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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1535)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP)): Good afternoon.

Welcome to the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we are going to study the votes under supplementary estimates (B) 2014-15.

We are pleased to welcome the following witnesses: Michael Martin, Deputy Minister; Ron Hallman, President, and Helen Cutts, from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency; Alan Latourelle and Maria Stevens, from Parks Canada; Mitch Bloom and Yves Robineau, from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

I forgot to mention Carol Najm, from the Department of the Environment.

Mr. McKay, do you wish to make a comment?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Can you remind the committee why the minister is not here to present her estimates? Is there some reason? I can't remember.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): The reason why the minister is not here is that she was not available. We should ask the Conservative members whether they have a different answer than the one they gave me.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: So the reason she's not here is that she's not here.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): That is not a point of order.

I will therefore give the floor to the witnesses, who are kind enough to be here today. I don't exactly know the order of the presentations, but we are here to listen to them. I think four witnesses will take the floor.

As I understand it, you have 20 minutes in total, followed by the rounds of questions.

Mr. Martin, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Martin (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is my privilege to appear before you today, on behalf of the Minister of the Environment, to discuss the 2014-15 supplementary estimates (B) for Environment Canada.

I have a brief statement to deliver, which will be followed by statements from our portfolio agencies. After that, we would all be pleased to answer questions on the supplementary estimates (B).

[English]

This is Environment Canada's first supplementary estimates to update the 2014-15 main estimates. The department's submission amounts to a net increase of \$52.6 million, bringing the department's total budget to \$1.035 billion. The estimates, as you all have seen, include \$44.6 million for grants and contributions, \$9.9 million for statutory items, and a reduction of \$1.9 million for transfers between Environment Canada and other federal government departments.

As you can see, grants and contributions are a large part of Environment Canada's supplementary estimates. These are voted transfer payments with limited funding and defined start and end dates, and they are provided to individuals or organizations for activities meeting eligibility criteria set by the programs they support.

Now, as I mentioned, included in these estimates is Environment Canada's request for \$25.6 million to implement the national conservation plan.

[Translation]

As you may recall, on May 15, the Prime Minister launched Canada's national conservation plan. The plan provides \$252 million over five years and will contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity by taking concrete action in three priority areas.

First, it will safeguard and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems through conservation and stewardship actions.

Second, it will restore degraded ecosystems while protecting and recovering species at risk.

Third, it will also connect Canadians with nature to foster an appreciation for nature that will help to build a community of stewards of all ages.

[English]

The national conservation plan targets investments in new and enhanced initiatives, such as securing ecologically sensitive lands, restoring wetlands, supporting voluntary stewardship for species and habitats, and strengthening marine and coastal conservation.

The department's funding requests for these estimates will be used for such initiatives as securing, as I said, ecologically sensitive lands, fully accounting for Canada's conservation lands, and taking actions to restore wetlands. We will also support voluntary actions to conserve and restore species in their habitats and, as I said, help further connect urban Canadians to nature.

Mr. Chair, these are the highlights of the objectives that Environment Canada's supplementary estimates (B) will support in the department's work to provide Canadians with a clean, safe, and sustainable environment.

I will now pass the microphone to the CEO of Parks Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Alan Latourelle (Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada): Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the 2014-15 supplementary estimates (B) for Parks Canada.

[English]

Just to give a bit of an overview, last week I returned from the World Parks Congress where close to 6,000 people from 170 countries gathered to debate and discuss the future of national parks and other protected areas. Participants generally agreed on the need to protect large landscapes and restore degraded ecosystems, the need for aboriginal peoples to have a real voice in the management of national parks, and the need to engage the hearts and minds of all people, and to inspire them across generations, geography, and cultures to experience the wonders of nature through protected areas.

Mr. Chair, as Parks Canada's team members participated in these discussions, I was very proud to be Canadian, to share with my colleagues from other countries our accomplishments as a country. On all of these fronts, which I mentioned previously, I can say without hesitation that Parks Canada, and Canada, is an international leader.

