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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, April 26, 2012**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Mark Warawa**



# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, April 26, 2012

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC)):** I'll call the meeting to order.

Welcome everyone to this 31st meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development as we continue our study on developing a national conservation plan.

I want to welcome each of the witnesses. We have three witness groups: Earth Rangers, Wildlife Habitat Canada, and Nature Québec.

Each of the witness groups has 10 minutes. We will begin with Earth Rangers.

**Mr. Peter Kendall (Executive Director and Co-Chief Executive Officer, Earth Rangers):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members for inviting us to appear before you today to contribute to your study on the development of a national conservation plan for Canada.

To help you understand our thoughts, we felt it was important for us first to say a few words about the Earth Rangers and our programs.

Earth Rangers is a national NGO focused on communicating a positive, science-based message to children on the importance of protecting biodiversity. Through our live programs in schools and community venues, our extensive online community and almost daily television presence, we educate well over a million children each year and inspire them to become directly involved in protecting animals and their habitats through our bring back the wild program.

In thinking about the purpose and goals of a national conservation plan, we tried to imagine what would be important to our stakeholders, namely children.

A number of years ago we undertook a major study right across North America on what environmental issues children cared about and what would motivate them to get more involved. The results of that study were very clear: Children's number one concern is the protection of habitat and wildlife. The children went on to say that in order to get involved, they wanted to ensure that their actions were having a direct impact on helping wildlife. To understand this commitment of kids, I want to share a couple of the thousands of letters and comments we receive from children each year.

The first one is from Jill, age 7:

I always have loved animals and when I donated \$50 for the peregrine falcon, I was so glad I was finally able to do something for an animal. My whole life I've wanted to help animals. The way you get people to help animals is amazing!

The second one is from Alex, age 9:

My name is Alex and I am an Earth Ranger. I love animals – all kinds of animals. That's why I became an Earth Ranger. When I grow up I want to be a veterinarian. I chose to help protect the woodland caribou because it was Christmas and Santa needs his reindeer. Canada has so many awesome animals. When I grow up I don't want all of our amazing animals to be gone. I think more kids should become Earth Rangers because it is up to us to save the wild animals of Canada. My name is Alex and I love animals.

At Earth Rangers we have a very ambitious vision, and that's to protect enough habitat together to ensure the long-term survival of all species in Canada. We and the children we work with believe that the purpose, goal, and guiding principle of a national conservation plan should be to mobilize and bring together Canadians in their efforts to protect our biodiversity.

We also believe that in order for a national conservation plan to be successful, it needs to include more than the creation of just protected areas and better practices on working lands and watersheds. Biodiversity is also heavily impacted by the choices we make in our everyday lives. Our transportation, food, consumer goods, and energy choices all have an impact on biodiversity.

The good news is that we have the technology and know-how to live more sustainably. An example of this is the Earth Rangers Centre for Sustainable Technology. The centre uses less than a quarter of the energy of an average Canadian commercial building. We continue to cut that energy use by over 10% a year through new technologies and better practices.

As a result, we strongly believe that a national conservation plan should include a significant public outreach and education component. We personally believe the best place to start that outreach is with children. Children care deeply about these issues and are ready to take action. We can really see this through our bring back the wild program.

This program enables kids to raise funds to help support one of four different wildlife habitat protection, research or restoration projects across the country. We only launched this program in April 2010 and already we've seen over 200,000 children across the country holding art sales, selling cakes and cookies, setting up lemonade stands, giving up their Christmas and birthday presents, selling buttons, and going door-to-door to raise funds and raise awareness, all in the name of helping wildlife.

Not only do children themselves care deeply, but they can also be an incredible influence on their parents and other adults. Our earth rangers have the desire and can be a very powerful force for change.

I have a cute example of how much of an impact this can have. It happened just this past weekend.

One of our earth rangers, seven-year-old Winter Slade, decided to have a bring back the wild birthday party and asked her friends to donate to her campaign instead of buying gifts. One day after school last week, as she was telling her friends about her birthday party idea, Winter overheard some of her friends' parents making fun of her. One mother actually asked why she would do that, that it was a stupid idea. Winter and her mother took action and posted the story online. Over the next two days, Winter received thousands of emails and comments from adults all around the world. The story landed on the front page of the *Huffington Post*. Hundreds of people stepped up and donated to her campaign, allowing her to exceed her original goal of raising \$500. As of today she has raised well over \$5,000.

I want to share one of the comments sent to Winter, as I think it speaks to the impact children can have on adults. This is from an adult somewhere in the world, who didn't leave his or her name:

Winter, it is not so often that I hear of someone so young who wants to make the world a better place. When I was your age I wanted gifts, but now at my age all I want for Christmas and birthdays is to make others happy and keep the world safe. Congratulations for protecting the pine marten; I learned today when I was donating to your page that humans are their biggest threat (even more so than eagles and foxes!). So you are not only raising money for a great cause, but you are raising awareness as well. What a great way to spend a birthday!

Finally, we feel that the national conservation plan should be used to build our national pride, and here in Canada we have a great deal to be proud of. Canada built the world's first national parks service. We've protected over 12.4 million hectares and we're stewards of much of the world's remaining wild spaces. This government alone has made a number of major announcements, including a large extension to the Nahanni National Park and the establishment of a one-million-hectare national marine conservation area in western Lake Superior.

As part of the plan, governments, industry, and NGOs need to work together to celebrate these successes more. These meetings are a good indication of your desire to make all Canadians part of this discussion.

We thank you again for including us. Please note that all of us at Earth Rangers are pleased to contribute whatever we can to aid in the development of the national conservation plan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kendall.

Next, we'll hear from Wildlife Habitat Canada.

You have up to 10 minutes.

**Mr. Len Ugarenko (President, Wildlife Habitat Canada):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. My name is Len Ugarenko. I'm the president of Wildlife Habitat Canada. I appreciate the opportunity of being invited here to present some ideas for your consideration about a national conservation plan.

Wildlife Habitat Canada is a national, non-profit, charitable organization that was established in 1984 by Environment Canada, provincial governments, territorial governments and conservation organizations. We work to conserve, restore and enhance wildlife habitat by funding conservation projects, promoting conservation action, and fostering coordination among conservation groups.

Wildlife Habitat Canada receives the bulk of its funding, which is derived from the purchase of the Canadian wildlife habitat conservation stamp, from Environment Canada. The stamp is purchased primarily by waterfowl hunters to validate their federal migratory game bird hunting permit. Since 1985, we have invested over \$60 million in support of over 1,500 conservation projects on private and public lands across Canada.

As for my credentials, I have over 25 years of experience working on wildlife, fisheries and natural resource management projects across Canada, the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean. This includes working with all levels of government, non-governmental conservation organizations, the corporate and industrial sectors, aboriginal peoples and numerous foundations across North America, to name a few. I am a founding director of the Canadian Business and Biodiversity Council, a member of the Ontario Biodiversity Council, as well as the North American Wetlands Conservation Council and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative Council. So I've been professionally and personally involved in conservation all my life.

