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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)): I call the meeting to order. This is meeting 33 of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We are meeting today to consider Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge national urban park.

We are honoured to have with us today Minister Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment, from the Department of the Environment.

We also have guests who will be speaking later in the day, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Latourelle, and Pam Veinotte. Thank you all for joining us here today.

We are going to begin with Minister Aglukkaq who will give her opening statement, followed by questions from members. The first hour is with Minister Aglukkaq.

Welcome, Minister.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council): Mr. Chair, hon. members, and ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Rouge urban national park act. This is a key initiative to support the national conservation plan which the Prime Minister launched in May.

The bill would establish a Canadian first, a national urban park in the heart of Canada's largest city. It would provide the opportunity for millions of Canadians to connect and enjoy our rich natural heritage. To support this, Canada's 2012 economic action plan has allocated \$143.7 million over 10 years and \$7.6 million each year afterwards for this park.

I would like to highlight how this bill would strengthen the protection of the land that would become the Rouge national urban park.

This bill would give the park the highest level of legal protection. It was crafted to go well beyond the existing provincial laws and policies governing the land that makes up the future park. The bill would allow for the expansion of the park and protect more land. Once completed, this park would be much larger than the existing regional park and about 16 times the size of Central Park in New York City. The bill provides clear legislative protection and powers on mitigating and preventing pollution, as it would be covered by the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Let me go through a number of ways the Rouge national urban park act would improve the current provincial laws and policies. The bill directly prohibits activities such as mining and hunting on all lands in the park. This is not the case right now under the province. The bill directly prohibits the removal of native plants and fossils on all lands in the park. This is not the case right now under the province. The bill provides full protection under the Species At Risk Act to lands within the park. This means that species that are threatened under this act would receive full protection. This is not the case now under the province. The bill provides fines for illegal activities, such as poaching, that are equivalent to those in national parks. Again, this is not the case under the province.

To ensure that there is strong enforcement of these clauses full time and year-round, dedicated law enforcement officers would patrol the park. I don't mean to repeat myself, but this is also not the case under the province.

Parks Canada's 2014 draft Rouge national urban park management plan strengthens and supports provincial goals including the ecological link between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine. Given the unique setting of this national urban park, Bill C-40 provides an approach that is tailor-made for the park location in Canada's largest metropolitan area. As many of you may know, the park contains major highways, rail lines, homes, businesses, and hydro corridors, as well as farmland.

In designing a national urban park for this area, it was important for us to find a balance between all these factors. Clause 6 of the bill would specifically require me to take into consideration the protection of natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes, the maintenance of native wildlife, and the health of the ecosystem. This is an approach that recognizes the park's urban surroundings. This new model embraces an integrated conservation approach that strives to maximize the ecosystem health of the park without isolating one value or area at the expense of another. It would be managed in such a way that it remains healthy and strong, while respecting the fact that it is located in an urban centre.

In all of this, we need to remember that there are families of farmers who have lived here for a very long time. Our government's legal and policy protections would also extend to the Rouge's rich agriculture heritage. It would ensure that farmers could continue to work the land and implement best farming practices.

Earlier this year I met with some of the farmers, and I can say that they are very pleased with the discussions that are happening on the draft management plan and leasing strategy. We would provide long-term leases so that they could plan and be sustainable long into the future.

Working with the farming community and others, Parks Canada would develop a set of best management practices for agriculture in Rouge national urban park. These practices would be aligned, to the extent possible, with those in existence provincially and regionally to avoid duplication of efforts.

● (1535)

In a letter that was sent to my office, Paul Reesor, president of the York Region Federation of Agriculture, said:

The farmers in the Rouge National Urban Park already use Environmental Farm Plans incorporating best management practices as part of their ongoing stewardship of the farmland they have been caring for for generations.

The farmland in the park needs to be preserved so that future generations of farmers can produce food for their surrounding urban neighbours.

We recognize that the future potential and viability of farms in the park are tied to the protection of natural and cultural heritage and the evolving needs of nearby communities. This means that Parks Canada must work in a collaborative manner to achieve all purposes for the Rouge.

There are a few other features of this bill that I wish to point out.

First, clause 7 of the bill addresses the protection of national historic sites. This means that for the first time national historic sites are receiving this kind of legislative protection. This means that the Bead Hill national historic site within the park will enjoy greater protection than ever before.

Parks Canada has made a strong commitment to work with the first nations in the protection and preservation of heritage places. Parks Canada has met regularly with first nations groups with historical connections to the Rouge Valley. An advisory circle was put in place to provide Parks Canada with input from 10 aboriginal groups on parks planning, presentations, and management. All members are supportive and keen to be involved.

Parks Canada has conducted extensive public consultations over the last two years, which have involved close to 150 provincial, municipal, aboriginal, agricultural, and community stakeholders and have generated positive comments from nearly 11,000 Canadians. This extensive engagement has continued. Since June of this year, the agency has conducted consultations on a draft plan for the management of the park. At the recently held public open houses throughout the greater Toronto area, we received tremendous support for the management plan.

Going forward, the Rouge national urban park act will ensure that the public will continue to have a voice in the management of the park by making public participation a requirement for the development of the management plan. In addition, the bill provides for the establishment of a committee to advise the minister on aspects of the park's management.

With the creation of the Rouge national urban park, Rouge lands will be protected with this strong federal law. This park is one of the

greatest conservation achievements in our nation's history, and I'm very pleased to be a part of its creation.

I would like to conclude by reading a quote from Wade Luzny, executive vice-president of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. He said:

It gives us great pleasure to provide our solid endorsement of bill C-40 for the formal establishment of the Rouge National Urban Park....The future Rouge National Urban Park is sure to be a national treasure for generations to come.

That concludes my remarks. I'd be happy to take questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister

We're going to move to our opening round of questions.

We'll begin with Mr. Carrie, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Thanks, Minister, for being here.

Back in Oshawa this past weekend, it was a beautiful weekend to be out and about and walking around. It's exciting to know that this park is finally becoming a reality.

I guess we were all surprised and disappointed, Minister, at least on this side of the room, when we learned on September 3, through the media, no less, about the shameful behaviour of the Ontario Liberal Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, the Honourable Brad Duguid, who is recommending to his caucus colleagues that the Liberal Government of Ontario not support the transfer of provincial land into the Rouge national urban park.

I was wondering, Minister, if you could tell those of us around this table when the Ontario government officially notified you of its changed position on the Rouge park. Did you have any indication through your discussions with Ontario cabinet ministers that there were problems in securing support for the creation of this historic park?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you for that question.

Like everyone else, I was made aware on September 3 by a letter sent by the Ontario infrastructure minister, Minister Brad Duguid. That letter was also shared with the *Toronto Star* on the same day, so that's how I became aware.

Federal officials had met previously on dozens of occasions with the Ontario government to discuss the creation of the park. To my understanding, these discussions were always very positive and supportive.

The Ontario environment minister, Minister Murray, even stated last summer that the creation of the Rouge park "will be one of the most significant environmental projects ever undertaken in Ontario". Mr. Chairman, I remain hopeful that through ongoing discussions we will reach an agreement with Ontario that will protect the environment and provide the residents a place where they can reconnect with nature.

Thank you.

● (1540)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you for that, Minister.

I'm glad the door remains open for discussions with Ontario. I think everybody is glad to hear we're open to that, but could you please outline what we've done to properly consult with stakeholders prior to the introduction of this very important and as I've said, historic legislation?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Sure. Since 2011 Parks Canada has conducted consultations with more than 150 organizations and has received comments from about 11,000 Canadians. It is as a result of those consultations that we are here today examining the bill before us. As well, Canadians have been invited to participate in consultations on a draft 10-year management plan for the proposed park. At recently held public open houses in the greater Toronto area, we also received a lot of support on the management plan.

I fully recognize and appreciate the need to consult with many stakeholders on this important piece of legislation, but I also recognize the importance of taking action, which is why this government has taken steps to protect a unique and pristine part of this ecosystem.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Could you tell us how the creation of the Rouge national urban park fits in with the government's national conservation plan? I know that this has been a really exciting part of your announcements in the last little while. Could you explain that to the committee?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Yes, absolutely.

As some of you may be aware, on May 15, 2014, the Prime Minister unveiled our government's national conservation plan, which was a key federal commitment in the 2013 Speech from the Throne. The national conservation plan will enable Canadians to conserve and restore land and waters in and around their communities, as well as make it easier for citizens living in cities to connect with nature.

The national conservation plan also includes significant additional investment of \$252 million over five years to secure ecologically sensitive lands, supporting voluntary conservation and restoration actions and strengthening marine and coastal conservation. It includes new initiatives that are designed to restore wetlands and also to encourage Canadians to connect to nature close to home through protected areas and green spaces located in or near urban areas, and the Rouge national urban park will enable Canadians to do just that.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Minister, you used the word "pristine". I love that word, because it says that in Canada we can be very proud of the parks and the lands that we have here. Many countries would love to have what Canada has.

