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—
Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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•(0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): I call this meeting to order. We're going to study the estimates today, as well as continue on our work on Bill C-16 while we have the minister here.

We do appreciate that Minister Jim Prentice, who's the Minister of the Environment, is joining us today and taking time out of his busy schedule. He's joined by Deputy Minister Ian Shugart. Welcome to the committee.

With that, Minister, would you bring us your opening comments?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here. I always enjoy the opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss your agenda, the government's environmental agenda, and legislation that is before us.

Once again, thank you for affording me the opportunity to be here to discuss the main estimates for my portfolio, which includes Environment Canada, the Parks Canada Agency, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

As mentioned, I'm joined by my able deputy, Mr. Ian Shugart. Along with us are a number of other departmental officials, who will be pleased to respond should any of your questions require any additional discussion.

It's been just under two months since I last appeared before you, but in those eight weeks, much has transpired to push our government's environmental agenda forward down the path toward reduced greenhouse gas emissions and toward a more secure energy future, in keeping with our overall responsibilities as stewards of the environment.

About a week after I was last here, President Obama travelled to Ottawa for meetings with the Prime Minister, from which emerged the foundational beginnings of a North American partnership on questions of continental energy security and environmental integrity.

I was fortunate enough to be included in those meetings. I met with both the President and Carol Browner, his adviser. I can attest that our conversations with the American representatives were healthy and productive, and that all of us have come away with an optimistic outlook in terms of how our countries can best address the challenges that lie before us.

While it's true that the clean energy dialogue is at this point in its infancy, the commitment made by the American and Canadian federal governments is clear, and it is a demonstration of the renewed appetite for cross-border collaboration on both environmental and energy issues. In fact, since President Obama's visit, I've travelled to Washington a number of times. For instance, just days after the dialogue, I met with senior White House environmental advisers and key members of Congress to begin addressing the clean energy dialogue in its main elements.

As you know, the principal stated elements of that dialogue include what I would essentially refer to as three working groups. Expanding clean energy research and development is the first of those. The second is the development and deployment of clean energy technology, including, but not limited to, carbon capture and storage. The third is the design and construction of a smart electricity grid in a North American context, based on clean and renewable energy availability.

Since my first visit to Washington, I've continued the conversation with my key American colleagues, both to maintain the clean energy dialogue momentum and to discuss other issues that are of environmental significance both continentally and globally. As was the case with the President's first visit, my discussions in Washington have been fruitful, and I think they provide a sound basis for proceeding forward on a continental approach to matters.

The same can be said of our similar pursuits on a domestic and international front. The 2008-09 fiscal year was a busy one for my department, but also a productive and successful one. I'm confident that we can again meet the expectations of Canadians.

I look forward to the discussion with you about climate change. As I will outline, our intent is to proceed on three parallel pathways—domestic, continental, and international—all of which intersect, in a sense, through the year, culminating in Copenhagen in December.

In terms of environmental accomplishments, ours have run the gamut from progress on climate change, both at home and abroad, to better-protected waters, to additional enforcement capacities, to cleaner air, and so on. I'd like to give more detail on a few of the accomplishments to demonstrate our environmental commitment. You may wish to relate this to the estimates themselves.

We have been making progress on our clean water agenda with the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, Lake Simcoe, and Lake Winnipeg, to name some of our more visible initiatives. We will take future actions with respect to municipal waste water regulation.

We have tabled a new environmental enforcement bill that cracks down on polluters, poachers, and wildlife smugglers through increased fines, stronger sentencing provisions, and new enforcement tools. I know you wish to discuss that today.

This legislation builds upon the combined \$43 million in funding, from budgets 2007 and 2008, that is being used to put more enforcement officers on the ground and ensure that strong cases are pursued by way of successful prosecution.

We launched a vehicle scrappage program that offers incentives to Canadians who turn in their older, higher-polluting vehicles and promotes sustainable transportation.

We hosted an important polar bear round table to set the scene for consultations related to listing the polar bear under the federal Species at Risk Act.

We've continued to collaborate with Canadians, and Health Canada in particular, on the national air quality health index. It helps Canadians make decisions to protect their health by limiting their short-term exposure to pollution and adjusting their activity levels during periods of heavier pollution.

Finally, our environmental action continues with the introduction of Canada's economic action plan, which includes more than \$2 billion of specific items relating to green investments designed to protect the environment, stimulate our economy, and transform our technologies.

● (0910)

[*Translation*]

Some of the most noteworthy investments include: \$1 billion over five years for clean energy research development and demonstration projects, including carbon capture and storage; a new \$1 billion Green Infrastructure Fund over five years to support projects like public transit, sustainable energy and waste management; and \$300 million over two years to the ecoENERGY Retrofit Program to support additional energy-saving home retrofits.

Specific environment Canada and Parks Canada-led investments in the Economic Action Plan include: \$97.5 million over the next two years to manage and access federal contaminated sites; more than \$30 million to support the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline Project; and \$10 million to improve the government annual reporting on key environmental indicators, such as clean air, clean water and greenhouse gas emissions; and more than \$200 million from Parks Canada to improve highways and roadways in our national parks and make them safer for visitors.

In addition, Environment Canada is submitting proposals to access funding in two items led by other government departments, including \$85 million over two years to maintain and upgrade key existing Arctic research facilities, which falls under the purview of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; and more than \$200 million over two years to maintain federal laboratories, which the Treasury Board Secretariat will oversee.

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, the year 2009 signals a key milestone for international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas and better protect the earth from harmful emissions.

I am interested in the views of the committee and your cooperation in working together. As you may recall, I actually included the critics in our discussions at Poznan, in the most recent COP conference.

At the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen next December, the world is expected to agree on the post-2012 way forward to address the challenges of a warming planet. In Copenhagen we will build on the progress made at the previous Poznan conference, the Bonn conference, which is currently going on, and a number of other conferences that will take place in the time before December.

Last December, I led the Canadian delegation at Poznan, where we urged the international community to adopt a post-2012 vision that places the world on the path to a low-carbon future. There is no doubt that Copenhagen will be an important conference in the fight against climate change. Canada fully intends to once again play a lead role in moving the world towards action.

However, what we do prepare for in Copenhagen is equally important, which is why I'm here today to clarify my department's 2009 and 2010 main estimates. During the next fiscal year, Environment Canada plans to spend a little over \$1 billion to meet the expected results of program activities and contribute to its strategic operations and outcomes. These include restoring, conserving, and enhancing Canada's natural capital; reducing risks and contributing to the well-being of Canadians through environmental predictions and services; and protecting Canadians and their environment from the effects of pollution and waste.

Meeting these strategic outcomes would mean that we were successful in addressing our key priorities. Those include reducing greenhouse gas emissions through domestic action and through international agreement; second, protecting Canadians from air pollution and the toxic substances by continuing to implement the chemicals management plan; and third, strengthening the meteorological and environmental services our department provides to Canadians.

Additionally, we intend to take action to improve biodiversity and water quality by implementing the Species at Risk Act and carrying out work under the action plan for clean water.

We intend to enhance the enforcement program to improve the environmental outcomes and the environmental legislation of activities.

We have continued to take leadership on environmental initiatives for the clean air agenda, the federal contaminated sites action plan, and sustainable development legislation.

And finally, we will strengthen the support to program activities by enhancing the enabling functions in the department.

● (0915)

[Translation]

Of our \$1.081 billion forecast spending, Net Main Estimates amount to over \$900 million, all of which will go towards internal services and meeting our objectives in clean air, chemical management, water, environmental science and monitoring, weather and environmental prediction, biodiversity and wildlife, legislation and information, and ecosystems initiatives.

Cast against last year's main estimates, you will see a \$35.2 million increase in our forecast spending. This increase occurred despite a decrease in planned spending of \$91.7 million associated with the transfer of responsibility for the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Initiative and the Harbourfront Centre to the Minister of Finance—two initiatives not considered to be core Environment Canada functions.

This represents an over-\$100-million increase to our core business activities, growth that is principally attributable to key initiatives like the National Vehicle Scrappage Program, Environmental Law Enforcement, the Clean Air Regulatory Agenda and the National Water Strategy.

As I mentioned when I began, my portfolio also includes the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and the Parks Canada Agency. Let me briefly speak on each of these areas and outline their priorities for the coming year.

[English]

First, on the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, environmental assessments will be a key element in ensuring that the environment is protected. Since the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act came into force in 1995, Canada's environmental economy has benefited from better-designed projects where adverse environmental effects are avoided and are minimized.

Over time we have experienced significant challenges in implementing the act. For example, delays in initiating the federal environmental assessment process make coordination with provincial processes difficult and can cause duplication. Delays also add to proponent costs, create confusion with public participants, and do little to add to environmental protection efforts.

Just last month I announced that we have taken targeted action to streamline overreaching and duplicative federal environmental assessment requirements for infrastructure projects. We now have two regulations that will help focus our resources by eliminating unnecessary environmental assessments for public projects where we know, from our accumulated experience, that there are no significant

adverse environmental consequences, and where, in fact, there are often net environmental gains.

We'll also avoid unnecessary duplication with provincial processes when a project requires both a federal and a provincial environmental assessment and the end result will be the creation of jobs and projects that begin sooner.

Over the coming months, we will look at additional options to ensure timely assessments and to focus federal resources on environmental assessments where they will have the greatest benefit. Protecting the environment will continue to be a priority, and environmental assessment for projects that entail environmental risks will continue to be rigorous.

