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Chair

Mr. Bruce Stanton

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• (1105)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues, witnesses and guests. This is the 35th meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

[English]

Our order of the day today is hearing from two principal departments. I say that in the sense that we have Environment Canada here, as well as the Parks Canada Agency, and we also welcome representatives of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Today's study continues our committee's examination of barriers and opportunities that lie before the government's and the country's ability to advance economic development in Canada's north—for the north, certainly, but also for northerners.

We also have representatives here from Industry Canada. We didn't have the individual names until today, but I appreciate having them now.

For the benefit of our witnesses today, we'll start with the customary presentations for a maximum of ten minutes from each of the four agencies. Then we'll go to questions from members. You'll recall that our time limits for that include both questions and responses. We ask your assistance in keeping responses succinct, and that will allow us to cover more material in the course of our two-hour meeting.

To begin, we'll go to the top of the list and invite Madam Poter.... Is that the correct pronunciation, Ms. Poter?

Ms. Virginia Poter (Director General, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): That's the correct pronunciation, but I'd ask my colleague, Michael Wilson, to start, then I'll carry on for the question side.

The Chair: By all means, and we'll start with that.

Representing the Department of Environment, Mr. Wilson, please, for ten minutes.

Mr. Michael Wilson (Executive Director, Environmental Assessment, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to appear before your committee and to speak briefly on the subject of northern economic development from an environmental perspective.

Environment Canada has a mandate to protect the environment, conserve Canada's natural heritage, and provide weather and environmental prediction to keep Canadians informed and safe. Environment Canada's expertise and services are recognized on the international stage on issues ranging from the management of contaminants and toxic substances to the monitoring of sea ice, biodiversity, and weather conditions.

I'll start with the department's environmental protection role as a regulator. Our department regulates a range of activities under a number of pieces of legislation. These include the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, under which we have authority to regulate emissions of toxic substances, such as mercury, among other things. As the north is a repository for a number of long-range pollutants, the regulations that we make across the country have a significant impact on protecting the northern environment.

As well, under the Fisheries Act we administer the pollution prevention provisions of section 36 of that act, as well as developing sector-specific regulations, such as the metal mining effluent regulations. We work in close collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on these provisions to protect fish habitat and the water quality of the north.

Environment Canada is also involved in environmental assessment. We provide expertise and knowledge about the environmental impact of proposed developments in areas such as water quality, air quality, the protection of migratory birds and protection of endangered species.

As you well know, the north is rich in natural resources, and jurisdictions are seeking to exploit these resources for the benefit of northerners. However, environmental implications of resource development must be taken into account. Some of the environmental impacts of these types of projects are addressed through existing regulations, such as the metal mining effluent regulations or the Fisheries Act. Others are addressed through the project land and water board permits, including requirements associated with waste and waste water management and with monitoring local and downstream effects.

We can expect the number of environmental assessments we undertake to increase in the coming years, as Environment Canada has experience working with other federal departments to streamline the environmental assessment process and the regulatory approvals process.

One of the key questions being raised in environmental assessments of projects is the impact that climate change will have in the north. Global climate models predict that warming will accelerate, with the greatest temperature and precipitation changes happening in the winter. Melting permafrost and rising sea levels have several implications for developers in the north. For example, the stability of roads, buildings, and pipelines is decreasing; the retention ponds that contain mine waste are weakening; the shorelines are eroding at an increasing rate, putting installations at risk. Project proponents will need to design for these changes.

In addition to climate change science and prediction, Environment Canada and other federal science departments support research on adaptation and technical solutions to protect the environment in a changing future climate.

I'll now turn to my colleague, Virginia Poter, who is director general of the Canadian Wildlife Service.

• (1110)

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Virginia Poter: Thank you.

I will now speak to Environment Canada's conservation regulatory and program responsibilities.

Not only does the Arctic have an abundance of non-renewable resources, the Arctic has a wealth of wildlife and habitat. Responsibility for wildlife in Canada is shared. The federal government is responsible for aquatic species, migratory birds, species at risk, and species found on federal lands. Environment Canada is responsible for migratory birds and is the lead for the implementation of the Species at Risk Act.

The Arctic supports globally significant populations of many birds who migrate and breed in dense numbers and rely upon access to relatively undisturbed landscapes. As development occurs across the north, this access will become more limited and will require hard decisions. Sustainable development is about balance. In the north, Environment Canada contributes to land use planning efforts led by INAC that seek to make these types of trade-offs. The department also protects birds through the implementation of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act as well as other acts and regulations already mentioned.

The Arctic also supports iconic species like the polar bear. Canada is home to about two-thirds of the world's population, or about 15,500 bears. Climate change is leading to decreased sea ice, less habitat, and less access to prey, as well as to increasing Arctic development such as oil and gas development and marine shipping that are threats to this species. Consultations are under way across the north as polar bears are being considered by the Minister of the Environment for listing under the Species at Risk Act.

You may have heard that Minister Prentice signed a memorandum of understanding with Greenland and Nunavut this past weekend to support the conservation of the shared populations of polar bears, and to further the polar bear round table he hosted last January. This is a significant step, which will promote sustainable hunting quotas while recognizing the importance of this species to the aboriginal way of life and its contribution to the northern economy.

In addition to programs and regulations focused on species, Environment Canada also has a network of protected areas. These include national wildlife areas designated under the Canada Wildlife Act and the migratory bird sanctuaries designated under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. This network is supporting conservation of Arctic biodiversity and contains critically important habitat for marine and terrestrial species at risk as well as migratory birds.

Environment Canada is continuing to expand its northern network. In cooperation with INAC, we are sponsoring up to six new protected areas in the Northwest Territories and we are in the process of designating new protected areas in Nunavut under a recently signed Inuit impact and benefit agreement under the Nunavut land claim agreement. These programs rely on community support. Communities are engaged in the selection of the sites and will participate with the federal government in a co-management regime once the sites are established. The Inuit impact and benefit agreement also contains provisions to assist in the development of ecotourism opportunities and mentoring of Inuit youth in these areas.

In closing, I would like to underscore that Environment Canada strongly supports the Government of Canada's northern strategy, and continues to contribute to effective environmental stewardship in the north.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for your time. We are open for questions.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you for your presentations.

We will now hear from Bill Fisher, Director General, Western and Northern Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Fisher (Director General, Western and Northern Canada, Parks Canada Agency): Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am going to be following through on the presentation deck.

On page 2 is the Parks Canada mandate. This was the legislative direction for the agency passed under the Parks Canada Agency Act in 1998. You'll see there are a lot of close parallels between this particular mandate and the work and aspirations of aboriginal people all across the north.

On page 3 is a list of the national parks north of 60, either totally or partially. Canada has one of the largest national park systems in the world. These parks certainly contribute toward our Arctic presence throughout Canada.

On the following page is a list of some of the national historic sites that Parks Canada manages. I would like to draw particular attention to Saoyu and Aehdacho, a national historic site located on the shores of Great Bear Lake. It was a national historic site created as a result of the collaboration with the Government of the Northwest Territories and also as a result of the comprehensive land claim agreement with the Saoyu, Dene, and Métis organizations.

Certainly all the national parks and any of the new national historic sites in the north are directed and built on the basis of comprehensive land claim agreements as they are signed.

Parks Canada takes very much of a cooperative approach toward working in the north. We treat aboriginal people as privileged partners, not as stakeholders.

It's our view that the most important way to build relationships with people in the north is to start with very personal and one-on-one relationships, building with elders, band chiefs, councils, and with our staff on the ground. Then we take that, and over a period of time we can gain some trust and respect in terms of moving forward at a greater level to build institutional relationships between the Parks Canada Agency and the aboriginal organizations.

This is critical, because in just about every one of our park operations in the north, the management arrangement is a cooperative with either the Inuit, the Inuvialuit, or first nations organizations. We believe that's a very powerful approach toward governance in northern Canada.

Parks Canada is a place-based organization. By that I mean we need to be on the land to be relevant, to understand the nature and the history of those regions, and we also need to be in the communities. It's not good enough for us simply to be located in Ottawa or even in the capitals of the territories. That's important. Our view is that you can't understand the communities and the wants and needs of northern peoples, especially aboriginal peoples, if you are not living and working in those communities.