I was wondering if you could tell us what this government has done to ensure that some of Canada's most pristine and sensitive areas are protected for future generations of Canadians.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Beyond the proposed Rouge national urban park, our government has committed to increase the amount of protected lands. Since 2006 we have added over 61,000 square kilometres to the network of federal protected areas, an area that's nearly twice the size of Vancouver Island.

This includes the expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve by over 25,000 square kilometres and a designation of 10

new sites. Also, recently our government was very proud to announce that it designated and protected the Ukkusiksalik National Park in Nunavut.

We also recently tabled a bill to establish Canada's 44th national park, the Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve in the Northwest Territories. The bill will protect and preserve nearly 4,900 square kilometres of land directly adjoining the Nahanni National Park Reserve. Together, the Nahanni and Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserves will protect 86% of the entire southern Nahanni watershed, and I hope that members of this committee will support the passage of this bill so we can build on a strong legacy of protecting our historic and natural heritage.

We're also working with Newfoundland and Labrador and several aboriginal groups to establish a national park reserve in the Mealy Mountains of Labrador.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you.

We only have about 15 seconds left.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I can't speak for 15 seconds.

The Chair: I'll add that on to a future time.

Ms. Leslie, for seven minutes, please.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): You'll add it on to my time? Thank you.

The Chair: I said a future time.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Welcome, Madam Minister.

Welcome to the government officials. I look forward to spending some time with you after as well.

I think this bill is a good start. The NDP has been really supportive of the idea of creating Rouge Park. You will probably remember that we actually managed to carve out two days of study on the park during one of our conservation studies here at committee. Everybody around the table is familiar with some of issues we're facing with this supremely interesting, yet supremely difficult, park that's about to be created.

As I said, it's a good start, and we're in support of the creation of the park. But there are quite a few issues, especially around the issue of ecological.... I'm blanking.

An hon. member: Integrity?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Ecological integrity. Thank you. It's been a long week for all of us.

I don't think the bill is where it needs to be, and I do want to ensure that we get it right. We are going to hear from a lot of witnesses. We are going to spend time with it at committee. I don't believe the issue of ecological integrity can be addressed through a management plan, personally. I think it needs to be enshrined in legislation.

Saying that, Minister, I'm not going to quiz you on what you would or wouldn't support or anything like that, as I don't think that's fair, but I am really honest and open about the fact that we do want to see a good piece of legislation here. I just want to ask you if you and your department would be open to amendments, if there's some area we can agree on, in particular around ecological integrity...but just generally, if you're open to amendments.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Chairman, I know that the ecological issue has been a discussion at previous committee hearings. The idea and the concept of ecological integrity as it applies to Canada's national parks is simply unachievable in an urban setting. The ecosystems have integrity when their native components remain intact, but because ecosystems are constantly changing, conservation strategies that have ecological integrity as their goal must also allow processes that reflect the ecosystem's natural conditions. That means such ecological processes as wildfires, flooding, and pest outbreaks would need to be allowed to run their natural course, which is not desirable and realistic in an urban setting. The park includes major highways, rail lines, hydro corridors, as well as farmland, and seven million people live on the Rouge's doorstep.

Applying in the legislation the concept of ecological integrity as we do in national parks would make it impossible to permit the type of sustainable farming that has been taking place in the Rouge for centuries.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I get that; I really do get that. I absolutely have heard the speeches in the House, and I understand the argument the government is putting forward, that there needs to be a different standard for an urban park.

Even leaving aside the definition we have of ecological integrity, I'm hopeful...and I'm asking if you're open to us trying to work together to come up with some amendments. I'm not tackling this one piece on ecological integrity, saying that we're going to the wall on it, but I think there are some amendments where we could actually all agree on this bill.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I have no idea what your amendments are, to respond to your comments.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Of course.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: It's a hypothetical question. If you have ideas, share them with the rest of the committee to debate this issue.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay, will do.

I have a very specific question, and then with the rest of my time I have some broader questions.

My very specific question is about the park transition advisory committee. This is reaching back into history, when the environment minister was Peter Kent. In 2012 a government-issued news release contained this statement:

The Government of Canada also announced the creation of a Transition Advisory Committee to support Parks Canada's decision-making on the establishment process and interim management of the park. Appointments to the Transition Advisory Committee will be made in the coming weeks by Minister Kent...

As far as I know, this commitment hasn't been honoured. I'm wondering if there's a timeline to put this advisory committee in place.

•(1550)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Chairman, I'll refer the question to Andrew Campbell. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Campbell (Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, Parks Canada): Over the past two years, we in fact have established with all of the landholders a landholders' table, where we have looked at everybody who currently has ownership of any land within the park study area. We set that up and have had a meeting at least once a month with that group to advise us on things like how to bring the management plan forward, how to meet the commitments. Every one of the landholders in fact has had clauses within their land transfer agreement to say—

Ms. Megan Leslie: May I interrupt, just to get clarification. Is that group what you would call the transition advisory committee?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: That group has worked as the transition advisory committee.

Ms. Megan Leslie: It has worked as that.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Yes.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

I have some questions about "meeting or exceeding". You're probably familiar with that phrase because the memorandum of understanding between the federal government and the provincial government states that in the creation and management and administration of the park, provincial policies—and it does say "policies"; it doesn't say "legislation"—will be met or exceeded.

I wonder, Minister, if you could talk about.... I don't understand right now how this legislation as it's currently written will be meeting or exceeding a lot of other pieces of legislation, including the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, for example. There are a number of policies and pieces of legislation. Can you help us understand how this meets or exceeds them? I think it falls below.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I'm going to go through a list of where there's a difference between the province and what is proposed.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this bill would not allow mining on the land. The province does not have that covered. It prohibits removal of native plants and fossils on the land. Again, the province does not have that protection. It directly prohibits hunting on the land. Again, the province does not have that. It allows for full protection under the Species at Risk Act, which the province does not cover. It also effectively covers waste dumping. Again, the province does not have that. The fines and penalties for illegal activity such as poaching are equivalent to those in the national parks. Again, the province does not have that covered. There are year-round dedicated enforcement officers. Again, the province does not cover that. The full protection of the park from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine is covered. The province, again, does not have that. It also provides an ecological link between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine. The province doesn't cover that.

The Chair: Minister, thank you. I think we're getting the gist of it. We're well over the minute. Maybe we could come back to this at a future time or you could weave it into another answer. Thank you for your response. Sorry, but we're well over the time.

We'll move to Ms. Ambler for seven minutes, please.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Minister and team, for joining us today to talk about this wonderful project. I want to thank you for making this a priority for the government. I represent a riding which, as you may know, is located just to the west of Toronto and Highway 416, so I suspect that many of my constituents already do and will continue to enjoy the Rouge national urban park.

I also had the privilege of serving on the environment committee when we studied the national conservation plan and gave input to the then minister on what it should include. I want to thank you for taking up that advice this committee gave as well, because there was a focus on urban environmentalism. I can tell you that in Mississauga South, which is located on Lake Ontario, and the Credit River runs through my riding, my constituents and I are very proud of our beautiful lake and river. It is part of who we are.

I know that the people of the greater Toronto area appreciate this park and will use it. It will serve to inform generations of Canadians, millions of Canadians, who live very close by. I want you to know that their priority is conservation and environmental stewardship. It's not just people who live in rural areas and in northern Canada who appreciate the environment, so thank you for recognizing that.

I want you to know, too, Minister, that I invited my colleague Bob Sopuck to my riding. He laughed when he found out that you could drive from one end of my riding to the other in about 10 minutes, but he still appreciated the beautiful Rattray Marsh.

This park is basically an extension, I think, for the whole GTA to enjoy. Also, finally, thank you for backing it with a significant funding commitment.

Minister, all that said, it's clear that this is an unprecedented project on a grand scale. Can you tell us what the benefits are of branding this a national urban park instead of just a traditional national park?

• (1555)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Thank you for that question.

I'm proud to be part of this project, in that it's the first of its kind in Canadian history: we're creating a national urban park protected through legislation. This particular park is 16 times larger than Central Park in New York City. I think we should be proud of that as well in terms of the work that we've done to do this.

The national urban park designation also provides a great approach that's tailor-made for a park's unique setting in Canada's largest city. The legislation is designed by recognizing the surroundings of where this is going to be located. Also, this new model for protected area management embraces the integrated conservation approach that recognizes the park's urban surroundings and the presence of working farms, the built heritage, cultural landscapes, major highways, roads, and rail. All of those were factored into the design of this, and it is unique and supports a designation for all Canadians in that region to enjoy.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: You mentioned that the current bill provides stronger environmental protection than what exists under provincial policies, but I think you might have wanted to say a bit more about that. Perhaps you could tell us more.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Yes, thank you. I can also provide a list, a comparison that identifies what's protected under...what's included in this bill as opposed to the province where it does not include....

Our government has created the Rouge national urban park act, the first of its kind in our country. To elaborate a bit on the crafting of that particular legislation, it goes well beyond the existing policies, which I'll provide, and it brings together the patchwork of activities that had occurred before, bringing it together under one legislation. I mentioned before that mining and hunting are prohibited under certain legislation, applying where the Ontario government's current policies and legislation are weaker in different areas. Parks Canada's 2014 draft Rouge national urban park management plan also strengthens and supports the provincial goals, including an ecological link between Lake Ontario and Oak Ridges Moraine and the protection of a prime agricultural area, which was very important to many of the farmers I met with.