With respect to Parks Canada, Mr. Chairman, in light of the time, I would suggest that I come back to those points in the context of the question and answer period, and similarly with respect to the national round table.

As I wrap up, I want to remind the committee that my one fundamental principle as Minister of the Environment is to protect and improve our environment. The funds represented by these main estimates enable Environment Canada and its portfolio agencies to do their part to make our country and our world greener.

Together, the main estimates and the budget 2009 commitments will promote real action on the issues that matter most to Canadians—environmentally healthy and sustainable communities, energy efficiency, and continued economic growth.

Mr. Chairman, I hope this summary of where we are headed with respect to the environment and this clarification of our main estimates provide the committee with the insight that we need to begin today's discussion. I'd be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (0920)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate your respecting our time limit as well.

With that, we'll go to seven-minute rounds.

Mr. McGuinty, perhaps you'd kick us off, please.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for showing up.

We have 37 minutes left in committee, Mr. Chair, to go through \$1.5 billion of expenditures, so that's unfortunate. It's too bad we didn't have the two hours we originally assumed we were going to have this morning.

Minister, I want to go right to part one of your three-point plan. You said there's a domestic, continental, and international approach to climate change, I think I heard you say, and you said it yesterday as well. Because there's such little time, I really would implore you to be brief, if you could. And if you don't know, it's okay to say you don't know. Is *Turning the Corner* still Canada's climate change plan?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you for your question.

Turning the Corner continues to be the basis on which the industrial emissions of greenhouse gases will be regulated. That plan is currently being fine-tuned in response to as I've said, three factors. First, the stakeholder consultation and the provincial harmonization efforts with respect to that plan were never completed. Secondly, the economic circumstances currently faced by our country require a reassessment of the level of targets and so on that are set out in the plan, although it fundamentally remains our approach. Thirdly, the election of President Obama in the United States has essentially changed the approach of our major trading partner to these issues. That continues to play out in the United States, even over the course of this week.

In light of those three exigencies, *Turning the Corner* will be fine-tuned essentially as the basis upon which industrial emissions are regulated. There are, however, beyond that, other initiatives relating to transport emissions. I announced yesterday a harmonization of motor vehicle standards, and with respect to other emissions such as coal-burning thermal emissions, there are other initiatives under way.

In conclusion, we will be addressing all of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions in our country over the time between now and Copenhagen.

Mr. David McGuinty: Let's go back to the plan, Minister. I know that things have changed, and there are some new factors in play. But I want to go back to your plan and your timelines and your targets.

Your government has said repeatedly, including at committee here with your senior officials, that you're forecasting 18% emission reductions in the industrial sector by 2010. This would result in absolute terms, you said—and maybe it might have been your predecessor—in a 49-megatonne reduction from the 2006 baseline.

Furthermore, your plan claims it will reduce emissions from the industrial sector by 165 megatonnes from 2006 to 2020. This 49-megatonne reduction by 2010 is over 30% of the target.

Now, we haven't seen a single greenhouse gas regulation in three and a half years. Are you telling the country now, and telling large final emitters, that we're on track right now to meet this absolute reduction?

Hon. Jim Prentice: What I'm telling you is that this is a critical year in terms of climate change and that we are proceeding domestically, continentally, and internationally. We will calibrate our efforts to be part of the international efforts to deal with climate change consistent with what is agreed through the UN process and the major emitters process, which the new U.S. administration has begun.

Secondly, we will calibrate our industrial emissions and those emissions that relate to thermal coal generation in specific response to what is happening continentally, what is taking place in our economy. And I intend to finalize those regulations when I'm satisfied that the path forward is perfectly clear in terms of the international process, the continental process, and what we're going to do domestically.

● (0925)

Mr. David McGuinty: I hear you, Minister. So basically you're not able to tell us whether we're on track or not. I understand that.

Hon. Jim Prentice: I believe we are firmly on track, as a matter of fact.

Mr. David McGuinty: Minister, has a single independent analysis—in three and a half years—confirmed your government's plan that it will in fact see Canada achieve its 2020 and 2050 targets? And in that answer, could you tell us if you have seen the Tyndall Centre's report?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Sorry, which report?

Mr. David McGuinty: The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research report. Have you seen C.D. Howe's report, or the Deutsche Bank's report?

Let me quote from your National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. They say in their conclusion that not only are your targets inconsistent with the objective of stabilization of emissions, but they are inconsistent with the wider commitment set out in your regulatory framework for air emissions to reduce Canada's total emissions relative to 2006 by 20% by 2020 and to 60% to 70% by 2050.

There are 11 independent groups, Minister, who have examined your plan. Not a single one substantiates or warrants your numbers.

Do you have a single third-party group independent analysis that substantiates your government's continuing claims—you've just said the *Turning the Corner* plan is your continuing plan—that you're going to achieve these targets?

Hon. Jim Prentice: The targets that we are proceeding with in terms of the mid-term are minus 20% by 2020. I'm satisfied that we are working towards those targets.

I'm familiar with most of the reports you have referred to. I haven't specifically seen the Tyndall Centre report. I'm happy to look at that.

The process at this point requires us to finalize our approach with reference to where we are in terms of the economy, where we are now that the United States has engaged in the battle against climate change. Given the deep integration between our economy and the United States', it is critical we get this right. It's extremely important on all aspects of energy production and consumption with environmental consequences in our society that we calibrate this properly. We will do so.

All the independent organizations you refer to will be at liberty, over the course of this year, to evaluate the specific plans I'm bringing forward.

Mr. David McGuinty: Okay, so it's a moving target, Minister. I think that's a fair conclusion for Canadians to draw. It's a moving target.

I want to go back to your dialogue for a second, Minister. I asked you in the House of Commons two days ago about the 2001-struck North American energy working group, which the previous Liberal government struck between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. We confirmed with Mexican and American officials that the North American energy working group is still working, still meeting, because we couldn't confirm it with your government.

Minister, they've been working on issues like expanding clean energy, clean energy technology, and the design and construction of smart grid for eight years. Why is it you had to reproduce what had already been in existence for five years when you became a government? A dialogue was already well under way with not just the United States but also, yes, our continental neighbours. Why is that?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Well, I don't think it's appropriate to compare something that was struck in 2001 with Mexico, the United States, and Canada. It has a different basis than the clean energy dialogue struck with incoming President Obama. I'm sure it's not lost on you or anyone else that President Obama has spoken about his plans on the environment with considerable clarity and determination. In many respects, his approach matches precisely what our Prime Minister has previously set out in terms of our approach to this internationally and domestically.

The focus of the clean energy dialogue is to begin the process between Canada and the United States to work together on all the issues relating to environment and energy. The basis of Mexico's participation is entirely different. Mexico is not a signatory to the agreement between Canada and the United States relative to the North American energy marketplace. The principal agreement signed in 1970 between Canada and the United States does not apply to Mexico. Mexico has not agreed to the free-flowing energy marketplace we have as the basis of international agreement between Canada and the United States. So the situation is quite different and will remain different.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Monsieur Bigras.

[*Translation*]

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

First, I want to say how disappointed I am that you have taken the time to make a statement that could have been more succinct, which would have enabled us to ask more questions and ensure greater participation from the committee members.

On page 6 of your presentation, you state: “[...] Canada fully intends to once again play a lead role in moving the world towards action.[...]” in regard to the fight against climate change.

I am little surprised to hear you tell the committee that Canada played a lead role in international circles when no later than the day before yesterday, the European Union criticized your position and said that you have failed to show leadership. Europe is pointing to the fact that no regulations have come into force in Canada in demonstrating that there is a lack of leadership on your part.

I am concerned about the Bonn Climate Change Talks, which are currently underway. Could you clearly indicate the position Canada has presented to date in Bonn? Would you commit to tabling the documents highlighting Canada's position in Bonn to date?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Our position in Bonn is quite clear. We intend to play a constructive role in this process, in order to develop an international protocol for all nations. We had expressed a preference in investing in green technology and energy, and it's clear that we will continue with that approach.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Let's be serious, Mr. Minister. Do not tell me that this is Canada's position at an international conference on climate change.

On the site of the European Union Commission, there is a 127-page document that presents that position. It is accessible to the public. What you are doing this morning is nothing less than implementing a policy of secrecy regarding international negotiations.

I am concerned. You told Mr. McGuinty that Canada's position and plan could be subject to change because the new economic situation needs to be taken into consideration.

Are you telling us that economic interests will take precedence over environmental interests, when the UN secretary general clearly indicated a few months ago that a crisis should not be a reason not to intervene in the context of another crisis?

Are you amending your Climate Change Action Plan, which is already weak, to make it even weaker for economic reasons?

Hon. Jim Prentice: If you want an explanation about the 127-page document, I must...

In any case, I appreciate your comments concerning this committee's time.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Are you committing to tabling those documents?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Given the current economic context, we need to ensure a proper balance between our environmental and our economic responsibilities. We will continue to do so and we are working in cooperation with the United States and other countries. The annual UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen, which will be held next December, is a key event in this field.

• (0935)

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I understand that you want to continue to work in cooperation with the United States in order to ensure a continental approach. However, you made an announcement yesterday about greenhouse gas emissions by vehicles. You said in this regard that a regulation would be forthcoming but you did not give any details about the standards that would apply. Ultimately, you didn't tell us anything.