The next slide gives you a sense of the kinds of places where our employees are working throughout the north. We are very proud of the work of our employees. Many of them are beneficiaries. As an example, we employ around 335 people in the north. A significant number of them are beneficiaries, aboriginal employees.

In Nunavut, 55% of our staff are Inuit beneficiaries. In the western Arctic, 55% of our staff are Inuvialuit. In the southern part of the Northwest Territories, 55% of our staff are aboriginal. In the Yukon, 22% of our staff are aboriginal beneficiaries.

In terms of the long-term presence, I have spoken about employment. In terms of relationships, I wanted to say again how important that is. From a traditional knowledge point of view, one of the key things in our organization is that we need to look at traditional knowledge as a key piece of decision-making.

• (1120)

It cannot be looked at as simply an add-on to western, science-based knowledge. It needs to be referred to and respected in its own right. To help build that knowledge, we work very closely with aboriginal elders, with schools, and with teachers to provide opportunities for local students and youth to get back onto the land

and become reconnected with their culture and their traditional ways of life.

In terms of its contribution to local economies, Parks Canada is a major partner in tourism in the north. Not only do we have a number of parks that are tourist attractions in their own right, but we also work with aboriginal organizations and with private sector guiding and outfitting companies to help provide tourist services. And we provide both of those in the communities: we provide exhibitry and displays at airports and other points of access into the north.

Those opportunities for employment are continuing, and support for northern development has been steadily increasing with Parks Canada's operations as they grow.

One of the key things we've been working on over the long term is capacity-building, Mr. Chair. I'd like to highlight the aboriginal leadership development program of Parks Canada. It's a ten-year-old program designed to provide opportunities for aboriginal employees from across the country to attend a four-year program.

That program is based out of the Yukon. It's an opportunity for people to learn leadership skills in an aboriginal-based culture. The work we provide to them is very challenging physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally, but we think this is a key way to build capacity, and not only in Parks Canada: many of those staff will go on to work with other territorial governments, with other federal departments, even with northern communities, or go back to their own bands. We find that building that kind of capacity is critical for our organization's success in working with our aboriginal partners.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, I'd like to raise two points. In our view, environmental protection and economic development go hand in hand in the north. Because of the location of many of our national parks and national historic sites, this is a critical opportunity to achieve healthy, sustainable communities, particularly for some of the small, more remote and isolated northern communities. There are often no other kinds of economic activity available in those areas, so this helps provide for a sustainable community in the north.

I thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Fisher.

Now we'll go to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We welcome three representatives.

I'm not sure who will be leading off. Is it Mr. Burden?

If you would, please introduce your colleagues at an appropriate time. Go ahead; you have up to ten minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. David Burden (Acting Regional Director General, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, it's a pleasure to be here today to discuss the role and mandate of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and the contributions we make to northern economic development.

My name is David Burden. I am the Associate Regional Director General for the Central and Arctic Region of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Joining me today are Mr. Wade Spurrell, Assistant Commissioner, Canadian Coast Guard, Central and Arctic Region and Mr. Barry Briscoe, the Regional Director of Oceans, Habitat and Species at Risk.

I would like to start off by first providing a little background and context. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is mandated to develop and implement policies and programs for Canada's scientific, ecological, social and economic interests in oceans and fresh waters.

• (1125)

[English]

DFO's activities in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in support of economic development include science, such as the Canadian Hydrographic Service's activities to support stock assessment, emerging fisheries, and safe and accessible waterways, which are carried out using our coast guard fleet assets; fisheries management, in cooperation with institutions of public governance established under the land claim agreements; small craft harbours, to support existing and emerging fisheries; oceans, focusing on ecosystems management, such as marine protected areas and large ocean management; and finally habitat management, or more precisely, major project monitoring and environmental assessment in support of resource development.

I understand your committee is looking for a regional perspective on the north, and I think we can provide that. While the Central and Arctic Region is responsible for our program delivery and operations in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, our operations also include Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, as well as the Yukon North Slope. This is one of the largest regions in any government department, extending from Prescott, Ontario, in the east to the British Columbia and Alaska borders in the west.

My remarks today will focus on the work Fisheries and Oceans Canada is undertaking in the support of the economic development in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

The economic drivers in the north come from the use and extraction of land- and water-based resources, and the absence of traditional agricultural and forestry sectors places a higher level of importance on aquatic and land-based renewable and non-renewable resources, such as the fishery, mining, and oil and gas resources.

Another element that is fundamental to our program activities is the northern land claims process. The land claims agreements legislate authorities and the responsibilities of the partners and insist on user involvement in shared decision-making. This, of course, ensures that opinions are heard in a consultative process and that decisions integrate traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge. Making users part of a decision makes it relevant to the circumstances and has the added benefit of giving ownership and community support to the decision.

Overlaid against this regulatory and governmental complexity, we must also contend with climate change, receding polar ice, rising global demand for resources, and the prospect of longer economic shipping seasons—all factors that will reshape the north in the coming decades and create both new opportunities and challenges.

While there remains some debate as to how quickly some of these challenges will occur, there is broad agreement that they will be transformational and will affect significantly the work of a number of federal government departments and agencies, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard.

With this as a backdrop, let's look at some of our work.

Environmental assessment in support of economic development initiatives is an important focus for our department. There are currently seven major projects under active environmental assessment in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. As well, the department is engaged in the pre-environmental assessment stage for an additional 15 projects. Our participation in the environmental assessments conducted in the north ensures that the review of potential impacts upon fish and fish habitat is transparent and receives the benefit of public input.

Merging regulatory responsibilities with economic prosperity objectives is often challenging, particularly when communities rely on land- and water-based natural resources as their economic drivers. In the Northwest Territories, DFO is responsible for environmental monitoring for three diamond mines. In 2008, the total value of the mineral, oil, and gas shipments from existing operations in the Northwest Territories was nearly \$2.8 billion. DFO has a cross-sectoral team, with dedicated resources working on the proposed 1,400-kilometre Mackenzie gas pipeline. The panel hearings, as this committee will know, have been completed, and the joint panel report is pending.

We are also actively engaged in environmental assessments for mining projects in the north with expected capital costs of \$7.5 billion and employment of more than 4,000 people. Environmental assessments for projects of this magnitude are time-consuming and costly, particularly in the Arctic, where travel and meeting with local stakeholders is logistically difficult and very expensive.

Fisheries and the oceans are also of immense importance to the north. Specifically, in the East Baffin communities, life essentially has evolved for centuries around marine and mammal populations and continues to do so. Income from the harvest of seal pelts has been thwarted by public and media stories that view the seal harvest as inhumane, and international markets have been depressed because of the European Union ban, which has significantly affected prices.

• (1130)

The Government of Canada regulates the seal hunt on the basis of sound conservation principles and ensures it is conducted in a safe and humane manner. The government has made every effort to counter the misinformation upon which anti-sealing campaigns are based, and it will continue to do so in the most appropriate manner.

The recreational fishery in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut is also very important. In 2005 more than 5,600 anglers, many of whom were non-residents, contributed more than \$17 million to the northern economy.

A commercial fishery is also being developed in the eastern Arctic. The main species harvested are Greenland halibut or turbot, northern shrimp, and Arctic char. Moving farther westward, in the Northwest Territories the main species harvested are whitefish, lake trout, northern pike, and walleye. The estimated landed value in 2006 for freshwater fisheries from Great Slave Lake was approximately \$610,000. The Great Slave Lake fishery has been a viable fishery since 1945, but economic factors have depressed the fishery over the last decade.

Although these fisheries are small in comparison to those in other areas of Canada, they are equally important in the north. The fishing sector represents one of a limited number of emerging economic and employment opportunities in the north. Commercial fishing in the Arctic Ocean has been limited by a lack of harbour infrastructure. As part of the economic action plan, the government has allocated an additional \$17 million to expand harbour facilities at Pangnirtung, to enable additional development of this commercial fishery as well as to meet domestic and re-supply needs in the community.

