It's on page 143, right in the middle of the page: vote 1a (g).

I'm assuming it's probably for ministers of state or such matters that are attached to the environment. But if not, I'd be curious to know why.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Is it in the main estimates or in the supplementary estimates?

Mr. David Christopherson: It's in supps.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Oh, yes, I have page 143 here.

Every minister—it's a statutory amount that we get from Treasury Board Secretariat—has a budget for their office and their staff. This is, essentially, the budget our minister has, the Minister of the Environment. It would be the same if you go to—

Mr. David Christopherson: But it's limited to ministers related to the environment?

Ms. Basia Ruta: Yes, that's right—and their staff.

Mr. David Christopherson: Okay. I was just looking to see whether it was possibly for anything else, because things do happen.

This one is an even smaller amount. I'm just curious as to what it is: “Transfer to the Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada—To support the National Managers' Community”, followed by dots. What comes after “Community” and the dots that follow it? It's “To support the National Managers' Community”...something.

• (1645)

Mr. Michael Horgan: I believe there's a sort of middle managers community that's been formed in the Government of Canada, and—

Mr. David Christopherson: By “community”, do you mean an organization—

Mr. Michael Horgan: Well, it's not really an organization; it's just that middle managers have been identified as an important part of the management team—a category. As I understand it, there's an annual conference, for example, that takes place. There's some training for middle managers that's organized by that particular agency. What happens is that all departments get “taxed”, if you will, on the basis of their proportion of middle managers.

Mr. David Christopherson: So it's your contribution to this group for middle managers; it's the environment ministry's part of it.

Mr. Michael Horgan: Exactly.

Mr. David Christopherson: I've got it. Good. Thanks.

Now, for the “Major Projects Management Office”, there's \$2.2 million to “improve the regulatory system for major natural resource projects”. The total for that initiative is \$19.6 million.

I'll just give you all the questions. I'm running out of time, I know.

What is that? Where is it going to be? What role will it play with the environmental assessment coordinator, as outlined in the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. I could read that, but I won't use the time.

They're a coordinator, too:

The role of a federal environmental assessment coordinator is to coordinate the participation of federal authorities in the environmental assessment process for a project where a screening or comprehensive study is or might be required

—blah, blah, blah.

What is this entity, where is it going to be, and how does its role potentially overlap with that of the assessment coordinator?

Mr. Michael Horgan: The Major Projects Management Office is going to be set up under the auspices of Natural Resources Canada. It's going to just play a coordinating role in terms of bird-dogging: making sure that the environmental assessment process is moving along, but as well, once an environmental assessment is done and decisions are taken, making sure that departments are following up on the permitting process.

Mr. David Christopherson: So it's not a change in the process? It just facilitates it?

Mr. Michael Horgan: No, it's not a change to the process.

What has happened is that in the last budget a certain amount of money has been set aside, for one thing, to set up this major projects office, but also to provide additional moneys to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and to a handful of departments that are most involved in the actual permitting process at the end of the day, increasing their resources so that they can deal with these major projects in a more timely way.

Mr. David Christopherson: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...coordinator, then?

Mr. Michael Horgan: I'm not exactly sure whether the coordinator—

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: The coordination office is going to track the process. They're going to be “one window” for industry to understand where a file is, either in the environmental assessment or in the permitting process. They're going to try to make the permitting process move more smoothly with the environmental assessment—

there have always been criticisms of the lag time between the two processes—and they will help share best practices or troubleshoot any problems among the various departments that issue permits, including Environment Canada.

So the \$2 million you were talking to was for Environment Canada to do better on its permitting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The question I would ask here—and if I had had the time when the minister was in the room, I would have asked him, but I think it can suffice to get that response from you—is on the issue of advertising.

On the matter of advertising in Environment Canada, it was asserted by the Liberals opposite that your department is spending money wildly—big amounts of money and, it was implied, irresponsibly, I guess—on advertising.

I would like to know specifically whether you can you tell us what kind of advertising programs Environment Canada spends its money on, so that you can enlighten all of us and the public as well about your budget for advertising by Environment Canada.