In comparison, President Obama asked his administration on January 25, 2009, to speed up the process to ensure that 2007 legislation on fuel consumption would apply to vehicles starting in 2011. This legislation will ensure that American cars will get an average fuel consumption of 6.7 litres per 100 km, equal to the standard in California, by 2020 at the latest.

Could you also make an official commitment today with regard to the announcement you made yesterday to harmonize our vehicle standards with those in force in the United States, but in keeping with President Obama's approach, meaning in keeping with Californian standards?

Hon. Jim Prentice: That is incorrect. I am going to speak in English.

[*English*]

President Obama has not said that the California standard will be the national standard for the federal government of the United States of America. He has not said anything of the sort. He has directed the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider the California waiver that precluded individual states from adopting their own standards. There's been no suggestion that the California standard will necessarily become the standard that applies in the United States in the time between 2012 and 2020.

What President Obama has also done is he has defined the fuel economy standards in the United States for the 2011 model year. He has not yet defined, nor has his administration defined, the standards from 2012 through to 2020. Those remain to be determined.

As we announced yesterday, we will be the first federal jurisdiction in North America to adopt tailpipe emission standards. We will be the first jurisdiction to regulate automobiles on the basis of the quantum of carbon they emit. This is not done in the United States at this point in time, so Canada will be leading the way in that respect.

We do, however, intend to harmonize those tailpipe emission standards with the very specific fuel economy standards that are developing between us and the United States in terms of the automobile industry. The rationale for doing that is clear. We want to have the highest possible environmental objectives. They need to be achievable. The automobile industry is deeply integrated across the border, and it is impractical to have differing fuel economy standards at the federal level in Canada and the federal level in the United States. So I've made the decision, with cabinet support, to exercise our jurisdiction under the CEPA legislation to introduce the first regulations of their kind.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan, the floor is yours.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to see you again, Mr. Minister. I don't run into you in the elevator anymore.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Have you left?

Ms. Linda Duncan: I haven't left. I think it's a ghost.

I welcome the policy you seem to be adopting, which is to harmonize with the new U.S. administration. That would be consistent with the North American Agreement on Environmental

Cooperation. But that agreement also commits Canada and the provinces that have signed on, including my province of Alberta, to not downgrade environmental standards for any kind of economic benefit. I would encourage you, if you are not yet briefed on that, to become apprised of that agreement. I have a couple of questions I want to ask you about that agreement.

First, is your government anticipating tabling a clean energy and security act similar to the one being considered in the United States? It is dedicated to creating new clean energy jobs, saving energy costs for consumers, enhancing energy independence, and cutting global warming. And it actually sets specific targets for retrofits and renewable energy. I'm wondering if you are considering that. I notice that the Canada West Foundation, in the south of Alberta, has proposed the same act. I'm wondering if your government is giving consideration to that.

● (0940)

Hon. Jim Prentice: Let me respond, first, with respect to the environmental cooperation agreement. As you know, that agreement is an important agreement. It is a parallel agreement, if you will, to NAFTA. It was executed in 1993. It is, strictly speaking, outside the four square corners of the NAFTA agreement, but it is essentially a parallel environmental accord.

I will tell you that at this point in time there is dissatisfaction with where that agreement currently sits and with what has been achieved under the terms of that agreement in the time since it was created. There have been discussions between me and representatives of the American government and representatives of the Mexican government about the possibility of evaluating that agreement and about how we are going to address it in the future. There are concerns on the part of all three levels of government as to whether the efforts since 1993 fulfill the promise of that agreement.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I am pleased to hear that.

Are you supportive of the proposal we've heard President Obama suggest, that in fact the side agreement on the environment should become binding and actually part of NAFTA so that the environmental conditions would be binding and there would be penalties?

Hon. Jim Prentice: To be clear, there have been no specific discussions about that with any representatives of the United States. Certainly I'm aware that publicly that has been a stated issue in the United States. Presumably it would form part of any discourse about the agreement, but that is currently not something under consideration.

With respect to the second agreement that you're referring to—

Ms. Linda Duncan: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...that's proposed.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Okay. Carry on.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm wondering if you are suggesting to your colleagues that it would be a good idea to also adopt a Canadian clean energy and security act.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Let's leave aside the question of the legislative mechanism that would be employed. To be very clear, and I don't want to reiterate my earlier comments, we are moving domestically, continentally, and internationally in a year that is both demanding and complex. It is our intention to proceed with respect to the appropriate legislative or regulatory action with respect to each major source of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.

We moved yesterday with respect to transportation. Transportation accounts for 28% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. As of yesterday, in terms of passenger vehicles, at least, we have harmonized our environmental approach and our industrial approach with the United States.

A second major source of emissions is the industrial sector, which accounts, as I recall, for 35% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, of which half comes from the oil and gas industry. *Turning the Corner* provides the fundamental basis for regulating that industry. I've explained that we will be moving ahead to fine-tune *Turning the Corner*.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Can I ask a question about *Turning the Corner*?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Certainly. Let me just finish one last point.

A third major source of greenhouse gas emissions is thermal coal, which you and I have previously discussed. Those emissions account for 17% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. I anticipate taking a very specific approach with respect to coal-burning thermal plants in Canada.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Unlike the U.S. approach, which has put a lot of attention on moving forward on renewables, why, in both *Turning the Corner* and in your budget, do you not at all include renewables? You only talk about clean energy, coal-fired, and nuclear.

Hon. Jim Prentice: I think the short answer to the question is that our economic action plan is responsive to Canadian circumstances. The approach that has been put forward by President Obama is responsive to U.S. circumstances.

One fact that is often lost in this discussion is that in Canada, although we are a large per capita emitter of greenhouse gases, we actually have one of the cleaner electricity systems in the world. It's rated as sixth or seventh in the world in terms of emissions.

We have approximately only 25 coal-burning thermal plants in Canada. We set out, in the last throne speech, an objective of trying to arrive at 90% non-emitting sources by 2020 from our thermal electricity sector. At this point, Canada actually sits at 73%, so 73% of Canada's electricity is produced from non-emitting sources.

It is the opposite situation in the United States, where, as I recall, less than 25% is non-emitting. They have a much different challenge than we do. Not surprisingly, the focus is different in the terms of the budgetary instruments.

• (0945)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Do I have any more time left?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Are you planning to waive notice and consultation on your regulations on greenhouse gases, as you did with the CEAA regulation amendments?

Hon. Jim Prentice: Twenty seconds isn't very long.

We will proceed with the consultative process that we've set out. There will be—

Ms. Linda Duncan: So you won't waive notice this time around.

Hon. Jim Prentice: No. There's no attempt to waive notice. I'm not sure where that suggestion comes from.

Ms. Linda Duncan: You did that with the CEAA regulations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Watson, you can clean up the first round.

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

Thank you as well to the minister and to the officials for appearing.

Coming as I do from the auto industry, it's no surprise that my interest lies in how the auto industry and greenhouse gas emissions reduction come together.

Of course, Minister, as we all know, in your previous portfolio we did some work together with respect to Canada's auto action plan, which was announced in February 2008.

One of the pillars of that plan, of course, was the focus on automotive research and development, particularly green R and D, and the auto innovation fund, which is to help automakers retool their Canadian operations to produce fuel-efficient vehicles and fuel-efficient vehicle components. From that came the Essex engine announcement, back home in the neighbouring riding of Windsor, both to produce fuel-efficient engines and to have a green research and development centre as part of that investment.

Yesterday, though, you made some additional announcements in terms of moving the auto industry forward in the efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. I wonder if you can take us through that in a bit more detail. You gave us a glimpse of that earlier today. Obviously, there are Canadians who will be watching this as well and who may not have heard your announcement yesterday.

Of course, as you're going through your answer, it's with the knowledge in mind that President Obama has announced his intention to implement the U.S. reform to CAFE standard, which must be achieved in two product cycles for the auto industry and is actually a fairly aggressive target.

Can you outline for us what we mean by a stringent, dominant North American standard; what that will be under the U.S. reformed CAFE; and the importance, in terms of the continental approach to harmonization, of improving our vehicle fuel-efficiency performance and what that means to greenhouse gas reductions? If you can walk us through that a bit, I'd love to hear details about how we intend to regulate through CEPA as well.

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you very much, and thank you for all the excellent work you've done with respect to the auto industry, both in my time as Minister of Industry and since, in my time as Minister of the Environment. We've had an opportunity to work together. It was interesting; I had the opportunity yesterday to meet the new president of Ford Canada, and he was very complimentary about the progress they're making with you in Windsor with respect to the Essex engine plant investment, which is so important there.

The essential challenge, and this has been on the table for a number of years, is how to fulfill our industrial and environmental objectives simultaneously with respect to the automobile industry. Obviously, the industry is in trying circumstances at this point. I won't get into that in all its detail, other than to say that our government is clearly working together with the U.S. administration to ensure that the steps we take are taken in concert and that they are oriented toward ensuring the industry is not only competitive domestically and internationally, but also achieves the highest possible environmental standards.

The announcement yesterday is an extremely important one, not only because it achieves that objective but it really sets the regulatory process in place to ensure that we will have harmonized fuel economy and carbon emission standards in North America. Every effort will be made, using the CEPA legislation year after year, to ensure complete congruity between the Canadian and the American standards. We will never again find ourselves in a circumstance where Canadian federal standards are discordant with North American standards in the North American marketplace.

