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Chair

Mr. Bruce Stanton

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•(1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC)): Good afternoon, hon. members, witnesses and guests.

This is the 18th meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. On the agenda, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we have the study of Northern Territories Economic Development: Barriers and Solutions.

[English]

This afternoon we are welcoming four presentations as we continue our study of barriers and solutions to economic development in the north.

Members, I'll also say that we do have a brief bit of committee business at the end, so we will try to finish up our regular meeting at about 15 minutes past five.

I'll apologize in advance for the rather uncomfortably warm room that we have this afternoon. This is our third meeting in this room today. We are going to do our best, but please accept my apologies. We have some extra water on hand, and we'll make it through.

We're going to begin with a presentation by Monsieur Jacques Plante. Monsieur Plante is the president of Nasittuq Corporation. He will be followed by Mr. Tony Butler, who is the president of Pan Arctic Inuit Logistics Corporation. You will recall that was one of the organizations we tried to meet with when we were actually in Iqaluit, so we are delighted to have them here today. Following that we'll go to Mr. Zehr from the Nunasi Corporation, and Mr. Page from NRTEE.

Let's begin with Monsieur Plante.

I understand that Mr. Plante and Mr. Butler are going to take about five minutes each. If you go over a little bit on that, it's fine. Let's begin with five minutes for Monsieur Plante.

Mr. Jacques Plante (President, Nasittuq Corporation): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My remarks will be in English, but it would be my pleasure to answer all the questions in both official languages, if necessary.

I will not be talking about our own corporation so that I can skip directly to today's topic of employment challenges in the north.

[English]

I would like to present to this committee some practical experience related to the challenges we face in hiring and employing people from the north or in working in the north.

Nasittuq has around 90 people, or about 35% of our permanent workforce, deployed in the north from one end of the country to the other. During the busy summer period we also hire an equivalent number of people on a temporary basis to support our maintenance and special projects in the north. Of our temporary workforce, over 55% will be Inuit employees.

Our focus has been to increase both the number and the quality of jobs and careers for Inuit people. It is part of the mandate of the company. When Nasittuq started in 2001, we had less than 20 permanent Inuit employees, and we are currently at 51, which represents approximately 20% of our permanent workforce. Note that 34 of these employees are working directly in the north and 17 are working in the south, either in North Bay or in Ottawa.

We have implemented a permanent employment development program as well as a training program. Both programs are specifically tailored to our needs. Since December 2001, 80 people have participated in both programs. We have invested over \$8 million in our training and development programs, which represents, on average, about \$100,000 per employee, which has been a significant investment.

On a practical level, our experience indicates five specific areas that have been a particular challenge for us in improving employment opportunities for our Inuit personnel. These are: education; health services; security clearances; appropriate personal safety equipment; and the whole issue of distance in the north.

Let me explain each one briefly.

In regard to education, most of our jobs are multi-skilled and require a technical or journeyman trade certificate, both of which require common minimum standards in math and science. Not only are there limited opportunities for Inuit to obtain these certifications, but schools still struggle to produce the number of high school graduates with the needed math and science skills to meet demand.

Our development program has been based on assisting Inuit employees to obtain the qualifications to receive their trade certificates. Our challenge has been in finding high school graduates with the prerequisite math and science who can complete pre-trades entrance exams.

In addition, given the limited level of certification programs available in the north, we have to spend considerable resources to send our development employees to training facilities in the south. Furthermore, some people are often unwilling or unable to spend a considerable period of time away from their communities and families for this training.

On a positive note, there are Inuit who are pursuing certification through programs such as our own development program. We currently have 14 employees in that particular program.

However, as the competition continues to expand for a limited pool of qualified Inuit employees, the challenge for us is to keep the trained employees with us. With their newly acquired qualifications, an employee may find an opportunity in their home community, which we continue to view as a positive contribution to northern development and integration of the Inuit into the economy, but which comes at a great expense to us. Others find it too difficult to work on a rotational basis.

We continue to search for ways to ease the adjustment and to support the workers as best we can. This high turnover compared to southern locales does place a challenge on our recruitment process.

Let me talk about health services for a second. In this case, I am simply referring to the requirement for medical certification and testing.

For example, we require a pre-employment medical to be completed as a condition of employment, and I understand the health centres in many of the smaller northern communities do not all have the resources to be completing these comprehensive clearances, especially when additional follow-up tests are required, such as X-rays. People then have to leave the community to get those medicals completed.

I'll now talk about security clearance. Given the nature of our contract with the Government of Canada, we have a requirement for various levels of security clearance, from "enhanced reliability" to "secret", depending on the position. Minor infractions can affect the ability to meet this requirement and many people don't anticipate that limitation.

● (1535)

Also, PALs, or possession and acquisition licences, are required for some of our positions, such as bear monitors. However, many northern residents do not possess this licence, and the ability to obtain this licence in the communities is difficult due to the lack of available training and assistance in obtaining the licence.

With respect to the appropriate personal safety equipment, all of our personnel must have appropriate personal safety equipment, and while we provide financial assistance for this requirement, we expect our temporary staff to meet this basic requirement prior to showing up at the work site. Safety footwear, for example, is an example of this requirement that can be a challenge for a new employee.

Finally, on distance, I believe that you all understand the challenge of travelling in the north. Until the northern community residents possess the skills required for our highly skilled jobs, we must employ staff on a rotational fly in/fly out basis, which is a substantial cost to us. The rotation lengths vary between six to eight weeks on

site, as the cost of flying employees for shorter rotations would be too costly. But due to the rotation lengths, these employees sometimes face challenges in meeting their family and personal obligations due to being away from their homes for extended periods of time.

A challenge to the subcontractor is dealing with specific tasks and projects. We experience challenges that are not necessarily unique to the north but are certainly prevalent in the north. The three main challenges are: the certification; dealing with government standards and procedures, especially in regard to the lack of experience with Government of Canada terms and conditions, which are quite complex, and the depth of paperwork required for proposal purposes; and, obviously, overcoming the geographical distance.

For the small businesses, the level of complexity in dealing with the Government of Canada terms and conditions is such that in most cases they just don't have the time and resources to bother and they give up trying to compete for such business. While we have done as much as we can to reduce the paperwork and minimize some of the most demanding aspects of liability and other onerous terms and conditions, we are required by our own contract to make these flow to our own subcontractors or absorb the risk ourselves.

The Chair: Mr. Plante, I'll just interrupt you there for a second.

We're sort of over time right now. Could you just take the last remaining points and summarize them? Take about a minute or so and we'll pull that all together, and then we'll go to Mr. Butler.

Mr. Jacques Plante: What I was going to propose are some very basic suggestions for making things easier for businesses.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Jacques Plante: One is a travel subsidy to access health practitioners with regard to work-related requirements. Another is to assist schools and students in achieving academic certification. The last one is to assist companies in understanding all of the content of government contracting.

I'll stop on that note.

The Chair: That's very good. Perhaps in the course of questions, if you have an opportunity, you could maybe elaborate on those last points. I'm sure you'll have—

Mr. Jacques Plante: By all means, sir. I'm sorry about taking too long.

The Chair: No, not at all. That's fine. Excellent.

Now we'll go to Mr. Butler. As members will recall, Mr. Butler is the president of Pan Arctic Inuit Logistics Corporation.

Mr. Butler, please go ahead.

Mr. Tony Butler (President, Pan Arctic Inuit Logistics Corporation): Mr. Chair and members, thank you for inviting us here today to present our perspective on northern development.

By way of introduction, I am president of the Pan Arctic Inuit Logistics Corporation. It's a corporation that is 100% owned by the Inuit of the four land claim regions through their respective development corporations.

With government encouragement, PAIL was created 15 years ago with an early focus on a joint venture with ATCO Structures and Logistics to operate and manage the North Warning System radar throughout the north. Within the joint venture, PAIL has evolved from being a junior participant to being an equal shareholder, with ATCO, in our corporate agent, Nasittuq. I should mention that this equity position provides the Inuit in the north a source of capital, a source of funds, to invest in their communities and in their local businesses.

Today I would like to speak briefly to two items I see as challenges in northern development.

The first concerns the government's approach to an element of the bid evaluation process. Currently bidders' past performance in achieving their aboriginal benefits target is assessed solely on whether or not there is an outcome, not on whether the outcome was a success or a failure. One must only document the lessons learned. This approach encourages firms to make significant commitments when bidding, without any concern towards meeting those commitments, as failure will not affect future business opportunities with the federal government. Firms that invest time, money, and effort to meet or exceed their commitments are judged on an equal footing with firms that do not. This fact reduces the incentives for firms to invest in developing meaningful Inuit participation of lasting benefit.

There is a need for a graduated approach to evaluating past performance to account for degrees of success. There is also a need for a mechanism to evaluate not just the quantitative achievements of bidders but also their qualitative results.

Secondly, I wish to address the awareness of opportunities and the timing of that awareness. Within the procurement review process, program decisions made early in a project's development can limit the considerations for participation. This in turn minimizes the opportunities for meaningful levels of Inuit involvement. As some crown agencies and federal initiatives are not subject to the procurement review process, obligations under the land claims may not be considered or may be considered too late in the process.