Mr. Michael Horgan: Our advertising budget for 2007-08 is proposed to be just over \$8 million a year. That's for advertising not just Environment Canada, but really for the government's new ecoAction plan. The first component of that campaign was on the ecoEnergy retrofit grant, and that was carried out in the spring and summer of 2007. The second component is going to deal with the ecoAuto fuel efficiency vehicle rebate. And there's an additional amount, over and above the \$8 million, which is \$85,000 to conduct evaluations of the 2006-07 campaigns that ended on March 31, 2007. That's what our advertising budget is.

• (1650)

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I understand those are pretty significant kinds of things. My constituents constantly call our office and want more information on this kind of stuff—and it's good stuff. The retrofit of homes and the rebate on vehicles are pretty crucial stuff.

You probably could have given us much more detail here, but you summed it up in a nutshell pretty quickly. Can you cite the figure again that you spend on advertising, and how does that amount compare to other departments?

Mr. Michael Horgan: To be honest, I couldn't tell you how it compares to other departments.

Basia, do you have a sense of it?

Mr. Ian Shugart: It's less. We don't have here today the numerical comparisons, but we're very confident that the level of advertising in Environment Canada or on the environment file is substantially less than other advertising budgets in government.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Okay.

Ms. Basia Ruta: Mr. Chair, we do have some information available.

Mr. Michael Horgan: Sorry, Mr. Chair. Going by this, the advertising budget of the Department of National Defence in 2007-08 seems to be over \$12 million. For Human Resources and Social Development Canada, it looks to be a little bit over \$12 million as well. For Health Canada, it's \$7 million. Those are some of the comparisons that I have here.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: I guess it would be interesting to know other comparisons on that, but at least in some of those that you cite there, it does seem not unreasonable and well less than some of the other ones. So it's pretty fair, I would think.

Is Environment Canada's advertising budget different from previous years? Can you do a comparison to last year and previous years?

Mr. Michael Horgan: In 2006-07, it was \$2,350,000. I don't have 2005-06, for some reason, but in 2004-05, it was \$8.8 million.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: So it fluctuates. It goes up and down a little bit. Certainly \$8 million is back to a figure you had a couple of years ago as well. We hope the dollar is getting us more these days.

I appreciate your information to us with respect to the advertising, and certainly I would commend you with respect to retrofits on houses and the rebate for vehicles, and so on. My constituents want to know about that kind of stuff. You do need to get that information out to them. I commend you and say that takes the stress off my office when you guys are doing your job in getting that good information out to consumers and my constituents as well.

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Vellacott.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

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

I think Mr. Vellacott is referring to a point I raised in the spring about advertising, which wasn't so much about the amount; it was that the advertising coming out at that particular time seemed to have a political slant to it. In fact, I think the government is blurring the lines between government and political advertising.

That was confirmed when I saw, as the backdrop for a slide that Minister Baird showed last week, a clip or photo from a Conservative attack ad. I think that's highly unprofessional. I think you should balk when that is requested of you as departmental officials.

I'd like to discuss the Canada Water Act. Under section 38 of the Canada Water Act, the Minister of the Environment, I believe, is required to prepare an annual report on the operations undertaken by the government with respect to the management of water resources in Canada. Is that correct?

Mr. Michael Martin (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Have you reported since the new government has come into power?

Mr. Michael Martin: No, we have not.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So you'd be in violation of the act.

• (1655)

Mr. Michael Martin: We are late with our reporting, sir.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You'd be in violation of the act. And I make that point after listening to the minister brag about his interest in water issues. We still don't have a document called a "national water strategy" do we?

Mr. Michael Martin: No.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That was a no.

Mr. Michael Martin: The national water strategy, sir, was a part of Budget 2007. The details of it were described in the budget. There has been a series of announcements since that time for specific projects under the strategy.

The Chair: May I ask you to identify yourself?

Mr. Michael Martin: I'm sorry. My name is Michael Martin. I'm the Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic Policy at Environment Canada.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: The man who wrote the 1987 water strategy said, as of two weeks ago, that your government's approach to a national water strategy, and I quote, "is neither national nor strategic".