A suggestion for the purpose of a national conservation plan is that it should conserve Canada's natural capital to ensure a secure future for generations to come. Natural resources and ecosystem resources are essential to human health as well as the health of the environment and the economy. It should also promote biodiversity and sustainable development, and it should promote partnerships among federal, provincial and territorial governments, conservation organizations, and industry to move forward toward the common goals of a national conservation plan.

Those goals could include the conservation and restoration of wildlife habitat, connecting Canadians to nature and to wildlife conservation, with particular emphasis on youth and new Canadians. We need the public to both commit to a national conservation plan and help implement the plan if it is to be successful. The government and the conservation community cannot do it alone. It should promote sustainable development by engaging sectors such as agriculture, forestry, mining, and the oil and gas industries. All should be included in a national conservation plan.

The guiding principles of a national conservation plan could include that it be a collaborative effort with the conservation community, aboriginal peoples, industry and government at all levels. Other government departments need to be involved, including Fisheries, Health, Agriculture, Aboriginal Affairs, Natural Resources Canada, and Immigration to name a few.

It needs to be a realistic executable plan for on-the-ground conservation activities, yet it should not be overly ambitious. Not everyone will get what they want.

National conservation plan progress and achievements need to be measured to keep the plan moving forward. It needs to be a living document that can accommodate additions and revisions as the landscape changes, such as with global warming and climate change, and we should continually look for opportunities to generate revenue and save money while doing good things for the environment.

One suggestion is having multi-year contribution agreements. The government could implement multi-year contribution agreements that fund organizations to reduce the high administrative costs of negotiating annually.

There are ways to leverage existing conservation funding mechanisms, and I'll use Wildlife Habitat Canada's grant program as an example. Revenue raised through the sale of the Canadian wildlife habitat conservation stamp is currently being used to fund projects on other national and international initiatives, such as the North American waterfowl management plan and other migratory game bird projects. The conservation activities executed through this program can directly support the national conservation plan's goals and objectives. With programs that are already in place, we won't be reinventing the wheel. They can be leveraged to further support and complement a national conservation plan.

• (1545)

We could also utilize existing delivery vehicles, such as the North American waterfowl management plan joint ventures, and other conservation organizations that have developed long-term geographic conservation plans across Canada. There are existing structures, such as aboriginal councils and the Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee to do that.

I've made a reference to the migratory game bird hunting permit stamp. The price of that stamp has not changed since 1991. A small increase in the price of the stamp would provide more money for wildlife conservation projects at no cost to the government, and these projects could be used to implement aspects of a national conservation plan.

Healthy fish habitat is imperative to maintaining human health, since water quality is a basic element that everybody relies on. If it is approached properly, funds dedicated for fish habitat projects will reduce costs associated with erosion, flood control, water quality and quantity, and water purification and transport costs.

The conservation priorities of a national conservation plan should include conserving, restoring, and protecting known critical habitats that support biodiversity; preserving intact ecosystems and watersheds; restoring species at risk; and creating dedicated protected areas, such as expanding the national park system, especially urban parks. These could be used to plan and manage adaptation to climate change and to educate the public.

The implementation priorities of a national conservation plan could include the following.

There is a need to get a national conservation plan developed and implemented reasonably soon. Having an NCP stuck in the

bureaucratic layers of study and process development will not be helpful. We need to have a champion for the conservation plan in order to keep moving it forward.

Another priority is to communicate with the conservation community to focus efforts towards common goals and reduce duplication.

Public education is necessary to ensure active involvement and commitment on their part. You should increase public awareness and participation in conservation and create more opportunities for involvement with nature. Focus on connecting youth to nature, as they are the stewards and leaders of the future. Promote the benefits, both immediate and long-term, especially in the areas of health and education. New Canadians need to be educated about the necessity of taking care of nature and must be active participants.

You could work with the waterfowl joint ventures—the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, and the Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee—to leverage projects that are at the implementation stage or already in progress.

In terms of the consultation process, the minister should consider having a collaborative process, drawing on the expertise of the people and organizations who have the knowledge and resources to aid in the development and implementation of a successful national conservation plan. However, the process should not get bogged down by the involvement of too many representatives.

Finally, we did not come here today to give you statistics on wetland loss, air and water pollution, declining wildlife species, nor global warming or climate change. We all know there are problems and issues facing the environment that will ultimately have an impact on society in the areas of health, quality of life, and economy.

Government has taken a leadership role in taking on the task of preparing a national conservation plan to conserve, restore, and connect. Organizations such as Wildlife Habitat Canada have both an opportunity and a responsibility to participate and help with this endeavour.

If done properly, this will not be the usual conservation plan that has been put together by the usual conservation organizations. The result can be a national conservation plan that embraces all aspects of society, including urban, rural, and wilderness components. It will be a plan that makes a difference in the lives of all Canadians by taking care of what we now have in the natural world and ensuring its existence for the future.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ugarenko.

Finally, we will hear from Nature Québec, and Sophie Gallais.

You have up to 10 minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sophie Gallais (Project Manager, Protected Areas, Nature Québec):** Good afternoon.

First of all, I want to thank the chair and committee members for inviting us to submit a presentation on development of the national conservation plan.

To begin with, I will say a few words about our organization. Nature Québec is a provincial non-profit organization that has been in existence since 1981 and is committed to the objectives of the world conservation strategy of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. More specifically, our objectives are to maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems, to preserve genetic diversity and to ensure the sustainable utilization of species, ecosystems and natural resources.

I want to mention that the brief presentation I am going to make summarizes a few of our recommendations. However, we reserve the right to submit a brief at a later date to supplement this preliminary effort.

First, in Nature Québec's view, it is important that the national conservation plan (NCP) have a solid foundation and establish international-level conservation objectives. We recommend drawing on the International Union for Conservation of Nature for inspiration. We believe the purpose of this kind of conservation plan should be defined as being to conserve biodiversity of species, populations and ecosystems at both the local and national levels and to ensure ecologically sustainable and equitable use of natural resources.

As regards the goals of a national conservation program, here again it is important to abide by the obligations we have undertaken, particularly at Nagoya. On that point, I want to mention that, in October 2010, the various governments agreed to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2012 and the Aichi targets. We believe those 20 targets should form the basis of the national conservation plan. I will not take up 10 minutes to cite the 20 Aichi targets, but I will mention the goal categories into which they fall.

Strategic goal A is to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society. Strategic goal B is to reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use. Strategic goal C is to improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity. Strategic goal D is to enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services. Lastly, strategic goal E is to enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

We believe that these Aichi targets, to which Canada has agreed, would form a good basis for developing the national conservation plan as it would be possible to achieve them by targeting more specifically through a national implementation.

What guiding principles should govern the national conservation plan? To meet these objectives, the guiding principles of the national conservation plan should be based on various measures. First, it is important to take action and adopt specific measures to preserve biodiversity. I will state a few such measures in a moment. It is important that investments be constantly made to promote scientific

research in Canada by both federal and provincial departments and the universities. Canada must adopt sound environmental regulations contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity and maintain those regulations. Lastly, support must be provided for conservation initiatives.

