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# **Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, June 18, 2013**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht**



## Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

•(0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)):** I'd like to call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to order. This is meeting number 83. We're meeting today pursuant to Standing Order 81(7) to deal with the report on plans and priorities 2013-14 of the Department of the Environment.

We have appearing with us today the Honourable Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment. Along with him, we have a number of witnesses from the departments. From the Department of Environment, we have Mr. Bob Hamilton, deputy minister; from Parks Canada, Alan Latourelle; and from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Mr. Yves Leboeuf, vice-president of operations. Welcome to all of you.

Mr. Kent, we'll begin with you for your 10-minute opening statement. Please proceed.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment):** Thank you, Chair.

It's good to be with you all again. I would just say congratulations on a very productive mid-evening last night.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** As you said, Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to return today to discuss the 2013-14 report on the plans and priorities for Environment Canada, for Parks Canada, and for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Joining me at the table are Bob Hamilton, the deputy minister of Environment Canada; Alan Latourelle, CEO of Parks Canada; and Yves Leboeuf, acting president of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, until the recently appointed president, Ron Hallman, is installed at CEAA.

Just momentarily on the subject of appointments, we were discussing at the last meeting the federal sustainable development strategy appointments to the International Joint Commission. If you haven't been advised, the two vacancies have now been filled. The two commissioners are Benoît Bouchard and Gordon Walker. It's up on the appointments website.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kent, I'm sorry to interrupt you. We have difficulty with our sound.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Stop the clock.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I will stop the clock.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** I can stay till 10:00 or 10:30, no problem.

**The Chair:** Is it working now?

[English]

Okay, sorry to interrupt you.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** As usual, I'll begin with a brief statement and then would be pleased to answer any questions that members may have.

As you know, there are a number of reports that the federal government issues to ensure that its decisions are transparent and accountable. The 2013-14 report on plans and priorities that we're discussing today outlines the departmental and agency goals for fiscal year 2013-14, and the actions to be undertaken to fulfill these objectives over the next three years. Today I'll discuss some of these goals and actions, and provide a brief update on some of our more recent accomplishments.

[Translation]

Beginning with Environment Canada, I am pleased to say the department is making clear progress delivering on its mandate to provide a clean, safe and sustainable environment for Canadians.

[English]

My department will continue to safeguard the quality of Canada's air and water, and restore Canada's natural habitat. It will also advance realistic and effective measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to protect Canada's environment in a manner that supports our economy. When it comes to climate change, Environment Canada has taken concrete steps to fulfill Canada's commitment to meeting our Copenhagen target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by the year 2020. Following its comprehensive and science-based sector-by-sector approach, the department has already published a series of regulations in alignment with the standards in the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

[Translation]

For fiscal 2013-2014, our approach will focus on implementing the coal-fired electricity regulations, building on the regulations in the transportation sector, and developing regulations for the oil and gas sector.

●(0850)

[English]

The department is also helping Canadians adapt to a changing climate by taking important steps to increase our knowledge and understanding of climate change. It is succeeding, colleagues. Canada's actions to date are estimated to have brought us halfway from our original projections for 2020 to where we need to be to meet our Copenhagen target for greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2020.

Internationally, of course, we are actively engaged in the United Nations process on a new climate change agreement that will include binding commitments for all major emitters. Here at home, Environment Canada's building on its accomplishments in conserving and restoring Canada's natural heritage through programs such as the natural areas conservation program, the ecological gifts program, the habitat stewardship program, and the Species at Risk Act.

These initiatives have demonstrated success. For example, collaborations with the Nature Conservancy of Canada under the natural areas conservation program have helped to acquire and secure more than 350,000 hectares of protected habitat for 148 species at risk. More than 1,000 donations across Canada have been made to the ecological gifts program, and more than 2,000 projects have been funded under the habitat stewardship program. Environment Canada will further this progress by working with partners on a national conservation plan to conserve and promote awareness of these precious natural species.

When it comes to the oil sands, for example, the governments of Canada and Alberta are committed through the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring to a scientifically rigorous, comprehensive, integrated, and transparent environmental monitoring program for the region. They are demonstrating their commitment to transparency with the recent launch, as you're aware, of the Canada-Alberta oil sands portal website that provides the public with ongoing open access to the most up-to-date scientific data collected by scientists in the field.

Environment Canada is also working to ensure a continued delivery of high-quality weather and environmental services to Canadians and to targeted users. In addition to the funding already included in this report, budget 2013 commits an additional \$248 million over five years that will serve the department well in achieving this goal.

