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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)): I call to order meeting number 64 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Our first hour today is booked with witnesses from Infrastructure Canada. They're going to make an opening statement. Following that, we will have about 20 minutes left. So rather than go with seven-minute rounds, I'm going to suggest that we complete one entire round and go with five minutes each to make sure everyone has a chance to get in their questions.

We're going to begin by welcoming Natasha Rascanin. She will make an opening statement. Our other officials will be available to answer questions as needed.

Welcome to the committee. Please proceed with your opening statement.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin (Assistant Deputy Minister, Program Operations Branch, Infrastructure Canada): Thank you very much.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I would like to introduce my two colleagues. Bogdan Makuc is the director of program operations within the program operations branch, and Mohamed Nouhi is the principal adviser in the policy and communications branch.

In the context of this committee's study of urban conservation practices in Canada, I'd like to use my opening remarks to provide you with a brief overview of Infrastructure Canada and its activities. Before that, it would be helpful to provide a bit of context.

The vast majority of Canada's public infrastructure—in fact, well over 90%—is owned not by the federal government, but by provinces, territories, and municipalities. This includes key infrastructure such as highways, local roads and bridges, water and wastewater infrastructure, and public transit systems.

Recognizing the essential role played by public infrastructure in supporting economic competitiveness, a cleaner environment, and strong communities, the federal government provides funding support to provinces, territories, and municipalities to help them finance their infrastructure investments. I would note that this funding has grown significantly over the last decade.

The Infrastructure Canada department was established in 2002 and uses the suite of available infrastructure programs and leads the government efforts in this particular funding area. We have two types of broad categories of programs. There are base funding initiatives and targeted programs.

The base funding initiatives are designed to support provincial, territorial, and local infrastructure priorities. The largest initiative in this category is the gas tax fund, which provides \$2 billion per year in stable, predictable funding to municipalities for environmentally sustainable municipal infrastructure.

Following budget 2011, this funding was legislated and made permanent. While the federal government determines which categories of projects are eligible under the gas tax fund, the specific projects are chosen locally and prioritized according to the infrastructure needs of each community that is asking for access to that funding.

Our targeted programs are designed to support both large- and small-scale projects that are national, regional, or local in significance. Federal funding is provided on a cost-shared basis in order to leverage additional funding from partners.

In that category, our largest targeted fund is the \$8.8-billion Building Canada fund, which is the flagship infrastructure program of the government. The Building Canada fund is largely delivered through two components. One is the major infrastructure component, which focuses on larger, more complex infrastructure projects of national or regional significance, and then there's a communities component, which supports projects in communities with populations of less than 100,000.

[Translation]

A total of 17 investment categories are eligible for the Building Canada Fund, but the vast majority of projects proposed by the provinces and municipalities—and funded by Infrastructure Canada—are in the areas of transportation, water and wastewater treatment and public transit.

Projects funded under the Major Infrastructure Component are chosen jointly through discussions with each province. Almost all of that component's funds have now been committed to projects, and on-going discussions are being held for the remaining funds.

Projects under the Communities Component were chosen through a competitive process based on applications for funding and are managed jointly with the provinces. The majority of this component's funding has already been allocated.

Targeted funding is also allocated through the Green Infrastructure Fund, which is a merit-based program with the goal of contributing to cleaner air, cleaner water and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. All of the funding under this program has already been allocated.

[English]

• (0850)

Environmental sustainability has been encouraged through Infrastructure Canada's targeted programs in two ways.

The first is through funding support for projects that provide direct environmental benefits, which we refer to as green infrastructure such as wastewater treatment, solid waste management, brownfield redevelopment, and green energy, which also includes community district energy systems. The largest proportion of this funding, which is approximately \$1.8 billion, has been committed to over 1,200 waste water infrastructure projects.

The second way that Infrastructure Canada has encouraged environmental sustainability is through program funding criteria, which encourage or require projects to meet certain standards.

But irrespective of our programs, I would like to finish by emphasizing the following points.

Our funding programs outline eligibility parameters for projects. However, within those parameters, our partners have a great deal of flexibility to prioritize investments to meet their particular infrastructure needs. So our role is limited to being a provider of funding and, thus, we do not own or manage any of the infrastructure projects we fund. That particular role is filled by our partners, which are mainly provinces, territories, and municipalities. As a result, it is they that are responsible for undertaking key activities such as project planning, procurement, and prioritization.

Our funding is meant to help cover the capital costs of building new infrastructure assets and refurbishing existing ones, and we do not fund operating costs. Our programs are designed to assist—I mentioned cost sharing—provincial, territorial, and municipal infrastructure projects. As such, we do not support federal assets.