The draft management plan also reinforces the province's Oak Ridges Moraine conservation plan by protecting the prime agricultural areas while conserving and connecting national heritage in those areas. Provisions have also been made to support the transit and road infrastructure identified in agreements with the province and regional and municipal governments.

That's it.

• (1600)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

The Chair: You still have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I'm good. Thanks.

The Chair: We'll move to Mr. McKay, for seven minutes, please.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for appearing.

Minister, we've all received this briefing book. I'm assuming that you have it as well. Perhaps you could turn to tab 3 and look at the map being proposed for the lands. I'm looking at that map and looking at the amount of land that the Province of Ontario has withdrawn from the bill. Not only are they lands that the Province of Ontario owns but also the lands it has through the TRCA under a reversionary trust and possibly all others.

Minister, in light of the decision however some might characterize it or impute motive to it, how can this bill proceed with this substantial amount of land actually not in the park?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that the provincial portion of the land represents 44%.

Hon. John McKay: That's 44% of the 58 square kilometres.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Yes.

In this particular map, the pink area is the provincial part, and it's 44%.

Hon. John McKay: For argument's sake, the lands that you're proposing are about 30 square kilometres in the south end of Markham. Is that correct?

Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada): No, Mr. Chair, what we are proposing is 58 square kilometres as the proposed study area in the park area. At this point we are still working with Ontario for them to deliver on their commitment that we made jointly.

Hon. John McKay: I get that. You would like to continue to work with Ontario, but in light of the minister's announcement, there doesn't seem to be much that you have to work with, shall we say.

At this point, it's in the order of about 56% of the 58 square kilometres. The question in my mind is why this bill is going forward unless you have this arrangement with the Province of Ontario, because it will be a shadow of what it should be as a park.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I disagree with you on that, in that we can proceed with the creation of the national urban park. As I mentioned before, I am quite disappointed with the Ontario Liberal government. I think they are playing politics with this issue. The environment minister, with all the discussions we've had with the provincial government, has been very supportive of this initiative. In September another cabinet minister of the Liberal government announced otherwise. Clearly there is a divide between caucus members of that government, but we'll continue to work with the government to draw this to a conclusion.

We can proceed with the creation of this park as proposed.

Hon. John McKay: Whether or not park politics apply, and I'm sure they apply on both sides of this equation, the hard-core factual reality is that today what you're presenting is half of what you started with when you tabled the bill. I'm wondering whether you should hit the pause button and see whether there's some arrangement that could be made with the Province of Ontario. People in my constituency are certainly keenly concerned about the southern end of the park, and they're not going to get that.

The Chair: Mr. Latourelle.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: First, Mr. Chair, I think it's important for the committee to understand that this is not a precedent. Even within

the national park establishment, several parks, when initially established, were at less than 50%, less than half. Grasslands National Park is a good prime example, as is Bruce Peninsula National Park, where we have added to the park. This legislation allows for the growth of the park area through an OIC, and again—

• (1605)

Hon. John McKay: It's perfectly understandable. It's right in the legislation that it allows for growth. I understand that, but it's being presented as something more than it actually will end up being if the province doesn't change its mind.

The key to changing the province's mind, as you know, is around this definition of ecological integrity versus the definition of ecological health. In the Parks Act there's a clear definition of ecological integrity, and it's clearly understood. In fact, I believe—and Mr. Latourelle could correct me—there's actually litigation as to what this means. You have not, however, put forward a definition of ecological health either in this bill or in an amendment to the Parks Act. Absent a definition of ecological health and what that might mean, is there any reason that you could not define “ecological health” if in fact that's what you're hanging your hat on?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I think I mentioned this earlier already. The concept of ecological integrity as it applies in national parks is simply unachievable in an urban centre.

Hon. John McKay: I buy that.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: You're asking us to amend the National Parks Act to change the definition or incorporate that.

Hon. John McKay: No, I'm suggesting that either in this bill or in the Parks Act you have a separate definition of ecological health.

The Chair: Mr. Latourelle.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, there has been a lot of discussion on the concept of ecological health, but I would refer the committee to clause 6 of the bill:

The Minister must, in the management of the Park, take into consideration—

—not only ecological health, but—

—the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes and the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems.

Hon. John McKay: I understand that, and in fact I've highlighted it, but “taking into consideration” is not a plan or a definition. It is something else.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, your time is well over. We're going to move to another questioner.

Ms. Sitsabaiesan, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Thank you, Madam Minister, for being here.

I want to start with a continuation of Mr. Carrie's question about the land assembly. He spoke of the provincial lands, and I'd like to speak about the federal lands that could be included in the study area for the park.

We know that thousands of Canadians have asked the federal government to significantly expand the park study area, which includes the adjacent Transport Canada lands that are in the greenbelt of north Pickering. These publicly owned lands are within the provincial greenbelt's natural heritage system and they are necessary to provide a true ecological and trail link between Rouge Park and the Oak Ridges Moraine, going all the way from the lake to the moraine. More than 22 square kilometres of additional lands are held by Transport Canada, and these exist beyond the greenbelt lands. For comparison with respect to airport size if that Pickering airport is to continue, the Pearson airport is approximately 16 square kilometres and the Toronto Island airport is about one square kilometre.

My question for you, Madam Minister, is whether you will work with your colleague at Transport Canada to add the federal government's greenbelt lands in north Pickering to the Rouge national urban park study area to thereby provide enough parkland to sustain nature, park visitor use, and farm uses along that corridor in the long term.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I'll point first to clause 14 of the current bill, which allows future lands to be added to this area. In terms of the Transport Canada land, TC is supportive of future parks, as illustrated by their commitment to transfer approximately 5,000 acres of their land west of the York-Durham area to Parks Canada, but at this time, the lands east of the York-Durham lines are not being considered for possible transfer.

• (1610)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Madam Minister, do you know why those lands are not being considered for the study area right now, while we're creating this monumental park?

The Chair: Mr. Latourelle.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Those lands are the responsibility of Transport Canada at this point. They would be better prepared to answer that question.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: All right.

I'll stay in the same vein of lands. Most of the current Rouge Park in Toronto is in my constituency. A lot of my residents are concerned that some of the land included in the current Rouge Park is not included in the study area for the future national urban park, including the valley lands and even the Morningside tributary. All of that is not included. My residents are concerned that these lands are not included. Can you please tell me why they are not included?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: I think we're down in the south of the map now.

My understanding is that the landowners put forth their proposals for consideration. If the landowners don't put forward those proposals, the areas are not considered. We had to work with municipalities, as an example, and with different counties and farmers. It's a whole group of people. If they don't put forward a plan to include their land in the park, then it's not on the table.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: As far as I understand it, because I was at an information meeting which the City of Toronto put forth, they said that they were willing to transfer all of the lands owned by the City of Toronto, except, of course, the zoo. The zoo is a separate entity and the zoo lands are not being included, but the valley lands

that are not owned by the zoo are not being included. Neither is the Morningside tributary.

The Chair: A short answer, please.

Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: All the lands in the study area that Toronto has have in fact been included in what we have as the transfer agreement. Anything that was outside of the study area—and the study area was put forward by the different landholders—is not included. Toronto would in fact be technically correct that they have put in everything in the study area, because they removed certain lands out of the study area prior to our going out for consultation.

The Chair: Your time is up.

We're going to move to Mr. Woodworth, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Minister, for attending with your officials here today. It's always a pleasure to hear you speak and to listen to the answers you give.

I want to preface my questions with the comment that this is truly a historic occasion. It is truly the first urban park in our country. I think that anybody who is well informed about environmental issues has to recognize that it's as a result of the commitment of this government to conservation and to connecting Canadians with the environment that we are taking this historic first step. I think also that anyone who is familiar with these issues has to recognize that it will be a work in progress and that the act itself does allow for future expansion, for further land to be devoted to it, and for the management plan yet to be developed and all of those details to be filled in.

For goodness' sake, after so many years of discussion, the suggestion of the Ontario government that at the last minute they should throw a spanner in the works, put a spoke in the wheel, and stop even the framework of this legislation from being enacted is almost beyond belief, quite frankly. It is time to move forward in creating Canada's first national urban park. In fact, I understand that it's one of the largest urban parks in the world, and I think the government can be rightly proud of that.

I understand that one of the issues we face is the fact that there are farmers in this area. I'm sure my colleague Mr. McKay will remember that under the Trudeau Liberals in the 1970s there was in fact a plan to evict farmers from their lands. They were given short-term, one-year leases to farm what I understand is class 1 farmland.

The Liberals endorsed a plan for the Rouge Valley that would completely evict farmers from this class 1 farmland, some of which has been farmed, I'm told, for over 400 years. I would like to hear from you, Minister, about how this bill will support the hard-working farmers that are in this area and how the bill reconciles their interests with that of the first national urban park.

•(1615)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: The bill will provide the highest level of protection for the Rouge Valley while at the same time promote sustainable farming and farming communities. Farming is an integral part of the Rouge national urban park. Earlier this year, I met with some of the farmers, and they are very pleased with the discussion on the draft management plan and our leasing strategy.