Fully 99% of the landed value of the Arctic fishery comes from the emerging fishery in Nunavut. For the Nunavut economy, the landed value of the commercial fishery accounts for about 5% of Nunavut's GDP. When government expenditures on goods and services are removed, this is equal to the same period in Newfoundland, in which the fishery contributed 4.8% to the provincial economy.

The presence of the Canadian Coast Guard in the Arctic is critical to the north, and this will become increasingly important in the coming years with expected growth in marine traffic. The coast guard has full responsibility to respond to ship-source marine spills that occur north of 60, and swift response to spills, however small, is critical given the fragile nature of the marine ecosystem in our Arctic.

In addition to rapid air transportable kits in Hay River, the coast guard has some 11 Arctic community packs positioned strategically throughout the north that can be deployed as required. This year with the health of the oceans initiative, its environmental response infrastructure will be further enhanced with shore kits, beach flush components, additional containment boom, and small vessels.

I would also like to underline the general involvement the coast guard brings to economic development in the north. For several years, the coast guard has been involved with re-supply and bringing materials to the Arctic that are inaccessible to commercial vessels.

Last, although certainly important, is sovereignty. For several months of the year, the coast guard vessels are often the sole federal marine presence seen in Canada's Arctic. Once the agency's new polar class icebreaker comes on stream in about eight years, the presence will be lengthened to a full nine months a year.

Coast guard icebreakers are making it possible to map Canada's continental shelf in support of our claim to extend this country's exclusive economic zone under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. If we are successful in defending our claim, this will further the economic opportunities in our northern waters.

Mr. Chairman, I hope I've been able to give you some sense of the way in which our department and the Canadian Coast Guard are

working to contribute to the economic development of the Arctic. We would be pleased to take any of your questions.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now welcome two witnesses from the Department of Industry: John Connell, Director General, Small Business and Tourism Branch, and Shari Scott, Director, Internet Policy, Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Connell, do you wish to lead off? You have ten minutes, and thank you for joining us today.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Ms. Shari Scott (Director, Internet Policy, Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians, Department of Industry): As Mr. Connell said, I am responsible for policy and communications for Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

As you know, the Economic Action Plan provides for \$225 million in funding for Industry Canada to design and implement a strategy to extend broadband coverage to as many unserved and underserved homes as possible. Broadband communication service means a minimum downloading speed of 1.5 megabytes per second. We will therefore be providing a unique stimulus to support the expansion of infrastructure in regions where it is not profitable for the public sector to go ahead using only its own resources.

[English]

The program is technology-neutral and will accept a variety of wireline and wireless technology solutions, such as fibre, DSL, cable, and wireless networks, including satellite.

Broadband Canada will fund up to 50% of eligible project costs on a one-time basis—a one-time non-repayable contribution—and the projects will be selected through a competitive application process.

First nations communities can apply for more than 50% federal funding. While they can only apply for 50% from the Broadband Canada program, they can apply for the other 50% funding from programs such as INAC's first nations infrastructure fund or from Infrastructure Canada.

The first step of the program was an extensive mapping of current broadband availability across the country. This extensive exercise was undertaken in consultation with provinces, territories, the CRTC, and other federal partners, using publicly available data.

On July 6 we launched a website inviting individual Canadians and ISPs to validate the mapping data we'd compiled. Over 2,100 individual Canadians provided feedback and 65 ISPs provided updated coverage information to the program. On July 30, Prime Minister Harper announced the program and unveiled the national broadband map in Adstock, Quebec. Using this mapping information, we can avoid funding projects in areas that already have broadband service or that will have broadband service shortly through other initiatives.

For the purposes of the program, the country was divided into 64 geographic service areas using census division data from Statistics Canada, as well as our own information from the mapping exercise.

Applicants must demonstrate they have a long-term sustainability strategy for the broadband service, for a minimum of five years, and have a proven track record of project management in the deployment of broadband initiatives.

Where provincial initiatives already exist to bring broadband connectivity to 100% within the next 12 to 18 months, no eligible service areas were defined.

According to the CRTC, 6% of Canadians currently do not have access to broadband service. That figure jumps to 22% for Canadians living in rural areas, and our mapping data indicate that 34% of the population of the north—all of whom are in Nunavut or the Northwest Territories—are either unserved or underserved.

Most of those 34% are underserved, meaning they have access to Internet connectivity, but at speeds between dial-up and 1.5 megabytes per second. This is a result of satellite investments from the national satellite initiative, which had been funded from Industry Canada, and now by the Canadian Space Agency and Infrastructure Canada over the past five years.

• (1145)

The Chair: If you could sum up your remarks, Ms. Scott, that would be great.

Ms. Shari Scott: I will close by saying that the call for applications was launched on September 1 and closed on October 23. So we're currently in the middle of the assessment, and I can't comment a great deal on the applications. I can just say that we received about 560 applications across the country, four to serve Nunavut and three in the Northwest Territories. We expect to be selecting successful applications in the December and January timeframe.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will start the first round with Mr. Bagnell.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you all for coming and for your good presentations. I'm glad you're here, because your departments can help the economy in the north.

Unfortunately, over the last couple of decades each of your departments has actually done some things that are counter-productive in that respect. In Parks Canada, there's been the huge issue from the drastic cuts—and I know those were before your time. Parks Canada was a big part of the economy in the north, and there were big cuts to its staff and capital.

In fisheries, there was an unscientific attack on the placer industry, which thank goodness is over.

In Industry Canada, of course, there were three full-service offices, one in each territory, with seven or eight staff dealing with all parts of the economy, and those were closed. So that wasn't at all helpful.

I have some specific questions on specific problems we're facing today—not in the past. On fisheries, our chinook and king salmon have fallen with the other salmon species, and I've been lobbying your department to take extensive action to fight the pollock bycatch in the Bering Sea and also to do more research in the ocean, where the fish are disappearing.

Can you tell me what additional resources in the last couple of years you've put into those battles?

Mr. David Burden: Thank you for your question.

I guess I should have prefaced my remarks by indicating that the Pacific region has responsibility for the chinook and the fisheries on the west coast at that end of the Bering Sea. From our regional perspective, there is not really much of a commercial fishery in that part of the Beaufort, so I can't really comment on that.

I could take it back and we could—

Hon. Larry Bagnell: That's fine. Environment Canada was supporting research and adaptation, which is great in the north. We have some huge expenses and requirements for adaptation. Climate change has had a devastating effect already and it's going faster in the north. What programs and resources are available from the federal government to implement the changes? I'm not asking for just the research. We know what's wrong, but we need to know how to implement change strategies and program initiatives.

• (1150)

Ms. Virginia Potter: Environment Canada would do research on climate change and its impacts. Other departments, though, would provide support for the adaptation as it relates to industry and conservation. I'm talking about protected areas and what not. The research would inform our selection of protected areas and how we would move forward on terrestrial species at risk.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: The northern caribou herds, with a couple of exceptions, have had drastic declines. What are you doing in that respect?

Ms. Virginia Poter: We have started a process for two of the barren-ground populations: the Dolphin-Union, and the Porcupine. I can confirm that for you. We have started the process under the Species at Risk Act. Once we have received the assessment from the independent science committee, the COSEWIC, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, consultations will begin.

Work on species that reside in Nunavut requires a great deal of engagement and consultation with aboriginal people. We have been busy doing that type of work for the last number of years.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: The residents of a town called Keno Hill have approached both Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada about a mine that is being developed partly within the town limits. Do any of you have comments on your reply to those citizens?

Mr. Michael Wilson: I'm not aware of any replies that we've made. But if the project is formally proposed, it will have to undergo an environmental assessment.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Industry Canada used to deliver the ABC program. I think they did this very well. Do you know if that program ever ran out of money early in the year, or was it all year round?

Mr. John Connell: I wouldn't hazard a guess, sorry.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: You were waxing eloquent about tourism, which is our biggest industry. One of the problems we've had is that a Canadian cannot rent a car outside Canada and then drive back into Canada. This represents a huge loss of revenue. All sorts of Canadians fly to Alaska or take cruises. They rent a car in the U.S., come back to tour B.C. or Yukon, and all of a sudden they're stopped at the border. They can't do it. It's illegal. In the United States, they recently put in a regulation that allows their citizens to rent cars in Canada and drive into America. We can't do it the other way, and we're losing all sorts of revenue. Would you commit to look into that problem, if you haven't already addressed it?