Mr. Chair, when it comes to safeguarding the quality of our water, the department remains focused on its collaborative work with its American counterparts, with the provinces, and with municipalities to improve water quality in significant areas such as the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Simcoe, and of course the St. Lawrence.

[Translation]

It has made it a priority to deliver on the federal components of the National Air Quality Management System which will improve air quality in collaboration with the provinces and territories.

[English]

Just last month, Environment Canada announced the implementation of new Canadian ambient air quality standards. My department also initiated consultations on more stringent air pollutant standards for a range of small engines used in the off-road sector. Regulations were recently published to reduce air pollution from ships in the North American emission control area, the Great Lakes, and the St. Lawrence Seaway, as were sulphur in marine diesel regulations to enable the implementation of these new air pollutant standards for ships. As well, I recently announced the government's intent to align with proposed standards in the United States to further limit air pollution emissions from passenger cars and light trucks, and to reduce the sulphur content in gasoline.

Mr. Chair, this highlights some of Environment Canada's plans for the fiscal year. I'd now like to turn to government key priorities and accomplishments set out in Parks Canada's 2013-14 report on plans and priorities. I'll first remind the committee that in the past few years, Parks Canada has built significantly on its proud legacy to protect these special and irreplaceable places that represent the very essence of Canada.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada is investing \$75 million over five years in significant Action on the Ground projects, the largest and most ambitious natural resource restoration program of this kind in the history of Parks Canada. These projects will make tangible improvements in the ecological integrity of national parks.

[English]

Our highly successful recent initiatives in ecological restoration include the reintroduction of the plains bison and the black-footed ferret to Grasslands National Park after decades of absence.

Establishing national parks and national marine conservation areas has and continues to be a priority for Parks Canada. Since 2006 the Government of Canada has taken actions that will add almost 150,000 square kilometres to Parks Canada's protected areas network. Last year alone, the agency established Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve in the Northwest Territories, and as you know, tabled legislation, which you've been working diligently on, to establish Sable Island National Park Reserve in Nova Scotia. It is also establishing Canada's first national urban park in the Rouge Valley, east of downtown Toronto.

This fiscal year Parks Canada will invest approximately \$125 million in Canada's national parks and national historic sites in every province and in every territory across the country. Efforts to expand Canada's natural legacy will continue in places such as Bathurst Island in Nunavut and the Mealy Mountains in Labrador.

Turning now to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, I'm pleased to remind the committee again that this act is an important milestone for Canada. It follows through on recommendations made by this committee to strengthen and to modernize environmental assessment.

•(0855)

[Translation]

And now that it is in place, Canadians can expect predictable and timely reviews, reduced duplication, strengthened environmental protection and enhanced consultations with aboriginal peoples.

[English]

We are achieving our objective, colleagues, for a single project review within a clearly defined time period and to have one responsible authority making decisions within legislated timelines. We have new enforcement provisions to ensure that the necessary mitigation measures are put in place to ensure protection of the environment. For the coming year, the agency will carry on with these efforts in support of responsible resource development.

Mr. Chair, these are some of the plans and priorities under my portfolio for fiscal 2013-14. They follow through on the Government of Canada's commitment to ensure that Canadians benefit from a clean, safe, and sustainable environment in a manner that supports our continued economic recovery. They are helping us to make tangible progress, building on our successes and achieving real environmental benefits for today and long into the future.

Mr. Chair, thank you. I await your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister Kent. That was a great overview of the work that you are doing and planning to do.

We're going to move now to seven-minute rounds of questioning, and our first questioner will be Mr. Sopuck.

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

Thank you, Minister.

A common thread throughout your presentation, which I really appreciated, was the focus on delivering real environmental results. I think we find these environmental debates are basically in two camps. In one camp all they talk about is process, and the camp that I'm certainly in, and obviously, you and your department are in, is dealing with delivering real environmental results. So it was greatly appreciated.

I was recently in Winnipeg where your department made a grant to the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation for wetlands conservation and wetlands restoration, again, very much in the theme of delivering real environmental results. Can you talk about why wetlands are so critical and important? Wetlands have been a focus of all parties in this particular committee, but could you expand on their importance?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Thank you very much, and yes.

A good deal of my continuing enlightenment in this area comes from your own experience. I think for me the most telling awareness set in after you showed me satellite pictures of some decades ago, which showed speckles of blue across the Canadian Prairies, and more recent satellite photos that show that in the interests of greater productivity on those lands, those blue areas have been drained and put into production. Of course, the cost of that in some years of extreme spring melt and precipitation creates flooding that costs the

Canadian economy, and the provinces, communities, and farmers, billions of dollars in losses.