With Inuit participation normally considered at the end of the approval process, participation is too often seen as nothing more than a tax on the projects, and like most taxes, people seek to avoid or reduce it. With meaningful consideration of Inuit participation delayed until the start of the bidding process, it is difficult for the Inuit to mount timely efforts to establish partnerships or joint ventures, meaning that Inuit communities are faced with addressing training and schooling requirements too late in the process, and opportunities for skilled employment are therefore reduced.

I believe long-term successful northern development can be achieved by having Inuit communities fully engaged in a meaningful fashion in the early stages of government plans and projects destined for the north. This involvement would allow for proper planning both to meet educational and training requirements and to provide

the lead time to establish appropriate corporate capacity and capability.

I would like to end on one note. In 1998 my predecessor spoke to this committee on the same issues. While there has been progress, these issues are still present in the north.

Thank you.

• (1540)

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

[*Translation*]

I now invite Mr. Tim Zehr, President and Chief Operating Officer at the Nunasi Corporation, to take the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Tim Zehr (President and Chief Operating Officer, Nunasi Corporation): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the committee for allowing me to present this morning. I thought I'd begin by commenting that if I could have any input on future meetings, I'd say that I would hold them in the north, where it's a little cooler.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tim Zehr: I feel like I'm melting away here this afternoon.

First I'll talk a little bit about who Nunasi is. Nunasi is a birthright development corporation wholly owned by the Inuit of Nunavut. As a development corporation, Nunasi acts as a vehicle for enabling the Inuit to take advantage of economic growth in Nunavut. Nunasi's board of directors has representation from all of the regional Inuit associations and their respective development corporations. Nunasi represents all three regions across Nunavut. In that respect, it's unique.

Most of what Nunasi does involves working with other business partners. We ask ourselves two key questions when assessing any business interest or venture. First, financially, is this a sustainable, long-term, solid investment that will create meaningful opportunities for our beneficiaries? Second, will this have a positive impact for our beneficiaries' environmental, cultural, and social well-being?

Nunasi invests in businesses throughout Nunavut. However, today I will focus on the eastern Arctic and the benefit to our beneficiaries in a number of lasting ways. This includes the important goal of earning profits for shareholders, of course, but it also includes key benefits such as creating new employment opportunities for the Inuit people and supporting developments that will advance Nunavut and improve the overall quality of life in the territory.

Nunasi is about more than just profit. It's about helping to build strong, sustainable, and thriving communities that can offer growing opportunities for individuals, families, and local businesses. It's the kind of approach you don't always see in today's business world, but it's the approach that has been right for the Arctic region and is one that has proven successful. Today, Nunasi has invested in over 60 different companies, quite diverse, and all across the north.

With regard to partnerships and opportunities, through strategic partnerships and joint ventures Nunasi has built a number of significant companies that serve the north today, companies that reflect the great ambition of Nunavut.

There's already a growing mining industry in these areas. Nunasi is hoping to find opportunities in this area. The mining industry in the eastern Arctic took a huge step forward earlier this year, as Agnico-Eagle opened its new Meadowbank gold mine north of Baker Lake. There are emerging opportunities right across Nunavut. Newmont Mining has received approval for its Hope Bay gold project in Cambridge Bay, and of course there's the ongoing prospect of iron ore on Baffin Island.

In addition to these mining resources, there are also significant oil and natural gas resources in the eastern Arctic. Current estimates suggest that the Arctic Basin may have as much as 11% of Canada's total crude oil resources and 20% of Canada's natural gas resources. However, given what's going on in the world today, perhaps they should remain untapped.

How do we see government's role? Given the huge deficits governments around the world are facing, including Canada's, we believe that much of the current funding is in jeopardy as Canada focuses on deficit reduction. Having said that, we believe the role for federal and territorial governments...there is a need to create a competitive investment climate in the Arctic, one that reflects the concerns and needs of business and industry and encourages new and exciting resource development projects in the region.

Government needs to reduce red tape and other barriers to investment. It needs to ensure we have regulations and approval processes that are effective in promoting responsible development without unnecessary complexity and duplication.

Specifically with regard to the skilled workforce, or the lack thereof, while new opportunities continue to develop in the north, by far the biggest concern is the lack of skilled talent. It's great to hear about new government agencies establishing operations in places such as Iqaluit and Nunavut; however, it continues to be a huge disappointment to see, for example, 20 new jobs coming to the north, only to be filled by 19 southerners who stay for only a short period of time or sometimes just simply commute back and forth.

The talent pool is so slim that there is a huge need for educational infrastructure and training. The reality in the north is that many young, single females are having children at a very young age, and the barriers created by a lack of day care means that many of these kids can't even begin to think about starting a career, let alone a full-time job.

The demographics in the population are completely reversed in the north compared to the rest of Canada. Most of the country is dealing with an aging population; Nunavut is dealing with a large percentage of a youthful population who will need the skills to fill these roles. Nunavut has the fastest-growing population in Canada. The population doubled from 15,600 in 1981 to 29,000 in 2006. The pregnancy rate is the highest in Canada.

• (1545)

A growing population creates demand for capital projects and infrastructure: educational institutions; transportation facilities;

housing; office space; and utility infrastructure for water, sewer, and energy. One answer specific to government's need to respond to these demands would be to foster and encourage public-private partnerships, or P3s.

P3s integrate a project's design, build, finance, and maintenance components. An example of this would be Nunavut's Legislative Assembly building in Iqaluit, which was built under the P3 model. P3s are not privatization but a true partnership, outlined in a business agreement.

Bringing more opportunity to the north is great, but we need to ensure we have a recipe for success in place for the people who live there. A good start would be an Arctic university.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the committee.

• (1550)

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

Now, last but certainly not least, we'll go to Mr. Robert Page, who is the chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

Welcome, Mr. Page. I know you've probably done this before, and as you know, you have up to about 10 minutes.

After Mr. Page's presentation, we'll go to questions from members.

Go ahead.

Dr. Robert Page (Chair, National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. *Merci, monsieur le président.*

I'm here to give a short review of a report from the national round table that came down last November on Arctic infrastructure and climate change adaptation in Canada.

The national round table is a group of Canadians in leadership positions from across the country who are working on environment and sustainable development issues. In terms of putting together this report, we held hearings in the north, and we had a great deal of northern input in connection with it.

This particular report, *True North*, or *Franc Nord*, is an effort to look at the very severe infrastructure challenges that Canada will be facing with climate change and the need to adapt to those new conditions. We are seeing in the Canadian Arctic today some of the most rapid climate change of anywhere in the globe, and we will be pioneering the adaptation processes and projects whether we like it or not. This deals with airports, sewage, roads, tailings, pipelines, drilling, mines, and building foundations above all—things that are critical to northerners for their existence.

In terms of our report, there are three particular areas: codes, standards, and related instruments; insurance and liability issues; and emergency measures and disaster management.

Mr. Chairman, in this morning's *Wall Street Journal*, there is an article on the increase in insurance rates, by 15% to 50%, for all offshore drilling as a result of events in the Gulf of Mexico. In terms of looking at this, the final area will be emergency measures and disaster.

On the physical challenges we face, some have already been mentioned: temperature and active layer expansion in permafrost; the ground ice degradation; the sea level rise and storm surges; and the melting of sea ice and the marine risks that result from it.

We go into some detail on the economic and social side, so I will just touch on it here. Northern people depend on this infrastructure to a very great extent. It's a dispersed population, with great challenges, far greater than those of many southern Canadians. The viability of northern settlement locations, as we're already seeing in some planning in the pan-Arctic area today, is in doubt. Increased economic development brings increased risks in some cases, as we will be seeing. High construction and operating costs in the north are already there.

In terms of actual applications, what are the kinds of issues we're trying to draw out in our report? One is the shorter season for winter ice roads, for instance, as Diavik experienced in 2006, and the increased helicopter costs that are involved as a result. There is enhanced coastal erosion in areas including Tuk, forest fires such as Dawson faced in 2004, and increased drilling in Arctic waters and tanker traffic from Siberia through the Northwest Passage, to say nothing of some of the more mundane things like breaches in sewage or mine tailing ponds.

Codes and standards are a very important part of how we build infrastructure. We have shown in this report the way in which we feel there has been inadequate consideration of northern conditions and circumstances in terms of developing national codes. We show the way in which there are gaps in data for engineers and northern architects and the way in which the real rate of climate change has to be brought down to the settlement level, the local level, in terms of applicability. We welcome the recent responses of the National Energy Board—although we feel it is only the beginning—on pipeline and drilling codes for northern regulatory purposes.

On property and liability insurance, a great deal of this will not be covered by normal private sector insurance coverage. In many cases, government will be the insurer of last resort. It will not cover flooding and settlement relocation issues.

As we are seeing in the Gulf of Mexico, Arctic oil spills will be difficult to curtail. One of the issues, which is of even more concern in the north, is that natural recovery from biological processes will be much slower in the cold water. And for insurance purposes, gradual phenomena like ground subsidence will be harder to document for our purposes.

• (1555)

On disaster and emergency management, I don't need to say very much here. The melting sea ice will lead to weather changes in the circumpolar area. Sea level rise and storm surges will certainly impact soil erosion and settlement locations. Northern emergency measures services are limited and as yet scattered. Northern oil and gas regulation must allow for industry-based emergency measures

and response teams, and some of this has international implications because the ocean currents spill from one side of the marine boundaries into the others.