Mr. John Connell: Yes, and it's not the first time this issue has been raised. In connection with a federal tourism strategy, we are trying to get federal departments and agencies to collaborate according to shared objectives. A component of that is getting rid of needless barriers and regulations that are inhibiting tourism. It's something we'll be speaking about with the responsible departments and agencies. We have a group of about six policy officers developing the strategy. It's based on reaching out to those other departments and agencies and having them make commitments.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Parks Canada has tremendous potential for economic development in the north. And it has done more economic development in the north than it has in most other parts of Canada. It's been great. But over the last decade there have been cuts after cuts in staff, operations, and capital. Can you offer us any hope that this trend might be reversed?

Mr. Bill Fisher: Certainly. I'll speak first to some of the projects that have been recently approved through the government's economic action plan, and one that—

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'm talking about Parks Canada staff and the capital budget for Parks Canada itself.

Mr. Bill Fisher: Yes, Parks Canada's specific capital budget has been increased, following the 2005 budgets, and that funding was

gone towards recapitalization and stabilization of cultural resources in places like Dawson and The Dredge, and more recently elsewhere with park establishment funds for places like an operations centre in Ukkusiksalik and Repulse Bay and new visitor facilities in Old Crow and elsewhere.

So there is funding available there. When new parks are created there are new funds provided for the operation of those parks. It's a big change from ten years ago, when that didn't exist, so that's been quite a good opportunity for us. The recent expansion of Nahanni is a good example.

● (1155)

The Chair: We'll have to wrap it up there, Mr. Fisher. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Bagnell.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemay, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you for being here.

When we embarked on this economic study of northern development, I didn't think we would get so much information. I don't know where to start, there are so many things...

Of course that's wrong, I know where to start. I am first going to quote a sentence we find in the Parks Canada document: "Environmental protection and economic development can go hand-in-hand." I have some difficulty agreeing with that statement. You are going to have to persuade me of it.

The problem is that it seems that everyone does their little thing in their own corner. All of you who are here before us and who represent Industry Canada, Environment Canada, Parks Canada, do you talk with each other, is there consultation, is there coordination, if someone wants to do some sort of development in the north, or does everyone stay in their little box? That concerns me.

I will not be going on the first trip, but I am going to go to Iqaluit. On our trip last year we went to Pagnirtung. At that time, I asked the mayor of the village, a rather elderly man, a single question. I will never forget what he told me. I asked him what was the one thing we should do for him and his community? His answer bowled me over. He told me that we should pick up our garbage. How can we do that in the north?

There are containers abandoned all along the coast. I saw dozens and dozens in Iqaluit. Everywhere I went in the north there were containers lying around. Is there some way of picking up the garbage? I'm asking you this question and I won't have any more. What can I tell the mayor of Pagnirtung? That is not really consistent with northern development.

I would like to hear comments from the Parks Canada representative first.

Mr. Bill Fisher: Thank you, Mr. Lemay.

First, Parks Canada works in collaboration with the other departments to do a lot of things, particularly when it comes to environmental projects. As well, we work with other organizations on economic development.

On the question of garbage in the communities and the problem of contaminated sites all across the north of Canada, we are working with the other departments to review contaminated sites and find a solution. Then, processes would have to be initiated to decontaminate the sites. Contamination is often caused by a mine located near a community like Pagnirtung or Nanisivik. We work together, not just with federal departments, but also with the territorial government.

• (1200)

Mr. Marc Lemay: Does someone else want to comment or answer?

Mr. Michael Wilson: I am going to try to answer, but I am going to speak in English to make sure I am understood.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Fine.

[English]

Mr. Michael Wilson: First, in terms of coordination, we do things as a government to try to make sure that we're coordinated in the north. At the deputy minister and assistant deputy minister levels, we do have committees that exist only to have departments come to them and develop joint actions and joint policies for the north. That's been active for a number of years to try to make sure we're not doing things that are counter or contrary to what other departments would be doing.

Generally, though, we do deliver our programs with either key departments that are partners or on our own, within our mandate. We coordinate with the other departments, but then we tend to deliver on our own.

We have another major new initiative for coordinating in the north around major industrial developments or major projects that are going through the environmental assessment and project approval regime—i.e., a major mine that's being developed, a port, something like that. The government recently announced a northern project management office. The purpose of that is to get all the departments that are involved in the environmental evaluation and approval of that project, be it a port or a mine, to come together and coordinate that environmental assessment process so that we're all moving it along at a diligent pace.

We've been doing that in the south for a little over a year. The government recently announced this northern equivalent that's just getting up and going now.

In terms of waste management, I guess from Environment Canada's perspective our main interest or our main mandate area of waste management in the north is on a slightly larger scale. We're involved in contaminated sites remediation in the north. The government has announced \$3.5 billion to remediate contaminated sites that the federal government has an interest in.

I don't have all the statistics in front of me, but in the Northwest Territories, for instance, there are 728 sites that are being—

The Chair: I don't want to interrupt, but if Mr. Lemay wants to get a last word in on this, we're just about out of time.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I just want to clarify my question. On the question of contaminated sites, I can understand that the government is doing something. What is being done about the existing dumps where there are millions and millions of plastic bags that are blown away and end up in the very fragile environment of northern Canada? That is what I want to know, because that is of tremendous concern to me, the filth that is there.

[English]

Mr. Michael Wilson: I can endeavour to get back to you with a more comprehensive answer, but that would be mainly a Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and territorial government responsibility. There's little that Environment Canada would do in that area.

[Translation]

The Chair: Can the Department of Fisheries and Oceans give a very brief answer?

Mr. Burden.

Mr. David Burden: Yes, thank you.

I would say the same thing as my colleagues. We speak to each other before doing our work. It is not possible for any department to do its work in the north without cooperation. As the others said, the problem of contaminated sites is still a challenge for us, but we have a program, and before 2018 we are going to do an inventory of all our sites in the north. Our program is ongoing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemay.

[English]

Now we'll go to Mr. Payne.... Oh, I'm sorry, it's Mr. Bevington; I'm jumping ahead.

Mr. Bevington, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to all the departments for coming out today. As with Mr. Lemay, the questions could mount very quickly for any one of you.

I think I am going to start with the broadband questions, because I just attended a meeting this morning with the health facility people and I asked that question there: What is the answer for northern health? They said we need to have telemedicine in all these communities.

I also met recently with the president of our college system in a discussion that they are having over the development of the University of the Arctic. They are very interested in the three northern territories, in their college system, in developing a distance university linking together all these communities. Yet 25 out of 33 of our communities are not capable of the simple telecommunications distance education program that is available in most places.

Those types of things are in the public domain to provide the services for education, for health, and then as well for communication with video conferencing. We need to bring those into these northern communities in a big way. These are things that are absolutely essential.

When you're talking about your program here, with the 1.3 megabytes per second, will that deliver telehealth to these communities?

• (1205)

Ms. Shari Scott: The benchmark of 1.5, download at 1.5 megabits, was set as a benchmark for quality video conferencing, to be able to allow quality video conferencing to occur.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: So 1.5 is the low mark, but you have a 1.3 megabit....

Ms. Shari Scott: No, it's 1.5.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay. I think what we need to see in the north with broadband service is this type of service that allows this kind of thing. Is that going to be part of your perspective in looking at these different programs? I would say, as well, because it is such a public concern—health, education, communication—you're looking at 50%. So you're bringing in private partners. How does that work out when we are talking about public health services?

Ms. Shari Scott: In terms of the broadband program, it was a contribution program aimed at the private sector, recognizing that they may not have the capital in place or a business case to go on their own to these areas. So we will contribute up to 50%, which in some cases may not be enough, which is why we've been working very closely with territorial governments and provincial governments.

The 1.5 was set as a benchmark to bring rural and remote areas up to the same comparable service that can be obtained in the near urban areas.

In terms of connectivity, the Yukon is actually fairly well connected with DSL, to 99% of the population. The Northwest Territories also has some land line infrastructure in place. Nunavut is a larger challenge, in that it only has a satellite backhaul.