We still don't have regulations under CEPA to regulate phosphates in dishwashing detergents. Is that correct?

Mr. John Carey (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Technology Branch, Department of the Environment): My name is John Carey. I'm acting assistant deputy minister for science and technology.

We have regulations under CEPA for laundry detergent but not for automatic dishwashing detergent.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: The issue of blue-green algae has been in the news for months and months and months. This committee even had hearings on the subject. We even passed a motion, which we sent to the House of Commons. The government can change the regulations on the Motor Vehicle Safety Act in 15 days to allow Canadians to import cars from the United States and take advantage of the lower exchange rate, which I agree with—I wrote to the minister to ask him to make those changes—so why can't the Minister of the Environment make a small change to CEPA when the Canadian Specialty Products Association is asking for a regulation to bring the level of phosphates in dishwasher detergent down to .5%? What's taking so long?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: We have the authority to act, but it's a question of priorities. The ministry outlined a number of priorities we're working on, and phosphate from dishwashing liquid detergent is apparently 1% of the problem. Our priority is the municipal waste water regulations, which are a more significant way of controlling the problem.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: When it comes to municipal waste water, we hear that the amount of money that's being committed to this is not anywhere near what the municipalities feel should be allocated. Is it true that the government is thinking of bringing the private sector in as an investor in municipal waste water?

Mr. Michael Horgan: I'm afraid you would have to speak to the—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's fine. I take your point. I don't have much time so I have to rush through these questions.

It is reported that the old Expo site in Montreal is leaking PCBs into the St. Lawrence and that the Commission for Environmental Cooperation is sitting on a report. Do you know, or do you suspect, that this allegation is true, that PCBs are seeping into the St. Lawrence? And if the CEC won't release the report, are you taking any steps to verify whether this claim is true or not?

Mr. Michael Horgan: I'm not aware of that, sorry. I'll look into it.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

I'd like to speak about mining tailings. That was in the news a while ago because it wasn't certain whether the mining industry was required to report mining tailings under the national pollutant release inventory. Was that ever cleared up?

Mr. John Carey: The effluent from mine tailings is required to be reported, but the waste rock from mining activities is not.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: What about the tailings ponds in the tar sands? Are they required to be reported?

Mr. John Carey: They're not an emission.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But are they required to be reported to the Government of Canada?

Mr. John Carey: Not as part of an emissions reporting system.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are they reported in any way, shape or form?

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

If you want to answer that in the next round, you may.

Mr. Harvey.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Good afternoon. Thank you for being here and for clarifying certain points.

Sometimes a number of prejudices appear in the opposition members with regard to budget developments and things like that. The fact that you're appearing here in a neutral and impartial light gives credibility to the direction the department has taken and to various decisions.

A news release entitled, "Environment Minister John Baird Moves to Protect Environmental Programs," was issued on September 25.

Are you aware of that?

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Ian Shugart: I'm not sure what exactly the release is—

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey: It's dated September 25: "Environment Minister John Baird Moves to Protect Environmental Programs". It states, among other things, that the minister has instructed his officials:

to provide the financial flexibility required to programs and services in critical areas, such as the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Meteorological Service of Canada.

It also states:

The Government of Canada has invested \$375 million in funding for conservation programs, which is the largest investment in conservation ever. This includes \$225 million for sensitive species and ecosystems with the Nature Conservancy of

Canada, \$30 million for the Great Bear Rainforest, and millions for Stanley Park in Vancouver and Point Pleasant Park in Halifax.

Is this information accurate?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Yes, it is.

Mr. Luc Harvey: It further states:

We have invested an additional \$110 million to protect species at risk as well as \$10 million for protected areas in the Northwest Territories.

Is that accurate as well?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Yes, sir.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Since it's accurate, do you think that what has been done for the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Meteorological Service of Canada is enough?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chair, our strategy, from the standpoint of financial managers, is to support the department's programs with the available funding allocated by Parliament. From the standpoint of program managers—and I imagine this is quite difficult—there is always pressure as a result of which additional funding would be useful. That isn't our choice; that's Parliament's decision.