As you know, and as this committee has contributed to the work on the national conservation plan, we are increasingly focused on the part of that plan enabling wetland restoration—something that we share objectives on with the United States—and on finding ways to incent the agricultural community to restore wetlands, at the same time as allowing them to enjoy greater productivity on the fertile lands that they're still farming. But perhaps it's finding ways of incenting them with a variety of possible tools to re-establish those wetlands.

•(0900)

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** In terms of the national conservation plan—I'm really glad you brought that up—many of us would like to see a major focus of the plan being on what's called “the working landscape”, the farmed landscape, the landscape where there's active forestry and so on. Will the working landscape be a focus of the national conservation plan?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Yes, I think it would certainly be an essential part of the eventual national conservation plan because the agricultural community is a natural conservation sector of its own. There's an awareness of the balance of best practices with regard to conservation.

We worked with groups like the Nature Conservancy, which, in many of the lands transferred and acquired, allow continued working landscapes, whether forestry, grazing, or other agricultural practices. Ducks Unlimited, of course, is another body that has worked to help our joint continental wetlands re-establishment. I would think that would be an integral part of the eventual national conservation plan.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** As you are very well aware, our government established the hunting and angling advisory panel, again in acknowledgement of the terrific conservation work that Canada's anglers and hunters have done over decades and decades. The acknowledgement for their work is long overdue. I know that you met with the hunting and angling groups that are part of the hunting and angling advisory panel. Can you talk about some of the potential that our government will have in terms of working with Canada's anglers and hunters?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Certainly.

The hunting and angling advisory panel, known by its acronym HAAP—we're still looking for a vowel that could make it HAAPY. Working with the panel has brought a voice to the department and across departments that hasn't been well heard in recent decades. Again, Canada's hunting, angling, and trapping sector contributes billions of dollars to the Canadian economy annually. Hunters and anglers, through catch-and-release programs on the angling side, for example, are well aware of threats to fish habitat, to fish populations from invasive species. On the hunting side again, the protection of species at risk and the responsible management of various species are of great interest to that sector.

We'll be talking about a variety of things, contemporizing some of the regulations and laws that the hunting, angling, and trapping sector work under. I think they will contribute significantly to Environment Canada's future accomplishments.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck:** In that same vein, your colleague, the fisheries minister, will be announcing the new recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program, so the notion of governments putting dollars into programs that actually generate real environmental results, again, is a common theme.

In terms of the natural areas conservation plan, where I live south of Riding Mountain National Park, it's a highly targeted area by that program in terms of the conservation of the aspen parkland. Have you been satisfied with the results of that program, and what kind of potential do you see for it over the next few years?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Again, I think the accomplishments are self-evident. They've been recognized, certainly, by the Province of Manitoba, and by landowners and land users in the area.

To come back to your point about the impending announcement of the \$10 million in recreational fishing support, it will very nicely mirror the roughly \$11-plus million that Environment Canada distributes in modest grants across the habitat stewardship program.

• (0905)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Sopuck. Your time is up.

We move now to Monsieur Choquette and Monsieur Jacob.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

[*English*]

My first question is about real environmental results. There have been reports that none of the companies operating in the oil sands have met their obligation to clean up their operation of tailings ponds. This government continues to claim it has implemented world-class standards, but is failing to ensure compliance. What is the federal government planning to do to hold polluters to account?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Thank you for your question.

I think you're referring to recent stories about tailings ponds in the oil sands that have not met provincial targets. Of course, as you know, we work with the Province of Alberta too, and we're at the moment crafting regulations for the oil and gas sector, including the oil sands sector, to cover the range of environmental concerns.

We're in the second year of the process of implementing the joint Canada-Alberta oil sands monitoring plan, which was designed by scientists at arm's length. It is being implemented transparently and will address exactly the sorts of issues you raise.

There are certainly challenges in the continuing development of the oil sands, whether with regard to tailings ponds, with regard to water use, or with regard to emissions and emissions intensities. But I can assure you that the Government of Canada is well focused on effectively regulating, with the cooperation of the sector and the provinces and the industry, outcomes that are more environmentally appropriate.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Chair, I'm going to share my time with Mr. Jacob.

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Thank you, dear colleague.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also wish to thank the witnesses for being here with us this afternoon.

According to Bill C-481, which I sponsored, the Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act (duty to examine), bills must be examined by the Minister of Justice in order to verify whether they are compatible with the Federal Sustainable Development Act. If they are not compatible, the minister informs the House of Commons as promptly as possible. My bill extends the scope of the spirit of the Federal Sustainable Development Act so that it applies to all bills.