There is an obvious rationale behind that—namely, in Canada we produce 20% of the automobiles in North America. More than 80% of the vehicles we produce are exported to the United States. They are sold into a different market than they are produced in, so this is a large integrated marketplace.

When I spoke yesterday, I reminded people that one of my first acts as Minister of Industry was to load myself into a Linamar truck, along with 18 rear-axle portions of the truck. We travelled across the border just to measure the time it takes to move auto parts back and forth in your neck of the woods. By the time a North American vehicle is produced, some parts in that vehicle have been back and forth across that border up to eight times.

We believe we are fulfilling our environmental promise going forward. We will be the first jurisdiction federally in North America with tailpipe emission standards. Henceforth, automobiles in Canada will be regulated in terms of the amount of carbon they emit, not in terms of fuel economy. We will harmonize those numbers with the United States.

• (0950)

Mr. Jeff Watson: You've entertained a bit of discussion or raised the issue of California emission standards. Clearly, the fleet mix in

California that was contemplated in the California emission standards is significantly different from the vehicle fleet mix here in Canada. For example, we have a significantly higher proportion of trucks than they do in the California market.

Can you talk about the impact of the California standard in Canada with respect to the fleet mix? What would that mean, particularly for regulating emissions with respect to small vehicles?

Hon. Jim Prentice: That's a very important point. We are aspiring to the highest attainable environmental standards in terms of our tailpipe emission standards.

Sometimes an assumption is made, on the part of people who have not worked through the detail, that the California standards necessarily yield higher environmental benefits when translated to Canada. Shortly after I became the minister, I asked to see the analysis on this fact. While there's certainly opportunity for debate about this, what I've seen technically tells me that because the fleet mix is different—we have a different percentage of trucks versus cars in Canada compared to California—if you apply the California standards in Canada, you don't get better environmental outcomes. In certain circumstances, you could get worse environmental outcomes.

The reason is that the California vehicle mix is, as I recall, 70% cars and 30% trucks. Trucks are essentially a free rider, if you will, under the California standard. When you come to Canada, where we drive a larger percentage of trucks—namely, 60%—you suddenly introduce a variable that the California standard doesn't yield higher outcomes. You have to look quite specifically at each province and the percentage mix.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to start off our five-minute rounds with Mr. Scarpaleggia.

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

Welcome, Minister.

I had put in a request for information, through Mr. Warawa, for some data on how much the Canadian government has invested in water and waste water treatment over the last few years. Given that we have very limited time, would you be able to table that information?

Hon. Jim Prentice: I can respond quite quickly to your question.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'd rather get on to something else. Perhaps you could just leave the information with the clerk. I appreciate the efforts you've made to get that information for me.

Also, I had asked your office for briefing notes on the Devils Lake outlet a couple of weeks ago. I still have not received that. I assume it's a bit of an oversight.

Hon. Jim Prentice: The Devils Lake note I have requested. It certainly will be available to you quickly. And I will ensure that you receive the sewage treatment infrastructure funding numbers.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

You said at the beginning that Mr. Obama's climate change plan matches precisely what your government has been proposing. This brings me to the issue of how much money the U.S. government will be raising by selling credits to industry so that those industries that are above their cap can compensate. It is estimated that the U.S. government will raise \$300 billion selling credits to industry.

Would you call that a tax?

•(0955)

Hon. Jim Prentice: I would say, firstly, from the figures I've seen in the Obama budget, that the climate change revenue—as I recall, that's their term in the bill, “climate change revenue”, so you'll have to discuss with them whether they consider it a tax or not—is estimated in the year 2012 to be \$78.7 billion.

I've only seen reference to the \$300-billion figure as...issues that some economists have taken with the projections in the American budget. They've said it could be double or triple what the President assesses.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'll grant you the \$78.7 billion, yes, but that's still money that's being taken out of U.S. industry and going into U.S. government coffers.

In fact, when your party was in opposition, the environment critic at the time, Bob Mills, who chaired this committee very honourably for a number of years after your party came to power, said—at a time when our government wanted to bring in some cap and trade regulations—that any regulation to curb greenhouse gas emissions was a tax. He said that quite clearly.

What I'm getting to, I guess, Minister, is that we're hearing persistent rumours that your government will be launching some attack ads against our leader on the issue of environmental taxes. I'm wondering if you agree with that approach, especially given that all the measures that are being contemplated to improve the environment around the world involve some kind of sacrifice on the part of businesses and consumers.

Hon. Jim Prentice: That's a very specific question that I would like to answer, Mr. Chairman, so I will.

What I am struck by, sir, is the incongruity between statements your leader has made about workable, realistic climate change plans and the fact that yesterday in the House of Commons your party supported what I refer to as the “tiddlywink” bill. That's Bill C-311, the bill that was put forward by the NDP.

Frankly, the bill contains unworkable and impractical targets that are completely unachievable in the Canadian context. We know, from the economic analysis that was done, that even in a good economy, the minus 6% by 1990....

I'd like to carry on with my response, Mr. Chairman.

The Kyoto Protocol called for Canada to reduce its targets by 6% from a 1990 base. This legislation calls for a minus 25% reduction. It

is completely impractical. It's so impractical that Mr. McGuinty actually suggested that it was fiscally irresponsible because there was no accompanying plan. As he put it, we might as well be sitting at a table with Monopoly money and tiddlywinks.

And so this is the tiddlywink bill. It is completely impractical. Your party has supported it in the House of Commons. You have no idea how this is going to be made. You have been critical of it yourselves.

I think that is something that Canadians will be interested in.

The Chair: Order.

It is 10 o'clock, Mr. Minister, and I know you have....

Mr. David McGuinty: Just before we break, if I could, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Only if it's a point of order.

Mr. David McGuinty: It's a point of order. Just for clarification—this is not on anything the minister has said—could the minister respond to the committee and just let us know whether or not there is a North American energy working group?

The Chair: That's not a point of order. You can carry on when we get into the next round of questioning.

The minister, I know, has to leave. He has a 10 o'clock appointment.

I'll allow you to depart, Minister. I appreciate your coming.

We'll continue on with our rounds with the deputy minister.

Mr. Shugart, if you wish to call anyone to the table to assist you, you're more than welcome to.

Again, thank you, Mr. Minister.

•(1000)

Hon. Jim Prentice: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you members of the committee.

The Chair: If you are ready to continue on with the rounds, Deputy Minister, I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Warawa, you're next in the cycle, so I'll turn the floor over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): I'll wait until the officials get sitting down.

Mr. Ian Shugart (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): In the interests of time, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if while that is happening I could introduce my colleagues to the committee.

With me today is Peter Sylvester, CEO of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. You've met before. Also here today is Alan Latourelle,

[*Translation*]

who is the director general of the Parks Canada Agency. He has had this position for quite some time already.

[English]

Cynthia Wright is the assistant deputy minister of the environmental stewardship branch. Cynthia, in her branch, has a large number of the programs and the regulatory activity in the department. Mike Beale is the associate ADM in that same branch, heavily involved in our climate change policy.

I also have other colleagues here, Mr. Chairman, and I'll perhaps draw on them as the committee has questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Warawa, I'll start the clock now.

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

My question is going to be regarding parks and what is happening in parks, because the minister is responsible for Environment and Parks Canada. But before I ask the question specifically on parks, I want to share with the committee the following.

I also just came back from Washington, D.C. I was with GLOBE International. They shared the importance of harmonizing standards. There are so many different standards internationally that it will be impossible to achieve a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without harmonizing standards. That's exactly what we're seeing happen with the clean energy dialogue ongoing with the United States and also the announcements that we've heard even yesterday and this morning from the minister elaborating on the commitment to harmonize our standards for vehicle efficiency.

Mr. Chair, they also shared the importance of the smart electricity grid. They went on and talked about transformative technologies like carbon capture and storage, renewable fuel standards, including cellulosic ethanol, energy efficiencies and nuclear, and on and on. I was so proud to represent Canada, because that is exactly the direction we're going in, and they were very optimistic. Even China was at the table when Mr. Ouellet was in Berlin with me.

So this is now two years later. We met in Washington, D.C. with GLOBE International. Unfortunately, the tiddlywink bill is going in a totally different direction and is out of date. Internationally, we're moving together, harmonizing standards and coming up with very stringent targets, which include the major emitters. Of course, the tiddlywink bill does not include China and major emitters.

My question is regarding parks. Of course, when we became the government, within weeks we, along with the Province of British Columbia, announced our commitment to the Great Bear Rainforest and the Nahanni National Park Reserve. We have made a strong commitment to parks right across the country. Also, in Quebec there has been a lot of work in parks.

Mr. Shugart, or maybe Alan, could you share with us what is happening in the budget specifically regarding commitments to parks?

Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): This is one of the most challenging but also exciting periods for Parks Canada. As you may know, 2011 will be the centennial of Parks Canada, the world's first national park organization. In the next few years, we will be investing \$75

million, as announced in the recent budget, to upgrade the national historic sites owned by Parks Canada. We will also be working with third-party, non-profit organizations, which are represented in 400 communities across Canada.

At the same time, we are moving to implement the infrastructure program to ensure that our visitor and campground facilities are brought up to a reasonable standards and contribute to the tourism industry in Canada. I think this is a great opportunity for us as an agency. It's not only about fixing infrastructure. In the new park program, we're continuing dialogues and partnerships with aboriginal communities, local communities, stakeholder groups, and other partners. In places like the Nahanni expansion, we're still working with the Dehcho and other partners. It is the same with the Manitoba Lowlands and across Canada. So we have several new parks that we're working on.