First, over the past decade we have expanded our parks system of national parks at a scale that very few countries, if any, have achieved and we will continue to do so by supporting the government's objectives to create three new national parks by 2015.

Second, Parks Canada is implementing the largest ecological restoration program in our 103-year history. That is international leadership.

Third, we are involving aboriginal peoples in the management of our national parks through cooperative management boards and other innovative approaches that are recognized as international leadership.

Finally, through innovative initiatives such as the establishment of Rouge national urban park, learn to camp programs, free entry passes for new Canadians, and the renewal of our accommodation offer, we are seen as an international leader in connecting people to

nature. In fact, in terms of connecting people to parks, we co-led the stream as part of the congress' program.

These are all Parks Canada initiatives that support the government's national conservation plan.

As we approach the 150th anniversary of our country, we have led a multi-partner search in the Victoria Strait based on traditional Inuit knowledge, and solved one of the greatest international mysteries through the discovery of Sir John Franklin's ship, the HMS *Erebus*. In so doing, we have connected the hearts and minds of our citizens to the history of our great country.

This year, Parks Canada also played a very significant role in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences, the genesis of our political system. We also commemorated the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War, and the 75th anniversary of the start of the Second World War at numerous Parks Canada places.

• (1540)

[Translation]

I would now like to turn to the estimates we are discussing today.

Parks Canada is seeking adjustments to Parks Canada's 2014-15 main estimates totalling \$62.4 million. These funds will be mainly invested in items such as: \$57.7 million in investments representing the first year of a five-year \$391.5 million investment included in economic action plan 2014 to make improvements to highways, bridges and dams located in our national parks and along our historic canals; \$3.7 million for projects under the federal contaminated sites action plan; \$0.5 million for continued policy support in comprehensive claims and self-government negotiations; and, finally, \$0.3 million for actions under the national conservation plan.

[English]

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, and the committee for your time today. I'm happy to respond to any questions at the end of our presentation.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you, Mr. Latourelle.

Are there any other presentations?

Mr. Hallman, the floor is yours.

Mr. Ron Hallman (President, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is requesting funding of \$139,000 under the supplementary estimates, for a total budget of just over \$31 million. If renewed, these funds will allow our Pacific and Yukon regional offices to continue supporting ongoing treaty negotiations with aboriginal groups.

We work to ensure that environmental assessment is appropriately addressed in the negotiation of self-government agreements and comprehensive land claim agreements. The treaties, once concluded, specify the roles and responsibilities of the parties with respect to environmental assessment. This work is a small part of the broader process led by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to successfully conclude treaties.

Mr. Chair, as the committee is aware, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 is now two and a half years old. The act supports public participation, high-quality environmental assessments, and aboriginal consultation. I'm very proud to lead such a capable and dedicated organization in the service of Canadians.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I would note that the agency is very proud of the results we are achieving, together with other federal departments, and we remain committed to continuous improvement in the implementation of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012.

Merci, monsieur.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you, Mr. Hallman.

Mr. Bloom, it is your turn to give a presentation.

Mr. Mitch Bloom (Acting President, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to be here to discuss the supplementary estimates (B) for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency—CanNor.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to give you a brief overview of our work to advance economic development in Canada's three territories.

• (1545)

[English]

This year CanNor will deliver about \$37 million in contribution programs and services to foster economic development in the north. Since 2009 CanNor has invested over \$208 million in approximately 950 projects. Many of these projects are funded through CanNor's two key contribution programs: the strategic investments in northern economic development program and the northern aboriginal economic opportunities program.

To fully align with the federal framework for aboriginal economic development, CanNor has streamlined and harmonized its aboriginal economic development programming under this northern aboriginal economic opportunities program, which was launched on April 1, 2014. This program is opportunity-driven, focused on results, and geared towards maximizing economic opportunities for aboriginal communities and businesses.