We are going to provide farmers with long-term leases to help them plan and to be sustainable long into the future. A sustainable and viable farming community in the Rouge will be built on community relationships, economic viability, diversification, and environmental stewardship. A set of best management practices is also being developed for agriculture, and these practices will be aligned with the province and municipalities to avoid duplication or undue burden on our farmers.

The Government of Canada recognizes that the future potential and viability of farms in the Rouge national urban park is tied to protection of natural and cultural heritage, visitor connection, and the evolving needs of nearby communities. The farming community is very pleased with the approach we have taken in protecting their farmland.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I've had a glance through some of the clauses of this bill. I know, for example, that clause 4 establishes the protection and presentation of natural and cultural heritage. Clause 6 requires the minister of the day to manage the park taking into consideration "the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes" and "the maintenance of...native wildlife and...the health of...ecosystems". I'm told that clause 7 is a first in federal legislation in creating a protection regime for "cultural resources". Clause 9 requires management plans to address the protection of natural and cultural heritage and so on.

There is a lot of protection of natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes mandated in this bill, but at the same time, we know that, as I looked at the map, Highway 401 runs right through the middle of this park. I think there are also some hydro lines.

The question I want to put to you is, how does this bill allow for necessary public infrastructure development in the park while at the same time protecting the environment?

The Chair: Mr. Woodworth, that was a great question, but we're well beyond your time to allow an answer. Maybe we'll have to ask for that answer in writing.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Or maybe someone in the opposition will pick that up.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We'll now move to Mr. Harris for five minutes.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Thank you to the minister for being here.

Mr. Woodworth forgot that there's a pipeline going through the park as well, the line 9B pipeline. There have certainly been some proposals that perhaps it should be moved adjacent to one of the other big pieces of infrastructure, such as one of the roads or highways going across, so as to ease access should there ever be a problem there. Then we're getting into navigable waters and the lack

of stop valves on either side of the Rouge in order prevent any potential spill from becoming an unmitigated disaster.

I want to go back to the minister's speech and also the comments on what on the surface seems like a very good list of protections that are over and above what the provincial protections are.

Minister, is there much mining or hunting going on in the Rouge currently?

•(1620)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: In some areas I believe there are some hunting activities. In the area of mining, no, but the bill does not allow mining development in a park.

Mr. Dan Harris: I ask the question because you yourself have said that it's a national urban park, so there are actually some differences from normal parks that have to be taken into consideration. Your mentioning of it in your speech is actually the first time I've heard mining brought up in the context of this park. It is an urban area, where we don't typically have mining or hunting. I can only imagine how fast the Toronto police response would be to guns going off in the park. Poaching typically is not a very difficult problem in that park. There are occasionally some fishermen who might not have a licence who go in and pull some fish out, and on a rare occasion perhaps somebody might go hunting for a deer, but I've never personally heard of those issues. I think it's a bit of a red herring talking about those issues, because they don't so much apply to the park.

It's other issues that are actually of concern with respect to the protections that the park provides. My colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River mentioned the Morningside tributary. There's also the Rouge River Valley. The Rouge River headlands for the waterways are not included in the park and are at this point not seeming to be getting any protections, which actually causes problems further downriver.

What will Parks Canada be doing to try to protect the upper areas of the waterways so as to ensure that silt and other contaminants don't end up in the river, end up downstream, and end up into Lake Ontario?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Chair, I will address some of the areas he mentioned.

Poaching is an issue in that area. Illegal dumping is an issue in that area. Illegal fishing is an issue in that area. If these issues had not been raised, we wouldn't have considered them. They are in this particular bill because they were in fact issues raised by stakeholders in the over 110 consultations we had with provincial governments, municipal governments, as well as the people who live in those areas. They are there and are identified as issues.

As well, this is a park in the process of being created. Bringing in all the stakeholders to hear how we would set this up was necessary. It is the first national urban park. It is different from a national park, and its provisions and clauses will be different. We have to identify the specific issues that are not necessarily identified in national park legislation.

I'll have Alan elaborate further.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, the other aspect is that we face that same challenge in a lot of our national parks also where the headwaters or the wildlife corridors are outside the park or migrate through the park. It's working through the broader ecosystem and working with adjoining landowners to develop strategies together that we've been able to achieve our conservation objectives.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move for the last four minutes to Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): To follow up on Mr. Woodworth's questioning, how does this bill allow for infrastructure development in the park while protecting the environment?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: On infrastructure, to meet with provincial and municipal landholder requirements, Bill C-40 provides the legislative framework needed in an urban setting. At the same time, the framework will allow Parks Canada to effectively manage and protect the park while allowing for future public infrastructure needs, such as utilities or transportation corridors.

The bill itself sets a strict limit of 200 hectares as the amount of land that can be disposed of for these purposes and for only these three purposes that I've identified. As well, under the Rouge national urban park act, the Government of Canada cannot dispose of or sell any of the lands for private development.

Thank you.

• (1625)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay, and just getting to the question of ecological health versus ecological integrity, I'm quite amused by that. It's quite frankly a distinction without a difference.

Would you agree, Mr. Latourelle or Minister, that what's important is ecological processes? That's what we're really talking about, right? It's about conserving and protecting the vital ecological processes. Regardless of whether it's ecological health or ecological integrity, it's all about those processes. Is that correct?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It is correct, but within the conditions and within the area where the park or the protected area is established.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Is that...[*Technical Difficulty—Editor*] As I look at those two concepts, one of them implies ecological integrity and almost implies large areas in the absence of humans where natural processes continue, whereas ecological health refers to the areas where humans tend the land under a conservation ethic. There's more human involvement in ecosystems where we use the term "ecological health". Is that a fair distinction?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It is a fair distinction, but I think the other part of it is the type of use of the land. For example, in the Rouge national urban park, a significant component is the land that we've agreed on and are working productively with the farmers. That, for example, would not be able to achieve the ecological integrity objective within that context, but we can demonstrate environmental leadership by working collaboratively with them.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Again, just looking at certain ecological processes, if we look at the current park as proposed, the hydrological cycle is still continuing, isn't it?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: That exists currently, and in fact, our objective is to improve it.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes, and in terms of ecological processes such as aquifer recharge and water purification by wetlands, those are features of that park. The wetlands are largely intact and the woodlands are largely intact. Is that correct?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: There are several parts of the park that have been disturbed. Again, I think part of our overall objective is to protect and improve the ecological health of that park.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Again, some kinds of human disturbance can be classified as—quote, unquote—stewardship, whereby the land is tended carefully and people reap economic gain while at the same time ensuring ecological processes continue.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, for being with us today and for bringing us up to date on the proposals for Bill C-40.

Our first hour is over. I'm going to call a three-minute recess. Our officials from Parks Canada will remain with us.

• (1625)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1630)

The Chair: We will reconvene.

We have with us, from Parks Canada, Mr. Alan Latourelle, Mr. Andrew Campbell, and Ms. Pam Veinotte.

We're going to proceed with an opening statement by Mr. Latourelle.

Welcome.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, the current regional Rouge Park was created in 1995. From 1995 to 2012 it was managed by the Rouge Park Alliance, and the chair was appointed by the Government of Ontario. In 2010 the alliance commissioned and released a landmark governance report for Rouge Park. I think it's important to understand some of the history.

The alliance by way of its governance report unanimously recommended that Rouge Park become a federally administered park, cared for and managed under the leadership of Parks Canada.

As the minister mentioned, extensive public consultations have taken place since we first became involved in 2011, and we've met with and received feedback from over 150 different stakeholder groups and close to 11,000 Canadians.

In short, the legislation and the draft management plan that we are consulting on now are the products of the most proactive and broad engagement of Canadians, communities, stakeholders, and different levels of government in the history of our agency, not only of this park.

For the remaining time, Mr. Chair, I wish to address three specific subjects: first, the agreement we negotiated with Ontario, what it is and what it isn't; second, the link between this bill and our proposed policy for the proposed park; third, the subject of conservation.

Recently in the media there has been a debate about obligations contained in the federal-provincial agreement signed between the Province of Ontario and the federal government in 2013 regarding land assembly for Rouge national urban park.

To ensure clarity on this matter, I would like to read a section of that agreement with respect to obligations required from both Ontario and Canada.

Paragraph a) of section 2.09 reads as follows:

a) Parks Canada will work with Ontario to develop written policies in respect of the creation, management, and administration of the Park that meet or exceed provincial policies regarding the Transferred Lands, including the policies set out in the Greenbelt Plan 2005, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2006 and the Big Move.

Not once is there any mention of legislation in that commitment. The four documents mentioned are all provincial policies. I can assure you that Parks Canada is absolutely fulfilling the Government of Canada's commitment to meet and exceed in areas of protection of nature. Indeed, we have reviewed and incorporated the key elements of these policies into our management plan framework.

First, in our negotiations with the Province of Ontario, the province's lone stated legislative requirement for the Rouge national urban park bill was to include a provision that would allow lands to be returned to the province or other levels of government to help meet the expected future infrastructure and transportation needs of Canada's largest metropolitan area.