Finally, we are working not just to expand our program or our existing parks, but also to protect the parks we have. Over the last few years, we have put in place an ecological integrity monitoring program, which is internationally regarded as one of the best of its kind. Over the next four to five years, our objective will be to focus on restoration of ecosystems in our national parks.

Thank you.

• (1005)

Mr. Mark Warawa: In Quebec, the minister made recent announcements. Could you elaborate?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Over the last few weeks, there were several announcements made in Quebec. One is the Canal Lachine in Montreal. It's an important asset for Parks Canada and for the community of Montreal. We're working in partnership with the City of Montreal to revitalize the canal. It was a \$10-million investment, and the minister announced it a few weeks ago. We're working with them to define a clear path forward and to try, in partnership, to put our money together to have a better effect in the long term. At the same time, we are working in places like Parc national de Forillon, where we're investing \$7 million in ecological restoration and camping facilities.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be here this morning.

There is something that really strikes me. Currently, we are talking almost exclusively about car emissions even if we know that buildings across Canada use 47% of all the energy consumed. What are we doing at present to reduce waste and increase energy efficiency in buildings that are being renovated, built and maintained?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chair, Mr. Ouellet is quite right. In looking at energy consumption by residential and commercial buildings, the federal government can in cooperation with the provinces and other parties, learn how to build buildings and create standards.

With regard to jurisdiction, at present, we do not have the necessary legislative authority to create standards and regulations across the country, but it is absolutely essential to pursue that objective in cooperation with the provinces, in order to minimize energy losses in that area. The minister indicated that the government was seeking solutions in all sectors that contribute to this situation.

Also, the federal government has responsibilities with regard to its own facilities and, although we do not have any specific data here with us this morning, we are seeking to develop a process to determine what measures the federal government could implement under the Federal Sustainable Development Act, passed by Parliament.

• (1010)

Mr. Christian Ouellet: I apologize for interrupting you, but I only have five minutes.

I would like to say that I do not agree with you. The federal government is responsible for the National Building Code. It is in force as such in each province. If there were a federal building and energy code, the provinces would also have copied this. It's not because it is an area of provincial jurisdiction that the federal government must therefore withdraw from the creation of a national building code.

In Quebec we have accepted the National Building Code and are copying it. If there were a national building and energy code, we would do the same. Furthermore, you could issue energy efficiency standards, given all the waste, which goes against energy efficiency. You could also issue residential construction standards. You only talked about commercial buildings, and not large institutional facilities.

Why is the federal government doing nothing?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chair, in principle, I am including all buildings in the commercial, institutional and residential sectors. If I am mistaken, I am open to correction. There is in fact a national code. It is a technical code that was developed in partnership with the provinces. I alluded to the federal authority to enforce this national code with regard to municipal blueprints and properties. That is the only distinction I made.

In principle, I fully agree that this is one of the strategies that need to be pursued, in partnership with the provinces. Special attention needs to be given to this sector in order to help reduce greenhouse gases.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Braid—

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I have an offer to make to the deputy.

I actually put a request in to the Government of Canada for the list of all the federal buildings that had been retrofitted. I'd be happy to share it with the department. It's a compilation of all the buildings held that would have been retrofitted, including your department.

The Chair: That's fine. Okay.

Mr. Braid, the floor is yours.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our departmental officials for being here this morning.

I was hoping to ask this question of the minister. I would still like to pursue this particular question, hoping that one of you can respond and provide an update.

I wanted to touch on our clean energy dialogue. It builds on a historical tradition; parenthetically, I might add that it is a historical tradition of significant progress made by previous Conservative governments through partnership with the American administration. I'm thinking, for example, of the acid rain treaty.

I wanted to ask if you could update us on the progress of this clean energy dialogue. I know that the minister has been to Washington numerous times in the last couple of weeks and months, meeting with members of Congress and with officials of the Obama administration. If one of you could provide us with an update on that dialogue and some of the next steps, it would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Chair.

The clean energy dialogue, as the minister indicated, takes three forms, or is divided into three parts, and really is an expression of a political commitment at the highest levels to pursue collaboration on clean energy. The logic behind it, as it relates to each of the groups, is that in order for any jurisdiction in the world to achieve its objectives on reducing greenhouse gases, it will be important to save energy and use energy more efficiently. It will be necessary to replace, to the extent possible, fossil fuel use with non-emitting sources of energy. Where we continue to use fossil fuels, and I think the way ahead is clear that fossil fuels will continue to be relied on very substantially in the world, it's important to clean the production of those fossil fuels.

So the clean energy R and D component of the clean energy dialogue is oriented to collaboration on work that is being done in both jurisdictions. The Department of Energy in the United States, for example, very similarly to NRCan here in Canada and the National Research Council, is a huge scientific and research and development enterprise. So we anticipate putting together our forces in this area, building on past collaboration between the two governments.

The one on carbon capture and storage is essentially directed at collaborating to deal with this promising technology, which still needs to be ramped up to the scale where it is economic on a commercial basis, and on widespread deployment in Canada with respect to the oil and gas sector, particularly the oil sands, and in the United States with respect to thermal electricity generation. Thermal electricity generation and CCS apply in Canada as well, of course.

Finally, there's the issue of bringing on stream different sources of electricity generation, including renewables, including large-scale nuclear, but also hydro, which, as the minister indicated, is a very substantial area of potential in this country to meet our energy needs and potentially for export to contribute to the American energy needs as well. In that working group, we will be focusing on how one adjusts the grid, expands the grid, makes the grid smarter and able to receive electricity from these sources, and replace the predominance of fossil fuel to the extent achievable.

That's a picture of the work that will be going on as we anticipate in the three groups. Of course, we need to have a concrete agreement with the United States on precisely the modalities of how those three groups in the clean energy dialogue will work, and we are in discussion with them in that regard.

•(1015)

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you very much.

Perhaps I could just zero in a bit on what you've described as a promising technology, carbon capture and storage. Are the Americans equally as interested in this particular aspect and approach?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Very much so, and indeed not the Americans only, I would suggest. There is work going on in other jurisdictions in the world, in the European Union, and I would anticipate increasingly there will be partnerships with some of the major emerging economies that face the same challenges as we do.

Mr. Peter Braid: Excellent.

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Mr. Trudeau, the floor is yours.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Thank you.

To follow up immediately, how interested are we in looking at carbon capture and sequestration around the oil sands project?

Mr. Ian Shugart: I think this, for Canada, is one of the major applications for CCS, and it is of course a hugely expensive undertaking.

The committee will know that the standards over time, that would be brought in through regulation on the industrial sector, in the next years begin to anticipate that carbon capture and storage will become a technology that will be deployed and will be relied on to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from that sector.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Have there been any successful pilot projects or mini-projects, or even research, indicating...?

I know that when our minister went down to the United States to talk about CCS, it was almost exclusively around, and the agreements were around, coal CCS, which is much less expensive than oil sands CCS. So I'm just wondering; because we're relying so much on the potential of CCS for oil sands development, where are we on practical solutions? I mean, it's lovely to say that we're going to fix it one day, but how realistic are our expectations around that?

•(1020)

Mr. Ian Shugart: I think this is in some ways going right to the heart of the issue of the convergence of energy and environmental standards. We are short of developing the technology to the point

where it can be deployed on a commercial basis. But as with all major technologies that offer the prospect of a step change, we are past the proof-of-concept stage as well. So it is much more than good theory, but it is not yet at the stage where we can develop.

One of the world's largest facilities is actually putting pure CO₂ into the ground in underground caverns at Weyburn, Saskatchewan. It is bringing in CO₂ from the northern tier of the United States. It is being used currently in the area of enhanced oil recovery. I would describe storing carbon in the oil sands as still under development, but it is more than a theory.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: It's more than a theory, but with the costs associated so far, it seems to me that it's not a question of developing the technology; it's a question of figuring out how to make it workable in financial terms. We know that we can spend astronomical amounts to do it. Specifically, have there been any indications that the costs are going to somehow come down so that it becomes actually feasible?

Mr. Ian Shugart: That is the big challenge. I think, as usually happens, that it comes from a combination of public investment, which is occurring by the federal and Alberta and Saskatchewan governments, and what I might call the engagement of the market through market mechanisms to make it either necessary or advantageous to deploy the technology.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: So there are no indicators yet.

Let me change tacks for a second. I'm looking at the estimates, on page 19. I'm new to this whole thing, so you're going to have to walk me through it, but as I look at the departmental spending trends on page 19, from 2009-10 to 2010-11 to 2011-12 there seems to be a significantly substantial decrease in forecast environmental spending. Why?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Trudeau is right that from the point of view of main estimates projections, that is the profile. This is explained virtually entirely on the basis that we in government typically have a number of programs whose funding is booked for a five-year profile. At one point, it runs out. Typically, we as a department have to take the next phase of funding to cabinet. It would then go through the budgetary process.

One of the areas, for example, that tail off in that period is funding for the chemicals management plan. This is a long-term commitment, and though it's funded in five-year tranches, we have every expectation that the renewed funding will occur.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr. Woodworth, the floor is yours.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

I was very happy to hear the minister reaffirm the *Turning the Corner* commitment to targets. I regard them—and I'm glad to hear the minister regards them—as fixed, firm targets, not moving targets. As I saw from the minister's evidence, the only thing that's moving is our progress in reaching those targets.