We are trying to have as much flexibility in the program as possible so that we can work with other programs, such as the national satellite initiative, to increase available band width.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Good.

Now on to Environment Canada. The Northwest Territories government has come out with a water strategy in the last months. This is the dominant issue in the environment. How is the federal response coming to that water strategy proposal from the Government of the Northwest Territories?

Ms. Virginia Poter: I'm sorry, the water file is not within my area of expertise, but we could certainly endeavour to come back to the committee with a written summary of what's being done.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay. I would appreciate that, because that water strategy is one of the dominant environmental issues and overrides many of the other considerations.

For fisheries, we have just seen the United States government put a moratorium on fishing in the Beaufort Sea. Are there any Canadian plans to do that for Canadian waters?

Mr. David Burden: That's a good question. Thank you. It's a question that has come up since the U.S. moratorium.

The reality is that we don't at this time have any commercial fisheries in that part of the Beaufort, so it is not a pressing issue from a commercial perspective.

That being said, I think we share the concerns expressed by the United States government on ensuring that we have appropriate conservation measures on that in place and we have the appropriate scientific knowledge to advance any commercial endeavours in that part of the Arctic.

• (1210)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Yes, I think that's similar for the U.S. They may have some issues with Chugach Bay or the Bering Strait, but do they have any issues with fishing in the Beaufort Sea right now?

Mr. David Burden: There are some commercial fisheries in the western part of the Beaufort. I don't believe there are any in the part that we bought up against the American border, but I'm not an expert on that.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Going back to Environment Canada, we just passed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. What additional resources are you putting into environmental protection in that area, since we passed that law in the last six months? What's the plan for further protection, extending those limits, and further manpower or equipment or resources that will go into that?

Mr. Michael Wilson: We're not the department that administers that piece of legislation, but we certainly do have regulatory responsibilities and program responsibilities in those waters. We have resources in environmental emergency response and weather forecasting in that area. Those would probably be the principal ones that we would apply there, but we don't physically administer that piece of legislation, to my knowledge. That's Transport Canada, I think.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay, but you're familiar with the—

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Bevington. We're basically out of time.

Maybe I'll take this opportunity, because it has come up a couple of times, to say to the department officials that when you get back and take a look at the transcripts from today's meeting, if there were individual commitments that you made to get back to us on certain questions.... We'd certainly appreciate your taking the time to just take a quick look and get back to us in due course. That would be very helpful.

Now we'll go to Mr. Payne, for seven minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to welcome all of the witnesses. I appreciate your attendance here today. It's very important in terms of the study on northern economic development that we're engaging in.

I think I would like to start off by asking Parks Canada a question in terms of tourism. It's obviously taking on a more important role in the north. I would like Mr. Fisher to give us a sense of how Parks Canada can contribute to tourism in the north in the years to come. Second, what are the plans to expand that role in northern economic development?

Mr. Bill Fisher: Thanks very much.

In terms of contributing, I mentioned the parks and sites being tourist attractions. By their very nature, they provide opportunities for visitors who want to come up.

However, one of the things we've done just over the last six months is create new positions in our organization that are focused on tourism opportunities. We have product development officers who will be working with local economic development authorities and with the other levels of government to develop new tourism products with the private sector. An example is the work we're doing with the cruise ship industry in the eastern Arctic, particularly with Nunavut. We're also providing opportunities for enhancing promotions, with funding that will go along with that.

Finally, part of getting the word out, from an outreach point of view, is creating staff positions that will focus on Internet and new content media to really push the message out to the millions of people, not only in southern Canada but around the world, who have an interest in coming to the north.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I have a question in terms of traditional knowledge. How do you see that playing a role in economic development?

Mr. Bill Fisher: I think it has a number of roles. One is in terms of opportunities for local guides and outfitters. A lot of people are looking for an authentic visit to a northern community or park, and having people who have lived on that land and are as familiar with that area as their ancestors provides a unique market position, a product that cannot simply be taken up by an outfitter out of the south.

If a southern outfitter or guide really wants to make their product unique and add value to it, then working with the local elders and aboriginal peoples helps provide that. They can provide that traditional knowledge.

That would be an example from a tourism point of view.

•(1215)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

I'd like to continue on that theme with Industry Canada. How would you see tourism being different from other economic drivers in the north?

Mr. John Connell: I think it's a significant economic driver because it's a growth industry. When we look at patterns of tourism internationally, notwithstanding current economic difficulties, the forecast is for significant increases in tourism, as there are greater numbers of leisure travellers. It's related to demographics as well, with people having more leisure time.

From some of the research we've carried out, the north in particular is outstanding, because people really want that authentic experience. A lot of adventure travellers want to seek the unknown, and the north offers that in spades. So it's a real jewel in terms of the Canadian Tourism Commission's branding activities for Canada. It figures importantly in attracting visitors to Canada overall, including the north. I think that particularly as we have economic weakness in certain areas—jobs being shed—tourism has a great opportunity to pick up some of those and offer some jobs in communities in the north and throughout Canada.

Mr. LaVar Payne: You said there are something like 400,000 visitors to the north. Do you have any projections over the next couple of years of what that might look like?

Mr. John Connell: I do not. If there are such projections, I'll get back to the committee. We get the information essentially from Statistics Canada's tourism surveys. I don't believe they forecast, but I will confirm that with the committee clerk.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

Obviously, technology plays an important role in our lives today, and it's certainly going to in the future. How do you see the broadband service being able to help in terms of tourism?

Mr. John Connell: Do you want to try that?

Ms. Shari Scott: I think the impact broadband connectivity can have on the tourism business is similar to businesses in general in terms of being able to connect to the outside world to promote services, to do online commerce, online bookings. Certainly you can have much more elaborate websites and marketing tools at your disposal if you've got a higher capacity infrastructure and connection to support it.

Mr. LaVar Payne: In terms of connectivity, do we have any idea how many organizations, businesses in the north, already have access to that, or...where are we going?

Ms. Shari Scott: I've got the population statistics with me, and I can get back to the clerk with business connectivity figures from Statistics Canada.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: About half a minute.

Mr. LaVar Payne: A quick question for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. How does the recent expansion of the harbour facilities at Pangnirtung aid economic development in the region?

Mr. David Burden: The construction of the small craft harbour in Pangnirtung is going to play a significant role in the advancement of the emerging fisheries, which I indicated in my remarks is a huge economic driver in the eastern Arctic. It's also going to help with strengthening the local economy and expanding the local fisheries in the areas I've indicated. That kind of infrastructure, because of the lack of roads, helps open up the areas for community traffic. Most of the challenges, particularly in the fisheries, come from transportation and high-cost fuel, so any infrastructure there is an added improvement. This one has been really well received, and is going to benefit the community, I think.

• (1220)

The Chair: Very good. Thank you very much, Mr. Payne and witnesses.

Now we'll begin the second round. It's a five-minute round, and we'll start with Mr. Russell from the Liberal Party.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to each of the witnesses.

I'll concentrate my remarks primarily on DFO and the coast guard. I want to put on the record a statement on page 10 of the submission by Mr. Burden. He indicated, "The Government has made every effort to counter the misinformation upon which anti-sealing campaigns are based". I don't want to get into an argument, but that certainly flies in the face of the response I received to an order paper question I placed and the information relayed to me from DFO. I just want to make that statement. They can refute me at another time, but it certainly didn't jibe.

On Pangnirtung itself, what is the completion date for that harbour?

Mr. David Burden: The completion date would be 2012.

Mr. Todd Russell: We were in Pangnirtung. We had lunch at the fish plant. We had a great meal. We saw how important that particular facility was to the people in Pangnirtung and to the region generally. We understood the importance of accompanying infrastructure.

What other small craft harbour assets does DFO have in the Arctic? I know Pangnirtung has been added, but what other assets do you have?

Mr. David Burden: Pangnirtung is the first facility we have in the eastern Arctic. In the western Arctic we currently have three small craft harbours facilities.

Mr. Todd Russell: That's a pretty skimpy presence, one would say, given the scope of the area.