• (1550)

We believe that partnerships are obviously essential to achieving all goals set. Synergies must be developed among government actions, actions by civil society and the various NGOs and actions by the industrial sector. Consequently, it is essential to support those conservation actions.

As regards conservation priorities, we recommend that the government draw on the various programs of the International Union for Conservation of Nature for inspiration. There is the species conservation program. We are experiencing a biodiversity crisis. We believe it is essential to address this problem on an urgent basis and to step up our efforts to maintain biodiversity, by addressing both species at risk through the Species at Risk Act, and the act governing fish habitat, which is also of particular interest for the preservation of biodiversity.

Marine conservation is also a conservation priority for us. Objectives of protecting 10% of marine areas have been set, particularly under the Aichi targets. It is essential for us to consider this priority and to work actively to reinforce our network of protected marine areas.

In water conservation, we believe that water quality and quantity management and cross-border water issues are important for Canada. It is important to promote integrated management for watershed resources. This water management method may enable us to achieve the desired results so that we can maintain the environmental goods and services that we provide in aquatic areas.

Forest conservation is a very important national issue for us. Canada's boreal forest is a unique ecosystem linking eastern and western Canada. We believe it is important to ensure that there is also a sound network of protected boreal areas and that forest and other natural resources in that biome be used in a sustainable manner.

More broadly speaking, it is important to look at all ecosystems, in both rural and urban areas, as well as wetlands, and to ask specific questions in order to promote the conservation of those environments.

Going back to protected areas, we believe this point is essential. It is important to establish a mechanism that provides us with enough protected areas to maintain biodiversity and assist nearby populations that can benefit from those lands.

With respect to priorities, conservation goes beyond these more tangible biodiversity issues. We must also consider issues related to climate change, renewable energy and a greener economy. These are all important issues that should be considered once we have developed this national conservation plan.

As regards implementation priorities for the NCP, the various levels of government must take action, particularly with regard to the network of protected areas. It is essential to consider this issue and to help achieve the objectives set at Nagoya, the Aichi targets, that is to say 10% of the marine environment and 17% of the land environment to be protected between now and 2020. We hope this priority will be conveyed through the national conservation plan.

Regulation is also a priority, whether it involves environmental assessment mechanisms or maintaining the act governing fish habitat and the Species at Risk Act. These are essential issues for us.

As I mentioned, another priority is support for conservation initiatives. It is essential to work in partnership, in cooperation, so that our various actions have a synergetic effect and we can at least make tangible conservation progress. Consequently, it is essential that we maintain the various federal funding programs, whether it be Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, the Community Interaction Program, the EcoAction Community Funding Program or the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program. We believe these programs provide essential support for the various organizations operating in the field.

• (1555)

In conclusion, with regard to the consultation process that the minister should consider using to develop the national conservation plan, it is important to consult the various organizations at the national, provincial and local levels. Of course, not everyone can be heard, but a representative sample of those various levels would give us an idea of the needs and concerns of the people on the ground at the provincial and national levels. It is essential that the consultation help integrate those concerns at various levels.

The aboriginal communities are a specific issue and aboriginal populations must be consulted. Beyond our consultations, their priorities must be reflected in the national conservation plan.

That summarizes the various points that I had to present to you.

Once again, I want to thank you for listening. I now hand the floor back to you. Thank you very much.

• (1600)

**Le président:** Thank you, Ms. Gallais.

[English]

We will begin our first round of questioning of seven minutes.

We will begin with Mr. Lunney for seven minutes.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for joining us today and for your excellent presentations. I'm sure you could keep us busy far beyond the time allotted to us today to ask questions arising from your suggestions.

I'd like to start with the Earth Rangers. Your focus is youth, and you hit on something. Part of your objective in the program is conserving and connecting people with the environment. We have a real challenge in Canada, where we have a vast land mass and a huge coastal area around us, but our population is increasingly

concentrated in the urban areas and there are lots of young people growing up who are not as connected to nature as we were.

The three of us here grew up in Manitoba. We were just talking a while ago and found out that we all used to camp out along the Winnipeg River system and Otter Falls, and hung out in the same areas and knew the same old forest ranger and so on. Camping out and having those outdoor experiences is really very healthy, but a lot of Canadians are growing up without those experiences, so I'm very interested in your program of connecting people.

Just by way of your rangers, I want to ask about the number of children you're reaching out to. How long has your program been going on?

Both groups at this end mentioned new Canadians. This is something that I heard you say and it is a concern for us. We have a very large immigrant community coming in, new Canadians who have come from areas where they haven't had rich natural heritage that we have. This is something interesting that comes out of a discussion of how we can reach out and engage new Canadians in the conservation objectives and in appreciating the nature around us.

I just throw that out to those here, and to Sophie Gallais, if you want to comment on that, about reaching out to young people. How do we engage them? How can we expand programs that do help connect young people with outdoor programs?

**Mr. Mark Northwood (President and Co-Chief Executive Officer, Earth Rangers):** I'll start by saying that I think a very good idea is the Rouge Park, because that park is going to be very close to the GTA, where you have 3 to 3.5 million people. Having some parks closer to urban centres allows people to get out into the parkland that we know as Canada.

In Earth Rangers our program is about eight years old and we're seeing about 250,000 kids a year, 200,000 of whom we reach in schools and another 50,000 in community shows. What we do in Earth Rangers is that we actually take the nature to the kids. We have 40 live animal ambassadors that we take to schools. We create a bond between the kids and the animal at the school level, and then we use that bond to actually start to educate them. Our education continues with a program that's in schools, and then an afternoon program where we're doing some in-class education. We have about 55 million impressions on the YTV Network, as well, throughout the year, and that impression takes it into the homes and gets kids interested in nature at home as well.

It about going where the kids are. The kids are in schools, the kids are on TV, the kids are online, and we try to reach the children where the children are living these days.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Okay, thank you.

Parks Canada has the My Parks program that helps engage grade 8 students in parks. We want them to get out and appreciate our national parks, which are a great heritage and treasure. But we're looking for other ways to engage people.

I'm a British Columbian. There are lots of programs there because there's lots of nature around us. British Columbia has lots of small regional parks. Most of them are not a huge land mass, but they're small, choice, excellent areas—waterfalls and beaches and so on—that have been preserved. So it's easier for our population to go get out, especially on Vancouver Island, and appreciate nature that way.

But how do we get our young people involved? And maybe somebody would like to take a stab at the immigrant community. How do we get our new Canadians engaged?

● (1605)

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** At Wildlife Habitat Canada, we fund and support hunter-mentoring programs and programs where they take the children outside and give them a hands-on experience. We find that the hands-on experience stays with them and encourages them to continue participating. We'll have students going to a local club like the Long Point Waterfowlers' Association down on Lake Erie. They will spend a few days learning about dog training. They will learn about fishing and cleaning fish, and decoys. They will have a chance to fire guns. If they are old enough, they may go out duck hunting. They go on tours of wetlands. They get some biology. They get some legal training. Often we find that these kids, because of their hands-on experience, become so positive that they encourage their friends to do it hands-on. That breaks their cycle of sitting 9 to 13 hours a day in front of a television set, a computer, an iPod, and texting and doing whatever the heck they are doing.