In finishing, Mr. Chairman, I just want to end on barriers to action. We feel there are severe issues in connection with these three areas in terms of federal, territorial, and first nations institutions and governments, to say nothing of the provincial norths, from B.C. to Labrador, which are so important.

Second, we feel that northern input into national standards and codes of practice is essential and needs to be increased.

Third, northern-based research—and I emphasize northern-based here—must include research, assessment, and policies on climate impact and adaptation needs. I strongly support Tim's comment earlier with regard to a northern-based university as part of that.

Last, building community capacity to monitor and address infrastructure needs and climate change is an important part of this overall program.

Once again, many thanks, Mr. Chairman. *Merci beaucoup.*

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Page, and all of you. I appreciate the fact that each of you actually addressed some specific suggestions, recommendations, in your presentations.

At this point we go to questions from members, and we have a pre-set list that we go by. It is seven minutes for both the question and the response, so the more succinct that members and your responses can be, the more questions we will get in.

Before we proceed to that, this topic has come up, and I want to just inform members of this in case anyone has to get away for any reason. You received in your packages last week—we're going off topic here for a moment—an invitation from Mr. Leon Benoit, who is the chair of the natural resources committee. Tomorrow for lunch an invitation has been extended to each of the members of this committee to attend a demonstration event. This is from Geomatics Industry Alliance. This is pertaining to the offshore drilling, safeguards, and so on. It's at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank Street, 15th floor. It was in one of your circulations. If you are interested, go to it. There is an RSVP you can send over. If anyone is interested in that offshore drilling issue, you may want to attend this. The formal part of the event will not commence until 12:30, so you can get there after caucus. I just want to pass that along in case anybody had to leave early.

Let's go to questions from members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bagnell, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

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

I will try to give you all fair air time and ask one question of each of you, so if you could, keep the answers pretty short in the seven minutes.

In reverse order, Mr. Page, I've been saying for a long time that we need a lot of adaptation funds in the north for exactly what you said, climate change. Could you elaborate on that, maybe, and give some scope or scale of the millions' worth of dollars of adaptation we're going to need because of climate change in the north?

Dr. Robert Page: First of all, that's a very important question. It's one we tried to deal with in our report, and I have to say, because of the difficulty in making cost estimates on this, it was impossible for us to come up with a figure on it. But that very process showed us clearly that the costs are large in connection with what we are dealing with, and the costs are beyond the ability of northern territorial and first nations governments to deal with on their own.

The second point in our report is that we strongly support the northern strategy of the government going forward, but we do feel this is one of the areas that must be addressed in connection with it, for exactly the reason you are getting at in terms of the costs that are involved in it.

I think you can appreciate, with the number of northern settlements, with the new Department of National Defence interest in the north, with the new economic development initiatives in the north, the costs we're dealing with here are a very hard number to nail down.

•(1600)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

Mr. Zehr, I just want to make clear whether as an Inuit, totally northern organization, you're saying that there's too much red tape in the north for some economic development projects.

Mr. Tim Zehr: Yes. In some of the areas.... Let me speak more specifically to mining, for example. In talking to some of the mines—actually, last year with the Agnico-Eagle mine that recently opened—I was told specifically, and not just by them, that in the regulatory process to get things under way, the permitting process was very long, and much of it, they felt, was unnecessary. Any big business is going to tell you that; however, the concern they brought forward had to do with the duplication, over and over again: they would meet with one body and then go to another body. They found that the process was all duplicated. This is an area in which I think we could certainly streamline things to help some of the business interests in the north.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

Mr. Butler, are there no provisions or not enough special provisions in the federal and territorial governments to ensure that Inuit have the best chance of getting as many jobs as possible?

Mr. Tony Butler: Nunavut, for example, provides preference. I believe it's about 15%, if you're Inuit-owned, and then another percentage if you're a northern-based company.

What I was speaking to was that many of the projects the federal government puts out will have as an evaluation criterion that companies have to report on past performance, which has always been something the government looks to. The problem is that the

standard is still stuck in the 1980s and 1990s. They're just looking for people who have tried to do something. The evaluation is based on whether or not you can produce a lessons learned plan. You don't have to achieve your targets. So if you have a project that's looking for 10% or 5% or 2% aboriginal participation, if the company fails to meet it, in subsequent bids all they have to do is explain why they didn't meet it. As Jacques outlined, there are a number of reasons why it's very easy not to achieve targets. It's very hard, though, to actually follow through.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Jacques, you were talking about security clearances being difficult. Is the tightening up of laws recently making things stricter? Is that making it any more difficult to get security clearance for your people?

Mr. Jacques Plante: It's one aspect. It's the processing. There are about seven different factors that come into play with security clearance. One of the issues is—I don't know what the exact politically correct term is here... People who used to get pardons...it would certainly help. People in the north were not aware. A number of people did not participate in that process, and it certainly had an impact for security clearance. That's one specific example.

It is also a matter in which, given the nature of the work we do, the higher the security clearance, the more investigation needs to be done. In some cases, the investigating officer will have to wait until he has enough cases to go up north to investigate. The time delay in getting that done also impacts on the possibility of getting the person hired.

Those are two specific examples of time problems.

•(1605)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: We have a bill right now to reduce the number of pardons; that's not going to help much.

Mr. Jacques Plante: I'm not going to comment on that.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Okay.

Two of you, Mr. Plante and Mr. Zehr, talked about educational infrastructure and training. What more do you need to get the students through math and science? There are schools there.

Mr. Tim Zehr: I talked a bit about the issue of young mothers, for example, having to leave school. There are kids having kids in the north. More specifically, if you go to a community such as Arviat, there's a real issue. There are a lot of young kids having babies and having to leave school. We have to find ways to allow them back in to finish their education. I see that as one of the biggest challenges we have.

The other thing is, as I mentioned, an Arctic university. There is certainly a need for that, but also, I've attended some of the mayors' conferences throughout some of the hamlets, and when you talk to them, there's frustration because they always have to send their people out somewhere to get education. There is not enough based within the communities themselves. Anything that can be done to help improve further education would be a big step for us.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

I now invite Mr. Lévesque to take the floor.

You have seven minutes.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Page, you have quite an impressive track record. You have probably studied the environment a lot, but you have also probably taught about it a lot in the west.

You are certainly able to answer my question. Do territorial governments have enough power and tools to make the appropriate studies and recommendations?

I am asking this because there are people who have always lived in the territories and had to adapt their lifestyles to ice conditions and the seasons.

Do territorial governments have enough workers, financial resources and power to make the necessary recommendations to get things done in the Northwest Territories, Nunavik, Nunavut and Yukon?

[English]

Dr. Robert Page: That's a really good question, one that comes back to a couple of the points I tried to make in my presentation.

Too much of the work on arctic climate change and adaptation is not focused at the community level, so it's very difficult for territorial governments and for first nations to properly appreciate what is going on. Much of the modelling that has been done is way up at about 17,000 feet, and what we're trying to deal with is right at the community level. So a great deal of the research...

The authority question is a little different one.

To my knowledge, right now we have people like the chairman of the National Energy Board spending a good deal of time in the north trying to understand better the issues there. I'm very aware of the efforts to try to work with the three levels of government—federal, territorial, and first nation—in connection with it.

It's a unique system of government that we have evolved here in Canada to try to develop this. Is it working fully and properly today? I don't think it is. That's why in my presentation I talk about further integration.

Are the resources there today that are necessary to do the kind of work we're talking about in terms of these risks? I don't think they are. As Canada begins to take a greater interest in the north, whether in defence, economic development, or sovereignty in circumpolar questions, I think we as Canadians have to invest in a lot of this to a higher degree than we're doing today.

Please understand that when I'm talking about this I'm including the provincial north, not just what I'm doing in the federal north. I'm very aware, for instance, of the very important work that has been done by some of my friends in Quebec in connection with these northern questions.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Zehr, I think you mentioned an Arctic university. I think that is what you called it. I remember a time when the First Nations University of Canada in Saskatchewan was the only university for all of Canada. We managed to get a university building for eastern Canada and, instead of calling it the First Nations Pavilion, we called it the First Peoples Pavilion. The university's intention was to serve all of eastern Canada. First Nations from Newfoundland, Labrador, Nova Scotia and all of eastern Canada were encouraged to have their students enroll there. In addition, the Université du Québec is ready to offer its courses by satellite in the various territories.

You are talking about training qualified workers and staff. Would it not be more appropriate to establish a vocational school now, as CanNor suggested in its report? There is supposedly a budget for vocational training.

[English]

Mr. Tim Zehr: Thank you for that.

Absolutely, a trade school would go a long way to help as well. I believe there needs to be far more diversity than just trades. I have to give a lot of credit to a lot of industry that's coming to the north. They are doing a lot to train Inuit through apprenticeship programs. The Meadowbank gold mine site has over 140 Inuit working on site, and they're not just pushing brooms; they're doing significant jobs, running heavy equipment.

However, there are other areas throughout the north where to even find accountants and so on is very lacking. Many businesses will do their books in the south because they can't find skilled people to do it in the north. So it needs to be much more diverse than just trades.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: When you need qualified staff for courses and training, is there accommodation for those people in most places where instruction is required? Is there adequate housing to allow them to live near the place where they are teaching?