The programs mentioned in Mr. Baird's new release, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Meteorological Service of Canada, were priorities. As I just said, there are operational pressures in these budgets and at the department, and that continues. The route our minister and managers are taking is to support the most sensitive, the most important programs and to manage available funding in order to guarantee that those programs operate well.

As to whether those actions are enough, I'd say that's a matter of judgment and the ultimate judgment is for Parliament and for the government to make.

Mr. Luc Harvey: Is the amount allocated to you to discharge your responsibilities enough?

Mr. Ian Shugart: We believe that, to date, the various aspects of the programs are covered by available funding. There are pressures, but they are not serious enough to jeopardize the most important aspects of Environment Canada's programs. I believe my colleague Cynthia Wright, who knows the program better, said that the aspects of the program were covered by available funding.

• (1705)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Godfrey.

Hon. John Godfrey: This is a series of questions, for Cynthia Wright perhaps.

I'm a little confused. During the week of September 17 of this year, reports were saying things such as the environmental monitoring and assessment network, which observes changes in ecosystems, had lost 80% of its budget; the migratory bird program, monitoring the health of the bird population, had seen its budget cut by 50%; and the budget for national wildlife areas, a program that protects nationally significant habitats for wildlife and birds, had been slashed from \$1.9 million to zero. Then the following week, as has been alluded to, the minister made an announcement that sounded like a restoration of funding.

To your knowledge, was there ever a time when that description, that cuts were either planned or contemplated for those three activities, was accurate? You did say there had been a reduction of the budget, but to your knowledge, were those three things I talked about in the works, or where did that story come from?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: That story has been puzzling to a lot of us. Like a lot of stories, there are elements of reality, but the specifics are quite puzzling.

The ecological monitoring and assessment network you mentioned is a very small program in Environment Canada. Essentially we coordinate and help other community groups share their environmental information. We're conducting a review of all of our monitoring, including our biodiversity monitoring. We've slowed down on some of the expenditures in that area, but we are still maintaining the coordinating function.

With respect to the protected areas budget and the migratory birds numbers, I don't understand the story that was reported in the news.

We did have a tight situation in our operating budget. That's the budget for buying small equipment, paying travel expenses, contracting, and that sort of thing. What we've done is to assess our priorities. We've reduced spending in terms of the number of people we send to meetings and conferences. We're focusing on mandatory training in priority areas—

Hon. John Godfrey: Can I ask whether there was any moratorium placed on field studies of the Canadian Wildlife Service?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: No, there wasn't.

The way budgets work is that people get a budget at the beginning of the year and they start making commitments and expenditures against that. We did a six-month review and we asked people to stop making any further commitments at their level. It was still available at a more senior level to make commitments, but we wanted to make sure we weren't foreclosing on prudent decisions we might want to make in terms of priorities.

Hon. John Godfrey: Is the way in which you dealt with these issues different from the previous years?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: No. We made sure everybody understood that we didn't want any more commitments for a period of time and where they should go if they needed authorization for spending.

Hon. John Godfrey: So there was no cessation of field studies that were under way as a result of that decision. Everything has gone forward.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair.

Again, thank you for your patience. You've been here a long time, and I'm sure you're getting quite tired.

My question is related to the \$17 million cut from the previous Minister of the Environment, now the Liberal leader. Could you elaborate on what problems that caused?

Who can answer that for me?

Mr. Michael Horgan: I'll take a crack at it.

As the minister indicated earlier, governments take decisions about reducing expenditures in departments. There have been several rounds of expenditure reductions, which usually take two forms: sometimes the actual programs and things being cut are identified; sometimes it comes out of the department's general operating revenues, so the department faces a reduction and has to operate with the lower amount of money available to it. There have been a series of those kinds of expenditure reductions over time.

The department has a budget, and we work at trying to live within that budget.

• (1710)

Mr. Mark Warawa: It does put stress on the department if you are missing \$17 million.