That's an overview. Thank you for your time, and we would be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you for providing the written comments as well. They're always very helpful for us to refer back to.

We're going to open up four five-minute rounds, and we'll begin with Ms. Rempel.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the officials for coming. We've had a really good discussion so far in this committee, and we want to get some clarification on a couple of points we heard during testimony on this study.

Perhaps you could start by giving me a little background specifically on the green municipal fund. We heard from some witnesses that perhaps there was a gap on eligibility for conservation or biodiversity types of projects. Do you think that's true, and

perhaps if not, what are the eligible programs right now for those types of initiatives?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: All right. The green infrastructure fund is a national merit-based system, and proponents for projects apply with their own priorities. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, it is largely provinces, territories, and municipalities that would put forward priorities. The funding was focused on large-scale projects that support environmental outcomes and objectives.

Now, there was no jurisdictional allocation per se, because it's a merit-based program where each individual project is evaluated on its merit, but provincial and territorial support in that regard was hugely important.

In terms of eligible categories, they are waste water, solid waste, green energy generation and transmission infrastructure, and carbon transmission and storage infrastructure. So I am not sure what whoever mentioned that—

• (0855)

Ms. Michelle Rempel: The context would be, for example, the City of Calgary; I'm thinking back to its presentation. It has a wetlands conservation plan and has implemented some infrastructure projects to achieve the goals of that program, etc.

I'm trying to get a sense of, between this program and perhaps other programs across ministries, whether urban green infrastructure is actually a gap or whether it would fall within eligibility criteria within other funding.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I've given you the categories for the green infrastructure fund particularly, but within the larger Building Canada fund program, there are 17 eligibility criteria tranches. A number of them are specifically green or eco-focused. As I mentioned, the proponents design their programs, but we certainly do look at projects having these components—and there is definite capacity to submit such.

I can give you examples of programs we have funded. Under the wastewater category, projects have been funded that included engineered wetlands as part of their treatment solutions. That is possible, and it has happened. In another example, there was funding for brownfield redevelopment projects. The flexibility within the categories certainly allows for that.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: We heard this theme from quite a few witnesses. Maybe it's not a funding gap but more about the awareness of the eligibility of certain criteria. Have you had any feedback from stakeholders to this effect at all? We're trying to develop a best recommendation, given that we know we're in tight fiscal times.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: We have not consistently been hearing that there's a gap. As you probably know, our minister held a consultation process last year with a variety of stakeholders, to seek feedback and considerations going forward. I'm not aware that we have heard of a major gap in specific categories. But as I say, we talk to a lot of different stakeholders. Certainly from our primary partners—our provinces, territories, and municipalities—the programs are delivering the capacity they need to choose priorities.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move on to Ms. Leslie.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

This is not going to be an adversarial committee at all, because we are really trying to drill down to this. I don't know if you saw the briefing put together by the Library of Parliament analysts.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: No.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Well, a number of witnesses said that they couldn't access this money. I appreciate what you're saying about the terms being flexible enough that people probably could access it.

Maybe one of the reasons you haven't heard that there's a gap is that it's not intuitive to talk to the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society when you're doing consultation, for example.

I like how we're uncovering what's going on here. When you say that there is flexibility in the terms, I would point out for example that we had witnesses who said, "What if we wanted to access that infrastructure money for a tree canopy because trees are a part of the green infrastructure. Or what if we wanted to access it for a habitat restoration project because in urban centres we want to make sure people can access nature within cities". Would you say that the terms are flexible enough for projects like those?

• (0900)

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: It's hard for me to tell you exactly, because we would need to look at the specifics. In general, we certainly don't try to preclude them, but we do have to review each project on its specifics and make sure that it fits the terms and conditions we have. That is our primary role: to ensure that the specific eligibility requirements designed for our funding programs are satisfied. We certainly do not automatically exclude them, but it's up to the proponent to identify them specifically, to put them forward as a priority. Then we would be able to determine if, for some reason, it doesn't fit. But as I said, we largely do have a lot of flexibility.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I don't think this committee is interested in making prescriptive recommendations, but would there be any alarm bells or any problem with starting a conversation with some of these conservation organizations to talk about how awareness could be raised, that folks could try and apply for it, or maybe having a conversation with them about possible gaps? Would there be a problem with that? I can't imagine there would be.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I don't think there's a problem with starting those kinds of conversations. I would emphasize as well that all the conversations definitely need to happen with municipal, provincial, and territorial partners, because all of this prioritization happens at that level.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I don't have any other questions.

The Chair: You have about two minutes.

Mr. Choquette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you for your presentation.