However, last June 4, you said that you would not support Bill C-481 because you felt it added a redundant level of oversight. You stated essentially that the Federal Sustainable Development Act and the Sustainable Development Office already ensure that our departments and legislation respect the parameters of sustainable development.

Can you explain to us how the Federal Sustainable Development Act sees to it that the House of Commons ensures that all bills are in compliance with the principles of sustainable development?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Thank you, and thank you for an accurate summary of what I said, and for your concerns.

Your private member's bill is still being considered. Certainly, as with all private members' bills, we on the government side will listen to the debate and we will be informed by different points of view.

But as I said at committee a couple of weeks ago, our first impression is that it would add a great legislative burden. It would add a redundant examination of laws, which our government is focused on eliminating. We're trying to end duplication and redundancy and to cut red tape, while at the same time maintaining and applying the federal sustainable development strategy to achieve the outcomes it was intended to achieve.

Again, as I said two weeks ago, we are still in the very early years of the application of the strategy. As time goes on and we do the periodic reviews of how the strategy is working or not working, perhaps some suggestions or variations of the suggestions made in your private member's bill would return for consideration.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Jacob:** Thank you, Minister.

I would now like to know why Canada does not include its ecological debt in its economic debt, as do several European countries.

• (0910)

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Well, we have different procedures and protocols. On a recent visit to a number of European capitals, I discovered that in fact the transparency of our accounting for environmental impact, for such things as emissions impact and across the spectrum of environmental considerations, is in fact more transparent than that of a number of European nations.

This country, as you know, is larger than the original European Union, and the amount of work required to create that sort of negative inventory again would get into areas of redundancy and duplication. We know well where the threats are to the Canadian environment and we're responding with appropriate action.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Jacob:** Thank you, Minister.

How do you see the government's role in promoting sustainable development, and when should the government not intervene?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** I think the federal sustainable development strategy makes it very clear that our government—and again it is a strategy approved by the House of Commons, by Parliament—knows where efforts need to be taken. We recognize that some of the provinces and territories in Canada have slightly different interpretations of the priorities under sustainable development, but I think the strategy is very clear on where we believe we need to intervene, and where we need to work in cooperation with the various provinces.

Quebec, as you know, has a very different balance of the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. Our federal strategy focuses more on the impact of government on the environmental pillar, but it is cognizant, it does recognize, in a different way, perhaps, than the Quebec government —

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Kent.

Thank you, Monsieur Jacob.

We'll move now to Mr. Toet, for seven minutes.

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

It's great to have the minister with us again today. Thank you for joining us.

I wanted to pick up a little bit on what Mr. Sopuck was touching on, and that's really the results-oriented aspects of the work we've been doing. Mr. Sopuck actually referenced the habitat stewardship program announcement that was made last week, and there's a component of that announcement that was also going to the Lake Winnipeg basin stewardship fund.

As I'm sure you're aware, as a Manitoba MP Lake Winnipeg is a very important area for me and for probably every Manitoban. We also realize it is a huge basin area. We focus on the lake, but I think we're really getting an understanding of the need. You touched on the wetlands aspect of it and how that affects it and touches on it. I'm

concerned about the health and quality of Lake Winnipeg, and I'm also very happy to see some of the investments, and the budget 2012 with the \$18 million investment for the second phase of the Lake Winnipeg basin initiative.

But I'd also like it if you could review for us the accomplishments we have seen in phase 1. Now we're into phase 2. You could touch on that also, but I'd especially like to really focus on some of the accomplishments in phase 1, and how we're going to be able to build on that going forward.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Sure. Thank you.

The challenges of nutrient loading in Lake Winnipeg are very significant. You mentioned the investment made under phase 1. What we're learning in combatting nutrient loading in Lake Winnipeg, and the amount of effort that is required not only in the water but in the agricultural lands, in the tributaries to the lake, will inform us with regard to similar problems in Lake Erie, elsewhere in the Great Lakes, and in other smaller freshwater lakes in Canada.

In phase 1 researchers had 24 projects that looked at everything from the water in the major sub-basin, which includes the Winnipeg River, Lake of the Woods, which of course is a very large lake. Many Canadians unfamiliar with southern Manitoba are unfamiliar with the immense size and the critical importance of Lake of the Woods.

They looked at the Assiniboine River and the Winnipeg River. They looked at the chemical and the biological integrity of these waters and the practices on land with regard to unintended drainage of fertilizers, for example, into the waters. They looked at the algae bloom, which is massive and recurring. They also announced a number of objectives that needed to be addressed, which is what brought us to the second \$18 million, five-year investment in budget 2012 to continue that work and to work with, again, the province, communities, and landowners.