Second, as we plan to establish, operate, and manage Rouge national urban park, there are two interrelated but separate components that will provide us with a framework to manage the national urban park: the bill before you and our policy. The legislation provides us with the legal framework required to manage the park. The policy direction is found in the draft management plan and provides us with the long-term direction for the management and operation under the legislative framework.

It is paramount that individuals not confuse these separate components. You will probably hear from groups during the committee process that will attempt to lump legislation and policy together, and it's important not to be confused or misled by this approach.

Finally, in terms of conservation, you should note that the term "ecological integrity" is not mentioned in the Ontario agreement at all.

Bill C-40 provides a strong legal framework under which to manage and operate the park and give the strongest protection in the Rouge's history.

First, the legislation will be applicable to the entirety of the future Rouge national urban park. This will be the first time the Rouge will have one piece of strong legislation governing the whole area as opposed to a patchwork of bylaws and policies that govern the current area.

I would now like to address the question of ecological integrity in Rouge national urban park. Again, this is an issue that has been raised in the media lately, and I wish to set the record straight and fully explain our approach.

The Rouge is truly an incredible place, but it does not exist in a landscape where Parks Canada's internationally acclaimed high standards for ecological integrity are unachievable. Seven million people live in the greater Toronto area, and the Rouge is fragmented by highways, roads, railways, hydro lines, private lands, homes, communities, malls, and infrastructure.

● (1635)

Our own Parks Canada experts have determined that approximately 72% of the current Rouge Park is disturbed, as opposed to an amount of about 2% for Banff National Park, for example, where we also have highways, so to have the same conservation standard between these two parks is unrealistic. However, this does not mean that we are settling for a second-class protected area by applying an ecosystem health approach across the Rouge's natural, cultural, and agricultural landscape. We will achieve the highest conservation and protection standards possible, while being realistic about the Rouge landscape. Our team is committed to maintaining or improving the health of that ecosystem.

We will apply the concept of ecosystem health across the entire park landscape in a way that not only conserves and restores natural and cultural heritage, but also promotes a vibrant farming community. We will end the cycle of one-year leases to provide farmers long-term leases and greater stability. The farmers in turn will commit to improving environmental protection and contributing to the visitor experience, and the cultural experience of the park.

The establishment of the Rouge national urban park is truly a unique opportunity for new, young, and urban Canadians to connect with Canada's incredible network of protected areas, and to be inspired to become stewards of this crown jewel.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Latourelle.

We'll move to the first round of questions. Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Thank you all for coming.

Mr. Latourelle, I want to go back a little bit. I believe it was in a letter of June 24, 2012, where Ontario Minister Bob Chiarelli, who was the infrastructure minister, and I'm quoting from an article in the *Toronto Star*, said:

Queen's Park is demanding "adequate compensation" for provincial land it would transfer to federal hands for the development of Rouge National Urban Park.

Somewhere in the \$100-million mark is what the Ontario government was demanding before transfer of land was done. To the best of your knowledge, was there a condition of that potential sale that had any indication anywhere of ecological integrity at that time?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: No, not from my recollection.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you.

I want to fast-forward to September 3. That's when the next letter came through. I just want to confirm, did you know about this letter in advance, or did you know about it the same way I did, by reading the *Toronto Star* that day?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I personally learned through the *Toronto Star*.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Through the *Toronto Star*. Thank you.

Part of that is Mr. Duguid said, "We will not in any way jeopardize the future of this property. We need to protect the environmental integrity and the ecology of the Rouge Valley." Duguid told reporters that. That's his quote. Yet you outline no less than 12 ways in which this legislation actually exceeds the current level of protection that the provincial government has always extended. Am I right on that, that this legislation actually goes further than the Ontario government currently does, or has ever gone, in trying to protect these lands?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I would say in general terms yes, but I think we need to recognize that the contribution of land comes from different organizations. There's the provincial lands, the federal lands. I think the other part of it is that on the bill that's before you, people have been focusing on one clause, which is clause 6 clearly, but there are several other clauses that ensure that the conservation objectives that we have and the level of maintenance of the ecosystem health and improvement to it will be achieved.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Back in 1997, Mr. Duguid was the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in the Province of Ontario. This was at a time when the Province of Ontario seized 600 acres of class 1 farmland in the area, provided \$2 million, evicted farmers from the class 1 farmland, and actually evicted some of those who lived in that area and had lived there for 40 years. The Ontario government evicted them, reforested that 600 acres of land, and called it the Bob Hunter Park, which to this day is still closed. That's what that very same government did in 1997.

Now, in speech after speech in the House of Commons, we are hearing from both opposition parties about this ecological corridor concept that has been advanced by a gentleman by the name of Jim Robb, who, whether or not people would agree, has an extraordinarily poor relationship with farmers in this particular area.

This 1997 seizing of the lands of course builds on what happened 40 years earlier, when the Liberals actually expropriated this land and put them on one-year leases.

Would you agree that the farmers—and I know you've been working closely with them—have reason to be concerned when they hear the name of Jim Robb being associated with a provincial minister who in his press release cites Mr. Robb regarding an ecological corridor from a 1994 report that is no longer accepted by even the Rouge Park Alliance, to which some of the members of the opposition belonged? Nobody accepts that report. Would you agree that the farmers have reason to be concerned that a minimum of 1,700 acres of their land would have to be taken out of production? These are Mr. Robb's own words—and you can't actually do that without evicting farmers. Would you agree that's one reason that the

farmers are so worried about this provincial government's lack of desire to transfer the lands?

• (1640)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, I'd like to say first that we've had an exceptional relationship with the farmers. I must say we've significantly turned a corner, so kudos to Andrew and Pam and several of our team members for that.

I think the farmers are clearly very concerned about any changes we would be bringing about, and that's why I think the management plan and the bill as presented to create the corridor would be a significant challenge. You'll hear their perspective on that from them directly. I do agree it would require close to 2,000 acres being taken out of production.

I want to be clear that that's not in the bill before you today.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Absolutely.

Perhaps I could ask you one last question, depending on my time.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Perfect.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood suggested that we should actually stop this process right now because the province is not willing to come forward. You indicate that the bill does allow for additional lands to come in. What this also does, quite clearly, is remove thousands of acres of land that had been set aside for any future potential airport for the last 40 years. This bill would actually remove those, remove the hold on thousands of acres of land once this bill is passed, give the farmers a long-term lease, and provide an unprecedented level of protection that these lands have never had. That alone, despite the politics the provincial government is playing, is one reason all the parties around this table should be supporting this legislation.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, the bill establishes the legal framework for us to manage the park, which I think is one of the crown jewels of our country. We are looking forward to doing that and to working with all of our partners. I think the bill adds a specific piece of land at this point, but it allows for two OICs for additional lands to be included. The 5,000 square kilometres of Transport Canada lands are a significant contribution to this.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I just want to reiterate that I am right that in 2012 there was no mention of ecological integrity when they asked for \$100 million for the land. Am I correct on that to the best of your knowledge?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: That's my recollection. I would need to reconfirm the letter, but that's my recollection.

Mr. Paul Calandra: In the lead-up, in the MOU that was signed, there was no mention of ecological integrity. As they campaigned for re-election in the province of Ontario, citing that they were creating a Rouge national park, at no point, to the best of your knowledge.... I've reviewed it and have heard no mention of their demanding ecological integrity. In fact, they told me that the only reason they didn't sign was that an election had been called and they couldn't actually move forward.

On September 3, all of a sudden, for the first time, ecological integrity came up. Am I right on that to the best of your knowledge?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes, I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge, in fact, as I've mentioned, in the MOU with Ontario there is no mention of ecological integrity.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move to Mr. Bevington and Ms. Leslie, who are sharing their time.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the presenters today for giving me a good understanding of Rouge national urban park. I'm sure you're in constant contact with the stakeholders that are engaged in that.

My question actually comes from people who are trying to establish the Thaidene Nene national park reserve. Parks Canada is in this process to establish new parks in many parts of Canada.

My question has to do with the importance of keeping the stakeholders engaged in what you're doing and how you're moving ahead. It comes from the Lutsel K'e Dene people. They're looking for an update on the status of the national park. The fact that they've asked me for it today suggests to me that they've been having trouble getting that update.

Do you have any comments about what the status is and where you're going with this?

• (1645)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, as a result of the devolution to the Northwest Territories, the lands have moved from federal ownership of the lands in the specific area to the territories, so we are working with them. As we do elsewhere where there are provincial governments that have ownership of the land, we work through them first before we move with the public consultation with stakeholders and partners. At this point we are working with the Government of NWT.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Are you familiar with the agreement that's being initialled between the government, NWT, and the Lutsel K'e Dene?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I've heard of it, yes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: What would your next step be after that?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Our next step is to work hand in hand with the territory to agree on the next step, because we at Parks Canada would not be out there by ourselves. We want to make sure that every step of the process, including public consultation engagement, is done in collaboration with our territorial partners.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Is there a priority timeframe to work on this?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The Government of Canada has done a land withdrawal to look at the feasibility of establishing this national park. That land withdrawal is still in place, so we are still working with the Government of the NWT.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Ms. Leslie, you have four and a half minutes.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Great.