As for new Canadians, we do have an extremely rich country here. You are right, in that as some come from countries that don't have conservation plans. Some don't understand what we have: It looks so big, but it is limited, and it's getting smaller and smaller. New immigrants would be encouraged if they got a handbook from the federal government. Put something in a handbook explaining the importance of conservation in Canada. A lot of my immigrant friends—and my family too were immigrants at one time—call me and say, “How do we connect?” Well, there are some wonderful organizations out there that run outdoor programs and list contact points for provincial or urban parks. There was a gentleman from Korea who actually started a program of getting Korean people out to Rouge Park to plant trees. It has been increasing and increasing.

If you have one spark, it can really ignite things. It doesn't take a lot of money or time. Think of the benefit coming back to the environment. Those trees being planted in the Rouge Park are taking in atmospheric carbon. They are supplying oxygen. They are improving human health. They are helping to stop erosion. If people understand that, they'll see that spending a few hours outside is a lot better than sitting inside. Overall, they're going to benefit.

With kids, you have probably heard of nature deficit disorder. It was a term coined by a gentleman in the United States. Lots of studies have shown that kids who spend time outdoors have reduced rates of diabetes, obesity, and physical and mental problems. They interact better socially. Their marks go up. Their health improves. Would it not be better to have a child outside instead of medicated? They go off their medication. All of these things have been documented and proven. I'd like to see these things continue, but more of them.

**The Chair:** Thank you. The time has expired.

I just have one anecdote. In my riding of Langley, British Columbia, we have the national park called Fort Langley. It's a national historic site. They had a program last summer similar to what you have described where people had an opportunity to camp out at the park. It was a huge hit. It sold out right away. It was predominantly new Canadians who participated and experienced a bit of the outdoors.

Next, we have Mr. Choquette.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses and Ms. Gallais.

I am pleased to see that you all more or less agree that the fight against climate change must be included in the national conservation plan. We cannot develop that plan if we are not first combatting climate change. There have to be very significant targets in that area.

Ms. Gallais, you mentioned the importance of regulation, among other things. Have you thought of any regulation priorities that would help in developing an effective national conservation plan?

● (1610)

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** There are a lot of important statutes, but regulations serve more to promote the sustainable use of resources. In addition to the protection of species, protected areas and so on, the sustainable use of resources is a very important component. We must ensure that the land's natural resources are managed in a manner that is respectful of our environment, and various statutes are important for that purpose. The act governing fish habitat is very important. We are concerned about maintaining that act, which helps preserve not only fish, but also fish habitat and the quality of the various waterways and marine environments. The Species at Risk Act is also very important. There are very important consultation processes concerning the various recovery programs implemented by Environment Canada. It is essential that those recovery programs be implemented, but greater effort must be made to implement them and to give the Species at Risk Act even more teeth.



The environmental assessment process is also very important. There are a lot of mining and energy development projects, such as oil projects in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and in western Canada. We want to exploit those resources, which often are non-renewable and have considerable impact on the environment. It is essential to ensure that the environmental assessment procedure for those projects is taken into consideration, together with the cumulative impact of those projects. We must find a way to assess projects on a case-by-case basis, but also have an idea of the overall impact of all those activities on the host environment, waterways and land environments. We believe these are the main essential points that must be addressed.

**Mr. François Choquette:** You talked about sustainable development and said that it would be important for the national conservation plan to help educate people, to bring them closer to nature, but that we also have to align the economy with the environment. All too often, people say that environmentalists are extremists, but, on the contrary, we must align economic considerations with environmental ones.

You talked a little about the use of natural resources and how they could be integrated into a national conservation plan. How do you view that?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** First, that is done through regulations, through the environmental assessment process, but we also have to have a vision. I spoke about the boreal forest, which is a good example of an area in which closer relations are developing between the NGOs and businesses. The Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement is an initiative that enables those people, who at the outset have opposing views, to meet and come up with joint measures to improve the situation. It is important to encourage initiatives like that. The government is an important partner in the process of cooperation between the various parties.

As regards oil, gas and mining resources, the federal government could have an important role to play without encroaching on the provinces' jurisdiction by establishing a national vision in this area.

**Mr. François Choquette:** I understand that you believe the Aichi targets should really appear in the national conservation plan. Target 19 focuses on knowledge, the science base, the importance of technologies and so on. In a national conservation plan, should we ensure that scientific knowledge is not only encouraged, but developed as well? On Tuesday, a witness said that we have very little knowledge of the scope of current conservation efforts. If we know little about what is being done well, it may be difficult for us to do things right or to improve them.

• (1615)

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** Knowledge acquisition is definitely an important point. As for research, perhaps we must adopt a long-term vision. The research we conduct today may help us do a better job of preserving our natural heritage in 20 years. That's a vision that we must adopt if we want to be a conservation leader. When I arrived here, the vision that I, as a French woman, had of Canada was one of magnificent big, practically virgin spaces.

**Mr. François Choquette:** In your opinion, what organization should oversee the plan's implementation? Is it Parks Canada? Is it Environment Canada? Would an independent organization be preferable?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** In this case, I think Environment Canada would be the appropriate organization.

[English]

**The Chair:** Your time has expired. You timed that very well.

We have Mr. Toet next for seven minutes.

**Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our guests here today.

I quickly want to pick up with the Earth Rangers the question that my colleague, Mr. Lunney, was asking. You talked quite a bit in your presentation about reaching the children where they are. It's great to reach them where they are, and it's important, but what are you doing to actually get them out to be part of nature and experience it, and not through their TVs and computer screens?

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** We're obviously big believers in getting kids out into nature, but that isn't the only answer. We used to have a large partnership with Outward Bound. We would run summer camps every year for kids, especially kids from priority neighbourhoods. The problem we found, of course, was with resources: we would reach hundreds of thousands of children, and by the time we got to the camps we were down to hundreds. We often found that the kids who got to that level with us were already converted.

It's very difficult to get these communities and new Canadians out into a wilderness type of experience. As Mark pointed out, we're big believers in initiatives like the Rouge Park. We think it's an excellent move that will connect people where they are to local parks.

We find from the demographic breakdown of our programs that we're at about 60% girls, which makes sense. We also find that about one-third of our program involves new Canadians and those from priority neighbourhoods.

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** I wanted you to have a chance to express that, because it didn't really come across. It seemed that you were quite content to have them stay in, and I was sure that wasn't the case.

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** On the concept of nature deficit disorder, we are finding that those in the age group we work with, the 8- to 12-year olds, really still have that affinity for nature and connection to nature. It's not until they reach high school level that it really gets driven out of them. So anything we can do at that age to maintain that affinity and make them feel connected is helpful.

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** You're playing a huge role by planting some seeds at an early age, which is very helpful.

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** We certainly hope so.