Overall, these investments may be modest, but they have an important impact on the economy of the north.

CanNor's northern projects management office, or NPMO, plays a key role in working with both industry and communities to advance responsible resource development in the three territories. The NPMO

shepherds resource projects through the regulatory process in a way that anticipates and addresses challenges. The NPMO coordinates all federal regulators to ensure the timeliness, transparency, and predictability of regulatory efforts while overseeing the crown's aboriginal consultations.

The agency also puts significant effort towards building a skilled and representative workforce in the north.

In 2012 we launched the northern adult basic education program, a five-year program to give northerners who have not completed high school access to basic literacy, numeracy, and workplace skills that will help them participate in the labour market as the economy grows. This program is delivered through the territorial colleges. In its first two years of operation, it offered more than 135 programs to over 1,900 adult learners.

We're also investing \$5.6 million over four years to help establish a centre for northern innovation in mining in Yukon to deliver the education and training required for skilled jobs in the mining and exploration sectors. The centre will be a one-stop shop, a state-of-the-art education and training facility for people beginning a career in the mining industry as well as for those who want to upgrade their skills. It will help address labour shortages in the mining sector in Yukon and in the north.

The funding of just over \$975,000 received through supplementary estimates (B) is part of CanNor's four-year investment in capital support to the college. This amount represents the second year of funding for this program to the college.

This funding is matched by the Yukon government and used for the construction and renovation of buildings at Yukon College's main campus in Whitehorse and for the purchase of mobile training facilities and equipment. The new centre is expected to provide the territory with up to 520 accredited trades, mining, and apprenticeship graduates, plus 710 students will be able to complete shorter courses, such as safety training.

The balance of our estimates received is to cover a small cost of compensation adjustments over the fiscal years.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, I have only touched on a few examples of how CanNor helps to foster a strong, diverse and sustainable economy across the three territories.

We see ourselves as a key player and partner in providing a foundation for a prosperous economic future for those who live, work, and support their families in the north.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you, Mr. Bloom.

We will now move on to the rounds of questions, starting with a government member.

Mr. Woodworth, you have seven minutes.

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

I would like to welcome all the witnesses and thank them for joining us.

I have some questions for Mr. Latourelle, but since I am not fluent in French, I will ask them in English.

[*English*]

There were a number of things that you said, Mr. Latourelle, but I'm particularly pleased that you said so clearly that having been to the World Parks Congress and observed the challenges that face other nations, you are able to say without hesitation that Canada is an international leader. I'm particularly pleased just to hear that said out loud, because there's a false narrative out there that (a), Canada is not respected internationally in environmental issues, and (b), that we don't in fact pull our weight. So thank you for making that comment.

I want to start with the largest appropriation in the supplementary estimates (B) that is in your budget, and that is the \$57.7-million investment that you refer to in your remarks as representing the first year of a five-year investment in economic action plan 2014. Could you begin by telling us, first of all, about the overall scope of that five-year plan, and second, what the \$57.7 million will be targeted toward?

• (1550)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The \$57.6 million is going to be invested mostly in highways, bridges, and dams. For this year, there are 50 projects, 12 national parks, and 7 national historic canals.

For example, there's \$10.9 million that is being invested in historic canal dams and locks. There's \$12.6 million for highway bridges across the country. There's \$34.2 million that will be spent on highways because we are responsible, for example, for the Trans-Canada Highway through Banff, in the mountain parks, and also on the Cabot Trail in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: What is the scope of the overall five-year plan? Can you elaborate on that at all? In what general direction are you heading? Is it going to be focused on the same kinds of projects, or will it also expand to maintenance of other facilities?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: No, the investment that was announced in economic action plan 2014 was focused on highways, bridges, and dams. That's where the investments will be made in terms of the \$391.5 million.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: As I understand it, recently the Prime Minister announced additional funding which will go toward Parks Canada infrastructure. Quite frankly, I don't have at my fingertips the precise amount or time period. You referred to it in your remarks, \$2.8 billion.