I know that greenhouse gases are important, and they certainly also attract a lot of publicity. But I'd like to direct my inquiries to another area, to the question of cleaning up contaminated sites. That's a very important aspect of the job the department does. We have a number of known sites across Canada and perhaps others that are not known, some that are under federal jurisdiction and some that are not.

I would be grateful if you could give me an idea of what the role of the department is in relation to contaminated sites and what the budgetary implications are.

• (1025)

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you very much, Chairman. I'd be happy to address that area.

In 2005 the base, if I might put it that way, for federal commitment to cleaning up contaminated sites was established at \$3.5 billion. The most recent budget provided funding in the range of \$245 million over the next two years to accelerate the expenditure on cleanup of individual contaminated sites.

This works in the following way. There is a list of sites for which the federal government has direct responsibility or for which it has accepted the liability it bears. These are sponsored, if you like, by a number of departments across the Government of Canada. Some of the major ones would be the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, and National Defence.

The role of Environment Canada, which we share with the Treasury Board Secretariat, is to provide the administrative coordination for the entire process across the Government of Canada. In the department, we have very few—virtually none to speak of—on the order of those of other major departments, but we are involved in coordinating the process of, first of all, assessment. These things have to be assessed in terms of how best they can be cleaned up—what the procedures are that have to be undertaken, what the engineering tells us about what needs to be removed, how the contaminated materials can be properly disposed of or stored, etc. So the first phase is the engineering and the assessment; the second phase is the actual remediation. All of these sites, at any given time, will be in one or the other of those two phases of activity.

The funding provided in the recent budget is to accelerate the number of sites. They are, in a sense, in a holding pattern on that list of sites across the Government of Canada, and the additional money will allow us to bring more on stream, either for assessment or for remediation.

I understand that about \$800 million has been invested already, so just under \$1 billion. At the moment, work is under way on 325 projects, all of which involves about 700 sites, and 120 projects have been completed.

This is a very ambitious long-term undertaking by the Government of Canada. It is happening all the time and in this last budget has in fact been accelerated.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Is it possible to project a timeline? You say that the additional funding is to accelerate the inclusion of sites in assessment or remediation. First of all, are you talking about that \$245 million, and second, what does it mean in numbers? How

many additional sites or projects would you expect that the \$245 million will enable you to begin to address in the next two years?

Mr. Ian Shugart: It's difficult to answer precisely, Mr. Chairman, because each of these sites is different, and the cost, which is typically driven by the complexity of the particular contaminated site, is so variable that it's hard to know.

I'd be happy to provide in written form for the committee what we can provide, what we know now. Some of it may very well be approximate, but we can qualify it appropriately. It's difficult to answer, because they are just so different, and they will be at different stages and they take different periods of time to remediate.

• (1030)

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Mr. Del Mastro, you get the last question before we go on to another round.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Shugart, I'm privileged to have one of the top environmental science universities, not just in Canada but globally, in my riding, and that's Trent University. They do a great amount of environmental research.

I'd like to know, and maybe you could inform the committee a little bit, about Environment Canada's investment in science and how you see that playing a role in our broader commitment toward our environmental plans and agenda.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a son studying at Trent—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: That's fantastic.

Mr. Ian Shugart: —so I'm interested in your question.

I'll answer broadly. We have with us today our assistant deputy minister of science and technology, in case the members want to pursue this.

Our science takes a number of forms. We have a number of laboratory facilities where very substantial work is performed—broadly, in areas of toxicology and understanding the nature of pollutants and toxic elements in the terrestrial and water and air environments. The reference the minister made, for example, to the air quality health index, would be informed by the science both at Health Canada and Environment Canada in terms of the action of pollutants in the atmosphere and the implications for human health.

There is also science that occurs in other institutions, such as the universities, as well as industry. That is a little more targeted on dealing with particular challenges in the environment. Examples that come to mind are the collaboration with the pulp and paper industry over the years in relation to dealing with effluent from pulp mills and the potential for damage in ecosystems, and the work we're doing in relation to phosphorus loading in lakes and rivers, which has been a preoccupation in a number of parts of the country in recent years.

These are areas of science that are directly applicable to problems we are anticipating or actually observing in the environment.

A second area of activity that is related to science, and we would include it under the broad category of science, has to do with monitoring. This would be monitoring air quality as well as water quality and quantity. We do that in close collaboration with the provinces. There are a number of formal agreements we have with provinces to bring our expertise and theirs to bear in monitoring what is happening in that area. We do monitoring under the migratory birds program and also under the broad area of species at risk and critical habitat, in the wildlife and birds area.

Finally—I know time is limited—there is a broad area of science related to the provision of forecasting weather services and contributing to understanding the implications between the flow of water from the earth to the atmosphere and how that's affected by gases in the atmosphere. Of course, that science is international as well as national, and with the university community and so on.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I might add that Environment Canada is the leading publisher, I believe, of environmental R and D in Canada, and through partnership arrangements, we are at the centre of the five or seven leading peer-reviewed science collaborations in Canada. I think we're justifiably proud, as you can tell, of the science we do in the department.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: How are you collaborating? The minister spoke a lot about collaboration with international partners. Are you collaborating on your scientific research and investment with international global partners?

•(1035)

Mr. Ian Shugart: Absolutely. I would cite, for example, the International Panel on Climate Change. A number of our scientists in the department bring to bear the expertise and resources they have in being part of the International Panel on Climate Change. We co-chair one of the working groups; Dr. Francis Zwiers from the University of Victoria. Brian Gray is our senior delegate to the IPCC.

There are other international collaborations, but that would be one I would cite specifically.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll start off our third round with Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thanks, Chair.

Mr. Shugart, we have four minutes, I'm told.

Is it four minutes, Chair, or five?

The Chair: We'd better go with four, just so we have enough time to do....

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Shugart, I'm going to take the earlier answers from the minister, which you can't really comment on, as confirmation that the *Turning the Corner* plan is no longer what it was when it was apparently published. There is no regulation. The draft regulations have disappeared. We're told that everything's changed—the economy, the arrival of President Obama. In fact, the Minister of Transport said publicly, the day of the visit of President Obama, that if he were a Canadian, he'd be a Conservative.

So I take from a series of answers given by the minister that the *Turning the Corner* plan is not what it was. I don't have any knowledge about where we're going in terms of targets.

Mr. Shugart, can you produce for this committee any analysis that substantiates the government's claims, or plan, or pathway, that it will achieve the targets that I raised with him earlier—the absolute targets, the megatonnage that will be cut by 2010? Can you produce a shred of analysis from the department to substantiate those continuing claims?

The Chair: I'll just say again, respecting the role public servants have with ministers and questioning at this committee, that it says in Marleau and Montpetit, page 864, the following:

...public servants have been excused from commenting on the policy decisions made by the government. In addition, committees will ordinarily accept the reasons that a public servant gives for declining to answer a specific question or series of questions which involve the giving of a legal opinion, or which may be perceived as a conflict with the witness' responsibility to the Minister, or which is outside of their own area of responsibility or which might affect business transactions.

I just put that on the record, and you can answer accordingly.

Mr. Ian Shugart: Thank you, Chair.

I would say, in terms of our approach on *Turning the Corner*, that we continue to develop the regulations in the context of these changes. So we have, from the point of view of our work plan in the department, not abandoned the regulatory development. As the minister indicated, we are taking account of these circumstances and working through the adjustment of the plan to those circumstances.

Mr. David McGuinty: Will we achieve the targets in the plan?

Mr. Ian Shugart: The government's objective remains the 2020 goal, and indeed, that is the position it is taking in the international discussions. The pathway to that goal is going to be affected in flux because of these circumstances. But I would say that in the answer to the specific question about tabling advice and analysis, we would have to take into account the extent to which that is advice to cabinet, and I would be limited by those constraints.

Mr. David McGuinty: Fair enough.

Mr. Shugart, the Prime Minister gave a speech publicly in London less than a year ago on behalf of this country, and he said he was going to be pricing carbon at \$65 a tonne. The *Turning the Corner* plan that your department produced with the ministers—three of them now—indicated the annual price tag of *Turning the Corner* was between \$7 billion and \$8 billion a year.

Can you help us understand what the price tag will be if carbon, as the Prime Minister has promised, is \$65 a tonne? In your answer, can you help us understand how \$65 a tonne is not a tax?

The Chair: Mr. Shugart, I'll ask you to keep it very short, as Mr. McGuinty's time has just expired.

Mr. Ian Shugart: What we referred to in the *Turning the Corner* plan was an anticipated price of carbon of \$65 a tonne by, I think, 2018. The complexity of this, as I understand it, is that the price of carbon under almost any plan that is a pathway to medium- and long-term targets is in any given year not going to be the same. It will be a price that can be set implicitly by fiat, it can be a market-determined price, and it's very difficult to project what that price is going to be.

Then that price, in interacting with other economic circumstances—energy prices may be influenced by the world oil price and so on—will directly combine to influence the cost to the economy of any given regulatory or cap and trade system. So it's very difficult to know what the price will be at any given point. Indeed, the whole world—those who are contemplating national policy that would put a price on carbon—is grappling with these same issues.

• (1040)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Monsieur Bigras.