I would like to ask a question about the Green Infrastructure Fund. You mentioned that this fund is merit-based and that its goal is to encourage cleaner water, air and so on. But you said that all of the funding under the program has already been allocated. Is that for this year or forever?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: That is all of the funding, total.

Mr. François Choquette: Will the Green Infrastructure Fund be renewed next year?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: No decision has been made yet, so I cannot answer that.

Mr. François Choquette: So, the Green Infrastructure Fund was a success.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: It is not up to me to determine that, but —

Mr. François Choquette: All of the funds were allocated, which means that municipalities and provinces came looking for subsidies. How quickly were the funds distributed?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I would not say that all of the funds have been distributed—

Mr. François Choquette: They have been allocated.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: The program was announced in 2011.

Mr. François Choquette: So, in less than two years, all of the funds were allocated. I think we could say that the fund was a success. I think that there is demand for the Green Infrastructure Fund.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I'm sorry. It was in 2009, not 2011.

Mr. François Choquette: That's okay. How much was allocated? Was it \$1.8 billion?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: It was a total of \$1 billion.

Mr. François Choquette: Compared with \$8.8 billion—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Choquette, I think your time is up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Oh, that's too bad.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll have to move on to Mr. Woodworth.

Thank you, but we're under a bit of a tight timeline, unless the committee instructs me otherwise. I'm at the mercy of your decision.

Ms. Rempel.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I think I have two colleagues on my side who are interested in asking questions. So I just put it to the opposition that perhaps if Mr. Choquette would like to continue his questioning, we could do so.

The Chair: Maybe in another round we could come back to that, if the committee agrees. Let's move on first and complete this section and we'll go from there.

Mr. Woodworth.

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

Thank you, Ms. Rascanin, Mr. Nouhi, and Mr. Makuc.

I also have many questions and I'm going to try to boil them down to those that will help me most. First of all, we heard evidence that there was a \$500,000 green municipal fund, and it sounds to me like that must be the green infrastructure fund that you're talking about. Is that correct?

• (0905)

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: That fund is something that's run by the FCM, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We do not have any involvement with that fund.

The Chair: Mr. Woodworth, could you just clarify the amount? You said \$500,000?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Sorry, I meant \$500 million. Thank you.

Do you not fund it?

Mr. Mohamed Nouhi (Principal Advisor, Policy and Communications, Priority Initiatives, Environmental Initiatives, Infrastructure Canada): Yes, we provide funding for that program, but it's mostly managed by the FCM.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I understand. I wasn't asking you about management just the funding of it. Is that different from the green infrastructure fund that you're talking about?

Mr. Mohamed Nouhi: Yes.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you very much.

Regarding the green infrastructure fund, you've mentioned a number of categories: waste water, solid waste, green energy, carbon transmission. Is that written down in a regulation or a policy somewhere?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Yes, it is. It's definitely in the terms and conditions that the Treasury Board approves for each program. Public information is provided on our website.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Is it a policy or a regulation?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: It's a policy.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Is that policy written so that you could provide us a copy?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Do you mean of the program's terms and conditions?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: The categories that I just recited that you mentioned....

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: We have that and we can definitely provide it.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: And that policy doesn't need to be backed up by regulation or anything, but is just set out by the department after consultation?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: It's approved by Treasury Board.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: So I suppose if anyone wanted to renew the green infrastructure fund and wanted to alter those and include other items, one would go to Treasury Board for approval. Is that correct?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: If there's any new programming, then the way we would be instructed in how to deliver it would be by final approval from Treasury Board.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I had occasion to announce funding for some green projects in Kitchener under what was described to me as the CIFF, community infrastructure improvement fund. Is that one of your targeted...? Is that the community's component that you're talking about, because Kitchener has more than 100,000 people.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I mentioned that Infrastructure Canada has a lead in delivering a lot of infrastructure programs, but that particular program you mentioned is delivered by the regional development agencies.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: So it's FedDev. Okay.

So there is other infrastructure funding apart from the ones you have the lead in, and those might be through regional development agencies like FedDev.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: That's right, and there may be a few other pieces. The programs are designed in a way to be most efficient and effective, so if it makes sense for another department to deliver certain elements, then that would be done.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Are the 17 categories under the gas tax fund written down in a policy or regulation?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: They're not regulations but, yes, they're all available publicly.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Could you help us out? I know I'm asking you to do some of my homework, but since you're here, would you give us a copy of where those 17 categories are written down. Again, is that a case where, if we wanted to add a category, it would be necessary, after consultation, to go and justify it to Treasury Board and they could do that?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Well, there's no process for individuals to petition Treasury Board.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I'm not speaking about individuals, but about the committee and what it might recommend. But it would be a process that would require Treasury Board approval.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Any program that comes forward first requires cabinet approval and then Treasury Board approval for the terms and conditions.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Even if it's just a policy and not a regulation...?