I just wanted to ask you if you could quickly go through the process. On OB turbot, Canada has been allocated, I think, 1,500 tonnes from the NAFO Scientific Council. Then Canada has a decision to make on how that's allocated. It has certain legal responsibilities, probably like under the Nunavut land claims agreement.

What process does DFO go through in terms of assessing how that gets distributed to people in the eastern Arctic? I know there are various fisheries organizations and sometimes coalitions. Just give us a quick sense of what you would do in terms of the allocation. I think

it's important for us to understand, particularly from an economic development perspective.

Mr. David Burden: In my opening remarks I referenced the role of the co-management boards. A lot of our interactions with the communities are to ensure that we're working cooperatively and we're understanding their capabilities and abilities to prosecute the fishery.

As you indicated, through some of the settlement agreements there is a requirement to share the allocation, as you've referenced, the 1,500 tonnes that we have on the new NAFO. That's actually 3,000 tonnes: 50% of it goes to Greenland, and then under one of the agreements, Nunavut, from Quebec, have an entitlement. Then obviously you have the residual amount, which the minister will be making a decision on shortly.

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you for that. I know my time is getting short.

Climate change is huge. We all know it. It's having a tremendous impact on the north in so many ways.

Pollution control—I know my colleague had asked about this earlier. I know you have some things in your docket.

Do you feel your capacity to track shipping movements in the Arctic is adequate?

There are new projects that are coming online. I think you said there were three under environmental assessment and 15 new ones that may be coming up.

With all of this increased activity, the added pressures of climate change, the increased activity, has any modelling been done to say these are the new assets we're going to need; this is what we're going to require as a department to respond adequately?

Are the people involved up there? You say you have these community kits. Who operates these community kits? Who disperses them? Who implements a spill response?

• (1225)

Mr. Wade Spurrell (Assistant Commissioner, Central and Arctic Region, Department of Fisheries and Oceans): On the community kits, the coast guard has a tiered response to pollution incidents in the Arctic. We have small community kits that are available, pre-deployed in each community, because logistics is always a challenge in the north, as you know.

We have worked with communities in the past to develop relationships and train individuals; however, there is always a turnover. We visit the communities on a regular basis. We're presently re-evaluating where the best relationship is in the community for the use of the environmental response kits.

We do have staff positioned in the north. We have the ability to cascade resources from Hay River, from the other sites, and eventually from our sites in the south.

We are increasing the amount of material in the Arctic this season and next season as part of the healthy oceans initiative. We're putting in an additional \$2 million worth of response equipment into the Arctic this year and next year.

The Chair: Unfortunately we're out of time, Mr. Russell. Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Dreeshen, followed by a member from the Bloc, Monsieur Lévesque.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for attending today.

As you know, our committee will be travelling to the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Nunavut later this month to continue our study. It's going to be my first opportunity to head north of 60 degrees, so I'm looking forward to that.

I'm also interested in some of the things I've heard have happened. One of those, and perhaps Parks Canada could address this, is that Nahanni National Park has recently been expanded. I was wondering if you could describe the extent of the expansion and the environmental benefits of having this particular area so that it can be studied and protected and so on.

Mr. Bill Fisher: Thank you.

Well, the park has expanded by sixfold. So at close to 40,000 square kilometres, it will be Canada's third-largest national park.

Before, the park boundaries were set to protect just the corridor of the river. Now they have expanded significantly to protect key habitat for grizzly bears. It'll have a population of grizzly bears larger than the entire southern population. And it will provide a better-connected corridor for wildlife moving along the mountain corridors. That's critical for Dall sheep, moose, wolverines, and other species. The expansion of the park will be significant in that regard.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: How then does this park tie in to encouraging and analyzing economic development that happens in the region? What kind of communication do you have with Environment Canada and so on?

Mr. Bill Fisher: Certainly we work with the other federal departments in terms of opportunities for tourism. Nahanni will essentially become an iconic site that many people from around the world will be interested in visiting, and not, any more, just to travel down the river by canoe or raft. They will also come to take part in some of the most spectacular hiking available anywhere in the world, such as in the Ram Plateau area and around Glacier Lake, which are expansions to the park. Opportunities from Watson Lake, Fort Simpson, Nahanni Butte, and even Whitehorse will be bigger now because of the change in the size of the park.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

Mr. Burden, I noticed in the text we have that you didn't have enough time to go through the northern land claims process. I'm wondering if you could perhaps enlighten me as to what is happening there, what the process is, and what you see occurring in that area.

Mr. David Burden: Our department is a partner in the process. Obviously, it's an INAC lead, and I know that officials from INAC have been here before the committee.

From our perspective, things that touch the water and the use of the water are fundamental to the land claims participants. Obviously, making sure that the habitat is protected is the big issue for us and for

them. Ensuring, through the co-management boards and the hunter and trapper organizations, that we use....

It goes to the issue of taking our scientific knowledge, mirroring it, and combining it with traditional knowledge of the local features and with the community's hunting habits, then bringing that together to develop a sustainable fisheries plan for the community.

• (1230)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I see.

If he's not paying attention, I'll ask one more question.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: We were looking at the BDC profile in the north, and there is a chance to discuss that. If I have any time left, could you perhaps give us a bit of an idea of what BDC is dealing with there?

Mr. John Connell: Thank you for the question.

In Nunavut, there are 17 clients with about \$14.8 million in financing outstanding. In the last fiscal year they authorized four deals for \$6 million. I don't have data offhand on the other territories.

I can tell you, though, that they work quite closely through the various Community Futures Development Corporations in the north. That's an important resource for economic development. And the BDC lends expertise to those particular corporations, which also provide small business loans. I think there are three Community Futures Development Corporations in Nunavut. There are seven in the NWT and none in the Yukon. To cover the Yukon, they signed an MOU partnership agreement with the Denendeh Development Corporation, which is an external delivery partner of Aboriginal Business Canada. They are trying to maximize the partnerships they have in the north to deliver that financing expertise.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Connell and Mr. Dreeshen.

For members' benefit, we have the BDC as one of our witnesses, you may recall, on the Ottawa witness list as well. So there will be lots of opportunity to follow up with that.

[Translation]

Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to take the opportunity to remind you that we still do not have enough Type A (H1N1) flu vaccine. If there are windows open, we are going to have even less, because it feels a little cold out there.

Mr. Connell, I believe that the development of small tourist businesses is your area. I am the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. We have a business there called Cruise North, a tourist business developed and operated by Makivik, and a Russian company, I think. This is a cause of considerable concern in the little villages along the coast because the people are wondering whether the pilots on the boats that come close to shore really know what the dangers there are. These communities would not have the economic capacity to deal with a shipwreck, for example, or an accident at sea.

Have measures been taken to make sure that the pilots have the skills that are needed for piloting along those shores?

Mr. Wade Spurrell: Is the community located north of the 60th parallel?

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: I'm talking about Ungava Bay.

Mr. Wade Spurrell: Right. I'm going to continue in English.

[English]

South of 60, with Transport Canada there's a regime where the oil-handling facilities in the community are required to develop a response capacity for the cargoes they move in and out. Hopefully that answers the first part. So if there's a vessel bringing any pollutants into the area, they—

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: The cargo ships delivering the goods are piloted by experienced people. I'm talking about Cruise North, which is a cruise ship.

[English]

Mr. Wade Spurrell: Okay. First of all, the department that deals with the certification of the mariners, the pilots, would be Transport Canada. We would transfer any information we have as the ship reports through our marine communications centres over to Transport Canada. They're the agency that regulates mariners in Canadian waters.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: In terms of the environment, in 2005, I called on the government of the day to do something about the former military bases from the last war used as part of NORAD. All of the waste had stayed where it was. I was told that the Americans had paid their share of the money to clean up the shores.

In 2005, after I did that, \$250,000 was paid out to do studies. If I recall correctly, there were four or five studies done before. Today, the problem still exists in places like Kuujuaq, Ivujivik and even Iqaluit, I think. There are barrels of tar sinking into the ground, and all sorts of military waste is still there.

Is that the responsibility of one of you?