Mr. Michael Horgan: All expenditure reductions, particularly ones that are not identified up front, put pressure on the department to manage, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Mark Warawa: My question is, has the minister made it very clear? We've heard the priorities that he's provided, but has he made it very clear that the priority of the government is to see absolute reductions of 20% by 2020; 60% to 70% reductions by 2050; and we're looking for the co-benefits of having pollution being dropped? These reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will make for some of the toughest drops of emissions in the world, but has he also made it very clear that we're committing to halving the levels of pollution by 2015? Has he made that very clear?

Mr. Michael Horgan: Those are certainly the objectives the government has set out, and they're very clear to us.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I do appreciate your patience, as you've had many questions from us.

We've heard, clearly, some of the difficulties that previous Liberal cuts have caused, but we've also clearly heard the commitments from the minister, and the staff of the department have clearly shared that the commitment from the government, from the minister, is these absolute reductions.

He's also shared, Chair, very clearly that this government is going to be going to Bali—we talked about that last Thursday—and he shared with some of the members of the committee, both last Thursday and today, those commitments to ask all major emitters to be part of the solution. As this committee has heard numerous times, my desire is that we start focusing on solutions and stop the rhetoric. Let's look at solutions like things you'd like to see, Chair, and some good healthy discussions on gasification of garbage, carbon sequestration, clean coal technologies, and on and on.

I think it would be very appropriate that I move a motion, Chair, that we as a committee support the call of the government to have all the major emitters participating in targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We've heard clearly over the months that without all the major emitters participating and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the emissions will continue to rise globally. That's our goal as a government, and I hope it's the goal of every member here. So this is my motion, that we do call on all major emitters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Hon. Geoff Regan: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, as there's already a motion on the floor, this motion is out of order. It was made at the last meeting, in fact, and is still under discussion; therefore—

A voice: It was on the agenda.

Hon. Geoff Regan: That's true also. I provided notice of motion. It's not arising from this.

The Chair: Could you just read that again for me, please, Mr. Warawa?

Mr. Mark Warawa: The motion is that this environment committee call on all major emitting countries to accept caps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to fight climate change.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warawa.

Yes, Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, I remind you that a notice of motion is already on the agenda and that that motion takes precedence over the one my colleague has just introduced.

[*English*]

The Chair: First of all, in answer to Mr. Regan's comment, there isn't a motion on the floor as such. The motion died as of the last meeting, a similar motion that Mr. Warawa made. Of course, as you know, I wasn't here.

As far as Mr. Bigras' motion, this motion, is concerned, if it were deemed to be on the subject of the day, it would supersede yours. However, I don't believe it's on the subject of the day. I believe we're here to talk about estimates. While I might totally agree with the nature of the motion, I don't believe it's related to what our witnesses are here for. Therefore, I would rule that motion out of order.

I believe you have a minute or so left, but I think the time has come and we now should move on to our third topic.

I would like to thank our witnesses for being here and ask you to leave, and we'll carry on with our third item.

Yes, Mr. Godfrey.

Hon. John Godfrey: I have a point of order on the estimates. I am assuming that if we do nothing they will be deemed—

The Chair: They have already been reported. Basically this was for information and advice to the committee. So that is done.

Members, the question is whether we stay televised or whether we go in camera. What is the wish of the committee?

Mr. McGuinty, have you got a comment on that?

Mr. David McGuinty: Televised is fine.

The Chair: Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Yes, that's fine.

[*English*]

The Chair: Televised, Mr. Warawa? Let's get agreement on that.

Mr. Vellacott, you had a question related to televised.... Their cameras are on.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, I don't particularly have a problem with it being televised, but the norm is that it's not televised. We had it televised because of the minister being here. Is that not correct?

The Chair: Those in favour of it being televised?

Okay, Mr. Vellacott, what is your discussion on this?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: With respect to the motion, to have it or not to have it, when we look at the disastrous and embarrassing way the Liberals acted last Thursday—let me finish, Mr. Chair.

You were not here, so I'll just enlighten you to clue you into what happened. I would say it's an embarrassment to this committee and it's why one would maybe not want to have this televised in this instance if it's going to degrade into that kind of scenario.