Okay, thank you.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Woodworth.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: You mentioned that in the gas tax fund there are criteria that things must be environmentally sustainable. Can you elaborate on that and tell me what the criteria are regarding environmental sustainability in the gas tax fund?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Well, the gas tax fund's stated objective is to support and target sustainable municipal infrastructure. It's public transit, waste water, community energy systems, and solid waste. It has cleaner air, cleaner water, and GHG reduction objectives.

Did you want other examples?

• (0910)

The Chair: We have to cut it off there. We'll come back to it if we have time.

Thank you, Ms. Woodworth.

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to you all. This is interesting.

As Ms. Leslie said, this is not antagonistic. We really are trying to get some information. As you said, the green infrastructure fund started in 2009. If I remember correctly, it was \$1 billion. When I look at what other countries did, they spent \$221 billion in China, and \$112 billion in the U.S. I think we lost some opportunities here, albeit I know you can't comment on that. But when we're good to the environment it pays off on the bottom line.

You said that all of that money has been allocated. Do we know when it will be rolled out?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: We're in the various phases. A number of the projects are starting or have started. These are pretty complex, major projects. The initial phases, after approvals are given, include a whole lot of planning and a lot of elements before actual construction starts. But they're all on track to go forward.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: I noticed in your presentation that there's a major infrastructure component of national or regional significance, and then a community component, and it's a population of less than 100. I don't have a lot of information there, but there seems to be somewhat of a gap. Can you explain the justification there?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Personally, I wouldn't say there's a gap. The major projects are typically ones that larger communities are able to participate in. In order to avoid creating a gap, there is a community's component that focuses on the smaller communities. Also, the gas tax fund is accessible to all communities across Canada, large or small.

That's all I would say.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: There really does seem to be a disparity there, but I'll move on.

Does your department view parks, trees, ecological assets, as critical parts of the urban infrastructure?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Do we view it as a critical part of infrastructure? We are administering our programs within the terms

and conditions that have been approved. I was going to give an example to try to—

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Sorry, before you do that, is that part of the conditions? Is this considered—this is really key to this study.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: It's not outlined as specifically as that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay, that's what we really need to know.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: But it doesn't mean it's precluded.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: But it's not outlined, and maybe that's where we're having some of the awareness issues.

As you've heard, various witnesses have suggested to the committee that federal infrastructure programs should be extended to recognize green infrastructure and innovations in grey infrastructure. Can you comment on that?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Again, I think that is possible under current programming. It's about how different kinds of projects are designed by the proponents and incorporated. We certainly see those elements in projects that are currently funded.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: There really is a gap here, from what we've heard from the witnesses and from what you're saying. I know you can't make recommendations. There seems to be a gap, in that these folks are saying that this is part of their critical infrastructure and you're saying that it's not part of the conditions, but that they can apply for this.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: Within the flexibility of the terms and conditions we have, there is scope to have projects with those components and so on.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Okay, so the scope's there, but what's not there is that the ecological assets are not part of the conditions as they stand today.

• (0915)

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I'm not sure I fully understand the question, that ecological assets are definitely part of what's possible?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: They're not considered critical parts of the urban infrastructure. This is the key part. That's really what we're trying to drive at.

The Chair: Okay, Ms. Duncan, your time has expired. Thank you.

I'm hearing some vibrations that you possibly want to continue further. I'm open to the committee's input on this. If there's agreement that we have another round or so, I don't know if our witnesses are available for 15 minutes?

Okay, if I hear nothing I'm going to suggest that we take one more round and have each party ask at least one question, or share a question if they so choose.

So, does the Conservative Party have someone who would like to ask a question? Mr. Sopuck. If you want to share your time that's fine.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): No, that's great.

I want to follow up on the points of Ms. Duncan, Mr. Woodworth, and all of the previous speakers, because I think what we're driving at is that we would like to see another category added to the existing categories of eligible projects. Let's just call it ecological infrastructure, if we're managing for outcomes like clean air and clean water that you pointed out many times. In the course of the study, we heard of the beneficial effects of trees on air quality and the effects of constructed wetlands on water quality, as Ms. Rempel talked about. It's a very specific ask of ours, or we may recommend it as a committee. Do you think it's possible to add ecological infrastructure as a category of infrastructure funding?

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: That would be a decision for the minister and cabinet and Treasury Board.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I understand that, but would that be possible to do, if it were decided?