•(1235)

[English]

Mr. Michael Wilson: The way contaminated sites remediation works, Environment Canada has a secretariat that provides expert advice on contaminated sites remediation, but the departments that are responsible for or that own those sites are actually ultimately responsible for their cleanup. So they're called the custodial departments. This one, presumably, would be under the Department of National Defence's care and control.

The government, though, has announced—I'll get the number right—\$2.5 billion to assess risks and clean up these contaminated sites, and custodial departments can access that to figure out the best way to clean up these sites, develop the right partnerships to clean them up, and ultimately clean them up. That money is being disbursed as we speak and will continue over the next decade or more to be used to clean up the different sites across the country.

I don't have specific information on this DND-contaminated site, but the Department of National Defence would.

The Chair: Merci.

In your handout, this rather voluminous document that you have, under tab 13 there is an actual map of the federally contaminated sites for your consideration as well.

Merci, Monsieur Lévesque.

Maintenant, monsieur Rickford, pour cinq minutes.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses.

First of all, Mr. Chair, I apologize to you, to the committee, and to our witnesses for being late. I had coverage for the first hour and then was further delayed by another committee obligation.

I feel bad about that, because the groups that are here today are in my wheelhouse, so to speak, on so many levels coming from the great Kenora riding, of course, with some of its challenges around parks and, perhaps to a slightly lesser extent, fisheries. But with Industry Canada and Parks Canada, we face challenges that are not too dissimilar to those of the vast regions in the Northwest Territories. Indeed, I had a chance to live up there in my former life as a nurse and can appreciate some of the more obvious challenges.

I've had a chance to do a cursory review of some of the speeches that were made here and of some of the information. I'll try to keep my questions somewhat general.

I am the chair of the all-party tourism caucus, so I also have an interest in what, if anything, we can do as MPs in a government to raise the profile of various regions. Obviously I bring to this a real interest in the bigger regions of Canada. I noted the Vancouver Olympics that we have this spring. One of the things that we were trying to do through the caucus was to get MPs motivated to help us come up with ideas about how to raise the profile of some of the lesser-known bigger regions in Canada.

In the instance of the territories and certainly of the Arctic, the inukshuk, to some extent, is a symbol that's been sort of... I don't want to say it's been taken, but it's been used for the Vancouver Olympics. I don't always arrive in Vancouver and think of that, but it is nonetheless a gateway to Whitehorse.

I'm wondering if anybody would like to comment on whether there's been a special opportunity to raise the profile of those regions through your departments with respect to the Olympics, with brief answers to that, if you could, and then I'll move forward on some specific challenges and successes moving forward. It may or may not be related to the Olympics.

Mr. Bill Fisher: I'll start, Mr. Chair.

In terms of profiling our national parks and national historic sites, day two of the torch relay was at Figgard Lighthouse, a national historic site. On the news over the weekend, there were photographs of surfers passing the torch at the Pacific Rim National Park. I believe that today the torch is up in the Yukon and is travelling up to Old Crow, which is the community adjacent to Vuntut National Park. A plane will be passing across the country and visiting over 100 national parks and national historic sites on that journey.

• (1240)

Mr. John Connell: I can probably provide a few comments. I did touch on that in my opening remarks, which you unfortunately don't have.

There's a memorandum of understanding between the Canadian Tourism Commission and the three territorial governments on a "Look Up North" campaign that provides a solid basis for activities that are going to be showcasing the north at the Olympics.

As part of that, the CTC received I think \$26 million over five years for Olympic promotion strategies. A lot of that funding has gone to particular canned productions that will be given to all of the major international networks covering the Olympics. In the case of the Americans, it's NBC, and there's the BBC and what have you. In that time when they're wanting to profile Canada, and when there's that dead time or whatever, there will be particular vignettes shown of Canada. Certain of those are of Canada's north—

Mr. Greg Rickford: Do you find that a particularly successful strategy, Mr. Connell? I say that because I recently had an opportunity to make announcements for the Kenora riding featuring some of our tourist camps and outdoor or outback opportunities, if you will. They were going to be on OLN and some of the higher-profile outdoor networks. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but that came into my mind as you were talking.

Mr. John Connell: I do in the sense that the CTC is a research-based organization. It's marketing research, so it's really tested to see how well that's going to play with an international audience.

In the case of the Olympics, I mean, it's just massive exposure. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity. Essentially, it's free promotion of Canada. The networks themselves are going to be looking for that kind of material to use in their Olympic programming, so right around the world that kind of research-based image of Canada is going to play out. Yes, I'd say it's highly, highly effective and a super opportunity for our tourism industry.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rickford.

Yes, it goes rather quickly. Now we'll go to Mr. Bevington, followed by Mr. Martin, and then we have a couple of brief comments to catch up with.

Mr. Bevington, you have five minutes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: I just want to see whether we can get answers on some of these questions. I know, of course, that you're from the Canadian Wildlife Service, so you're probably not likely to be able to answer any questions about sustainable development and some of the dollars coming out of the federal budget this year.

Do you have the expertise in that regard?

Mr. Michael Wilson: We're responsible for some of the areas that have been invested in, mainly the contaminated sites, for mediation money. That would be our principal one but not holistically the money that has gone into sustainable development.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: So Environment Canada still has that. Within your department, are there elements of it that have a say in that sustainable development portfolio?

Ms. Virginia Potter: I don't know the answer to that, but we can certainly undertake to find that out and get back to the clerk of the committee.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay. I think that would good, because it certainly indicates in some of our notes that you have some responsibility for it. We'll have to find out exactly where we can get that information, because it's certainly part of any response in the north.

Mr. Michael Wilson: Sorry, I'm late looking into that. There were some new moneys for that piece of sustainable development legislation. Specifically, we are administrators of that, but we can get back to you on the Federal Sustainable Development Act and the funding indicators that have gone with that.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Do you have anything to do with the environmental assessment process of the Mackenzie gas project?

Mr. Michael Wilson: Yes, we do.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Could you outline how that's going to proceed in terms of the joint review panel? What's your role as Environment Canada, and how do you anticipate your role moving ahead with a minister who is also holding the file for the development of the Mackenzie Valley project?

How does that separate in your department when you have a minister in charge of developing the Mackenzie gas project and then you have a responsibility to ensure that the environmental aspects of this project are well understood coming out of the joint review panel? Could you perhaps clarify some of that?

• (1245)

Mr. Michael Wilson: Sure, absolutely. I'll try to be brief, because that is a complex question.

Environment Canada, like all departments, is managed in result areas. So we have a specific result area that encompasses the Mackenzie gas project office. That is the government's focal point for work on the pipeline. We are also, in another result area, responsible for environmental protection and conservation. That's where most of our regulatory response liabilities lie.

So Environment Canada's regulatory and science responsibilities in the Mackenzie gas pipeline range from any sediment that would have to be disposed at sea, to conservation of the migratory birds area in the delta, and to any environmental impacts on the pipeline route that affect our mandate areas, such as species at risk, pollution, or contaminants.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: What is the impact of permafrost degradation on structures?

Mr. Michael Wilson: In the way we have participated and will continue to participate in environmental assessment, we have two real roles. We regulate certain activities, such as the disposal at sea, or activities in the migratory bird sanctuary. We also provide expert advice to whatever body is doing the evaluations. In this case, the most recent was the joint panel review. So we would have provided information from our meteorological service on what we were seeing or were predicting to happen to the permafrost.

We provided expert evidence at the hearings, and now we, as well as other departments, are waiting to see what the joint review panel says, what their conclusions are. We're expecting that around the end of the year. Then we'll have a short period of time to work with the other departments to produce a response.

Our main interest in the response will be those environmental issues that we have mandate over: the migratory bird sanctuary, the species at risk that are present in the area, and disposal at sea permitting.

Is that helpful?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Well, it needs a little more work.

How are we doing for time?

The Chair: We're just about out of time. You have maybe 20 seconds for a very short question and answer.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Once again, back to that question around actual.... You're conducting permafrost research through Environment Canada, is that right?

Mr. Michael Wilson: Yes, the scientists in our department do.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: So you would be analyzing the nature of the impact of permafrost degradation on structures that are going to be built for the....