[English]

Mr. Tim Zehr: The quick answer would be no. There's certainly a lack of housing, another issue I touched on earlier. The great thing about the people I know in the north is that they find accommodation through the people who are living there. Many times they're living with someone.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, sir.

[English]

The Chair: *Merci, monsieur Lévesque.*

Now let's go to Ms. Crowder for seven minutes. Go ahead, Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the witnesses for coming before the committee.

I want to start off with Mr. Page. Although I know people are talking about Nunavut largely, I know, Mr. Page, that you've looked more broadly at the north.

I want to refer to the Auditor General's report from spring 2010. In that report she indicated that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Environment Canada had not met their responsibilities to monitor the cumulative impact of development and the various pollutants on the fragile environment of the Northwest Territories. I wonder if you could comment on whether that's also the case in Nunavut.

Dr. Robert Page: First of all, I think my colleagues on the panel here are a little more expert on the Nunavut situation. I've certainly visited Nunavut.

In terms of our report, we were looking at the infrastructure issues; we were not looking at the levels of pollutants in the north, which certainly exist. I'm not trying to suggest that, but your question requires someone who has done detailed work in terms of trying to look at it. I'm certainly aware of some of the residual elements of mining in other parts of the north. I'm not so familiar with Nunavut, so I'm hesitant to answer that question particularly.

• (1615)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Are you aware of any broad-ranging studies that are looking at that?

Dr. Robert Page: In Nunavut?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Or more broadly in the Northwest Territories?

Dr. Robert Page: More broadly in the Northwest Territories, yes. And of course we've seen some of the mining residues of arsenic and others in the Yellowknife area, and we've seen a variety of others. To my knowledge, more work has certainly been done on the western Arctic than there has been on Nunavut in connection with it. Once again, I'm happy to be corrected by some of my friends on the panel here.

I think this is a particularly serious issue, because with mining companies, in many cases, what you have is a situation in which, after the mine is closed, the corporate facility, the corporate entity, may be bankrupt and there would be no party other than government to attempt to go in to look at some of that cleanup. But that's just a general question...that's not replying specifically to yours. I was just trying to suggest to you the seriousness of this issue in terms of ensuring cleanup.

Ms. Jean Crowder: More broadly, I think you and others as well have pointed out that the environment up there is so different from the south that you can't assume... The garbage dump outside of Iqaluit is a really good example.

Dr. Robert Page: That's right.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So you can't just assume that you can treat everything the way you do in the south.

Dr. Robert Page: Well, that's true, but the issue is the separation between some of the chemical processes and some of the biological processes that we're dealing with here. Certainly in terms of trying to deal with the biological processes, as I tried to say in my opening comments, you see significant differences in both the difficulty and the cost involved for northerners. When I say northerners here, I

mean northern companies, northern peoples, and northern governments.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Great. Thank you, Mr. Page.

I want to turn to the other panellists, and anyone can answer this. I want to touch on education because a number of you raised it.

I know this report was dealing with the Northwest Territories, but I can't believe that the conditions are substantially dissimilar. In the Auditor General's report, she pointed out some challenges with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. What she recommended was that HRSDC

...should work with Aboriginal groups and the Government of the Northwest Territories to assess the impact of their Aboriginal skills training programs and ensure that they're leading to improvements in the skills and employment prospects of the Aboriginal peoples over time.

A number of you have raised concerns with the availability of skilled people from Nunavut. I'm sure you're probably well aware of Justice Berger's report from a few years ago—I think it was 2005—that raised some serious concerns with the K to 12 system in Nunavut in terms of just the number of graduates. Of course, if you're not graduating from grade 12, it's highly unlikely you're going to end up going to technical school or university.

I wonder if you've had any experience in working with HRSDC programs and whether you see them as being effective or whether they need to do more of them or less of them, because those are often targeted towards specific skills and job-related training.

Mr. Jacques Plante: I can talk from personal experience at Nasittuq.

First of all, one of the things we've done at the high school level is develop a very simple program of offering scholarships, assisting education, very practical types of things. We've also participated in supporting the junior ranger program and cadet corps to encourage youth to get involved and have an activity that would broaden their overall life experience. That in itself can help. There's still the need for higher concentration on the science side of education. There are a number of programs that seem to minimize the importance of math and science. When you try to get into the more technical trades, these are basic skills that are required but are lacking. We've had a number of jobs where we've had four, five, or six applicants that we went through, but they were unsuitable.

This is a program on which we are willing to spend over \$100,000 to get the individual into heavy equipment operator training or chef training, practical jobs that are in the market. We are struggling to get the right candidate to apply, so anything done at the local level to get each individual child treated specifically...

Here's a very simple thing. In Cambridge Bay or Hall Beach, they have a Breakfast for Children program at school. Children go to school without having had breakfast. They're not very good students when they haven't had breakfast. So it's not a lot of money, but money in the right place would certainly help improve education, and it might also motivate the kid to go to school longer, which is a big issue.

• (1620)

The Chair: Unfortunately, that's the end. It goes very quickly, doesn't it?

Thank you, Ms. Crowder.

Now let's go to Mr. Dreeshen. That will finish up the first round. I don't have anyone else on the list for the second round, so please indicate....

Let's go to Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I was a math and science teacher for 34 years, so I certainly understand some of the challenges you have in trying to convince people that they are definitely the best courses that can be taken.

Again, looking at the educational and the labour concerns you have, can you address what, in your opinion, is the influence or capacity of aboriginal people to making these meaningful gains in the area of economic development? Is it just the educational training, or are you seeing a lot of support coming from industry to assist as well?

Mr. Tim Zehr: Thank you.

Certainly there's a lot of input from industry that is going out. I'd like to say that a lot of them are doing it out of the goodness of their hearts, but I think in reality they're doing it out of necessity. When you weigh the options of trying to train someone locally for a career as opposed to, as I mentioned earlier, flying people up and back and forth—which is a reality in the north—you'd much rather hire locally if you can, not just for the cost factor but for what you're doing for the local people themselves. That's very important.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: The comment was made that about 19 out of 20 jobs that were available were coming from south of 60. Again, take a look at the thought that you're looking at your programs from 17,000 feet. I certainly understand that. When we were in the north, taking a look at the types of programs they had available, and I compare them.... I'm from Alberta, so I take a look at those things that are south of the 49th parallel. I hear my friends from Ontario talking about being in northern Ontario, and to us that's Montana. We look at the kinds of changes and the thinking, the thought process, that comes from one area...trying to implement that into other areas. I think perhaps those are some of the concerns that people have.

I just wanted you to expand a little bit more on how you feel the barriers, as far as labour force is concerned, can be addressed here in the future.

Mr. Jacques Plante: You mentioned Alberta. That's interesting. One of our developmental training programs takes place in Edmonton because we don't have those classes available up north. For some of the younger employees to be away for a lengthy period of time in a place like Edmonton is a challenge. That's one of the reasons we're trying to put that emphasis on having more training facilities up north.

Obviously, there are barriers to getting accepted into the program, like the pre-trade exam and things like that, that come into play. This is why I made my earlier comment about the math and science, because in most of those trades it is a requirement. There are other issues that are cultural in nature, obviously, that come into play. It was funny, I was on the flight coming back from Iqaluit not too long

ago, and there was a young lady who was all excited to be coming down; she had never seen trees. They were quite excited to walk around Ottawa to look at trees and flowers, which they never see up there. There are some adjustments that we just don't think about because of our southern exposure.

One of the barriers is clearly transportation and transportation cost. For those of us who don't regularly travel, we don't think about it, but a flight from Cambridge Bay to Yellowknife is over \$1,000. The flight from Yellowknife to Edmonton, which is probably twice or three times the distance, is \$360 this month. If you look at the difference in travel and the budget that represents, those are significant costs. Clearly, anything that can deal with fair access to travel would certainly be a big way to reduce the barriers in the north.

•(1625)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you.

Mr. Page, the committee has heard from various witnesses with regard to climate change in the north and the significant impact on economic development, which you have mentioned, how it's going to affect infrastructure and ecosystems. I'm just wondering what actions the federal government should take to mitigate some of those risks.

Dr. Robert Page: In my paper I've laid out four, and in our report—I've filed both a French and an English copy of that report with the committee—we are looking at a few things that we think need to be addressed very quickly in connection with it.

In connection with it, first of all, is the integration question that came up in my response to Monsieur Lévesque in terms of his comments. This is tremendously important, because we have to bring the resources and some of the knowledge of the south to the north, and that integration is an important part of it.

If we launch a "University of the Arctic", or whatever term we want to use here, Laval, UBC, and other universities, I would hope, would be contributing to it in connection with it. Integration is an important part.

Secondly, in connection with it, building codes and standards are fundamental to everything we do. That's one of the real lessons of our report. If you have national building standards that the federal government is trying to enforce in order to build new northern cities or economic development, then we feel there has to be greater input. This is not only in the formal building standards, codes, and practices. This includes engineering programs in universities. It involves the way in which professional societies are today trying to address these issues.

Thirdly, we really do need much more research, north- and south-based research in terms of... There are two really critical factors when we look at climate change. One is that we really don't know today the speed at which this change is going to take place.