Could you elaborate on that a little bit? What's the timeframe and how will that improve on the action plan 2014 that you were just describing?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The announcement that was made earlier this week by Prime Minister Harper was focused on supporting infrastructure improvements to heritage, tourism, waterway, and highway assets located within national historic sites, national parks, and national marine conservation areas across Canada.

That covers the whole spectrum of our operations. For example, visitor facilities, campgrounds, and day use areas would be covered by this significant investment, as would, again, the outstanding work that would be left from budget 2014, in terms of dams, highways, and bridges.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Do you have a timetable? Do you have a plan or a set of priorities worked out at this point for that funding?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The announcement was made this Monday, so we are finalizing our plan within the next month.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Hopefully, we'll have you back again to hear a little bit more about that.

I also want to ask you about what you referred to in your remarks as "the largest ecological restoration program in Parks Canada's 103-year history". I wonder if you could elaborate on that a little bit. What specifically were you referring to?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We've embarked on a five-year ecological restoration program across the agency. The investment over five years will be approximately \$85 million. The types of projects we're embarking on are, for example, restoring aquatic connectivity in Banff National Park, the cutthroat trout and the bull trout, and restoring a lot of prescribed burns.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development identified in his report that he was concerned last year that we weren't able to deliver a fire program. We are. I can report that to the committee. We're actually doing it in line with our objectives. There's also restoration of species at risk. Those are all the programs. There are about 42 key initiatives and significant initiatives occurring across Canada as we speak.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: It's a pleasure for me to hear that Parks Canada is taking such a wide-ranging approach and the government is putting the money behind it, particularly when we talk about aquatic connectivity and even the species at risk program, because we know those are important concerns across the country.

If I have time, I would like to deal with one last item regarding the multi-partner search in Victoria Strait resulting in the discovery of Sir John Franklin's ship.

I'm not sure how many people across the country understand that this was a Parks Canada-led initiative or understand the commitment that was made to this by Parks Canada as part of Environment Canada.

Could you give us some details about that, and tell us how it relates to the mandate of Parks Canada to have undertaken that search?

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Unfortunately, Mr. Woodworth, we will not be able to hear the answer, but perhaps in the next round, you or one of your colleagues can ask the same question again.

We will now move to Mr. Bevington for seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Greetings to the witnesses today. I'm glad to see you here.

I want to talk a bit about environmental liabilities. They're 10% of Canada's accounts payable and accrued liabilities over this year. That's a pretty big sum and it's been huge and it's been growing.

How do you account for the increase in environmental liability that we've seen over the years?

Mr. Michael Martin: Mr. Chair, under the program a portion is devoted to assessment. As we continue to assess contaminated sites, the liability changes. We of course continue to remediate sites. That leads to retirement of some of that liability, and we continue the assessment. It also can add to that liability in some cases.

It's part of the evolving process.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Are most of these federal responsibilities? Are they federal sites?

Mr. Michael Martin: These are federal sites, yes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Would Giant mine be considered part of the federal sites?

Mr. Michael Martin: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Absolutely, okay.

This year you have \$80 million for contaminated sites, to work on \$11 billion worth of contaminated sites. Is that correct?

Mr. Michael Martin: While we play a role in coordinating this program, Environment Canada itself has relatively few contaminated sites. Other departments have custody of a large number of sites. For example, Aboriginal Affairs has custody of the Giant mine. The money we are seeking here will support Environment Canada in its remediation activities for its contaminated sites.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: What's the total of your liabilities with Environment Canada?

Ms. Carol Najm (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Finance Branch, Department of the Environment): As reported in the public accounts, it's around \$120 million.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: How much of the liabilities will be retired with the \$80 million?