There are waste water issues. There are, as I said, fertilizer drainage issues. There is a tax base concern because it is a large recreational water as well as an important freshwater source. So this is a very important program. The work we do there, the science that is done there, will inform us in similar situations in other parts of the country.

• (0915)

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** Thank you. It is good to see we have a great focus on the Lake Winnipeg area and the basin. You talked about Lake of the Woods. Many people who are unfamiliar think it's one lake, but it's actually a huge series of lakes that are all tied together, and they play a very important role.

I want to change the channel a little and talk about our Copenhagen targets and how we're doing there. I noted in the 2012 "Canada's Emissions Trends" report that as a result of our actions taken to date, Canada is already halfway to closing the gap between what our emissions had originally been projected to be in 2020 and where we need to be to meet our Copenhagen targets.

That's quite a great accomplishment for the short time we've been going forward on this. I was wondering what steps we are going to be implementing to build on this success, to make sure we meet those targets for 2020.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** As I said at committee a couple of weeks ago, the accomplishments to date are partly the result of regulations we have created for the transportation sector and the coal-fired electricity generating sector. This will be further contributed to by the oil and gas regulations, which we're working to complete, and those for other major emitters.

They are also the product of actions taken by provinces, by municipalities, and by ordinary Canadians through practices such as keeping the thermostat a couple of degrees cooler in the winter and perhaps using the air conditioning more judiciously in the summer, things that would seem to have a relatively minor potential impact. There's some confusion, which is completely understandable, between the numbers and the megatonnage we report in our annual inventory updates, and the estimate of what our regulations to date and supplementary contributions will make by 2020.

I've been waiting for an opportunity to explain this, so thank you for your question. If we had done nothing, as, for example, the previous Liberal government did, we would have had an estimated business-as-usual megatonnage of about 850 megatonnes, plus or minus five or ten megatonnes, by 2020. The actions that have been taken to date—supplementary actions by the provinces and industry—have brought us down to an estimated 720 megatonnes by 2020. That has nothing to do with the latest inventory report that says 702 megatonnes.

The 2005 megatonnage was 737 megatonnes. Reducing that by 17% would take it down to 611 megatonnes. So from 850, and we're at 720, we're just over halfway to getting down to our 2020 total target emission reduction of 611 megatonnes.

• (0920)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Toet. Your time is up.

We'll move now to Ms. Duncan for seven minutes.

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

Thank you, all, for coming. In 2010-2011, actual spending on environmental assessment delivery was \$15,263,000, dropping down to \$8,597,000 planned spending in 2015-16. Can you tell me what accounts for this reduction?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** There are a couple of programs that will sunset in 2014-15. The major projects management office will sunset, and the government will assess, as we do with all term projects, the effectiveness of the project and whether or not to renew and at what dollar amount. The other one is the aboriginal consultation funding, which was increased last year for CEAA, but again it comes with a multiple-year term, which is set to expire, as you point out, March 31, 2015.

It would be premature to anticipate, but I would think, given the direction of responsible resource development and CEAA's mandate, that funding will be renewed at appropriate levels.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Is that drop related to the fact that we lost roughly 3,000 environmental assessments over night?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** No. It relates, we anticipate, and as the RPP process is intended to illuminate.... We look at the current fiscal year,

but we also look at it over the three-year period and anticipate where sunseting programs will end—that helps us with our planning—and where we will need to consider renewal.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Are you comfortable with the reduction?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Yes, and I'll just offer a very brief answer. As we accumulate experience—we have almost a year's experience now under CEAA 2012—from our point of view, from the provinces' and indeed, from the industries' that have been subject to assessments and the assessment process and are anticipating going into the assessment process, it is working.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you, Minister.

With regard to SARA, several stakeholders have said that the concerns in the legislation are questions of implementation, not questions of legislation, meaning the act can be made better without opening it up.

Can you tell me what scientific evidence you have for wanting to make amendments to make the act “more effective” or efficient with respect to the act's stated purpose?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** That's a good question. As you know, it's a continuing conversation. No decisions have been taken.

There are indeed those. In fact, some of the original framers of the Species at Risk Act said that implementation at the time was imperfect. Not all of the advice was taken in terms of application of the law and they have been aware of it for some time. Again, it's barely a decade old. It's a young piece of legislation, and over those 10 years some of the problems that were identified and foreseen have accumulated.