[Translation]

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

I would like to come back to the 2009-2010 main estimates and part III concerning the Report on Plans and Priorities. On page 41, there is a table entitled "Program Activity 3.1: Chemicals Management Program". I was a little surprised to see that there is absolutely nothing on risk assessment of nanotechnologies and nanomaterials in a table giving a breakdown of program activities.

On September 10, 2007, you tabled a regulatory framework with Health Canada. You were to introduce legislation under section 71 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. This should have been done several months ago, but this is not the case.

In the meantime, the federal government—the Government of Canada—has announced \$9 million to encourage research and development networks bringing together experts in the forestry sector.

I think that we're beginning to take a very specific tangent: on the one hand, we are funding technology through federal government programs, and on the other hand, some departments are not assuming their responsibilities in assessing the risks of such technologies.

My question is simple: When will you table such regulations?

Mr. Ian Shugart: I want to ask my colleague, Cynthia Wright, to expand on this.

First, obligations regarding nanotechnologies and biotechnologies have not been specifically identified, but the department's approach is to develop tests to ensure that any product resulting from such technologies—be it traditional chemistry or new technologies—does not wind up in the environment.

I invite Ms. Wright to give you more details.

[English]

Mrs. Cynthia Wright (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Stewardship Branch, Department of the Environment): Mr. Chair, I'll be very brief on this.

Nanotechnology is, as the member knows, an emerging technology. All countries are looking at how it can be regulated. We are cooperating with OECD countries to understand how we could move forward, and that requires some basic understanding of how small particles behave. In order to regulate, we'd have to be very specific about issues such as the kinds of notifications, assessments, and studies we want. That work is being done in collaboration with the OECD right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I understand what you're telling me and that we're in the world of the infinitely small. However, this has not prevented other countries from adopting regulations. I am thinking, among others, of European countries. About a month ago, regulations on cosmetics were tabled in Europe.

So, it's not because we don't know where we are going that we don't need to take action. On the contrary, we need to act all the more quickly. The danger is that this type of product can be directly disseminated into the environment and this could have an impact on public health. I am thinking of the health of workers, among others.

My question is simple. A regulatory framework has been in place since 2007, a little like with regard to the fight against climate change, by the way, and we are still waiting for regulations. Could you tell us exactly when regulations will be tabled, and will the fundamental principle, the precautionary principle, be taken into consideration in assessing the risks?

• (1045)

[English]

The Chair: Could we have a brief response, please?

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: We don't have a fixed date for the introduction of regulations. We're still working on the analysis of what kinds of regulations could be developed that would be appropriate to the nature of the risk.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Duncan is next.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Shugart, we had a presentation by the enforcement officers on the increase in the number of enforcement officers across Canada.

Given the scale of industrial development in northern Alberta, the problem we're having with migratory birds in the tar sands area, and the fact that we have an international obligation, I was a little stunned to see that no enforcement officers were being posted to northern Alberta. Why aren't new enforcement officers, or any enforcement officers, being posted to northern Alberta?

Mr. Ian Shugart: The mechanism of posting in any particular geographic location shouldn't be taken as a proxy or a representative coverage of any particular area of the environment where enforcement action is going to be required. I think the action that the enforcement branch and the prosecution service has taken with respect to the Syncrude plant indicates that when enforcement action is required anywhere, the distribution of resources in a particular area is not an obstacle. We have assigned in all provinces and territories the 50% increase in enforcement capability across the country. I don't know the formula today; we have those figures. Those officers are available and we frequently move them around in order to respond to situations that may be required. Sometimes that is seasonal, sometimes that is based on intelligence or events that are reported. It's a highly mobile operation, as required.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm wondering if you have been directed, and if you are including moneys in your budget, to engage the Canadian public in the Canada-U.S. clean energy climate change dialogue.

Mr. Ian Shugart: I would say that we have not gotten that far. There have been substantial funds dedicated to consultation in the regulatory process. But with respect to the clean energy dialogue specifically, we haven't gotten that far.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you.

I'm hearing from the public that there's substantial delay in the preparation, approval, and implementation of management plans under the endangered species act. Can you advise the committee on whether the delay is due to budget shortages? What is the blockage? For example, the woodland caribou plan is already two years overdue, according to the legislation.

Mr. Ian Shugart: I'll invite Cynthia to comment on that.

Mrs. Cynthia Wright: A lot of the recovery strategies, as I explained when I was before the committee on species at risk, are being led by provinces. For Environment Canada, it's around 70% of the terrestrial species that are being led by provinces. So the capacity issue and the workload is not solely a federal government issue. There's that challenge.

The second challenge I mentioned is just having more understanding of the nature of the recovery strategies and how to do them. We spend a lot of time investing in our processes and procedures. We've now made progress on that so that the pace of recovery strategies is more rapid than it has been in the past.

There's also some technical scientific knowledge, as we explained to the committee, that a lot of the species.... While there's enough knowledge to give an assessment of the status, we lack the knowledge that is required for the specifics of determining appropriate recovery goals and how to achieve those recovery goals.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa, last question.

• (1050)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair.

I first want to touch on a couple of comments that have already been made around the table, and then ask some questions regarding the examination and evaluation of different greenhouse gas mitigating programs.

Mr. Trudeau was asking about CCS. That's very important technology. Yvo de Boer was at the GLOBE International conference. There were a number of different countries represented, or international partners in the fight against climate change, and we spent half a day on CCS. In that half day, there was a lot of science. The importance of developed countries investing in that technology was clearly spelled out, so that there would be commercial pilot projects able to demonstrate it's doable—and we have the science to show it is doable, and we can commercialize it through pilot projects.

Canada and Alberta have committed over \$3 billion, and the United States almost \$3.5 billion. There is also France, Japan, England, and all of those countries. But Canada is one of the leaders in this technology, and also in the commitment to create these pilot projects. As more and more countries participate in this, the cost to commercialize it drops dramatically—and again, Canada has made those commitments. It might be something this committee would

like to spend a meeting on and to call in some world experts on. A lot of it could be done through video conferencing.

Regarding regulations, we have heard about the importance of harmonizing regulations in these changing economic times, and with changing technologies. If you create regulations just to create regulations—and there are regulations all over the world—it would be counterproductive. You must have regulations that are in harmony with where the world is going, and you must have regulations that are effective. Therefore, we have the clean energy dialogue, and we are working within the international community on that.

It is also important to invest in the IMF, and Canada has increased our investment to that institution. So again, we've taken strong leadership there to create these transferable technologies.

Now, as for my question for the officials, we've heard questions regarding the evaluation of the different programs. So my question is do we examine the economic costs and benefits of proposed greenhouse gas-mitigating programs and other environmental initiatives?

Mr. Ian Shugart: Yes, Chair, we certainly do that in the department, although I would say the nature of the evaluation depends very much on the subject matter. In fact, all across the government, there is a requirement to evaluate the environmental costs and benefits of actions by government.

We have the privilege, I guess, of being in a position where if we develop policy advice, and it's accepted by the government and it's good environmental policy, the net benefit to the environment is going to be pretty clear. But we do in fact go through that discipline of providing government with the analysis within the context of the information and data available.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

I want to thank all of the officials for appearing today on the main estimates. I think the committee received a lot of useful information from the presentation by the minister, and from the subsequent questions.

There is some homework that we tasked you with, and we do ask that it be submitted back to committee in an expeditious manner. You are dismissed. Again, thank you.

Committee, we do have one motion to deal with and future business.

Mr. Bigras, you did give notice of motion. If you wish to table that motion, please do.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Thank you Mr. Chair.

I would like to table a motion. My motion reads as follows:

That the Minister of the Environment table before the committee the documents underlying Canada's position presented at the Bonn Climate Change Talks, from March 29 to April 8, 2009.

[English]

The Chair: We have it on the floor.

Is there any discussion?

Monsieur Bigras.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Chair, an important conference on climate change is currently being held in Bonn. This is a conference in preparation for the Copenhagen conference. The government must show transparency. Many countries around the world have done so by publishing their position on their website. Canada should show transparency and table all the documents underlying the position it will be defending in Bonn this week.

Thank you.

● (1055)

[*English*]

The Chair: Good.

We'll go to Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, I have no problem with the request from this committee. I think it's good that the committee is in the loop and being edified as to what's happening internationally. In that thought, then, I think it would be good....

Canada participated at the GLOBE International conference, which was in Washington, D.C. I've just come back from there. Congressman Ed Markey was there, and he tabled his bill. There was a statement position that was negotiated with all the countries, our international partners, including the United States and China, the two big emitters.

I'd like to provide that if the committee would also like to have that information. It was a statement made, and it included Canada's commitment to carbon capture and storage. I'd be glad to also provide that for the edification of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warawa.

I have Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thanks, Chair.

I appreciate Mr. Warawa's offer to table documents from a meeting convened by a non-governmental organization, but what Monsieur Bigras is seeking here, and what we're supporting strongly, is something else. Japan's already announced its targets. The European Union has a 125-plus-page plan already out there for 26 nation-states to observe and react to. We need something here.

What happened at the GLOBE meeting has nothing to do with the official process going forward in Bonn. It's not an intergovernmental working group. It's a non-governmental group.

I'd like to move a friendly amendment to this motion so that it actually includes, in terms of documentation, any analysis the government is either putting forward or relying upon. We have no idea, absolutely zero idea, where we stand, Mr. Chair, on this most important process under the UNFCCC. We got nothing from the minister this morning, not a shred of what our position's going to be. It's extremely important.