We have the results from the last 20 years of winter temperatures in the Mackenzie Valley, and we have a start in other directions, but if the Government of Canada and the territorial governments are going to do their job, they really need to get a better sense of how fast those new airstrips are going to be built and how quickly it will be necessary to relocate certain northern communities and this kind of thing. These are very, very major social questions, not just economic questions.

Lastly, we have—

The Chair: We're actually over time here, Mr. Page. Could you shorten it up? Finish your thought, please.

Dr. Robert Page: I'm sorry. I was just on my last phrase, Mr. Chairman. My apologies.

Lastly, it has to come back to the community level.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Plante, did you want to add something briefly?

Mr. Jacques Plante: I just wanted to add one comment that is an observation more than anything else.

We talk about national codes, standards, and things like that, but we'd like to make the point that some of the codes and standards developed down south are totally unrealistic for the north. We have environmental standards that require fuel measurement monthly when you just plainly can't even get to the site because it's buried in snow. I think there is a need for understanding on that point.

• (1630)

The Chair: Very well.

Thank you again, Mr. Dreeshen.

Thank you, witnesses.

Now we're going to go our second round, for five minutes now, so it's a little shorter.

We'll begin with Mr. Russell for five minutes.

Go ahead.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Good afternoon.

It's good to see you again, Mr. Butler, Mr. Plante, and Mr. Zehr, and it's good to have you with us, Mr. Page.

I want to concentrate on just one aspect, because many of my colleagues have raised some of the other issues that are important. It's the issue of transportation, particularly marine transportation.

When it comes to Nasittuq, I know that you have huge expenses when it comes to flying in goods and people and that type of thing. But from a marine perspective, has much thought been given to additional marine infrastructure, to docks and shipping and these types of things?

Because we see an increase in terms of the shipping season and the length of the shipping season. I see it in Labrador. You talk to people in Nunavut and other parts of the Arctic and they say, yes, things are being extended. We see cruise ships more frequently than we ever have. We see recreational boating happening.

But from a marine perspective, I haven't seen much concentration on it from a government policy perspective federally—or territorially, for that matter. I'm just wondering what your views are on that and what could we do.

Mr. Jacques Plante: I'm sorry if I left you with the impression that we don't care about the shipping. We do about 240,000 tonnes of cargo every year and we do all of the fuel transfer using sealift, so we are quite aware of the importance of maritime shipping.

The challenge has to do with the scheduling, of course, and obviously the infrastructure certainly would make a difference, because it drives up the cost. Currently it is extremely expensive to move material, but any project or program that requires access to significant materials can only be done using sealift.

It really becomes a major programming and planning activity in order to get on with the right shipping schedule. We've had projects that have been delayed for a full year because we hadn't taken into account the proper sealift, shipping, or maritime capability. It is indeed important to have the infrastructure to support it.

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you.

Mr. Tim Zehr: Thank you.

Mr. Tony Butler: I was just going to add to Jacques' comment. One of the things that Nasittuq has experienced this year—and it plays into Mr. Page's comments—is delays in work and in shipping because of the weather. The environmental changes have created more moisture in the air, more snow, and more fog. If you're looking at a gravel beach that you have to offload to, there's no way you can have a barge stop. You can't have people flying in and out to offload. So we're seeing the environmental impact, and we're seeing the lack of infrastructure having a big impact on the performance of work.

Sorry, Tim.

Mr. Tim Zehr: I will say that as recently as just last year in Iqaluit we had a ship that turned around and couldn't get in due to ice. It got there a little too late. Certainly there is more open water. We're just not yet at the point where people are thinking in those terms. Recently I was at a conference, and I saw a presentation in which one of the shipping companies was certainly talking about a permanent port in Iqaluit, for example. It would make a lot of sense to do that. Another one of the shipping companies has started moving freight from the west coast as opposed to moving it up the Mackenzie Valley as much. So we're starting to identify that those are certainly needs. I'm just not so sure how far along they are, but they are in that frame of mind now of identifying those needs for ports and so on.

Mr. Todd Russell: Mr. Page, you talked about the importance of codes and standards. Is there any movement on this at all? Do you see any evidence that governments are moving in this direction? Because climate change is not something of the future. It has an impact today, and it had an impact yesterday, if you look at some of the communities.

Dr. Robert Page: I do see some progress on this, Mr. Chairman, and I say this wearing another hat, not the one I'm wearing here this afternoon. I chair the management committee for the international environmental standards association. The ISO 14000 series and the Canadian Standards Association and Industry Canada are the Canadian representatives in that international effort. Certainly both of those organizations are hard at work today trying to look at it. As to whether there are as many resources being put into this as are necessary in terms of the north, I would probably say no, but certainly I didn't want to leave the implication that there was no progress being made here. I think the thing that is of concern to the round table right now is the speed of the change in the north and the speed and the necessity and the urgency of dealing with some of the very real problems my colleagues elsewhere have talked about, and trying above all at this time to engender a greater sense of urgency in this work.

• (1635)

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

Let's go to Mr. Duncan now for five minutes.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I get the feeling we could talk for about eight hours and elucidate a lot of issues.

I'm from a rural part of the B.C. coast. A big part of the riding is rural. On a different scale, I recognize a lot of what you're talking about.

Mr. Zehr, you talked about Agnico-Eagle and the red tape. The NUPPAA legislation has been tabled, and the mining sector basically said that was the legislation we could support. In terms of the federal role, was there any recommendation specifically you could make beyond that legislative package, or were those sort of local red tape issues?

Mr. Tim Zehr: There were certainly both local and federal... I'm not entirely familiar with the report you're talking about—and I'm switching a little bit now from Nunavut to the NWT—but I do know that last year they came out with what was called the McCrank report, and it talked about this very thing, about trying to reduce the red tape and so on, and that was specifically with regard to exploration. Exploration throughout the NWT has pretty much died off because of all the bureaucracy that's been created. There are concerns about the same thing in Nunavut. I'm not sure how the federal report addresses this, but I do know that the comment was made that the regulatory process for permitting should take anywhere from nine to 18 months, and right now it's taking up to four years.

Mr. John Duncan: Yes. We did have testimony from the chair of the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines. We followed up, and he has now endorsed the new legislation that will affect all of that in Nunavut. So that was where my question went. But I'll move on.

You also talked about P3s in the north. We've been talking a lot about sealift and the difficulties. We have construction under way, as I understand it, in Pangnirtung Harbour. It's not ready yet, but we must have learned some lessons. In terms of the industry and people associated with the business side of things who would like to see a lot more port facilities, do you think that is appropriate for P3, as an

alternate way of financing, rather than the federal government always being the cash upfront for all of these developments?

Mr. Tim Zehr: I believe it is. I think there are some winning strategies there. As I mentioned, in our view, given the huge deficits out there, certainly some of that funding is going to dry up and some of these remote areas aren't going to be on the radar.

I know, specific to the Government of Nunavut, their hands are really tied. They have many issues internally and a lot of large-scale projects to deal with, such as fuel supply, fuel storage throughout the north, and power supply. These are huge projects that certainly the Government of Nunavut doesn't have the wherewithal to take on, and this would be a good answer to help address some of those large-scale projects.

Mr. John Duncan: Would the same hold true for the need for warehouse capacity? Could you see the private sector getting involved in building warehouse capacity? We certainly heard while we were in the north, in Nunavut especially, about the need for some kind of facility in that regard.

• (1640)

Mr. Tim Zehr: To that I'd say, absolutely. You can find examples of that. You have certainly the competitive need throughout southern Canada, whether it's cold storage warehouse facilities or just warehousing in general, distribution centres that are built up all throughout the south. This is something that would help address a lot of the high-cost need of transportation of goods throughout the north, whether it be by air or sea.

Mr. John Duncan: We had several references to the building code. I totally understand how the national code might not fit the north, because it didn't fit British Columbia either. Guess what? We have leaky condos, and it cost a lot of money.

You mentioned fuel measurement. What other codes are out there that you can name that would be specifically advantageous to be developed with national terms of reference? Are there other examples that come to mind?

The question is open to anybody.

Mr. Jacques Plante: One very simple code is the fire code. In our facility, we have people trying to apply the southern standard of fire prevention, which is quite difficult to apply in an isolated community. I'm not saying it's not required. I'm just saying that it needs to be taken into account. At one of our sites we had a fire truck with 10,000 litres of water and that's it.

So we do take other precautions. We understand. We want to preserve life and limb and property and everything else. But we do get comments without people realizing what it's all about. Obviously all of the things to deal with the POL infrastructure are quite complex and touch multiple departments. Environment and other departments get involved, so it becomes a little bit difficult for us to handle.

I just want to make a small comment.

When Ms. Crowder talks about the Auditor General's report and some of the licensing and inspections, the Nunavut Water Board, which has been in existence for only a few years, has certainly made a lot of effort to deal with some of the issues involved in the proper handling of various products, and we have worked closely with them in some applications. But in some aspects, they are the regulatory side. The inspection side falls within INAC and Environment Canada. The duplication and the complexity of dealing with these various parts make it a challenge.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan: I have a point of order. Could we give our translators a three- or four-minute break from that hot room down there?

The Chair: I'm happy to do that, if it's the wish of the committee that we take a brief break. We have four questions remaining.

Are we okay? Are we good to go?

We will be taking a brief suspension of the meeting when we're finished with rounds of questions here, before we go into our brief segment on committee business. So we'll give you a brief reprieve at that time. Good for you for hanging in there today.