Ms. Carol Najm: I would have to get back to you with that response. I don't have the details. That \$80 million covers multiple departments. It is not all Environment Canada.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: You don't have those numbers in front of you. Do you have a plan for your own \$120 million? What part of that is going to go into remediation on your own sites?

Ms. Carol Najm: I can tell you of the \$4.9 million that we do have, part of it will go to doing the risk assessments and the lion's share of it will go to the remediation activities for the sites that we own.

I can provide you with the specific details.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: On the departmental performance review, Parks Canada admits having problems maintaining and repairing its own infrastructure. Is that correct? Is that a reasonable statement?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We have some challenges in the state of our infrastructure, but Mr. Chair, as I mentioned earlier, this year the government is investing \$57.7 million. That's being increased over the next four years up to \$391 million over five years. Very recently, again, there was the announcement by the government this Monday of a significant investment of \$2.8 billion.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Was any timeframe attached to that \$2.8 billion by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It is premature for us to—

Mr. Dennis Bevington: —to even say this is a 10-year program, or a 20-year program.

• (1600)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: When the Prime Minister talked about the federal government's overall infrastructure program, he was clear that the bulk of it would be done in three years.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: The \$2.8 billion was going to be spent in three years?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Based on my recollection, the comment that was made was that the bulk of the federal infrastructure program would be done in three years, but we don't have a fixed timeframe yet. This will be worked out over the next month or so, but our objective is to move quickly. I just want to reassure committee members.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: You had the \$391 million for infrastructure repair. Now you've got the \$2.8 on top of that.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Billion, yes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Yes, and that totals more than what your estimates are for the repair of the infrastructure. So is there some new infrastructure involved in that as well? If you have \$391 million and then you're adding \$2.8 and here it says you have about \$2.9 billion worth of deferred repairs, obviously you're going to do some new work as well.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The \$2.8 billion is potentially not only for Parks Canada. There are often other departments that may benefit from that, but the lion's share of that is for Parks Canada.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Is there no indication of how much that is?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We'll get confirmation very shortly.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay. Thanks.

I want to ask you one tiny question. Two or three years ago you decided not to allow your staff at Parks Canada to create cross-country ski trails in the parks. A decision was made that park employees would not be engaged in providing that access to people. How does that fit in with some of the philosophy that you just recited to me in your opening statement?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We are investing our operating budget on the period of highest use to make sure that Canadians can come and experience the exceptional beauty of our places and the history of our nation. What we've seen in the last few years is in fact an increase in visitation that is quite substantial. Last year it was 3%, which is substantial in the tourism industry.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: So the people who are working in the summer, of course, it's the high season, but why is this a problem for the winter?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We have to look at putting our money and investment into when we get the most visitors, to better serve them and not affect the service, so that's what we have done successfully.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: So you're not reviewing that choice at any time to see what it's done to the situation in the parks? The parks are still open in the winter, aren't they?

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Mr. Bevington, unfortunately, your time is up.

The floor now goes to Mr. Toet.

[*English*]

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Thank you for joining us today.

It's always helpful to get a good handle on some of these estimates and some of the changes in the estimates. One of the key things we need to understand is that we're looking at supplements here. We're not looking at full estimates for a full year. We're looking at adjustments that have been made over the course of the year, and these are additional moneys being spent on some great environmental initiatives that are being brought forward.

One of the things that was touched on, Mr. Martin, in your opening statement was regarding a national conservation plan. It's something that I know many members of this committee spent a lot of time on over the course of a couple of years. I think I can speak for any members who were on the committee during that time. We were quite pleased to actually see the cohesiveness of the committee in going through that process, but also the government's adoption of the vast majority of what we brought forward in that.

I am wondering if you could expand a little bit on the \$25.6 million that is in these supplementary estimates for the initiation of this \$252 million over five years project. Could you give us a sense of where that initial funding will be going to, and the beginning of the rollout of this process?

Mr. Michael Martin: Thank you for the question.