Thank you all, and thank you, Mr. Latourelle, for your opening remarks. I found them very useful in explaining and laying some things out for us.

I do understand the difference between legislation and a management plan. That's part of my problem, that I do understand the difference. I also know that ministers come and go, so I'm reluctant to rest a lot on the management plan, because it can be redrafted quite easily. I tend toward wanting to enshrine certain principles in legislation.

I do understand that the MOU doesn't mention ecological integrity. None of these other conversations mention ecological integrity, but the National Parks Act does, and that's the problem for me. The National Parks Act talks about maintaining ecological integrity, and then we have a new bill with a different—I'm not going to say "lesser" right now—definition. As I said to the minister, I get that maybe we need a different understanding of our level of protection for an urban park, but I don't quite understand how this is different from a town in Banff, how this is different from a highway in Cape Breton highlands.

Yes, the proportion is different. You mentioned the percentage in Rouge Park. But when you're creating a highway, when you're maintaining a highway, you still have this principle of maintaining ecological integrity.

I'm still not with you here. Can you help me get this?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, first I'll take a step back to the National Parks Act, because immediately people turn to subsection 8 (2), which is the ecological integrity clause. But the real purpose of national parks is not that. It is part of the act, but the dedication clause, which has been there since 1930, is really the main purpose in dedication of national parks. It is for use, enjoyment, education in a way that leaves these places unimpaired for future generations.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Right.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I think that is the starting point.

The second part of it is that when you look at Banff, as an example, you have close to 6,000 square kilometres of land adjoining Jasper National Park and another 10,000 square kilometres. You can have highways, but when you look at a place that's 16,000 square kilometres, we have been successful in maintaining the ecological integrity of that place based on the definition that's currently in the National Parks Act. It's not achievable here.

The other part of it is that people are asking why we need a definition. I think clause 6 is self-evident. It says the following:

The Minister must, in the management of the Park, take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes and the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems.

It is pretty self-evident, and it's not uncommon; for example, in 2002 the National Marine Conservation Areas Act, which we're responsible for, came into force, and it has no definition either.

From our perspective, that plus all of the other clauses in the bill, including, for example, the clause related to the management plan that guides what will be included in the management plan in terms of protection, I think will achieve the conservation outcomes that we want to achieve, because we are also governed by the Parks Canada Agency Act, and there are other aspects, such as the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and also the Species at Risk Act. Therefore, it's not a piece of legislation in isolation from all of the other pieces.

•(1650)

Ms. Megan Leslie: I hear what you're saying. I still am left with... it's not even a feeling; I believe a lot of these things need to be worked out in the legislation and not in the management plan. I believe we're smart people in this room. We can figure out a way to protect farmers and ensure they're not going to be evicted off their land. I know we can do that. It can be in the legislation, and everybody will understand. Yes, there's some different stuff we have to do here, because it's an urban park; I just don't accept that we should leave it to the management plan.

In my last seconds—you probably won't have time to answer this—I don't understand that the Rouge park bill has that clause, about dedicating the park for the benefit of the people of Canada. Am I wrong that it's not in the Rouge park bill but only in the National Parks Act?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I think when you look at the—

Ms. Megan Leslie: Is it only in the National Parks Act?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It's only in the National Parks Act. For example, the Rouge park preamble is specific to Rouge park. It is a bill for this park only, not a system of urban parks.

The Chair: Ms. Leslie, we're now beyond the seven minutes.

We'll move to Mr. Sopuck, please.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I'll yield my time to Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I have a few questions.

I want to get back to farming. Some of you guys have been very active in that area. To the best of your knowledge, in the entire park, which spans from Lake Ontario to 19th Avenue, there used to be a lot more farming in what I call the southern part of the park, south of Steeles Avenue. I'm not wrong that the vast majority of that land to the south, with the exception of that bordering on Steeles Avenue, has been reforested. Am I correct on that?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: That's correct.

Mr. Paul Calandra: In terms of the land in this area, I'm correct also that this is class 1 farmland? If I'm not wrong, class 1 farmland is the most productive farmland or among the most productive farmland we have in the country.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Perhaps I could just add, because I was somewhat responsible for the negotiations for the agreement with the Ontario government, that in fact the two major pieces within that Ontario government agreement, from a policy perspective, are the Oak Ridges Moraine and the greenbelt. In both of those, the vast majority, in fact eight of the twelve requirements under the acts.... If we go act to act, eight of the twelve are to protect the agricultural land within there. They have nothing to do with ecological integrity or ecological health. The main number, in both of these two acts, actually have to do with the protection of that class A farmland.

That's how it has been treated, and that's why we are treating it in the act in the same way.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I just want to go back; I misspoke before when I said it was 1997 and former minister Duguid. It was minister Duguid in 2007. Actually in 1997 it was under the Mike Harris government when thousands of acres of land were transferred to the

Rouge Park to be protected, and it was in 2007 that the Ontario Liberals then took away that farmland to reforest it.

There is an article from June 21, 2010. Kelly Hatton, who had lived on that land for 32 years, was evicted. Her farmland was taken away and reforested, after having been assured that this would never happen. The quote from the Ontario government representative at the time was, "Nothing stays the same [...] things change".

This is why our farmers in this area are extraordinarily worried. They hear the Ontario government all of a sudden starting to talk about ecological integrity, and they hear parties opposite cite Jim Robb, who was paid by the Rouge Park to plant trees in the Rouge under contract to the Rouge Park Alliance. When they hear him being cited as an individual, a reason why the Ontario government is not moving forward with the transfer of this land, this is why farmers tend to get worried.

Now I want to go back to this. In many speeches during this debate, people talked about the ecological corridor, the 600-metre corridor. That came up in speech after speech. In questioning, I was told it doesn't mean you have to evict farmers. That is perhaps true and perhaps it's not. The number that I was given from Jim Robb was that a minimum of 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland would be reforested.

When I spoke with my farmers in the area, they told me that it can't be done without evicting them. I spoke to, and you mentioned, Paul Reesor. He said it can't be done. That's why they support what you have done. It's probably the first time in 40 years that the York Region Federation of Agriculture has supported a government initiative in this area. It's the first time in 40 years that the Cedar Grove Community Association—since they were kicked off of their land, and their land has been expropriated by the Liberals in the past—has supported an initiative.

You know that I was opposed to the creation of the Rouge national urban park. The reason I was opposed to it was that I did not trust government when it came to working with my farmers.

Alan, we have had a lot of very difficult conversations in the lead-up to this. I have now come on side with the work you've done, based on what my farmers, the Cedar Grove Community Association, and the City of Markham have told me. There is a complete reversal in people's attitudes on this.

We have one of the most successful farm markets in that area, something called Whittamore's Farm. Thousands of people across the GTA visit Whittamore's Farm. He's going to be here. He's convinced that if an ecological corridor forms part of this, he will have to close, putting hundreds of people out of work.

This is why farmers are anxious.

Again, I want to get it on the record. How do you create this ecological corridor that has been supported by the members opposite in many speeches, without evicting farmers, and without taking a minimum, I'll say 1,700 acres; you said 2,000 acres? How can you do that? In your negotiations with farmers, is there any way that you think that could be done?

●(1655)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I don't think it can be done without... I think there are different options. If the option is the one that was thought about initially in 1994, I think it's not going to happen without significant impacts on the farming community. There are other options we are looking at that I think are achievable.

I must say that for the farming community, it's about taking the time—and Pam has done this in spades, and Andrew also—to meet with them on their land and have a discussion with them. They're great stewards of this great place. By working with them, working with other partners, landowners, and municipalities, I think we can achieve it, but not at where it was before. That would be my sense at this point.

Again, the management planning process will be dealing with that. Our objective is not to pursue it in the same way it was initially planned.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: Okay.

I have a quick question then, and anybody can answer.

In your discussions with farmers, have they ever been opposed to protecting the lands in addition to farming the lands? Have they ever said that they didn't want to be a part of protecting those lands?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: No. In fact, it's quite the contrary.

One of the things they are happy about in long-term leases is we would look at land.... In the past, because of the one-year leases, with drainage tiles and other things that have been broken or not replaced, they would be able to keep that land in productive land use and take other pieces of their land that they know would fit in better from an ecological perspective and have those be used for that purpose. We could take those lands out of their leases, have them pay for that land that is productive, and have them actually have ecological benefit.

We've had excellent conversations with the farmers around that, which I'm sure they'll be happy to talk to the group about.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

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

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, I'd like to join Mr. Calandra in expressing that I don't trust government either—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: In fact, Mr. Sopuck said that the difference between ecological health and ecological integrity was a distinction without a difference. Well, if it were a distinction without a difference, then I guess we would have reference to ecological integrity in the bill.

Do you agree with Mr. Sopuck that ecological health and ecological integrity are one and the same—distinctions without differences?

●(1700)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: What I would agree with is that in clause 6 of the bill, it goes beyond ecological health. What is being proposed is to protect the “natural ecosystems”, the “cultural landscapes”, “the maintenance of...native wildlife”, and the “health of...ecosystems”. That is what is in the bill.