One of those problems is the order in which species at risk are considered and the fact that all species are treated the same. There is no opportunity to prioritize with regard to recognizing the impacts of climate change or to recognizing fringe species, which might be just present in a small part of Canada but abundant south of the border.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you.

Minister, could I ask that you table with the committee the scientific evidence you have?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Sure.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** That would be terrific.

We're hearing from the scientists that any move to open this up is going to have the opposite effect. What do you say to that?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** With some scientists, as you know, on all of the big environmental issues that society considers, not just in Canada but around the world, there are degrees of agreement and disagreement. Certainly this committee will have abundant opportunity to look at the justification and the logic for whatever might be brought back to Parliament with regard to changing practices in application, or in fact, legislative amendments to the act. There are powerful arguments on both sides of that discussion.

It's something that we won't and we shouldn't rush into, but there are some very real issues to address with regard to the accumulating problems—



**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I'm going to jump in because I have a short time.

For whom are trying to improve the act's effectiveness and efficiency?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** For the species at risk. As you know, there are almost 200 species at different levels of risk for which recovery programs have yet to be completed. There is a lot of science to be done. Again, prioritization can be undertaken to a degree, and the courts, of course, as you know, keep an eye on the minister of the day with regard to recovery plans and their creation. The improvements will be for the benefit of the species at risk in Canada.

• (0925)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you.

I'm going to jump in. Environment Canada's measurement stations and analysis for ozone trends are gold standard in the northern high latitudes, which are highly vulnerable to stratospheric ozone depletion.

How many of our ozonesonde stations and Brewers are supported? How many scientists are supported for management and analysis related to Brewers and ozonesondes?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** It is the same number that Dr. Dodds identified when she appeared before the committee last year.

Bob, do you have the page open with the numbers?

**Mr. Bob Hamilton (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment):** I don't have the specific numbers with me, but we can get back on that.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** There were 10 ozonesonde stations. How many of those are operating?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** To my knowledge, they all continue to operate.

You're quite right, Canada has set the gold standard in ozone monitoring and we are determined to continue and to maintain that standard.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Duncan.

We'll move now to Madame Quach, for five minutes.

[Translation]

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

Thank you, Minister, for having come to appear before us for the second time in two weeks.

One of the principal mandates of Parks Canada is to preserve the ecological integrity of our parks. However, the ecological integrity indicator for eight of these parks is considered bad. As for ecosystems, the indicator is considered bad for six of these parks. It is dropping. Moreover, the number of species at risk in heritage areas has since 2004 gone from 141 to 222.

How do you explain these rather poor results?

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** I'll defer to Alan in just a moment for the science behind decisions that have been taken, but I would like to

respond to a question you raised in the House last week regarding the

[Translation]

Réseau d'observation des mammifères marins—the marine mammal observation network.

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Can you answer...

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** That group has been approved.

Alan.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada):** Regarding the ecological integrity challenges, we currently have in effect the largest ecological restoration program in the history of Parks Canada. It will cost approximately \$70 million over the next five years. The work is being done in close to 25 national parks, and our objective is to change those indicators in 20 national parks by 2015.

And so we are taking steps to attain those objectives. We have already seen very concrete results at the local level.

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** So, despite the results that are on the decline, you cannot explain why there has been an increase in the number of species at risk since 2004.

**Mr. Alan Latourelle:** The fact is that national parks don't operate in a vacuum. We operate in an ecosystem that is often bigger than the national park. We work with people from outside the park, consequently. For instance, one of the challenges at the Forillon National Park is the movement of animals in the corridor. We are working with Nature Conservation Canada specifically; they have purchased land in order to improve this circulation corridor for the animals.

So we are taking concrete actions like that one in order to change those indicators. I also want to point out to you that you identified eight national parks and that there are 44 of them. In several national parks, we are seeing considerable positive change.

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** You also talked about protected corridors, but Canada does not yet have any protected area networks. You say that two national parks and two additional protected marine areas will be created. Do you know where they will be created, and when? What percentage of the terrestrial and aquatic area of Canada would be protected if we want to respect the Aichi objectives? We are quite far from reaching the target of 10% of aquatic zones and 17% of protected terrestrial habitats by 2020.

• (0930)

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** As you know, Parks Canada has created four national marine protected areas to date. We're actively working on three additional areas.

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Where?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** One of them is in the area known as the Serengeti of the Arctic, a very rich area in Lancaster Sound in Nunavut. We are working with the Government of Quebec on a feasibility study for the Îles de la Madeleine, with regard to a marine protected area there, and I think that work is progressing. As you know, the southern Strait of Georgia is one that was announced. It's still in the study and development process, but it's a large one, and there are others that have been designated.