We are working to rapidly implement the plan, including by moving forward quickly with the new grants and contributions resources that we have and that we're seeking to secure. There are a number of areas where we are acting.

First of all, as you know, we are renewing the natural areas conservation program, which is administered by Nature Conservancy Canada. This supports conservation of vulnerable habitats in southern Canada. To date we have secured more than 4,000 square kilometres of ecologically sensitive private lands under that program.

We are undertaking work to fully account for Canada's conservation lands. This is to build a more effective national conservation inventory to capture private lands and to give recognition to the contribution that land owners and private conservation organizations make.

We have established and are rolling out the new national wetland conservation fund, which will support projects for wetland restoration and enhancement across the country. We are, of course, enhancing our existing programs for voluntary actions to restore and conserve species and their habitats through the habitat stewardship program and the aboriginal fund for species at risk, as well as the stewardship of species at risk on agricultural lands.

Finally, we are moving forward on the theme of connecting urban Canadians to nature. We recently announced the 10 national wildlife areas, 10 of our 54, where we will invest to increase public access.

• (1605)

Mr. Lawrence Toet: That's great. I'm very happy to hear that wetlands restoration is one of the initial items we're starting out with. It's something we heard a lot about in committee when we were going through the national conservation plan. We heard about the need for that, and on so many fronts, even outside of the national conservation plan study, and about the great benefits that are going to be brought forward with this.

Also, the connection to nature was a large component, especially our urban.... I'm wondering if the focus there is going to be largely urban, or is that for the initial rollout of the connection? That's one of the things that I think also came through in our study very clearly: the need for that for urban and new residents, new citizens.

Mr. Michael Martin: The 10 national wildlife areas that have been selected are all in proximity to major urban areas. Some are within 100 kilometres and some are much closer.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Thank you.

I want to turn now to the federal contaminated sites. Again, in the supplementaries here we have some additions to that, but I do know that this is actually a very large plan. It's a 15-year plan. I'm wondering if we can have a bit of an explanation as to where we are on the plan, what we've spent to date, how many sites we've cleaned up, and where our focus is for the next little while.

Mr. Michael Martin: As of March 2014, \$2.1 billion has been spent on remediation at 1,530 sites and on assessment at 10,272 sites. That is for the federal government as a whole. The government has committed a total of \$4.23 billion to clean up federal contaminated sites.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: It's a very substantial project.

Mr. Hallman, in your opening statement you talked about CEAA, its implementation, and some of the changes. In the opening remarks, you had some material on some of the new inputs, some of the early new inputs. I was hoping that you would be able to go through that a bit. You kind of skipped over it, but I think there are some very important points that I think are good to have on the record as to these early implementations and the ability for Canadian citizens to interact at a very early stage. You also touched a bit on how well these reviews are brought forward. I was hoping that you could expand on that a bit.

Mr. Ron Hallman: Thank you.

Some of the new public engagement steps that arise with the new act include, first and foremost, a 45-day period wherein the agency reviews a proponent's project description to determine whether an EA is in fact required or not. Within this step, there's a public web posting of the project description and a 20-day public comment period. This provides an early opportunity for Canadians to learn about the proposed projects in their communities and regions, and that in fact is an opportunity that did not exist under the former act.

Regional media in particular are picking up on the public notices that are posted to the registry from this phase of the EA, helping to ensure that Canadians are aware of proposed projects and of opportunities to participate in the review process. We're finding that the project descriptions, which are usually a summary of about 50 pages, are at a level of detail that is well suited to promoting public understanding and input.

• (1610)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Mr. Hallman and Mr. Toet.

I will now give the floor to Mr. McKay.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: *Merci*, Chair.

The environment commissioner was pretty critical of funding programs for species at risk. He said, "Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Parks Canada have not met their legal requirements for establishing recovery strategies, action plans, and management plans under the Species at Risk Act." He went on in some considerable detail and said, "Of these, 84 percent were overdue by more than three years as of 31 March 2013."