I was in discussion. We had a reasonable motion on the floor to the effect that this committee resume, and we carried on affirming the minister, wishing him and his delegation well in their journey to Indonesia, to Bali, and I was enlightening the committee. We had Mr. Regan in the chair at that point, and they began to make some mocking noises, and they walked away and collapsed the debate.

The Chair: Mr. Vellacott, I think the problem with that motion really is that it's not about the estimates. So I think that ruling has been made.

Mr. Bigras, you had a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, I'd like to immediately table a motion so that we can go to the agenda.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk advises me that this is on our agenda today, so we'll go immediately to Mr. Bigras' motion.

Mr. Bigras' motion, as I understand it, is that we proceed to dealing with his motion.

Some hon. members: It's non-debatable.

The Chair: Those in favour?

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

• (1720)

The Chair: Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, I'd like to table a motion.

[*English*]

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

The Chair: We're going to debate his motion once he tables it.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair.

The second paragraph on page 338 of Marleau and Montpetit says:

Usually, quorum is quickly restored so that the House may proceed with the business before it. Should the House be required to adjourn for lack of quorum, any Order of the Day under consideration at the time, with the exception of an item of Private Members' Business not selected to come to a vote, retains its precedence on the Order Paper for the next sitting.

Now, this is referring to business in the House, but very clearly what happened, Mr. Chair, is that a motion had been tabled and was in the middle of debate when—and this is televised, so people will hear very clearly—every member on that other side stood up and walked out of this meeting. They started off with counting, and then off they went.

The chair of the meeting, Mr. Regan, then said we did not have quorum, when in fact, Mr. Chair, we did have quorum. If you look at the rules, to have quorum you need to have a member of the opposition; we did have a member of the opposition and five members of the government, so when the members stood up and marched out, we had a reduced quorum. For the meeting to have been called was not appropriate. Then we go back to our procedure; it says that the business that was being discussed now takes precedence.

My question is through you to the clerk. Using Marleau and Montpetit, would it not indicate that the item that should be taking precedence is the motion that the members of the opposition tried to keep from being debated by getting up and walking out of this meeting?

The Chair: There is a point of order.

Mr. Bigras, we'll hear that and then I'll confer with the clerk.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, you've ruled on that matter. You've made a ruling. If my colleague doesn't agree with that ruling, he need only overturn it.

[English]

The Chair: I did rule on the new motion of Mr. Vellacott. I ruled on Mr. Vellacott's motion and I then asked about television. Let me go back to the point Mr. Warawa has just raised about the last meeting and where that stands .

I don't think we need a lot more discussion. Do you have something new to add, Mr. Vellacott?

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Yes, I do. Just very simply, this is in the Standing Orders. It's in section 116, and I quote directly. It says:

In a standing, special or legislative committee, the Standing Orders shall apply so far as may be applicable, except the Standing Orders as to the election of a Speaker, seconding of motions, limiting the number of times of speaking and the length of speeches.

Aside from those exceptions, Mr. Chair—and to our clerk as well—those Standing Orders adopted over in that place there—in the chamber, that is—apply in respect of this committee. So what Mr. Warawa quotes from Marleau and Montpetit here is in fact that quorum, if it's not restored, is in fact an adjournment:

...any Order of the Day under consideration at the time, with the exception of an item of Private Members' Business...retains its precedence on the Order Paper for the next sitting.

We have resumed sitting again today. This is the very first meeting thereafter, and according to Marleau and Montpetit, it should be the

precedent order of business that we deal with today. I'm citing the Standing Orders. If we want to make up other stuff, I suppose it's possible, but it's here as well in section 116.

● (1725)

The Chair: The problem I definitely have is that when we go to the Speaker or to the clerks in the House, they will tell us that parliamentary committees are really responsible for their own decisions, that in fact there isn't an order paper or set of rules that apply to committees. I've heard this many, many times, that committees control their own destiny, so to speak. They elect a chair to make decisions, they have a steering committee, they have a committee, and those decisions are made.

So I guess I have real trouble with bringing back a motion that couldn't have been voted on, a motion that was made, in effect, when the committee had ended. In fact, we had a new motion brought forward. That new motion, I believe, was out of order simply because it didn't deal with the subject on the table, the estimates, which I think it had to deal with.