I certainly appreciate, Parks Canada appreciates, and the department and the government appreciate the ambition of the Aichi targets, but it's a matter of capacity. These parks can't be created overnight in a scientifically and environmentally acceptable, sustainable way. There's a lot of science and there are intergovernmental concerns. There's first nation consultation, and believe me, Parks Canada is working at speed to help move forward on those accomplishments.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** I have one last question.

You talked about increasing the public's appreciation and comprehension, among other things by offering young people the possibility of interacting with members of the Parks Canada team. You also want to improve the visitor's experience, but the number of visitors in Parks Canada heritage places has decreased by 20% over the last 15 years.

[English]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** You have abolished facilitator-guide positions, you have increased the entrance fees, you have shortened the visiting seasons and you expect that 700 employees are going to retire. You are planning to cut 600 positions, ranging from facilitator-guides to biologists to researchers and archeologists at Parks Canada.

Do you not think that these cuts will worsen the decline in the number of visitors in the next few years, and also the resources...

[English]

**The Chair:** Madam Quach, we'll have a very short response, please. We're out of time.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** I thank you for your question. This is part of a larger conversation. But, to your point, you're quite correct. Visitation is down and there has been some reduction of on-site interpretative services at national historic sites, for example, in the off-seasons.

Essentially, what we're doing now, and what we're doing with the ingested deficit reduction realities, is ensuring there are Parks Canada personnel at these locations when the tourists are there, when there are visitors. It does involve a shift. At the same time, Parks Canada has a very aggressive program going to engage younger Canadians who have not had the experience that some of us of the older generation have had in visiting the national parks and historic sites and making them a part of our life. Life is very different today. We need to re-engage. We need to teach camping skills, for example, to get people into our parks.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Quach.

We move now to Ms. Rempel for five minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment):** Well, here we are. We've been doing this gig for two years now.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Yes.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** You might have taken some heat, but I think there's a lot of stuff that we can be proud of. I'm going to start with parks.

My colleagues here have asked about what we've done to satisfy the Aichi targets to protect land. Since we've come to office, by how much have we increased Canada's protected lands?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Thank you, that's a good question. You're quite right. I've certainly learned how quickly scar tissue accumulates.

Parks Canada is a world leader. In my previous life as a junior minister in Foreign Affairs, I visited countries in the Americas and abroad in Africa and Asia, and met many ministers, and certainly, I visited some naturally protected spaces. Parks Canada is cited as the source of best practices in creating national parks and dealing with species at risk with all of the issues that occur under CITES. Since 2006, our government has increased—and again to the question regarding the Aichi targets—by 50% the protected spaces across Canada.

• (0935)

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** What does that mean in terms of comparing it to the size of another country, say?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Well, you could put the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Belgium into that area. There was a criticism not long ago comparing the amount of protected space in New Zealand to the amount of protected space in Canada. It's apples and oranges, the percentage of protected space. We are at about 10% of Canada's total land and sea area protected. We are, as I said, working on achieving Aichi targets for both our oceans and for land. I think Canadians can well be proud of the work. As minister, I take the credit and the blame on issues. Parks Canada's accomplishments really speak for themselves.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** I agree. Actually, it's my understanding that since we've come to office we've protected a land mass the size of Norway in new....

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Yes.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** I think Parks Canada is to be commended for that.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** I think that's incredible progress in protecting parks areas in Canada.

We often get derided, too, for increases in parks fees and access to parks, but I always like to look at comparative activities. I think for less than the cost of a movie in an average Canadian city, somebody can access a national park for a day. Is that correct?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Absolutely.

As you know, after freezing user fees for some time in the parks and our historic canals, we addressed issues that the Auditor General pointed out in past years to ensure that reasonable access is there for these parks. But when you look at the expenses that Canadians make for children's hockey, for health clubs, for other recreational activities, including movies, the changes to the fees across the national parks are comparable. They are reasonable. We're trying to find a balance.

User fees will never support our national parks system—they certainly won't support our entire historic canal system—but we're trying to find a reasonable balance. In the parks, user fees account for about 35% of costs. On our historic canals, as you know, user fees paid by boaters account for barely 10% of the costs. The current exercise we're going through is controversial. It's a sensitive one, but in the national capital area, for example, we have a wonderful historic canal here.

For those boaters who complain about reasonable, modest increases in moorage or dockage, for example, my answer is that a 36-foot cabin cruiser that wishes to tie up for a day opposite the Chateau Laurier should pay at least the same moorage fee as a 36-foot Winnebago at a campground in one of our great national parks.