[Translation]

Is it Mr. Lemay's turn now or Mr. Lévesque's?

All right, it will be Mr. Lemay, then Mr. Payne and Ms. Crowder.

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Gentlemen, I am pleased to hear from you. I will probably address our clerks and analysts, because I get the impression that, by undertaking a study like this, we did not know what we were getting into. I think the first 24 pages of the briefing notes should simply have a glossary, an index of who does what.

For example, Pan Arctic Inuit Logistics Inc. is owned and controlled by Inuit from the four land claim regions, Nunavut, Inuvialuit, and so on, and Pan Arctic's seven shareholders... There is a lot of that!

Do you know who is in charge of what and, above all, are you able to control who does what? It seems there are a lot of people suddenly interested in what is happening in the north, and, as a member of Parliament, I ask myself a serious question. Who does what and do you have any control over who does what? Good luck!

• (1645)

[English]

Mr. Tony Butler: I'll take a shot. Depending on the term "control", I think there is some confusion. For example, among the departments that can affect decisions on development in the north, you have INAC—

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Slowly. Could you repeat that? It is important. We are taking notes. INAC is Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

[English]

Mr. Tony Butler: Yes. There's ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, for Labrador, and you have CanNor, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: It is the new agency.

[English]

Mr. Tony Butler: Yes. And you have Industry Canada, which has a hand in some of the national projects. So there are a number of different departments.

As Jacques alluded to, when you're dealing with some of the environmental issues, we deal with the Nunavut Water Board, but INAC is responsible because that's the way the original agreements were written up. When we're dealing with certain regulations, you're dealing with Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and then you're getting into the western territories, and then of course the federal government.

So the north is unique. I don't think of the north as to the left of Hudson's Bay; I think of it as from Labrador to—

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: One question interests me and I am going to put it to you directly. We are talking about northern development and so on. You have the unique opportunity to be here and ask us if we can reduce this, that and the other. What can we do?

Mr. Tony Butler: Yikes!

Mr. Marc Lemay: It is difficult to answer, isn't it?

[English]

Mr. Tony Butler: I have little idea. I think we forget that our strong interest in the north is short-lived. It's recent. So I think there is some confusion that's occurring because of that. In the past there hasn't been that much interest in what was going on. So a lot of this bumbled along. I think some of the efforts of the committee and others are to perhaps rationalize for us, because we struggle to rationalize for us, who is responsible for development in the north and what is the north.

As I say, because I represent the pan-Arctic, Labrador is as much the north to me as Nunavut. Nunatsiavut in northern Labrador is the north to me as well. I think we run a risk of looking at just the western half without considering the full scope. It's complicated.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: I agree that Canada is ungovernable.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemay.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Already?

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Payne, you now have five minutes.

[English]

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

I'd like to welcome all the witnesses here today. You make very interesting comments. Certainly, my questions are to you through the chair.

I did find some interesting things in terms of education. I think everyone talked about education. You talked about the need for an Arctic university and you talked about potentially a trade school for the north, because of all of the individuals who need training. If I were to say you could have the money for a university and a trade school, where would you put them?

• (1650)

Mr. Tim Zehr: There would have to be further discussion on that, believe me. It's an interesting question.

But specific to Nunavut itself, there are three very distinct regions. Certainly, right there, all three of them would be all over that in a heartbeat. There would have to be a fair way to do it without having it drag on for years. If the commitment were there to do it, I think the people of the north would certainly find a way to resolve that question.

Mr. LaVar Payne: The north, obviously, goes from one side of the country to the other, so I see that as a major problem. I'm not sure how you'd get around some of the travel issues you talked about earlier.

Secondly, I don't know if anyone has done any studies in terms of the number of students who would potentially be there each and every year. Also, where would you find the professors, the instructors? Would they be from the north or from the south?

Mr. Jacques Plante: If I may make a comment, we should look at some of the success stories. For example, the Arctic College in Cambridge Bay has developed a very simple program for training chefs. They ran a program with 20 students and they brought in an instructor from the south. They spent 20 weeks, and it worked.

There doesn't have to be a whole pile of money. Money in the right place is what I would recommend we look at. Simply throwing money at the problem is not going to work; we've tried that in the past. It's focusing on building on the success, and partnering with southern schools with an Arctic flavour is probably... Learn to walk before we run, is probably the advice I would give the committee when it comes to this type of thing. If we start getting into an argument about whether it should be in location A, B, or C, we'll be studying this for another five years and nothing will get done. And it's probably not the wisest use of funds, from that point of view.

Clearly, distance is an issue. It's a cultural thing. We think of it as being something that only applies to the north. My friend from Quebec will tell you that at Christmastime they all want to go home. I used to be in the military. I remember being in Saskatchewan and my wife asking if we were going home for Christmas. There's nothing strange about this. It's the nature of being close to the ones you've grown up with.

The real challenge we have here... You have had the opportunity to travel up north, but 95% of Canadians haven't been up north. They don't realize that it's shorter to go from Montreal to Miami than it is to go from Montreal to Iqaluit. Also, it's ten times cheaper to go to Miami than it is to go to Iqaluit. That's the real challenge we're facing.

How are we going to solve this? I believe that by studying it a little bit better, we could probably come up with some recommendations. That's my humble advice on this.

Mr. Tony Butler: I have a quick comment: online schooling and infrastructure for faster Internet.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Do I have any time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Todd Russell): You have about 40 seconds, if you would like to utilize that, sir.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of what you talked about, I think the strategy is right. One of the issues you talked about was security and getting a PAL licence, so I would see the same kind of thing happening with that, and having somebody in the north being able to train people in various locations.

Mr. Jacques Plante: You're correct: having people make that training available more easily.

People don't realize that we hire bear monitors, not because we want to but because they are needed. It's part of the safety program that we have in place. These people need to be trained, just from a Canada Labour Code requirement, to make sure they can handle weapons appropriately and provide the safety they need to provide.

Again, it doesn't have to be a complicated program, but it needs to be made more accessible to the people who will need it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Todd Russell): Thank you, Mr. Payne.

Our last two questioners will be Ms. Crowder and then our chair, Mr. Stanton, and then I'll move on to other business.

Thank you.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Butler.

You talked about the procurement process. Are you talking about small and medium-sized enterprises and access to government contracts?

• (1655)

Mr. Tony Butler: No, I'm not per se. The small and medium-sized business program is out there, but from my perspective, I don't think it has reached out to the northern communities as much as it has in the south. There's a lot of demand in the south for its services and its approach.

Within the aboriginal procurement policy and the procurement review process the government follows, you have the procurement review committees, senior procurement and advisory committees that make determinations on the level and type of aboriginal participation in projects the federal government is putting forward. Many times what happens is the decisions are made just before a project goes out the door, so that the first time the Inuit hear something is when bids are being requested.

It also means that in planning—something as simple as how you set up your schedule for how a project is going to take place—because of the travel and the transportation issues, the lead time in the north to meet a requirement is talked about in seasons, not in months. You have firms down in the south that are constantly in talking to government personnel, finding out what's coming down the pike, what kinds of businesses might be available. This is not something that occurs as often in the north, so the north is hearing about these things too late to be prepared to step in at a higher level.

Ms. Jean Crowder: There are a couple of things. One is the aboriginal participation. But the second thing is still the SME process. Despite the view that it's working well in the south, I can tell you that for shipbuilding, for example, it's absolutely not working well. I have shipbuilding in my riding.

What would you like to see changed? It sounds as though the lead time is important, but what are the mechanics around this?

Mr. Tony Butler: I'll use as an example Defence, with which I'm most familiar. The defence department works very closely with a lot of defence associations. They brief them, they speak to them, they talk about what's coming along, they talk about their five-year plans, they talk about specific projects. This allows major industry players who are members of these associations to start considering what they need to do in order to be prepared to mount a reasonable bid. That doesn't happen...many times in the north the first time they hear of a project is when they hear that the bid closes in 30 days. Well, in the north, 30 days doesn't even allow you to get from one side to the other. It's not enough time.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Would part of a solution be that there be a carve-out for businesses in the north?

Mr. Tony Butler: I hesitate to say a carve-out, because I think the northern companies and Inuit groups are capable of delivering. There are already provisions to allow for set-asides and for a percentage of a project to be directed to aboriginals. When I think of set-asides or of carve-outs, I worry about their being made in the sense that we're just going to give them some money to go away. They have to qualify.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But you indicated in your testimony that the participation can be seen as a tax on projects.

Mr. Tony Butler: Yes. That's because what happens is that as a project or a procurement is going through the review process, somebody will say, we'll make it 3% or we'll make it 5%. Bidders can then put forward that they're going to spend 3% of the total value. If the contract is worth \$1 million, they have to spend 3%. It could be for anything; it doesn't necessarily lead to meaningful employment. If we look at the history of the east coast, we see that with a lot of programs, money is spent, and as soon as the contract ends, so do the jobs; so does the survivability of the firms.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Do I have time left?

• (1700)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Mr. Tony Butler: Let me speak of education, just to speak to some of the successes. A number of Inuit go south for education.

One of the programs out west was to provide chaperones, because when the kids arrive, quite honestly, with the noise of the city, the size of the city—and this applies to almost anybody coming from a small community, but it's especially hard for those from the north—having chaperones available increases the success rate for these students, both in finishing their matriculation or getting successfully into colleges.