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** Absolutely.

Mr. Ugarenko, in your presentation you briefly touched on the agriculture, mining, and forestry sectors being involved in this plan. One of our guests the other day from Nature Conservancy of Canada made a comment about the completion of the working landscape, and how those in industry—he was talking specifically about mining companies—were just as keen as anybody else about conservation.

Has that been your experience also? If so, how are you seeing that working out, and how can we incorporate the industry sector into being a complete part of this national conservation plan?

• (1620)

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** You're right. The industry sector is participating more and more in conservation. There are programs across North America started initially by the Wildlife Habitat Council in the United States, but they do work here in Canada. One of the biggest groups they're working with is Ontario Hydro. They also work with mining and forestry companies to help them assess the wildlife and wildlife habitat on the properties they're using, and then to draw up conservation plans they can work with while they're extracting the natural resources and then to rehabilitate the sites. A couple of cement companies have done a marvellous job of restoring their open-pit quarries into places that are actually more beautiful and productive, because of the management, than they were before the companies started to extract resources from them.

Many of these companies are searching, but they don't have the tools. They really don't know where to go. People are telling them to do this, do that, but they're slowly building up their expertise. I've seen in the past five or ten years that they now have scientific people, that is, biologists, on their staff to help them with this kind of stuff. In the agricultural sector, for example, if you work with the big producers, they then go down to the folks who have the small farms. Groups like Ducks Unlimited go around doing farm plans with the farmers, showing them how they can preserve the habitat they have, and also showing them how their farming can be more productive, more profitable, and more effective. So it's really just about connecting.

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** It's about connecting it all.

You talked about development, and I was really intrigued when you talked about the cement company and the work they had done. So obviously you'd be of a mind too that industry or development isn't necessarily a negative influence on the environment. There can be a very positive outcome from it. Mr. Lunney touched on the fact that all three of us have some of our roots along the Winnipeg river system, which essentially was brought about because of the hydro project in eastern Manitoba. So there is opportunity. I think if you talk to people in Manitoba, even a large portion of the young people today, you'll find that their first touches with nature and conservancy and the idea of conserving nature came about from being in this provincial park created by this project.

Do you see that we can work more and more in that vein, and that industry also has a great opportunity to be part of a great solution in the conservation plans?

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** Yes, sir. I tell people that my name's Len, and I wear jewellery and glasses. I've got gold and silver fillings, so I rely on the mining industry.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** I love to carve. I've got wooden furniture in my house, and it's framed with wood, so I rely on the timber industry. I drive a car, I heat my house, so I also rely on the oil and gas industry. That's the reality.

The other side of that reality, again, is connecting what you're doing with what they're doing. Instead of going in with a baseball bat, go in with an apple pie. Help them because they want to listen, they want to do good things. When you talk to the executives of these companies, or even their workers, they have families and children and they have concerns about what's happening in the environment. They are searching for ways to try to improve the production, improve the supply chain. But, again, many of them are too busy and they just don't have the time to search out the resources. I think they'd be more than happy to come to the table and express their concerns and listen to others, so they do have a place in this national conservation plan, whether it's on their own lands or on adjacent lands, or whether it's helping to fund projects.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next we have Ms. Liu. Welcome back. *Vous avez cinq minutes.*

[Translation]

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses and to welcome them here.

[English]

Len, in your testimony you spoke briefly about climate change. We know that climate change has an affect on ecosystems, including an affect on invasive species, which we discussed in our earlier study on invasive species. We can name things like the spruce/pine beetle, and the fact that changes in climate had an affect on the proliferation of these species. So it's really important to connect the dots when we talk about conservation.

I was wondering if you had any specific recommendations in terms of how we can incorporate climate change into a conservation strategy or how it can be taken into account.

• (1625)

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** It's interesting that you mention the pine beetle—and there's only so much that we can put into one of these presentations—because the pine beetle is moving farther north and ravaging the forests up the west coast. It has the potential to go across the boreal forest in Canada.

One way of adapting to climate change is to look at the path of these creatures. If provinces, governments, conservation organizations are going to invest in large tracts of land to protect grizzly bears, bighorn sheep, and elk, we have to think of the future. Will there be the habitat there? Is that the best place to put the money?

If we're looking at ocean-level rise, if we start setting up protected marine areas around estuaries, will those estuaries still be viable when and if sea-level rise does occur?

When we have people coming to us from the Atlantic provinces and they want to look at protecting saltwater marshes, one of the things I ask them to do is to look at the projection maps. If you're going to protect the saltwater marsh now, will it still be there 10 years from now or will it be under water?

That's what I really mean about climate change and managing it.  
[Translation]

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** I would like to ask Ms. Gallais a few questions.

You mentioned the conservation of habitats, particularly fish habitats. However, according to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Keith Ashfield, the government is in a way changing direction. Just to give you some context, I will cite the following remarks by the minister:

This means focusing protection rules on real and significant threats to these fisheries and the habitat that supports them while setting clear standards and guidelines for routine projects.

How do you accept this change in direction, which emphasizes fishing, whereas we are talking about fish habitat?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** For us, this is definitely a change that is not headed in the right direction.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madame Gallais, just one moment, please. We have a point of order.

Ms. Rempel.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I would ask my colleague to rephrase her question in terms of how this affects the national conservation plan.

**The Chair:** The point of order is that we address the NCP as opposed to getting partisan.

I encourage the questions to be asked in a respectful way and dealing with how we develop a national conservation plan.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** My question specifically concerns habitat conservation, which Ms. Gallais mentioned. So I believe this is absolutely relevant. And when you discuss conservation, you also have to talk about habitat.

I would simply like to hear your answer, since these changes are happening now.

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Chair, a point of order—

[Translation]

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** As regards the act respecting fish habitat—

[English]

**The Chair:** Order. One moment, please.

Ms. Rempel.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Again, I haven't heard a change in the question regarding how this would affect the scope of the study. We had a very clear scope of study, with six clear questions for witnesses.

My colleague's rephrasing of her statement did not reflect the scope of the study.

**The Chair:** Is there any further comment on that point of order? Otherwise I'll rule.

Madame Quach.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It seems to me the question is absolutely relevant, since we are talking about conservation. The question concerns fisheries legislation that will result in changes in this area. That has a specific impact on fish habitat and on waters. In my opinion, it is absolutely appropriate for my colleague to put that question to Ms. Gallais, who is talking about defending natural habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Again, Mr. Chair, we're here today to discuss the development of a national conservation plan. The committee put a lot of effort into developing the scope of the study, and we've had excellent collaboration across the aisle and from witnesses on keeping the points relevant to the scope of that study.

While I appreciate that there may be certain components of what my colleague is saying to the national conservation plan, again, she did not rephrase her question in that regard. Should she wish to review the scope of these changes, I'd direct her perhaps to the fisheries committee, or the relevant department that may be studying this, at that point in time.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** We are still on this point of order.