The Chair: Let me get the....

Mr. David McGuinty: It's just to add the words "and analysis".

The Chair: Is that after "documents"?

Mr. David McGuinty: Yes, sir.

The Chair: Okay.

A friendly amendment has been requested.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I accept.

The Chair: You accept the friendly amendment? Okay.

So the motion now reads, "That the Minister of the Environment—

Mr. Mark Warawa: Oh, was it a friendly amendment?

The Chair: Yes, a friendly amendment was accepted.

The motion now reads as follows:

That the Minister of the Environment table before the Committee the documents and analysis underlying Canada's position presented at the Bonn Climate Change Talks, from March 29 to April 8, 2009.

Mr. Trudeau, you have the floor, and then we'll go to Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Every country will come to these discussions with a position that is their own to defend and promote. They will try to represent what the realities of industry and citizens have to say about this particular issue. This is what international conferences are all about.

What we're trying to see and find out, since our minister and representatives will be speaking for Canadians, is their initial position. I think it's a very fair request we're making here. What is our negotiating starting point? We'll find out, all of us, where it's going to end up. To know where Canada stands is the minimum transparency we can ask for.

The Chair: It's 11 o'clock, and there is another committee waiting to come in here. We can be back in here at 1 o'clock, if the committee so chooses.

We'll have Mr. Warawa quickly, and then Mr. Watson quickly. Please respect the time.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Just to respond to Mr. McGuinty's comments, as we lead up to Copenhagen in December, we have the London Summit. Our Prime Minister is there. It's being hosted by the United Kingdom. Gordon Brown has read the statement from GLOBE.

It's all part of the process. GLOBE International is making presentations and statements also in Rome in June, and then pre-Copenhagen. Again, these are all international conferences.

I don't have a problem with us reporting on what's happened in Bonn, but I do have a problem with the amendment that Mr. McGuinty has just made. It changes the substance of it when you're now asking for potentially secret information.

● (1100)

The Chair: Mr. Watson.

Mr. Jeff Watson: No, that's fine; I withdraw my intervention.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Mark Warawa: My question is, then, is it asking for secret information—to you, Chair?

The Chair: That is a concern, I guess.

You're looking for public documents and analysis?

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, there is an access to information code in this country. Departments know what is secret and what is not secret. Departments and officials know what is cabinet and what is not for cabinet only. This is not a serious concern. They will screen appropriately, based on their own legislated criteria.

I suggest we call the vote.

The Chair: Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: No, I don't think that's correct.

Chair, my question was to you, not to Mr. McGuinty.

The Chair: I was seeking clarification, as the chair, from Mr. McGuinty on his amendment.

I guess it will lie with the minister to table the appropriate documents and analysis as he sees fit, the way I interpret this, and not what's been called—

Mr. Mark Warawa: If that is what the motion is saying, “the appropriate documents as he sees fit”, then I can live with it.

The Chair: That's not in that, but—

Mr. David McGuinty: No; “as he sees fit”? He'll send us a menu.

Mr. Mark Warawa: So, clarification on the motion.

The Chair: Are you moving an amendment to the motion, then?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Yes.

The Chair: What are you suggesting?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Your suggestion, Chair, was “as he sees fit”. So it would be, “appropriate documents as he sees fit”.

The Chair: So we're inserting the word “appropriate” before “documents”; and after “analysis”, we're adding “as the minister sees fit”.

An hon. member: Is this friendly?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: He's moving an amendment, so we have an amendment on the floor.

The amended motion will now read:

That the Minister of the Environment table before the committee the appropriate documents and analysis, as the Minister sees fit, that underline Canada's position presented at the Bonn Climate Change Talks, March 29 to April 8.

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It seems entirely reasonable. Obviously, as all members of this committee know, we operate within cabinet confidentiality in this country. Certainly, items that would be contained in our approach would be sensitive. They would be commercially sensitive. They could have impacts on the market, which you don't want to have leaked, for example, prior to an implementation. You certainly don't want speculation that can cause shareholders undue harm in this country and abroad and cause commercial harm to industry in Canada. That's why we have cabinet confidentiality.

I think the amendment put forward by the parliamentary secretary is entirely reasonable. It also greatly clarifies this motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there any other comments?

Mr. Woodworth.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you.

I don't want to be overly lawyerly about this, but I do want to remind the members of the committee that the minutes of our meetings are accessible to all concerned across the country. It may be that, as any particular member of the committee might interpret a motion, it means no confidential documents, of course. But others reading it may not interpret it that way. My view is always that if we have a particular intention in mind, we are much better to express it in the motion clearly, so that anyone else reading it will know what was intended.

So although it's fine to pooh-pooh it and say, “Oh, well, it's not necessary to be so specific”, I think it certainly doesn't hurt and it is better for those who read our minutes.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan.

I still have people who want to speak on this.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, it would be my presumption that the committee cannot exceed the law or its jurisdiction or its mandate. It's understood that the minister will provide only those documents that will be required to be provided in law and consistent with the Access to Information Act.

If they want to include that provision, I think it demeans the motion and the minister, but if they so choose, they can put it in.

The Chair: I will call the vote on the amendment.

(Amendment negated)

● (1105)

The Chair: We're back to the original motion. Are there any comments?

Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, the motion, then, is asking for an analysis of the position, which is that you're now going into a possibility of a confidentiality. Would you please share with the committee, through Marleau & Montpetit, what the guidance is to the committee regarding confidentiality?

Today we've heard members of the opposition asking questions of the minister and the officials and misrepresenting things that were said, even taking a speech made by the Prime Minister a year ago and misrepresenting things that were said.

First of all, it would be inappropriate for an analysis of position to be shared publicly. Second, I'm concerned with the past habits of some, in that whatever is said regarding Bonn may be misrepresented, as we've seen, by some here on the committee. I'm also wondering about motive. Why would they want to find out what the Bonn position was, since it will be in the news already, but not want to hear what's happened at other international conferences? It seems to have a bias and a narrow focus to use something, maybe in a mischievous way.

The Chair: Under Standing Order 108(1)(a), as a committee we can order witnesses to send for papers and records and appropriate documents while we're sitting, and it's up to the witnesses to provide those documents. If we're not happy with the documents that are provided, the committee has the option of calling for more documents or more reports.

Essentially we're asking for a document analysis. We'll see what the minister provides to us. Then, as a committee, we can decide whether that's sufficient. That's Standing Order 108(1).

Go ahead, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, generally speaking, departments have 150 days to respond to requests. Can we have a timeline expressed with this? For example, when the government is requested to provide a response to committee reports, they have 150 days to do so. Is that the case with this specific request?

The Chair: That's the case in the House of Commons when reports are tabled in the House. Government has x number of days to respond to petitions and x number of days to respond to reports from committees, but witnesses appearing at committee are required to submit within a short time span.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: But it has been established by the House that it's entirely reasonable for the response time to such a report to be 150 days.

The Chair: Mr. McGuinty is next.

Mr. David McGuinty: I'm not sure if Mr. Del Mastro is finished, sir.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'm just saying that the House of Commons has established 150 days as a reasonable timeframe for a minister or a department to respond to a request.

The Chair: It's 120 days. Standing Order 109 says it's 120 days for a government response to a committee report, but 45 sitting days for questions from committees on paper or in the House as well. If you table a question in the House, it's 45 days. The standards, then, are from 45 days to 120 days.

Go ahead, Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: Can we call the vote, Chair?

The Chair: Are there any further comments? I see there are none.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, can we do mine?

The Chair: As with all motions, there's a 36-hour requirement, and it wasn't in to the clerk in time. There may have been technical difficulties because of Tuesday's events; regardless, he didn't receive it with 36 hours of the meeting. It will be on the agenda for the very next meeting.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Can I ask if it has been circulated, so that people know about it and can think about it for the next meeting?

The Chair: It has been circulated already. All the members got it.

Mr. Bigras, I'm trying to set up a 15-minute meeting for one o'clock to go over our work plan, if that's possible. You're saying you're not available before question period.

Nobody's available.

Okay, we will do this when we get back, and then we'll call a meeting of the steering committee.

We do have the plan of doing Bill C-311.

Go ahead, Mr. Warawa.

• (1110)

Mr. Mark Warawa: We haven't adjourned yet. The meeting is still going on.

With regard to Bill C-311, which I believe Mr. McGuinty has nicknamed the tiddlywinks bill, that bill has now been passed in the House. We're going to have to have a steering committee deciding how that's going to be incorporated into our schedule. The schedule now likely will be changing. The only study that's going on is the oil sands study. Does that continue, or is it going to have to be shelved to deal with Bill C-311?

Those are the kinds of questions we need to—

Mr. David McGuinty: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. David McGuinty: We have to leave. This room is being waited for.

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

Mr. David McGuinty: It is a point of order.

The Chair: As long as I have people on the speaking list, the committee is going until we actually—

An hon. member: You can go, Mr. McGuinty, if you want to.

Mr. David McGuinty: On the point of order, sir, you just suggested a 15-minute meeting to deal with the work plan. Now we're into a debate about the work plan. You've just canvassed the table and no one is available. It's 15 minutes before question period. I think it's up to you now to make a ruling.

The Chair: You're correct that we don't have a question on the floor.

All right, then, I will call a meeting of the steering committee when we get back from break, and we'll leave it at that.

Mr. David McGuinty: That's fine.

The Chair: I will have a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Watson, thank you.

We're out of here.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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