If we go to online training, there's the possibility for remedial math, remedial sciences, so that people can qualify online.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Crowder.

I have a couple of short questions, and then we'll have a question from Ms. Neville as well.

Let me continue with you, Mr. Butler. You mentioned in your remarks that one of the difficulties you recognized was the problem with the bid evaluation process; that in point of fact, the successful bidders were assessed only on the basis that they actually won a bid, and not so much on the actual realization of the objectives of whatever the program is. You described that.

Can you just give us an example of what you meant, an anecdote that describes that problem?

Mr. Tony Butler: I'm going to make this very generic so that I'm not pointing a finger at any particular company.

The Chair: No, you don't have to mention specific names.

Mr. Tony Butler: I won't even mention what they were doing.

The Chair: Okay...or what they didn't do.

Mr. Tony Butler: What happens is a company goes in, and you have price, technical management—a number of different areas are evaluated. One of the areas is aboriginal participation. The aboriginal participation plan may form 5% or possibly even less of the total evaluation. But when you have competitive bids, that 3% to 5% can be a determinant; it can be the tie-breaker. Companies can go in knowing that they might be able to shave a little bit on the price or bid a little bit more, but they can go in and commit to higher employment levels. They can commit to, say, management or semi-management positions. If they don't deliver... I can think of an individual who left a company because he wound up sitting in an office with a plaque outside, and his job was to come to the office. If they don't deliver, what happens on the next bid round is that all they have to do is say why they didn't achieve their targets and say what lessons they've learned from not achieving their targets, and that's considered a success.

Nasittuq has achieved over 300% more than they were required to. That has no bearing on the next bid.

The Chair: I appreciate that.

Mr. Page, here are a couple of background questions.

How big is your annual budget for your operations?

Dr. Robert Page: Our annual budget is around \$5 million.

The Chair: What department is it funded from?

Dr. Robert Page: It's funded through the Department of the Environment.

The Chair: Does the board report to one of the directors general, or does it report to Parliament, or...?

Dr. Robert Page: It reports to Parliament, and Parliament can assign us duties, as they have under the Kyoto implementation bill.

The Chair: So if there's a specific job that Parliament wants to do, they can shunt it off to...?

Dr. Robert Page: That is correct.

The Chair: How many members are on your board?

Dr. Robert Page: We currently have about 18, but we're in the process of declining numbers in response to budget cuts.

The Chair: Do you have any members who are specifically from the north?

Dr. Robert Page: We had one, and his term has finished. We are seeking a new appointment from the north in connection with it. If any of the MPs wish to make recommendations to us, we'd be delighted.

The Chair: I hope everybody heard that. If you have some suggestions, please send them along.

Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to the last question, to Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you all for being here.

In part you've answered the question I have and in part not. It's somewhat similar to Mr. Lemay's question.

The undercurrent of what I keep hearing from all of you in different forms is that the north is not consulted sufficiently; that the people on the ground, whatever the forum, whatever the policy-making, regulation-making, or whatever, are not engaged in the processes sufficiently. I don't know whether I'm not hearing you correctly, but if I am, I'd like to hear from you what your overarching recommendation would be to engage with the people on the ground who live there and experience it. It came through in a host of different ways, but I'd like to know what we can recommend to government.

• (1705)

Mr. Jacques Plante: I'd like to take it from a slightly different angle and maybe answer Mr. Lemay at the same time.

One of the problems we see is that a lot of the programs are departmental programs; they're not Government of Canada programs. So you could have a number of initiatives that come, and they might come out of the blue as far as the north, from a consultation point of view. It's very difficult to get a global picture of what the Government of Canada's overall program is going to be. What

Environment Canada might be planning to do versus what DND might be planning to do are two separate entities that don't necessarily come together until we see the final picture.

One other point I'd like to make on investing in the north is that the infrastructure in the north is extremely expensive. So there will be some financial benefit to having a more coordinated plan and executed program. Somebody mentioned building airfields. DND has 10 abandoned airfields throughout the north that are hardly maintained, and we're talking of building new airfields. Some of them are clearly not in the right location, but some others could well be shared for other programs. This is just one specific example.

Hon. Anita Neville: So what would your overarching recommendations be to us so that we can speak to government on the issues?

Mr. Jacques Plante: Well, I know the government is working on a strategy for the north, and we really encourage the government to go global on that strategy. It's not only a Government of Canada issue; it's also a territorial issue.

Cambridge Bay airfield needs to be upgraded and expanded. The Nunavut government is struggling to find money. It's a wonderful central Arctic location, and from a global Canadian investment point of view, all of the governments—local, territorial, and federal—need to work together.

The north is a wonderful place, and I learned a long time ago that for people to survive in the north they need to cooperate and work together. And that is really the true message I would like to leave with the committee.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Neville.

And finally we'll move to Mr. Rickford.

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

I just have a quick question about mobile training centres. These obviously would be more for specific skills and trades. Are any of you gentlemen aware of whether you have any such thing? I know we have it in part of my riding, and my colleagues in Thunder Bay—Rainy River are obviously looking more seriously at the concept for key infrastructure development plans. Under Canada's economic action plan we're quite busy in northern Ontario.

But I was wondering if you had anything like that, or whether you were aware of it.

Mr. Tim Zehr: Yes, that's a great question.

Nunasi has an investment in a company called Academy of Learning, which is really a franchise. One of the things they do is hold labs in the different communities. They call them labs, and they go out and do really short-term courses for computer training and these types of things, which are very necessary.

The one issue the Academy of Learning is having is they can't seem to get enough qualified people to go out and conduct the labs, so it's always a catch-22 for them to get out there. But I would say that I am familiar, somewhat, with it, and I would encourage more of that for sure. As I mentioned earlier, a lot of the communities want to see the training done at their home base as opposed to sending their people elsewhere.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Sure. I have some information on this. These are not so much computer training as they are for different kinds of welding trades and heavy machinery and stuff. It's very useful, particularly for the isolated communities. With greatest respect to the far north, I have as much isolated, remote territory, and some of my colleagues across the way do as well, where this kind of thing is not just seen as beneficial but has potential to get learning infrastructure into communities for some specific skills and training. So thanks for that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rickford.

Committee, we're going to take a five-minute break and then we'll come back, because we have some committee business to discuss. So we'll suspend momentarily.

I just want to thank all of the witnesses for coming today. It has been extremely helpful. You have made some excellent points, each of you, that will be helpful and informative to our studies, conclusions, and recommendations. So thank you very much, and have a good afternoon.

We'll suspend. Committee, we'll be back in five minutes.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1710)

The Chair: All right. Let's carry on.

Thank you very much.

- (1715)

Before we go to Monsieur Lévesque *pour sa motion*, we have a couple of housekeeping items.

This Thursday we have a split meeting. The first hour is on the main estimates; the documents have all been circulated to you. In addition, in the second hour of Thursday's meeting will be the first meeting to begin consideration of the draft report on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. That first draft report was sent out to you this afternoon, so you'll have the opportunity to consider it before Thursday afternoon.

As I mentioned, Mr. Russell will be chairing the meeting. He's gracious enough to do that on my behalf, and I appreciate that, so please be nice to him.

[Translation]

Mr. Lévesque, you now have a motion to introduce.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Let us recall that Hon. Chuck Strahl announced a new program. The Food Mail program will change its name to Nutrition North. The information on that was released at the beginning of the long

weekend, but it was a bit confusing. No one knows what to expect. Everyone is spreading all kinds of rumours, which are not always true.

The motion states that:

Following the announcement by the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada of the new Nutrition North Canada program, the AANO Committee requests the appearance of the minister, program officials and Elizabeth Copland, chair of Nutrition North Canada's advisory board, to provide a full description of this new program.

We know that we spent 40 years building the Food Mail program. And today, with the stroke of a pen, the program is changing. Let us be clear that the very nature of the program is being altered. It is being completely changed.

We would like to know where the minister is heading with this and what his vision is, as well as the vision of the people in the department who supported him in this decision.

The Chair: Fine. The motion is in order.

[English]

It's admissible. It's quite perfect in terms of its form and it met the notice requirements, so we'll entertain any discussion on the motion at this point.

Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan: I got hung up a little bit at the start of this conversation, after the northern economic development witnesses, so I've got two things that I want to speak to. One is directly related to the motion and the other is that we have the visit from the minister on estimates. The supps (A) should be in place by that time as well, so I'm just thinking we should try to wrap the two together.

The Chair: We're going to have to separate those two issues. We've got this one. We'll take Mr. Lévesque's motion as moving that and putting that forward. If we have time, we'll come back to that other motion as another scheduling issue.

Mr. John Duncan: Okay.

The other thing is on the specifics of this motion. We have the minister here this week. I think it's totally reasonable to ask the officials and the advisory board to come before the committee. I just think we have an opportunity to question the minister on this, this week, so why not, once again, wrap that together at that time?

The Chair: Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I guess we will only have the minister here for an hour, and with the estimates and everything else that's before us, it seems to me this northern program needs more attention than that, particularly with the committee's focus on northern economic development. So it doesn't seem reasonable to try to deal with estimates and this motion at the same time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Crowder.

I'll make just a brief comment before we go to the next question.