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: If it were decided.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I ask because the following has been shown in a number of studies and projects. In New York City they do upstream watershed work to obviate the need to build a billion dollar wastewater treatment plant. In short, the watershed conservation obviated the need for expenditure on hard infrastructure. Moorhead, Minnesota, right now is also looking at constructed wetlands for exactly the same reason.

We're asking you to think non-traditionally. My colleagues and I made a few disparaging comments about engineers, and I think we tend toward engineers' solutions. Ecological infrastructure is something the public really likes, and it provides multiple benefits. Could you speculate on that?

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: No, I'm afraid I can't speculate on that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: I can tell you, though, that the funding we provide is cost-shared. Most often it's one-third federal, one-third provincial, one-third municipal. As I've mentioned already, some of these engineered wetlands have already been part of a number of projects that have been considered and funded and are built, so—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Can you give us some specific examples?

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: I think I'd have to come back to you with names and where they are and so on, but I do know there were nine different projects. I don't have the list here.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: The precedent has been established, then, which is good. I think that's splendid.

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: My point was that it was quite possible within the parameters of the programming.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: But what would drive project proponents to do more of that, I think, would be a new category called "ecological infrastructure", because normally the traditional way of thinking drives people to hard-infrastructure projects, right?

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: I really can't comment on that. Honestly, I just don't have that degree of expertise.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: We have about a minute and a half if somebody else on this side wants the question?

Mr. Choquette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Ms. Quach.

I would like to talk about your second method of encouraging environmental sustainability, which is by requiring that projects meet certain standards. I am a bit surprised by that. This is the first I've heard about your projects needing to meet certain environmental standards.

Is it a matter of having new constructions with LEED certification, for example, or do they have to meet even higher energy efficiency standards? What are your standards, exactly?

A witness who appeared before committee said that it would be good if funds allocated under the federal government's infrastructure programs were dependent upon meeting certain environmental criteria. Do all of these programs require that environmental standards are met, or is it just some of the programs?

• (0920)

[*English*]

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: All right. I will give you some examples and hope they will answer your question.

A key example under the Building Canada fund is that all newly constructed or materially rehabilitated buildings must exceed the energy requirements of the national energy code of Canada for buildings by 25%. There's a standard code, and the requirement is that it has to be 25% higher.

Solid-waste projects have to demonstrate that they result in the actual reduction of solid waste going into the landfills. For wastewater effluent, they have to at least meet the federal wastewater systems effluent regulations.

Those are the key examples of the kinds of norms and standards.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Could you list all of the environmental standards for the committee? You listed a few, but is that for all of the funding allocated by Infrastructure Canada?

[*English*]

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: It's under the Building Canada fund and the green infrastructure fund for sure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: So not every fund is subject to standards.

[*English*]

Mrs. Natasha Rascenin: We do not follow the gas tax fund in the same way, so you're right that it's not.

The Chair: Are you sharing your time?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Yes, I will be sharing my time with my colleague.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go to Madame Quach.

[Translation]

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

You said that all of the funding from the Green Infrastructure Fund has been allocated since 2009. Between 2009 and 2012 or 2013, did you see an increase in the number of projects that applied for funding under the Green Infrastructure Fund each year?

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: I do not have the numbers, but perhaps my colleague can answer that.

Mr. Mohamed Nouhi: As Ms. Rascanin said, the program was launched in 2009. At the beginning, it took some time before we received projects. By 2010-11, we were getting plenty of projects. Now, all of the funding has been allocated.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: This project seems to have become quite popular. But you said that it might not necessarily be renewed. Climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions are hot topics these days. We need to take action, and quickly. In light of that, it doesn't really make sense to cut this funding.

As part of your recommendations, would you consider suggesting that it be renewed, or would that have to come from the committee?

[English]

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: We can talk to you about the green infrastructure fund, which is ongoing. It has not been not cut; money is flowing. Certainly we didn't want to imply that it's been cut.

However, any decisions about new funding are outside the scope of what we can talk about here.

It is an ongoing program. The projects are just starting. The money will flow as long as the projects—

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: But, no other applications are being accepted, which means that it's not renewable, correct?

[English]

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: There is a constrained envelope, absolutely—

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Okay.

Mrs. Natasha Rascanin: —just like all....

The Chair: With that question, the time is up.

This comes back to our discussion of the previous session when we talked about estimates and budget. We'll have to wait for the budget.

I want to thank our witnesses for the time you've given us today. It's been very helpful.

Committee members, I can see our report becoming a little longer based on the input from today and, possibly, from an additional session. I think it's been very helpful. Thank you very much.

We will adjourn for three minutes to allow our witnesses to leave and then we'll move in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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