Mr. Michael Wilson: Yes. The way the environmental assessment legislation works, we provide expert testimony advice into the process on the science that we have. We don't have regulatory authorities around structures and permafrost. Instead, we provide the science, what we know about frost conditions.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Virginia Potter: Perhaps I could add one point; my colleague reminded me. Our minister would work with the deputy and Industry Canada on the pipeline, per se—the structure, the industrial project—and then the minister would work with our department on the types of permitting, the type of assessment and environmental impact, and would provide advice to the proponent as they would perhaps be executing the project.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now hear from Mr. Martin.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Thank you very much, all of you, for being here today. I have two comments and two questions.

First, I personally feel that many first nations communities are being set up for failure because they don't have the capacity to be

able to do what they're asked to do. I'll share with you an innovative thing we're doing in my riding. We have a relationship with post-secondary institutions to use their senior post-graduate people and utilize those people to provide and build capacity in first nations communities—for example, if they need to have business plans, or if they need to find economic development. It's an inexpensive way of actually enabling them to have access to the types of capabilities they need. I share that with you as something that may be useful.

Second, I spent a fair bit of time with wildlife officers and anti-poaching patrols in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. As you know, they were very innovative in actually marrying up and looking at their wild spaces as a way to utilize and develop resources and create jobs, particularly in rural areas. If you haven't, and I'm sure you have, I ask you to take a look at what they've done there in terms of being able to utilize these wild spaces, particularly in northern Zululand. They've created jobs and utilized those wild spaces in a very economically successful way and have essentially been able to generate the funds for the expansion of habitat as well as create the resources for jobs, primary health care, and education in rural areas.

My two questions are to Parks Canada. The division of labour issue is a very serious issue with our wildlife officers right now. I personally think it puts them in a very compromised situation. I would ask if you could share with us what has been done to actually decrease the siloing in duties, so that a wildlife officer can deal with situations where they need to deal with errant wildlife—they also deal with tourists—where they can actually have quick access to being armed, frankly, for their protection, and also the way they are identified. The removal of their slashes has caused a problem and in fact puts their lives in danger when RCMP officers see somebody carrying around a shotgun who is not identified as a wildlife officer. This compromises their lives. I implore you to take a look at that for the safety of our wildlife officers.

Last, has anything been done to decrease the speed of trains through our wildlife corridors, particularly in blind corners, to decrease the mortality of some of our large mammal species?

● (1250)

Mr. Bill Fisher: In terms of the work of our park wardens, they are certainly responsible for law enforcement and the enforcement of the Canada National Parks Act. I think what you are referring to are our other staff, who deal with resource management issues.

We are working through our national occupational safety and health committee in terms of dealing with appropriate identification for these resource management officers. They do deal with wildlife issues. They are allowed to carry rifles or shotguns for the purposes of public safety and dealing with wildlife, but the law enforcement elements are specifically set aside for park wardens.

In terms of the question around trains, particularly in places like Banff and Jasper national parks, we do work with the local railroads in terms of assessing correct speeds. We spend a lot of time with other elements of that work in terms of cleaning up the tracks from grain spills and that kind of thing. We continue to do that.

Thank you for your encouragement. We will continue to work with them on that.

Hon. Keith Martin: I have one brief comment, if I may. I want to say that I have a huge respect for the men and women who serve in our parks. They really do a yeoman's job, and I give them kudos. They serve Canada admirably in their duties.

The point I was trying to drive at—

The Chair: Ms. Poter was trying to get in there as well. But go ahead, Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I'll just finish briefly. Thank you very much.

With regard to the siloing of the duties, Mr. Fisher, as a wildlife officer, if you come across a person doing untoward things, you have to call in a replacement who has a sidearm. This causes all kinds of challenges. Also, if you have other duties and you can't deal with a problem animal, if you will, you have to call in others to help.

If more can be done to enable wildlife officers to be able exercise the skills they already have, that would be very beneficial from a morale perspective and, if I may say so, from an efficiency perspective in the execution of their duties.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Poter, briefly.

Ms. Virginia Poter: I want to speak, if I might, to the comment about capacity and supporting the people in the north.

In the Inuit impact and benefit agreement, there were a couple of provisions that I think are relevant to the point you raised. The first one is that there's a trust fund that has been set up to support ecotourism, to take advantage of the new national wildlife areas that are being set up in the Nunavut land claims area.

The second point that I want to make sure people are aware of is the requirement for a mentoring program. Co-management is a key feature of the management of the wildlife areas as well as their selection. Stewardship is part of the mandate of that local community. And there's a requirement for us to hire students and to support the youth in developing capacity to help manage these wildlife areas and participate in research that's conducted on those lands.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin, and to all of our witnesses today.

There's certainly volumes of information for us to ponder. I'll remind you again that if you have the opportunity to take a look at the transcript, or if there were some commitments to respond to some of those questions, it would be very helpful.

We do have a couple of short items of business. We will ask you to sit tight for a minute or two, because I know some members would like to say goodbye on the way out.

[*Translation*]

There is no doubt that they are essential for preparing the committee's report, however.

[*English*]

Mr. Rickford, you have a question.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I was just going to talk about some general business things. I have a couple of points to raise about our forthcoming trip. If that's not timely right now, I understand.

The Chair: We'll see if there's time, but I think we'll get to that.

By the way, I want to thank Mr. Clarke and Mr. Rickford. Our colleague Mr. Benoit was not feeling well, and I appreciate Mr. Clarke bringing that to our attention and taking some direction. I hope he's feeling well soon.

There's one item that was circulated to you. This is a routine motion that involves the—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I so move.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Is there any discussion?

As background, this is where the committee is paying for a breakfast, for example, when there will be other people joining us. We need to authorize the payment of those breakfasts for our guests or hosts that join us during the trips to Whitehorse, Yellowknife, or Iqaluit.

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

The Chair: Second, I'll draw your attention, as I did earlier, to a tremendous reference document prepared by our analysts. It was on your desks today. There will be more briefing documents coming with backgrounders on the witnesses, but the document that Mary Hurley and James Gauthier have put together is a tremendous reference for the many subjects we will come across in the course of our work. I would ask you to take a look through that; it may be some nighttime reading for you.

Finally, a question has come up with regard to members' staff who may wish to accompany their member on the tour. You know that members have the ability to use special points for their staff to travel; that is their choice. The committee meetings that will be held in the three locations are public, and certainly staff may attend those.

The one potential area of limitation would be when we, as a committee, have authorized arrangements for ground transportation or bus tours that may be limited to the size of the committee delegation. We can't guarantee there would be other seats available on a bus, for example, for staff to accompany their members. Of course any other costs—hotel, ground transfers—would be absorbed in your MOB.

With those understandings, you have discretion in terms of how you wish to proceed on that.

Mr. Rickford, I'll take your question now.

Mr. Greg Rickford: This is just a question or comment, Mr. Chair, with respect to the use of special points on this particular trip. Is this one special point for both destinations, or are we using a special point for each trip?

The Chair: My understanding is that it will take two, because there will be one special point used to go.

I'll ask the clerk if there is anything inconsistent with this explanation.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I'm not arguing, Mr. Chair, that there would be.

The Chair: Okay. So it would be two.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I just want to make the committee sensitive to the fact that a few of us are from really big ridings, where those special points are golden, as the saying goes. We require those to get to, in my case, more than 25 communities that are not accessible by road; I can't appreciate a visit there, nor can my constituents. I know that one of my colleagues is in a more critical situation than I am with respect to this.

I just put it on the record. There may be more work to do outside of this committee, but I want folks to be aware of the tremendous challenges that we face going....

The Chair: And we realize that.

I would just say that when we authorized the trip, particularly the trip to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, the cost of not doing it on points was about an additional \$50,000.

• (1300)

Mr. Greg Rickford: I respect that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It likely would have resulted in us not getting the trip authorized.

So there's where we are. That's what—

Mr. Greg Rickford: I'm just concerned about one of my colleagues, who may have to walk back to Labrador.

The Chair: We would never allow that to happen, I'm sure.

With that, members, *merci beaucoup* for your attention today.

Witnesses, again, thank you very much for your tremendous responses and presentations.

Merci beaucoup.

The meeting is *ajournée*.

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