Hon. John McKay: Essentially, clause 6 says that the minister “must...take into consideration...”. It is not, however, a legislated commitment to any particular.... It certainly wouldn't meet the standard of ecological integrity that's put out in the Parks Act. You have to agree with that.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I think it's important for members to understand that the National Parks Act states that the minister shall give “ecological integrity” the “first priority”. That clause was challenged by CPAWS legally against a previous minister, and what the court ruled is basically that there can be several priorities, and if the minister has considered that, in that case she met her objective.

From our perspective, when I look at the history from a court perspective and I look at what's before you for debate, I think we will ensure that this place is strongly protected for future generations.

Hon. John McKay: That's why a lot of us like the idea of ecological integrity. I buy your argument that you can't apply the Nahanni park concept to the Rouge park. No one is going to dispute that, but the issue here is that there is no definition of “ecological health”.

You've put your hat on the concept of ecological health, but there is actually no definition. If CPAWS or anybody else challenged your idea, you'd be swinging at puffballs, because the way you have clause 6 written, it's essentially good faith on the part of the minister to be nice to the ecology.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, first I would say that nowhere in the bill do you see “ecological health”. What you will see is “the health of those ecosystems”. I think that is one important point.

The second point is that through the management plan, which is a requirement under the bill that's being proposed, there are some specific obligations on the minister, including reporting on the state of those—

Hon. John McKay: You're not committing to ecological health, then.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: For that part, we will ensure that we protect the natural ecosystems and the cultural landscapes, and the—

Hon. John McKay: It's not ecological integrity and it's not ecological health. It's something called “the protection of the health of these ecosystems”.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes, we will ensure that.

Hon. John McKay: What does that mean? We're writing law here. What does that mean?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: For the definition of “ecosystem”, I think there are several of them, and there are some that are very complex. We can provide a list to the committee, but—

Hon. John McKay: I appreciate that, because this seems to be the locus of the argument. It's that you have ditched ecological integrity. You tell me you're not going to go with ecological health, which is where I thought you were going first, and now there's something else.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, as an example, I'll read for you the definition of "ecosystem" under the National Marine Conservation Areas Act:

"ecosystem" means a dynamic complex of animal, plant and microorganism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

Hon. John McKay: If you can put forward a definition that's clearer—

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I'm not sure that's clearer than what we have before you.

Hon. John McKay: If you can put forward a definition like that on what is a complex ecosystem in a marine park, why is it that you can't put forward a definition, whatever it is, of what constitutes whether it's ecological health or health of the ecosystem? Why can't you put that either in the bill or in an amendment to the Parks Act?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, I can't commit the government, but what I will say once again is that the concept of protecting the natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes, and the maintenance of native wildlife is, from where I sit, a pretty simple and basic concept that we can implement. If Parliament decides that this legislation goes forward, we can implement that, supported by all the other clauses that reinforce the conservation objectives of the bill.

Hon. John McKay: Do you appreciate, though, that for the level of government that is about to contribute 44% of the land to this park, this might be a little on the thin side as far as kind of a "trust me" definition?

• (1705)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, what we've committed to—Andrew negotiated that—is basically that we have a signed agreement at the ministerial level with specific obligations on both the federal and provincial governments.

Hon. John McKay: Yes, and that's what has become unravelled.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It was for us, the federal government, to meet the policies of the provincial government. Nowhere are there obligations in terms of legislation. When we finalize that draft management plan, we're looking forward to receiving from the Government of Ontario their perspective and their comments on the management plan. We are very comfortable that we have met that threshold that we've committed to.

Hon. John McKay: You seem to be comfortable. They don't seem to be quite so comfortable. But we'll put that aside for the time being.

I want to address this false food fight with farmers. I had the privilege a couple of weeks ago of spending a day up with the farmers. I met with a whole bunch of them, including Paul Reesor, who was quoted by the minister. I spent the whole day with Paul. Since I have a farm background, I know quite well that farmers are probably some of the foremost, if not the foremost, stewards of land resources. They have a lot of great ideas which I think could quite easily be integrated.

What I keep circling back to is that if there's no legislated definition, if you're not actually prepared to deposit the plan based upon the definition here, they are as much in the dark as the rest of us. You might turn out to be eco-freaks for all I know, and poor Mr. Calandra's worst nightmares might come true that the whole place would be re-naturalized. I don't think that's ever going to happen. Nevertheless, it seems to me, for the purposes of comfort for ecologists and farmers alike, that a little precision in a definition wouldn't be amiss.

The Chair: We'll now proceed to Ms. Sitsabaiesan for the next five minutes, please.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you to all of you here.

Before I start my questioning, I have a question for the clerk. I know that when the minister was here, she said that she was reading a list of differences between the provincial and federal laws, and she said she was willing to provide that. I'm wondering if the clerk can pursue that list for the committee.

The Chair: Yes. We'll proceed with that.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you, Mr. Chair and the clerk.

With respect to farming, Mr. Calandra mentioned Whittamore's Farm. I go there all the time, because it's just north of where I live. By no means do I want to kick farmers off of their lands where they live and they farm.

The minister mentioned that sustainable farming will be developed in the area. Mr. Latourelle, in your remarks you also mentioned that we'll end the cycles of one-year leases and go to four-year leases. In turn the farmers will commit to improving environmental protections, contribute to the visitor experience... and the rest of your sentence there.

My question is, what does that mean? Does that mean that cash cropping will stop in these farmlands? Does that mean that pesticides will not be used anymore? What does that mean? I'd like to see a change towards sustainable organic farming in the community, because it's also affecting the groundwater tables.

I'm just asking you, what does that mean?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: To give you a very short answer, I think our objective is to work with the farming community on what are, within the farming industry, the best environmental standards. That's what we want to work with them on, and those that are accepted within that geographical area that have already been developed by the industry.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Okay, so it's a longer term working on best practices—

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, there are some great best practices currently, so it's to continue working with them on that and working with education organizations and others. Again, first and foremost in our case would be for Parks Canada to work with the farming industry to develop those standards.

The Chair: I won't take this off the member's time, but speaking as a farmer myself, I can tell you that if you have a long-term view, you can implement such practices as crop rotation, which improves the health of the soil. There are all kinds of things you can do long term that you cannot do short term. I think that's part of the answer.

Please continue. You have another three minutes.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With respect to the visitor experience and the protection of the cultural history and significance of the area, I know that it is home to the Mississauga, the Huron-Wendat, and Seneca first nations. Just two weekends ago I was in the park visiting the lands of where the ossuary used to be and where the aboriginal village site is below the ground. I'm wondering as part of the visitor experience and education of the park and moving forward if the aboriginal education centre for that area will be part of it. I think it's an important piece of the education and maintenance of the history of those lands. I'm just wondering if that's going to be part of the plans moving forward. Could you enlighten us, please?

• (1710)

The Chair: Ms. Veinotte.

Ms. Pam Veinotte (Field Unit Superintendent, Parks Canada): We've been working with the first nations since November 2011. We set up an advisory circle with the 10 first nations so we could understand how they wanted to be involved and their hopes and aspirations for being involved in everything from protection to presentation. What we learned was they're very happy that they can be re-engaged in the park, because their engagement went by the wayside. They see themselves involved in many different projects and initiatives. Certainly getting their culture exposed to all the others who use the park and finding ways to show their settlement, their transportation routes that they had, will be an extremely important part of educating visitors, not just on one site, like Bead Hill national historic site, but also throughout the whole of the park. They don't want to be relegated to one area. They want to have the messages of first nations taken throughout the whole of the park.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Throughout the park, of course. I'm just wondering if the aboriginal education centre is part of that plan and if you could provide us with a list of the members who are in that consultation group.

Ms. Pam Veinotte: It is the seven Williams Treaty, the Six Nations and the Huron-Wendat, the 10, but we can give you the exact list if you'd like.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Would you please give the list to the committee through the clerk?

Ms. Pam Veinotte: Yes.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We move now to Mr. Woodworth, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I want to direct my questions toward what I regard to be a bit of a word game going on in relation to the phrases "ecological health" and "ecological integrity".

I believe you've directed us to the correct place in the memorandum of agreement, paragraph 2.09 (a), which commits

the Government of Canada to develop policies that meet or exceed the provincial policies in the Greenbelt Plan 2005, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2006, and the Big Move.

My general impression of those specific policies to which the federal government has committed itself is that they are land-use planning policies that determine what kind of development can go where and under what circumstances. Am I right about that, first of all?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: In general terms, yes.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Of course, land-use planning policies can have as an objective protection of ecological integrity or perhaps as an objective protection of ecological health, but the specific policies are what the Government of Canada has committed itself to. Correct?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: That's absolutely correct.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Let me be very specific about where the rubber hits the road here. I hope this isn't too technical, but I just at random drew out the Greenbelt Plan 2005, and in section 3.2.2 I see a title, "Natural Heritage System Policies". For example, paragraph 4(a) of that section says:

Where non-agricultural uses are contemplated within the Natural Heritage System, applicants shall demonstrate that:

a. At least 30 percent of the *total developable area* of the site will remain or be returned to *natural self-sustaining vegetation*

Can I count on the Government of Canada to ensure that policy and others within the Greenbelt Plan 2005 will apply to constrain development in the Rouge national park?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, what I can say is that we are establishing this national urban park for different reasons. First, clearly it's for conservation. That is clearly our objective, but it's not only that; it's also to ensure sustainable farming. In terms of our objectives, we will meet the objectives that were set out in those documents. There are some that we are challenged with, and there's a separate clause in the agreement that allows us to have a discussion with Ontario.