Monsieur Choquette.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is important to know that marine waters conservation currently represents only 1% in Canada and that it concerns fish habitat. However, if my memory serves me, the Aichi target for 2020 is 10%. We have asked the question to determine how we could adopt the most efficient and effective national conservation plan possible for protecting marine waters and habitat. I asked a question on ecosystems last week. If we only protect a few fish at a time, we overlook the fact that we are dealing with an ecosystem. We can't just protect the fish that are caught in the commercial fishery because the rest of the fish are food for other fish and so on. It's a whole ecosystem.

So I suggest that Ms. Liu simply restate her question as to whether, in the context of a national conservation plan, an ecosystem approach would be preferable to an approach based on groups of species or groups of commercial fish and so on.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Liu.

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** I appreciate my colleague's point of order, although I was specifically referring to targets six and seven of Madame Gallais' testimony. Target six reads:

By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.

Target seven reads:

By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

I might rephrase my question to maybe refer to these two targets more specifically, but the question does remain.

I think it's legitimate for committee to have an oversight role in terms of the legislation that the government does put on the floor and so I think it is legitimate to ask a witness about legislation that government is presenting or the legislative goals that the current government has. But I'll defer to your ruling on that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** While I'm glad for my colleague to remind us in committee of what our role as legislators is in reviewing legislation, which is what we have been doing in government actively over the last couple of months, I would also remind her and implore you to again review the scope of today's study in directing lines of questioning towards witnesses.

**The Chair:** I think we've had adequate discussion regarding this point.

For the benefit of the witnesses and my colleagues in the committee, this is what was provided to the witnesses and will guide the principles of our questioning today:

The scope of the study is as follows, with witnesses and interested parties being asked to comment on or provide briefs, regarding the following potential elements of an NCP:

- 1) What should be the purpose of a NCP?
- 2) What should be the goals of a NCP?
- 3) What guiding principles should govern a NCP?
- 4) What conservation priorities should be included in a NCP?

5) What should be the implementation priorities of a NCP?

6) What consultation process should the Minister consider using when developing a NCP?

With those being the guiding principles of the meeting today, I would encourage the questioning to be such and would remind each member to make sure their questioning of the witnesses is in that scope.

Carry on, Ms. Liu.

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** May I just ask, Mr. Chair, how much time I have left?

**The Chair:** The clock was stopped. You have another minute and a half.

Please proceed.

•(1635)

[Translation]

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** My next question is also for Ms. Gallais.

I would like to know how you view the cooperation between the federal government and the provinces, your take on the partnership between the two jurisdictions.

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** The two orders of government have their own jurisdictions. In certain cases, and to address conservation targets, procedures must clearly be implemented jointly, to create protected marine areas, for example. The federal government has an important role to play. It is important that there be intergovernmental structures for achieving conservation targets together. The interests of Canada are at stake.

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** What lessons can we learn from conservation in northern Quebec? Could any aspects there apply to a national conservation plan?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** Quebec and conservation commitments are a current issue. There are some promising initiatives, such as the idea of implementing an ecological plan in the area north of the 49th parallel in Quebec. In fact, those initiatives are being taken elsewhere in Canada. So it can be done in other communities. The idea is simply to determine the various land uses based on energy, forest, conservation and recreational tourism potential. By doing this kind of planning, we can facilitate more sustainable land use taking stakeholders' interests into account.

[English]

**The Chair:** The time has expired. Thank you.

Mr. Sopuck, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Thank you.

Mr. Ugarenko, I think it's very important to emphasize, as you noted in your presentation, that Wildlife Habitat Canada is almost solely funded by hunters' dollars and has been from day one. I've always been impressed by the scope of the projects your organization has undertaken. Can you very briefly discuss the tradition of the hunting community in paying for conservation, and do you see a willingness there for them to pay even more if they can be assured of direct conservation results?

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** The hunting and angling community has been the major funder of wildlife conservation in North America since the beginning. Many of the conservation organizations you see today were founded by anglers and hunters, and they continue to participate. They provide money through their licence fees, but almost all of them also provide an untold amount of time and money as volunteers, working on conservation projects.

They would fall into the whole idea of helping establish the conservation priorities for the plan, and they would also fall into the implementation part of the plan. You have a huge resource with them, and they would be willing to do that—I've talked to them as a hunter and angler myself—because as I said earlier, one potential way of funding this is what we call the “duck stamp” in Canada. The price has been the same since 1991. It has been over 20 years, and from speaking to the hunters, I know that paying a little more is something that they're willing to do, because they are truly attached to the resource and truly love it.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** As an avid hunter and angler myself, I couldn't agree more.

I was very intrigued by your description of the Long Point waterfowl program that you undertake and the wide suite of activities that the kids undergo. I'm especially intrigued by the fact that you do take them out hunting and fishing. Again, too often those two activities are neglected. It's almost a biological desire in many of us to undertake those activities. Again, you take them out, I'm sure, for bird watching and teach them the importance of wetlands and all that other stuff as well.

Do you think there's a biological basis for the love of nature in kids, and that all we need to do is bring it out?

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** Yes. I may be wrong, but I'm saying that we're all part of nature, that it's inside us. We've lost the way of looking at that and connecting with it.

I've taken kids who have never hunted before—my own two daughters, for example, years ago—out onto the prairies of Alberta and into the foothills. My daughters would come back and say every year, “Dad, I want to do it again”. All they were doing was walking.

I used Long Point as one example. Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and some of the provincial angling and hunting groups also have programs to get kids outdoors. The encouraging thing to me is that these programs are starting to expand.

Wildlife Habitat Canada runs an annual art competition for the habitat stamp. We started one for a youth habitat stamp. We're hoping that we can build a pool of money that will be separate from government funding and have more discretion in funding school buses for inner-city kids and that kind of thing.

We've been doing this for three years. All three of the youth who won have actually said that it was a life-changing experience, because they have to produce a painting based on their observation or experience with nature. They are leaders today. They're 14 years old and they're talking to their friends about the importance of nature.

So yes, I think it's something that's part of us. I think it's something that has been buried because we live a hugely urban existence, and we've lost touch with it. The trick is to bring it out, nurture it, and connect it. How many people think about where the water is coming from and where the water is going when you turn on the tap? Not many, I'm sure.

• (1640)

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** Agreed.

Ms. Gallais, I'd like to ask you for your definition of biodiversity.

I'll tell you why I'd like to explore that one further. If we're to develop public policy in terms of biodiversity conservation, we have to know what it is.

Are you talking about preserving the suite of species that exists today, many of which are non-native species? Are you talking about preserving the suite of native species only, keeping in mind that some of the non-native species that have become established in Canada are actually very beneficial? Could you just explore what specific definition of biodiversity is actually in your mind?

[Translation]

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** As I explained earlier, biodiversity simultaneously means diversity of species and populations as well as genetic and ecosystem diversity. To answer your question more specifically, some species may definitely be harmful, particularly invasive exotic species. To maintain the natural heritage, the goal is not to conserve the biodiversity of those species but, on the contrary, the biodiversity that is already in place, the indigenous diversity of our country.