I think Mr. Bigras' motion is in the order papers, and that's what we are here to deal with. We have roughly five minutes left to deal with his motion.

Of course, we also need some agreement about Thursday's meeting in terms of arranging witnesses and carrying on further with Bill C-377. But we have to call those witnesses now. I believe three have been approached and are tentatively available for Bill C-377, but that needs to be confirmed with them.

Again, the committee, being responsible for its own destiny, needs to decide if we are going to hear Mr. Layton and the other two witnesses, Aldyen Donnelly and Matthew Bramley. Those three witnesses have been suggested. Of course, it's Mr. Layton's bill.

So we will carry on with that on Thursday. The clerk needs to know right now if we should confirm those speakers for Thursday. That's my first question.

My second is, after we go to the motion of Mr. Bigras and debate it, do members want to return after the vote to carry on with that debate? That's the next question, because this meeting is going to be called in about two or three minutes.

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that you're trying to deal with a difficult situation handed to you from what happened last Thursday. What we were debating was this motion. The motion said that I had moved this committee should resume Thursday's discussion....

Sorry about that—

An hon. member: A point of order.

Mr. Mark Warawa: No, I'm speaking to the point of order.

The Chair: Let's just hear Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I guess the question I have is, did we have reduced quorum? Did we have quorum? We had Mr. Regan stand up and say we did not have quorum, but in fact we did have reduced quorum.

You were quite right, Chair, that we do have rules within this committee defining reduced quorum, and we did have reduced quorum on Thursday when—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I have a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: To answer that, the chair saw it as reduced quorum, and that's on the record.

Mr. Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, I remind you that we adopted a motion to return to the agenda. That motion must be complied with. I invite you to move on immediately to consideration of the motion for which I provided notice.

• (1730)

[*English*]

The Chair: The motion we have is not debatable, the clerk advises me.

Mr. Mark Warawa: My point of order is, and I ask you, Chair, did we have a reduced quorum at that time? Your decision was on the motion I made at the end of those speakers, but that is not what I'm talking about.

The point of order I'm bringing up is one resulting from last Thursday.

The Chair: Last Thursday, the chair ruled we did have reduced quorum.

An hon. member: We did have reduced quorum?

The Chair: Yes.

Now we need to vote on whether we move on to this. I would like to do that.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, if we indeed had a quorum, which we did, then according to Marleau and Montpetit....

I do have the floor, do I not, Chair?

The Chair: You do right now. Be quick, though.

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm going as quickly as I can, Chair.

Let me just read this again:

Usually, quorum is quickly restored so that the House may proceed with the business before it. Should the House be required to adjourn for lack of quorum....

That didn't happen, as we had quorum—

The Chair: Mr. Warawa, I'm going to rule that we have a non-debatable motion and that we need to vote on whether we move on to....

Could you just repeat your motion, please, Mr. Bigras?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Today it is a pleasure for me to table a motion that reads as follows:

It is proposed that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, through its Chair, write to the Environment Minister to express the committee's desire to see him, on the occasion of the 13th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, make a commitment to ensure an absolute reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 20% below 1990 levels by 2020, and accept Europe's invitation to cut emissions by 30% if the other developed countries also accept.

I am therefore tabling this motion because, in recent months, scientific evidence has been presented to the international community. First, the intergovernmental group—

[*English*]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Mr. Chair, can I have the floor for a point of order?

The Chair: I'm going to suspend this session.

We'll come back after the vote. That's all we can do.

We'll hear the rest of your arguments and the point of order, and we'll carry on after the vote.

• _____ (Pause) _____

•

• (1810)

The Chair: I hereby reconvene the meeting of the environment committee. And this is being televised, just so members don't....

Let's listen to Mr. Bigras with the first speech. Then I'll come back to you, Mr. Vellacott, to your point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm introducing this motion today simply because the 13th Conference of the Parties began on climate change in Bali on December 3, yesterday. The purpose of that conference is to establish mandatory reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions. We know that the minister announced to us that he intended to leave Canada for Bali with his plan for fighting climate change in his suitcase, the purpose of which, he said, was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But what is the actual situation? The actual situation is that the government has made a commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions relative to 2006 by 20% in 2020, on the basis of emissions intensity.