Apparently, the department agrees with the findings of the commissioner.

What money in your supplementaries here, if any, is going to address the concerns of the environment commissioner?

Mr. Michael Martin: Thank you for the question.

It is correct that Environment Canada in particular is behind in completing the recovery strategies. As you know, when the act entered into force, we began with a bit of a backlog and we've been working since then to catch up. We are making progress in that regard, but we still have about 163 that remain to be posted for recovery strategies.

We have ongoing funding that supports the work to develop those recovery strategies. Where this funding is important is in actually responding to the issues that recovery strategies raise in identifying critical habitat, in working to restore that habitat, and also in building partnerships with landowners and others to help not only to address species at risk but significantly to prevent species that may be threatened from further deterioration.

Hon. John McKay: I'm still not clear that I got an answer to that question.

Out of this \$25 million, what, if anything, would be there? Is it 10%? Is it 5%? You speak about species at risk and yet it's not clear that any of this money is actually going to be addressed to that issue.

Mr. Michael Martin: No. I'm sorry if I'm not being clear. The bulk of these funds are for the grants and contributions programs. Those grants and contribution programs, delivered through such vehicles as the habitat stewardship program, are specifically targeted to support action on species at risk.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. So there's kind of an indirect...give the grant, and that's to address that particular issue.

Mr. Michael Martin: I think it's a very important tool. At the end of the day, partnerships on stewardship are critically important. All the evidence shows that partnerships with landowners, with those who are on the land, who use the land, are critically important. And, of course, these partnerships also extend to a wide variety of groups, including non-government groups who are active in restoration activities.

Hon. John McKay: I understand the process is that COSEWIC makes an identification of species at risk and various gradations, and then it goes to the minister. Then after that the minister is supposed to put it in front of the cabinet.

How many presentations has the minister made to cabinet about species at risk in the last year or so?

Mr. Michael Martin: I can't comment on what the minister has presented to cabinet, but as you know, under the act in cases where a Governor in Council decision is required, the minister would, by necessity, need to make a presentation.

• (1615)

Hon. John McKay: Have there been any Governor in Council determinations on any species at risk in the last while?

Mr. Michael Martin: I can verify that, but the only recent case that comes to mind is the case where we sought an emergency protection order for the sage grouse.

Hon. John McKay: I'm given to understand that there's a whole pile of these things on the minister's desk, that COSEWIC has actually presented a number of findings on a variety of species and this has not actually come off the minister's desk. Is that correct?

Mr. Michael Martin: I would have to verify in terms of where we are in terms of COSEWIC recommendations. I'm sorry, I don't have that information today, but if the committee wishes it, I can certainly provide it.

Hon. John McKay: I would particularly appreciate it, Chair.

The secondary questions have to do with Parks Canada.

How much time do I have?

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): You have a minute and a half left.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: One minute. My goodness.

The Rideau Canal is a pretty seriously degraded piece of infrastructure entirely within Parks Canada's jurisdiction. Is any of this money that's set aside in your supplements directed to the Rideau Canal, and if so, how much?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes, Mr. Chair, there are six different projects that amount to about \$1.5 million for the Rideau Canal as part of the \$57 million.

Hon. John McKay: I'm sorry, how much?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: There are six projects for about \$1.5 million.

Hon. John McKay: \$1.5 million?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: That's it? Six projects, and \$1.5 million out of \$391 million.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Sorry, Mr. Chair, of the \$57.7 million that is being presented today.... On the remaining \$340 million or so for the next four years, the allocations will be confirmed shortly.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. I'll have to come back on this, because I'm a little confused as to what you just said.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Okay.

Hon. John McKay: Is it \$1.5 million out of the \$57 million?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: Six projects?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: Of the \$391 million, what part of that is for the Rideau?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: That we still need to make the final allocation and decisions on.

Hon. John McKay: What about the announcement of the Prime Minister of \$2.8 billion?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We received the announcement this week and we will move quickly to implement.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Mr. McKay, unfortunately, your time is up.