[English]

**The Chair:** Your time has expired.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Next, Madam Quach, you have *cinq minutes*.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses who have come to talk to us about conservation. I'm going to ask Ms. Gallais two questions.

You addressed the question of assessing the cumulative effects of activities on natural resources and the development of those resources, the effects on receiving environments, waterways and the land environment. I would like you to say more about that. What is the benefit in having all those assessments? Do you already have information on what the federal government could do to improve the national conservation plan?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** I want to clarify one point concerning environmental assessments and cumulative effects. Studying a project on a case-by-case basis of course makes it possible to reduce the impact on the site itself, but the overall vision, that is to say of a number of various projects, is significant in terms of the effects on a watershed, for example. The study of cumulative effects is an important issue, particularly in natural resource development. There is room for the development of natural resources, which we all need, but it must be done intelligently, considering the capacity of our environments to support it. There are various ways of doing it. When, for example, there is a major economic boom in a given area, that's where the importance of a strategic environmental assessment for the purpose of studying cumulative effects becomes clear.

•(1645)

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Do you have any figures on people's health, for example, which could be improved through the national conservation plan?

We talked about the economy, and we said that the cost of taking no action to address climate change or nature conservation was very high. I talked about that with representatives of Équiterre and other environmental groups this morning. Do you have any statistics showing that it is really time to act, that the federal government has a role to play in this regard and that it is not too late since we could take positive action? That could affect people because we are talking about including action by citizens in all this.

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** Unfortunately, I am not at home and I do not have the documentation with me. If you wish, however, I could send that information to the committee.

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** That would be appreciated.

In the same vein, Mr. Ugarenko talked about the impact on human health, the economy and quality of life.

Do you have any figures on prevention and on what the federal government could do through the conservation plan to promote citizen involvement and government involvement?

[English]

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** I don't have any figures with me but I can obtain some for you. There have been a number of studies done across North America, for example, on the impact of water pollution on human health. There have been a couple of incidents in Ontario, Walkerton being one that comes to mind. Outfits such as the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority were created because it was understood that there was an imminent threat from agricultural pollution. So there are data out there, and that's why I advocate getting these groups involved in the development and implementation of a national conservation plan. I think this would be a huge benefit to society.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Thank you.

My last question is for Ms. Gallais. Mr. Ugarenko made a connection with agriculture. I believe that, in your 2012 plan, there is a link on how to include farmers in the conservation plan. With regard to green technologies, it would be a good idea to address the importance of the scientific research that farmers are trying to include in their economic development innovations.

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** With regard to agriculture, I believe that farmers are open to the idea of doing their part for conservation. As for scientific research and knowledge transfer, it is important that there be both basic and applied research, which would enable us to obtain concrete results.

It is also important to consider the entire information transfer chain so that farmers can have access to that information on cropping practices that should be put in place, particularly the type of crop and its impact on climate change. I believe that there is an entire action component in which farmers are prepared to take part, but the lack of information could impede action.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. The time has expired.

I will remind members as they ask questions of the witnesses to stay focused on the scope of this study. I think we find ourselves veering off topic at times. Please stay within this scope in your questioning.

Next we have Ms. Ambler.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing today and for your very enlightening presentations.

My question is with regard to the connections we were talking about earlier. My interests lie in connecting urban and suburban Canadians with nature, which is part of the goal, and certainly I think it should be the goal, of a national conservation plan.

I was very privileged to be able to take a tour of the Earth Rangers Centre a couple of years ago to learn a bit about the award-winning features of the green home. As I understand it, it's one of the most energy-efficient buildings in North America. I was very impressed.

I want to know how you think we can connect urban and suburban Canadians, who are interested in making their homes greener and respecting our planet but who really have absolutely no connection to nature, to our national conservation plan. What can we do to make the plan relevant to them?

My question is for you, Mr. Ugarenko, but I'd also like to know if the Earth Rangers would like to answer, too.

•(1650)

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** Thank you very much.

It's a good question. There is a lot of green space in urban areas that is really underutilized.

I've been talking to some school teachers and principals here in Ottawa because when you go by a school you see a lot of grass. There isn't a heck of a lot else going on. I thought that one way they could incorporate nature into their curriculum—and this would be something you could put in within the purpose of the plan, the first point—is to have the schools link up with nurseries or whomever and come up with a plan of putting in vegetation that's going to be friendly to bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. The students do the planting. Hire a couple of them to keep their eyes on it over the summer time, but track the progress of the vegetation and what comes to it over the course of the year.

You could also develop what you could call a biological transect through the vegetation so that you're starting with some low bush stuff where you may get grasshoppers, the odd toad showing up, to trees where you'll be identifying what birds are nesting in them and how they're being utilized.

I think it's a tremendous resource that's not being utilized.

We have Ontario's past legislation where we can't use pesticides on our lawns, but most cities have noxious weed bylaws. So if I want to turn my front lawn into an area with butterfly bushes and all kinds of stuff, chances are the city is going to come along and tell me I can't do it. I would love to have nature on my front lawn. I have it in my backyard because there are fences and people can't see it, but I think we have a huge amount of green space that people have access to but we're not utilizing.

For those folks who are living in apartments, townhouses, whatever, we could utilize the roofs of those buildings. It has been done. You could not only grow food on them but you could also have a significant impact in educating people about nature, for instance, to keep the lights off at night so the migratory birds don't crash into the buildings.

Again, there are circles within circles and connections that can be followed.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Terrific. Thank you.

Peter.

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** I'll repeat myself a bit here, as we're strong supporters of getting kids out into nature. But what we also need to do through this plan is to create a cultural shift, starting with the kids. To do that we can't ignore traditional media and reaching kids en masse as well. For us, we really have to go to where the kids are, as much as thinking about getting them outside. That's in schools. So school programs would be important around the conservation program, and the TV, Internet.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** But you do think that ultimately there is a place for urban Canadians in a national conservation plan and that there should be? What priority would you place on that, on getting urban and suburban Canadians to buy in?

**The Chair:** The time has expired, but I'll give you, say, 30 seconds to answer.

•(1655)

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** We certainly do. We run our programs in schools in northern Ontario first nations communities right across the country and primarily in urban centres. We don't find any difference

in the kids in downtown Toronto than we find in downtown Sault Ste. Marie.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Pilon, you have cinq minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Gallais, you talked about the boreal forest in your presentation. How could the national conservation plan help you conserve the boreal forest?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** As I mentioned earlier, the boreal forest is both a Quebec and Canadian issue given the extent of this vast resource. It is even an international conservation issue. Canada has a responsibility to preserve that asset.

As regards the national conservation plan, the conservation of forest ecosystems and the sustainable use of those resources are among the initiatives that should be put forward. In conservation, protected areas in the boreal environment have an impact. It is important to be able to create and maintain protected areas.

The same is true of the implementation of the federal government's forest caribou, or boreal caribou, recovery program. We would like that program's implementation to help maintain boreal caribou habitat, which is the boreal forest. Through this recovery program, the federal government is fully playing its role in protection of the boreal forest. I believe that meeting commitments to protect species at risk is part of the approach of the national conservation plan.