The committee has already adopted one motion of business, the child family services motion. That is a future business item that we agreed to push off to a later time. We also have a relatively full schedule from now until the end of the session. So the options would be to either find a gap with the existing schedule between now and the end of the session or, alternatively, we could look to provide or open up another time slot in addition to the two two-hour meetings we currently have. It's up to the committee—it's your committee, it's your schedule—how you wish to do this.

Now we'll go to Monsieur Lemay.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Chair, I completely agree with my colleague, Ms. Crowder. It is an entirely different point. It is completely different. In fact, we should adopt the motion here, today. The subcommittee could then decide when we will study it in more detail and which witnesses we will invite.

We cannot get rid of a \$75 million program that grows 5% to 10% per year. It is a very important program for northern development. It is also consistent with what we are currently studying. Food and transportation are among the major development problems in the north. That is why we should pass this motion. Then we can decide when to study it in depth. We will find a date.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemay.

[*English*]

Mr. John Duncan: Just to add to my earlier discussion, my concern is if we don't ask questions on it when we have the minister before us, we may not get an opportunity before the summer break. If you want to push it off to the fall, that's not an unlikely situation.

I think we should try to use Thursday with the minister to ask some questions on this program. There's a lot of literature out there. There's been a lot of Q and A, and there's been a lot of very solid, positive reaction from the north to the announcement last week as well.

The Chair: Mr. Rickford.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Just a comment, Mr. Chair.

A number of my communities are listed as potential serious participants in this program. I'm thinking that while the minister may introduce and make some comments about it and answer some questions, I'm really interested in the program officials, who will speak more to the implementation issues that I'm concerned about. I'm sure we would, or we could, find time to explore with them. I have a series of questions. I've been through the preliminary literature we have been supplied with. I think they are the ones who are going to be most capable of answering. So they would be available for the longer period of time for questioning, and I'm sure far more able to answer some of the technical questions we might have around administration and implementation of this very important program.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rickford.

Monsieur Lévesque. He will be followed by Madam Neville and Mr. Russell.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: I just have some additional points.

When the minister appears before the committee to study the budget, we always run out of time. It is just for the budget. We never have enough time to ask him questions. He always has to leave too early.

I think we have to accept the motion. The subcommittee will discuss and develop a work plan based on it. We will work with that. It is important to have a separate discussion, because there will be different stakeholders. I am sure that Ms. Copland will not be here for the study of the budget. She is a very important person for the current program. I think we have to adopt the motion today and talk about it with the subcommittee in order to adapt the work accordingly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Neville.

• (1725)

[*English*]

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I think it's important that we deal with this topic separately and quite apart from the estimates process. I've been part of an estimates process in which we got consumed with the food mail program and did not get a chance to answer a number of what I think are quite pressing issues in the department. So I would not support incorporating this into it. Let the subcommittee find the time. There's always a way.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Neville.

Mr. Russell.

Mr. Todd Russell: I share some of the sentiments that have already been expressed around the table. This affects many of my communities—although the department wasn't off to a great start; it listed six Labrador communities as being from northern Manitoba. I would think they would want to look at least at Google Earth or something that might be available to them. It doesn't instill much confidence that they know what they're doing with the program. I think we need to deal with it.

Maybe if there is time available under the northern economic development study—this is an integral piece—then we can fit it in there. That would accommodate not having to add an additional meeting. It would give Mr. Lévesque and all of us who are concerned, Mr. Rickford and others who are impacted by this in our communities, the time to address it adequately. Then it's up to the minister to find the time to be here with us. He took the time to be in Iqaluit, and I understand how important it is to him. It's only a hop, skip, and a jump from his office over here. He should be able to accommodate us.

The Chair: Okay. Seeing no other speakers, I recommend—if the motion is adopted without any specific direction as to when—that the subcommittee have a meeting next week and look at the schedule. We need to do that anyway. We generally have one subcommittee meeting for each series of sitting weeks. So we'll try to schedule that for next week, to look at this issue and other scheduling issues between now and the end of the session.

I would say only that because we're getting down to the wire here, the next three weeks, I'm not so sure we'll be able to get the minister. I don't know whether members have any opinions on whether the minister is absolutely necessary. Is that a make or break? Should we go ahead with the meeting even if we can't get the minister, bring the senior director for the program?

Monsieur Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: We will see what the minister has to say on Thursday. If we can ask him a question on Thursday, so much the better. Otherwise, we'll see. The minister implemented the program, and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons decided this morning that ministers have to be accountable.

I am sorry, but that was too easy.

Some hon. members: Ha, ha!

An hon. member: Question!

[English]

The Chair: Okay. Are we ready for the question?

Mr. John Duncan: I was waiting for Monsieur Lemay to actually come forward with that. I do want to say something.

I sat on this committee through parliaments when it was like pulling teeth to get ministers to come before this committee. I want to say for the record that this minister has bent over backwards to accommodate this committee. There are a lot of assumptions being made here. I think we're maybe prone to taking it a little bit for granted that a minister can be as available as you're suggesting. It seems like every whim of the committee is suddenly absolutely essential. Our work schedule is getting further and further behind, and we do have legislation.

I would like to ask a separate question—once again not related to this motion. I'll wait until we have dealt with the motion.

The Chair: Are we ready for the question?

This is the question on the adoption of the motion.

Oh, you want a recorded vote? Okay, we'll have a recorded vote.

An hon. member: A recorded vote?

The Chair: Unheard of.

Go ahead.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1730)

The Chair: All right. The motion has been adopted.

Now to the second point that was made. Mr. Duncan raised the idea of... The supplementary estimates (A) have been tabled as of today. Did you want to consider supplementary estimates (A) on Thursday in addition to the main estimates? Is there a consensus on that? I suppose it would—

Mr. Todd Russell: In the one hour that's still scheduled?

The Chair: That's what we have scheduled, unless you wish to push off the second hour, which is on the AHF draft report. That's an option, if you wish. We'd start that process at a later time.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: So the minister would stay for two hours?

The Chair: Yes...well, we would have two hours scheduled for both the main estimates and the supplementary estimates (A). Is there consensus to do that?

Jean.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Is the government going to give us cheat notes on the supplementary estimates (A), since we only got them today and that leaves us one day to look at them?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: That's why I asked the question.

Ms. Jean Crowder: When do the supplementary estimates (A) have to be voted on?

The Chair: By June 20.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay. Then I'll agree.

The Chair: And it would basically allow us to get that done—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes. Okay. I didn't realize it was June 20. Nothing else makes sense.

The Chair: Keep in mind that you can narrow in on the sections, both in the main estimates and the supplementary estimates, that apply specifically to our department.

Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Is there anything else? Just to—

Mr. John Duncan: I would just—

The Chair: Mr. Duncan, before I get back to you, just to confirm then, Thursday's meeting will be on the main estimates and the supplementary estimates (A). The minister will be here for the first hour, at the very least, but we'll have a full two hours. We'll reschedule the consideration of the draft report on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and we will schedule a steering committee meeting for next week. Okay?

Mr. Duncan.

Mr. John Duncan: Yes. I would just ask if everybody has come to a decision on what they want with the FNC now, with the legislation, in terms of going forward. I know that opposition parties have indicated support for the bill. How much time in the House and how much time in committee...? It would be very helpful if I had an indication on that front.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Is that the Squamish bill?

Mr. John Duncan: Yes.

The Chair: Do you have any concerns about discussing that? We're not in camera at all. I just want to remind members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Mr. Chair, I suggest that this be a point of discussion at the subcommittee meeting next week.

[*English*]

Mr. John Duncan: Okay. Very good.

The Chair: That's a good idea.

Mr. Rickford, did you have another point?

Mr. Greg Rickford: If I understand correctly, Mr. Chair, you're saying that the steering committee will meet next week with respect to the potential for further discussion around the Nutrition North Canada program?

The Chair: The motion has been adopted—

An hon. member: *Oui*.

Mr. Greg Rickford: I understand the motion, thank you.

The Chair: —so the steering committee will then consider the scheduling priorities in front of it, both in terms of finishing up the study on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and in terms of the two motions we've now adopted that pertain to our go-forward schedule.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Maybe I don't understand the motion, then. This motion is saying that while the minister is here talking about the main estimates and supplementary estimates (A), there will also be some other officials from this program who will be with him...? No?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Greg Rickford: That's kind of how this motion reads, at least by intention, maybe not by....

The Chair: The only orders of the day.... We're not dealing with this motion. This will not be an agenda item this Thursday. The orders of the day for Thursday will be the main estimates and supplementary estimates (A).

Having said that, as you know, Mr. Rickford, when we have the department here, and particularly the minister, far be it from the committee, or from me, for that matter, to in any way guide what members can ask. They are free to speak as they wish.

Mr. Greg Rickford: My concerns are not questions for the minister around the program; it's the people who are going to be administering and implementing. I mean, this is something that is for the benefit of communities in the ridings of several people here, political things aside, and I—

● (1735)

The Chair: Of course, and I sense that this is in fact the spirit of the motion.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Once this goes to steering committee, there seem to be other more political priorities that don't always emphasize these important programs. At least, we've seen that so far, so...

The Chair: Well, I would entrust our subcommittee members to take those views under consideration. We'll see how we decide with the agenda going forward.

Is there any other business?

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned. We'll see you on Thursday.

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