First, that means that all those businesses that have previously made efforts will be penalized by the minister's plans because he has taken 2006 as a benchmark. A lot of those businesses are in Quebec. I'm thinking of the Quebec industrial sectors that have managed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 7% since 1990.

Then the government announced to us that these targets won't be absolute targets. Instead they will be intensity targets where greenhouse gas emissions reductions will be conditional on production. So reductions by unit of production are anticipated. In absolute terms, that means increases in greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

For the first time, the WWF has established figures for the greenhouse gas emissions represented under the introduction of the Environment Minister's plan. It refers to greenhouse gas emissions increases of 179%. They could even rise to 219%.

We must not, we cannot allow the minister to leave for Bali in a few hours with this plan, which, contrary to what the minister will attempt to lead the international community to believe, will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He must make commitments to absolute reductions of 20% below 1990 levels by 2020.

The reports of the scientific groups are eloquent and demonstrate that, to ensure that climate change does not have dangerous economic and environmental impact—the word “dangerous” is important—we must limit the increase in average temperatures to 2°C over the pre-industrial period.

That requires a considerable effort on our part, and that's what this motion talks about. It also asks Canada to join the umbrella of Europe, which has decided to exceed this 20% reduction commitment by inviting the industrial countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 30% relative to 1990.

Mr. Chair, we expect the minister to stand up in Bali and to propose real targets for mandatory absolute reductions. We also hope that he will send a clear message to the developing and emerging countries, recalling the importance of clean development mechanisms. That is a powerful instrument of the Kyoto Protocol which enables Quebec and Canadian businesses that have environmental technology to make a technology transfer to those emerging countries. Those countries would thus be able to contribute to the global greenhouse gas reduction effort, and businesses that have sustainable development technologies would be able to do business.

Unfortunately, the Canadian government has not yet paid its minimum fees of \$1.5 million. This non-compliance with its financial commitments shows that the government does not believe in the instruments contained in the Kyoto Protocol, including the Clean Development Mechanism.

In addition, the minister must send a clear message in Bali that he believes in the emissions credit trading system. That is fundamentally important; it is another powerful tool enabling us to meet our international commitments. If Canada does not make mandatory commitments to absolute greenhouse gas emissions reductions, what message will the Canadian government be sending to the business community? What will be the impact on the carbon market? Isn't there a risk that that market, which enables businesses that have previously made efforts to make profits, collapse, as Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, stated in Asia a few weeks ago.

●(1815)

In our opinion, the minister has no other choice: he must send a clear message; make a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% in absolute terms; reiterate Canada's support, clearly stated in Kyoto and confirmed in Marrakesh, for the Clean Development Mechanism; and clearly tell the international community that he believes in an emissions trading market system. That, Mr. Chair, is how Canada can regain leadership on the international stage.

Just today, Germany has committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40% in absolute terms by 2020, starting from 1990 levels. Canada is increasingly isolated. While we have a prime minister who believes that the Kyoto Protocol was a mistake, Australia only yesterday stated its intention to ratify it.

Canada can no longer remain isolated from the international community. That is the gist of the motion introduced today. I know that the government has previously used all kinds of dilatory manoeuvres to engage in systematic obstruction in the committees. Today I won't afford the government the opportunity to use dilatory manoeuvres and obstruction to ensure that we, on this side of the committee, lose face, when we want to see firm measures in terms of greenhouse gas reductions. That is why I am introducing a motion to adjourn the committee's proceedings.

●(1820)

[*English*]

The Chair: So we have a non-debatable—

Mr. David Christopherson: On a point of order, may I inquire as to what happens to the other order of business? I realize that the Bloc got to their business, but there's another order of business. It happens to be a private member's bill in the name of the leader of the Canadian NDP.

The Chair: That's not a point of order. It's basically a question. We have a motion to adjourn, which is non-debatable.

Could you read the motion again, please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: It's an adjournment motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: The motion is that the committee adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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