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** With the time I have left—

**The Chair:** Actually, you don't have time left—

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Oh.

**The Chair:** I hate to inform you of that on—

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** But everybody else got seven or eight minutes.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Peter Kent:** It was a long answer.

**The Chair:** I appreciate your perspective, even though it's wrong.

We will go to Mr. Choquette for the last question. You have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

I have some very simple and direct questions to ask. And so I would like answers in the same vein.

[*English*]

How many staff have been let go in the last year, and how many are you planning on letting go this year? If you can't answer me today, you can give us the numbers later.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Are you talking in parks, in environment, and...?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** I am talking about Environment Canada.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** We'll give you those numbers. There are three separate sets of numbers.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you very much.

How many staff have been hired in the communication department in the last three years? You can give me the same answer.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** The net positions have decreased.

**Mr. Bob Hamilton:** Yes.

● (0940)

**Mr. François Choquette:** Can you provide us the number?

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you very much.

To be sure that everybody knows, the fact is that this committee never issued a report on the statutory review of SARA in spite of repeated efforts by the NDP. I simply wanted to address that.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Sure. You'll have an opportunity soon, I hope.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Maybe.

[*Translation*]

My other question has to do with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

I was often told in the House of Commons that the Navigable Waters Protection Act was no longer necessary to protect lakes and rivers. Ninety-eight per cent of lakes and rivers are no longer protected, but the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will, we are told, do all the work.

I hear that there will be cuts on the order of 50% related to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Mr. Leboeuf, I am very worried. With all of these cuts, how are you going to ensure that the agency functions well? I am really worried. I don't think that it will work well because of all of these cuts.

I would like to add one thing, Minister, before you answer me. It is something that concerns me a great deal. Why are the programs of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency only aligned with the results of the government's "Strong economic growth" program, but not with the results of "A clean and healthy environment"? It seems to me that this doesn't make sense. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is only aligned with the economy, but not with having a clean and healthy environment.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Thank you for your question.

Obviously it doesn't. We make the point at every opportunity—and certainly it is a process of environmental assessment to ensure—that when an application is made, for example, for a resource development, consideration of the impact on the environment is paramount. Those proposals are only approved conditional to actions that must be taken to protect the environment or to remediate after the extraction of whatever resources involved is completed.

With regard to your initial question, the Navigable Waters Protection Act dealt with navigation. Over the years, communities across the country had asked the government to amend the act—to contemporize the act, if you will. At the same time, issues regarding water quality, fish habitat—all of these other environmental concerns, issues, and protections—continue to be addressed in other legislation, both under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and under Environment Canada.

Yves, would you like to add an observation?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Leboeuf (Vice-President, Operations, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency):** Yes.

Concerning the 50% reduction you alluded to, I imagine that you were talking about the reduction in the budget of the agency for the period after 2014-2015. As the minister explained a little earlier, these are funds that were allocated to the agency in Budget 2012, i.e. \$8 million for large-scale projects and \$6.8 million a year for aboriginal consultations. This represents an increase as compared to what we received in the past. These funds were allocated for three years. They will expire at the end of 2014-2015 and their renewal will then be considered.

**Mr. François Choquette:** Excuse me, Mr. Leboeuf, but I only have 15 seconds left.

I would like to ask one last question, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Make it a very short question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** In this committee, we have only examined Bill S-15. All of the other legislative measures which concerned the environment were studied in the context of omnibus bills.

Can you promise us that the next bills on the environment which amend the act will be referred to the Standing Committee on

Environment and Sustainable Development, so that we may be able to our work?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** I can't give a yes or no. As you know, the government House leader determines, in consultation with cabinet, the composition of legislation.

Last year was an exceptional year that included CEAA, 2012. We continue to be open to discuss and to consider improvements. As you know, this year there have not been a great number of.... As a matter of fact, I don't think we have had any Environment Canada legislation. There has been associated legislation, but that's a matter of the whole of government.

Perhaps the committee should consider calling those ministers who are responsible for tangential responsibilities in respect to the environment to discuss things such as navigable waters.

● (0945)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Yes, among others the Minister of the Environment.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Certainly I look forward, I hope in the very near future—and thank you for your consideration of Bill S-15, as I said at the beginning—to bringing any new proposed legislation before the committee for consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I want again to thank Minister Kent and his officials for being with us today.

Thank you, committee, for great questioning.

At this point, we have the honour to adjourn, and then I have the honour of presenting Bill S-15 to the House in a few minutes. So we're going to adjourn at this point.

Thank you very much.







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