We've done a detailed review of all these documents, and we feel that we've met or exceeded those obligations.

• (1715)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: That's really what I want to be sure about, that all of the policies that are in those land-use planning agreements referred to in paragraph 2.09(a) of the memorandum will, in fact, serve as a minimum basis for the requirements of development in this national park. If there's to be any development at all, none of those policies will be violated. Am I right about that?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Our agreement is that we would meet or exceed, and our goal is certainly to meet or exceed. We do have section 2.10 in the agreement, which says that where we are in conflict, we have a mechanism, which has not been noted in the press, to rectify that. In the plans and policies that they've asked, if you read them together as plans and policies, you'll notice there are, in fact, a number that are contradictory. Where those are contradictory, we are trying to meet the four goals that are in the act, and to have an integrated way of moving those forward. In fact, as a land-planning document, the Big Move is quite contradictory to some of the other plans that are within what's being asked for. We are trying to meet or exceed all of them, and I think that's something that has not been noted to date.

That is why we put in section 2.10, because the Government of Ontario has contradictory policies over the management of this land.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Have you had to invoke section 2.10 in your negotiations up to this point, or has it been all smooth sailing in terms of recognizing and respecting those policies?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: One of the amazing parts about this, Mr. Chair, is that in the consultation for our management plan, or in the act, we have not had a single instance that the Government of Ontario can point to where we have not met...and we have asked them specifically for that. There has been nothing, in specifics, where they cannot meet...

The Chair: The time is up. Thank you, Mr. Woodworth.

We'll move to Mr. Harris, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Harris: Thanks to our witnesses again for being here. It's great to see Pam here today. We were just chatting during the break. It was actually over two years ago that we first met to discuss issues around the park. Things are moving forward, but these things do, unfortunately, sometimes take a lot of time. It's important when developing a national park of any kind to get it right.

When we had the minister here, I was asking some questions about mining and poaching and hunting. The minister had spoken about how there would be year-round dedicated law enforcement officers in the park, which is also not the case under the province. Of course, this being an urban setting, the province isn't dealing with policing; it's the Toronto police and Durham Region and York Regional Police.

I'd simply ask how law enforcement done by Parks Canada would be integrated in working with those different police forces that already monitor the park.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, I think we have more than 100 years of experience through our park wardens and law enforcement.

I'll use Banff as an example, but you can look at most of our national parks where there is, as in the case of Banff, an RCMP detachment that deals with all the criminal investigations. Our responsibility is really focused on natural resource management, but we do collaborate and develop some agreements with them to ensure we're supportive of each other's mandate. Clearly, in the case of the Rouge national urban park, we would do the same with all these police organizations. We would develop an MOU, work with them, and support them, and they would support us when required. That has worked extremely well from Newfoundland to B.C.

● (1720)

Mr. Dan Harris: I thought the question deserved to be raised because again we are talking about a new situation with an urban park, and it's not the RCMP, but in fact three different police forces. If you went along the waterfront, technically you could add CBSA as well because you have entry potential from the United States. There are certainly some things to figure out.

It would be on natural resource management, but does this mean that other security issues are going to be deferred to the police in Toronto, or York Region, or Durham, depending on where in the park for instance something might take place?

Ms. Pam Veinotte: I wanted to say our park wardens will be committed to enforcing the legislation and to protecting natural, cultural, and agricultural resources.

Right now that's done by a collection of conservation officers in other jurisdictions such as the province who are not stationed in the park. Our park wardens will be stationed in the park, and they will be dedicated to enforcing whatever legislation does apply to the Rouge—the act, the Species at Risk Act, and so on. That's really what they are going to be there to do.

Mr. Dan Harris: This might be difficult to provide an answer to at this time, but roughly how many wardens do you think a park like this would need?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: First, I think we need to understand what our legal obligations are as an agency. What I would say is there is a very significant investment. The minister mentioned \$143 million over 10 years, so it's more than \$14 million a year.

We will have a good mix of investment in law enforcement, but also in restoration, and also in science, and all of our programs for resource conservation.

We will look at it. I think part of it is although Parks Canada has been involved in this for three years now, we still have to do more research in terms of the operationalizing of our operation. On that part of it I think we still need to do some work.

Mr. Dan Harris: That was why I said it might be difficult to give an answer, but those are the kinds of questions people are always curious about with respect to their own safety within the park grounds.

I mentioned earlier about the crossing of the line 9 pipeline. Is there anything planned vis-à-vis Parks Canada to ensure stronger protections or risk mitigation vis-à-vis the pipeline going across the park? Is Parks Canada envisioning doing anything there to help try to stave off the potential for something negative to happen?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Yes, Mr. Chair. First, all of the regulations concerning pipeline safety would be in force, but as people will note, the Government of Ontario has actually asked for that land to be excluded from the park land. It would continue to be within the Ontario government's regime of land management because that line runs through the hydro corridor, which they have excluded from the transfer of the plan. In fact, the Ontario government would continue to own the land in which the pipeline goes through.

The Chair: That's good. Thanks.

We'll move now to Mr. Calandra, for the last five minutes, please.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you all for coming. I appreciate that. I'm happy the member for Scarborough—Guildwood spent the day with the farmers in the area. These are the same farmers who have been farming the land for 200 years, but he spent a day there so he has become professional on what they like. I thank him for spending that one day.

Speaking of friends of the Rouge, let's talk about Friends of the Rouge. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood, I believe the member for Scarborough Southwest, the member for Markham—Unionville, and the member for Etobicoke North submitted petitions from the Friends of the Rouge to the House. As we know the Friends of the Rouge plant thousands of trees in the park each year. They said that this plan ignores the ecological vision and policies of the former cooperatively run Rouge Park including a 600-metre wide forested main ecological corridor.

The Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood and two other Liberal members of Parliament and the member for Scarborough Southwest submitted petitions to Parliament calling for this 600-metre corridor to be enacted. We've heard that will take thousands of acres of class 1 farmland out of production. We know that will mean the eviction of farmers despite the fact they are trying to now back up and say that no, they don't want to evict farmers. We know that's what the result of that will be. I would suggest to you that's why farmers don't actually trust what they are saying. This is why farmers don't trust what the provincial government is doing, because the other parties to this in our House of Commons actually support and have submitted petitions to that end.

That's more of a comment than a question.

Is there mining in the park? I want to ask this. Is there actually any mining in the park?

• (1725)

Mr. Dan Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'm sorry, but Mr. Calandra's characterization of supporting the petitions, it's been widely done—

The Chair: That's not a point of order. That's debate.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Is there mining in the park?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: There is no mining in the park currently, but because it is germane to the discussion on the policies, the policy on the Oak Ridges Moraine, which the park borders, and the greenbelt—two of the major issues—if you talk to any of the environmental or farming groups, there is an open pit aggregate mine

in it between the park boundary and Markham airport. You could throw a baseball from the park and hit an aggregate mine—

Mr. Paul Calandra: —which speaks to why we put that in the legislation, which some found humorous earlier, but it is a reality. Because I live in the area, I would know that.

Is most of this class 1 farmland being farmed? In his presentation, the member for Scarborough Southwest suggested that these lands aren't being farmed.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: The vast majority of it is, yes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you.

To the best of your knowledge, has the province ever met its own standards in managing this park?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: To the best of our knowledge, they have not met the standards of land management in the park, and I'll just leave it at that.

Mr. Paul Calandra: To the best of your knowledge, has the province ever indicated its desire or brought forward legislation to make this a provincial park?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, I did quite a bit of research when we were initially approached, and that was not the case. The federal government at the outset put in \$10 million. Since then the province has invested a lot in the acquisition of land, but I have not seen anywhere the concept of a provincial park being proposed.

Mr. Paul Calandra: My understanding of this, and I've been on this a bit, is that in the early 1970s the Trudeau Liberal government expropriated this land, evicted farmers, and put them on one-year leases. Then Brian Mulroney and the Conservative government set aside \$10 million. Nothing further happened. Bob Rae's government created the Rouge Park Alliance to manage the park. David Peterson, the Liberal premier, promised the park, but in the tradition of the Liberals, did nothing about it. I'm not sure. Jean Chrétien promised everything in one of his many red books, but never fulfilled any of the promises, unless they were done by a Conservative government in advance. Then Mike Harris transferred thousands of acres of land to help sustain a growing Rouge Park. Then our government created the Rouge national urban park—

The Chair: Mr. Calandra, your time is up so there won't be an opportunity for any comments.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Oh, sorry.

The Chair: I want to thank our witnesses for their presentations and their answers today. We appreciate it. It's helpful moving forward and getting to clause-by-clause.

The meeting is adjourned.

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