**Mr. François Pilon:** Thank you.

Mr. Kendall, we want a national conservation plan, but only in the short term. You mainly deal with children. Do you do a follow-up once they have grown up? Do they still want to protect the environment? Do you have any figures on that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** The short answer is no, we haven't done a lot of research on the longer term at this point. We've only been around for eight years so far, so we're just seeing kids...and our projects have changed a lot over the past eight years as well. We do a lot of research on short-term effects and what messaging the kids come out of our programs with. We're working with York University on that.

The next phase of that would be to look at the long-term impacts, but I have no date on that yet.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Pilon:** Thank you.

Ms. Gallais, can you tell us about your 2012 action plan? May we use it to implement the national conservation plan?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** As I said, the main idea of a national conservation plan is to combine our strengths by working in partnership with the various levels of government, industry, the NGOs and the public to increase awareness through various programs. The more information on each party's action plans and concerns are included in the national conservation plan, the more we will be able to work together to achieve the goals.

We have various goals such as protecting species at risk, such as the boreal caribou and the wolverine. It is through partnerships, with Environment Canada among others, that we are able to work together and take concrete action. Ultimately, a national conservation plan must reflect what goes on in the various core organizations so that all stakeholders can work together as efficiently as possible.

**Mr. François Pilon:** Thank you.

Do I have time to ask another question?

[English]

**The Chair:** You have half a minute.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Pilon:** Mr. Ugarenko, you talked about wetlands. How could the national conservation plan help protect wetlands?

[English]

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** There's quite a bit it could do.

There are a lot of wetlands in Canada that are unprotected, but there are organizations that can be connected through the implementation part of a national conservation plan to work on those wetlands. There are organizations such as Ducks Unlimited and Delta Waterfowl. There are provincial groups. There are committee groups.

I think in a national conservation plan, if different kinds of habitats were identified as part of the purpose and the goals, wetlands would rank up really high because they're one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems we have here in Canada.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Very good. Your time has expired.

Ms. Rempel, you have the last five minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Ms. Gallais.

[English]

We've been speaking a lot during the course of our study about partnerships, partnerships with the provinces in particular, and how we can achieve some of our conservation objectives. So I think you bring a very interesting perspective, as your organization is based out of Quebec. Are you aware of the Province of Quebec's *plan nord*, that was recently released?

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** Yes.

**Mme Michelle Rempel:** The concept of *plan nord* and other provincial land use planning frameworks is to do what we were talking about earlier. Answering that question, what should provinces be doing with their land? How should it be used? What sort of biodiversity targets should be maintained and whatnot?

In your organization's opinion, how have you contributed to that dynamic, and how do you see that working relationship contributing to a national conservation plan?

[Translation]

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** A partner-issue table was created under the northern plan, for example. The partner-issue table concept is a promising one for a national conservation plan. That table involved both the aboriginal communities and representatives of various regions and industries, as well as representatives of the environmental, sustainable development and transportation sectors.

In the context of the sustainable development of that area, the coordination committee helped achieve a better balance among the economic, social and environmental aspects of development. In my opinion, there are still some challenges, but we were able to make an overall contribution through various committees.

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Again, because we're looking at provincial partnerships, could you succinctly describe a few of the key challenges that you think might be unique to Quebec with regard to the development of a national conservation plan?

[Translation]

**Ms. Sophie Gallais:** In work done in partnership, there are problems at various levels, hence, I believe, the importance of cooperation. Aboriginal communities and a provincial government may not see eye to eye. The federal government is often the preferred liaison for the aboriginal communities. The industrial and environmental sectors do not always do the best job of talking to each other. Cooperation plays a fundamentally important role. One of the challenges of the national conservation plan will be to bring these various stakeholders together, but I believe it is important for them all to have a say, if we want to ensure that the concerns of all Canadians are reflected.

[English]

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Merci.

To Mr. Kendall—

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Mr. Choquette.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Mr. Chair, according to our schedule, we were to finish at 5 p.m. However, I understand that we are going to continue until 5:30. Would any members have liked to give notices of motion?

[English]

**The Chair:** This is to speak to the point of order. We have scheduled some time for some business. Ms. Duncan was late getting here, so I've used my discretion to allow time. So I'm going to allow Ms. Rempel to continue. She has another minute and a half, then we will be suspending the meeting and going in camera.



[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** I have no objection, but it seems to me that, according to the Standing Orders, we would have to have everyone's consent to extend the meeting, wouldn't we?

• (1705)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Speaking to that point of order, at 5:30 we would need to have consent to extend the meeting. However, it is at the discretion of the chair as to when to go into the in camera meeting, so I'm using that discretion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** My honourable colleague, Kirsty Duncan, who arrived late, would perhaps like to ask some questions as well. If she wanted to ask questions, and since we deviated from the schedule for Ms. Rempel, I believe it would be fair for us to do the same for Ms. Duncan. If we require unanimous consent, I am prepared to give it for that purpose.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Again, I'm using my discretion because of the recent arrival of Ms. Duncan. I'm going to be ending the meeting in a minute and a half. That's my ruling.

We have a point of order from Ms. Duncan.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I didn't think it was standard practice to announce if someone is late. We respect that. We all have very busy schedules. I was speaking in the House. I don't think we're usually punished for being late. I ran all the way from the House, where I was speaking on OAS. I got here at 4:55, and we were supposed to go in camera at 5 o'clock for the motions. I'd just like the committee to take note of this, please.

**The Chair:** Note taken.

Is there any further discussion on that?

Okay, then proceed, Ms. Rempel.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Kendall, your organization focuses on connecting youth with conservation. We have talked about that aspect with a couple of other groups. We had an aboriginal organization here earlier. They said that one of the challenges they

faced in contributing to conservation was the connection with aboriginal youth. Does your organization work with aboriginal youth at all? Are you aware of any other groups that it might be useful for us to consult with?

**Mr. Peter Kendall:** We have brought our existing program to first nations communities. I wouldn't say that we work specifically with aboriginal youth. I am not aware of any organizations that focus on that.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Ugarenko, you talked a little bit about an increase in the price of the stamp as a way to promote or fund conservation activities. Are there any other financial, incentive-based measures that you think we should consider in developing a national conservation plan?

**Mr. Len Ugarenko:** If you are going to use a grants program as a financial incentive, think about what that program can leverage, and perhaps think about the people who will be participating in it and how much money they have to bring to the table. An art grants program would work on a one-to-one match, but your chances are much better if you have two-to-one or three-to-one.

It doesn't have to be money; a lot of these groups get in-kind services. They know the guy who owns the bulldozer on his farm, and he will take it over and help them with their conservation project. There are creative things that can be put into the implementation section of the plan.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. The time has expired.

We are going to suspend for about—

Mr. Lunney.

**Mr. James Lunney:** We had one member who arrived a bit late. If there were unanimous consent, could we extend the meeting by five minutes and allow—?

**An hon. member:** No.

**Mr. James Lunney:** There is not consent. Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will suspend and we will reconvene in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]





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