Thank you very much for your questions.

We will now move on to the five-minute rounds of questions and answers. We will start with Ms. Freeman.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

On the increased liabilities that my colleague Mr. Bevington was talking about earlier, I'd like to ask you a few follow-up questions.

First of all, what oversight exists for the execution of these funds under Environment Canada?

Mr. Michael Martin: Sorry, what oversight exists?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: What oversight exists when addressing the fact that there are liabilities year after year?

Mr. Michael Martin: Well, we have an ongoing assessment program. We identify projects and do an assessment.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Maybe more specifically, could you explain what the process is for identifying these projects that are going to be addressed?

Mr. Michael Martin: I'm sorry, I'm not sure I can give you that information now, but I would be happy to take that on notice and reply in writing if you want the specific details of how we go through the assessment process.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes, sure. That would be great.

Is the department conducting any studies on the impact of climate change on the management of contaminated sites or on the impact of climate change on environmental liability?

Mr. Michael Martin: I would have to check on that. Climate change, both mitigation and adaptation, is one of four key priorities under our departmental science plan. I'd be happy to verify whether we are specifically addressing the impacts on contaminated sites.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Could I ask what those four key priorities are?

Mr. Michael Martin: Sure. The science plan focuses our scientific effort in areas that are aligned with federal priorities. The first is contaminants, the scientific work we do to address contaminants, chemicals that could enter the environment. The second is in the area of warnings, both weather and environmental warnings. We continue to do a great deal of science in that area. The third, as I mentioned, is climate change mitigation and adaptation. The fourth relates to this area of conservation and all of the work we do in wildlife-related science, which is both flora and fauna.

• (1620)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay. I was also wondering, what is the department plan for reducing GHG emissions within the department itself? Could you detail that for us?

Mr. Michael Martin: Under the federal sustainable development strategy government-wide there's a commitment to reduce GHGs in government operations as a whole by 17% by 2020.

We report on that indicator and we are now in the second phase of the implementation of that plan.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay. Is there a plan for energy efficiency in government infrastructure going forward or for updating?

Mr. Michael Martin: As part of the federal sustainable development strategy, there is a greening government dimension to that which includes rules for both new builds and for retrofits which meet different LEED standards.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: What's the plan for accountability and oversight on that?

Mr. Michael Martin: As you may know, the federal sustainable development strategy, which was created by an act of Parliament, does have considerable public engagement, and both parliamentary and external oversight. The Commission on Sustainable Development reviews our plans and comments on them. Of course, there is a public consultation phase. This committee, of course, has the ability to provide oversight to that plan as well. That was all laid out in the legislation when it was put in place back in 2009, as I recall.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: That might be an interesting thing for this committee to look at, then.

On the—

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Unfortunately, Ms. Freeman, I have to interrupt you. You will not have enough time to finish your sentence.

We will now go to Ms. Ambler.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you to all of our guests for being here today. We appreciate your information on the supplementary estimates (B).

My question is with regard to the transfer of \$933,000 to Fisheries and Oceans for the restoration of areas of concern under the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Representing a riding that's situated on Lake Ontario, I'm wondering what areas of concern will benefit from this funding.

Mr. Michael Martin: Thank you for the question.

The Great Lakes is one of the ecosystem priorities under the department. We invest a whole range of both financial resources and scientific effort to improve the water quality in the Great Lakes. Specifically, we're transferring funds to DFO to undertake scientific work to support activity, in particular, in the Bay of Quinte and Hamilton harbour.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Do you know what work is being carried out? Is it dredging of some form?

Mr. Michael Martin: This is scientific work on fish habitat. Separately, of course, we are undertaking remediation activities, in particular, in Hamilton harbour. The government made an announcement of \$46.3 million, working in partnership with the province, U. S. Steel and others, to build an effective containment for the contaminated sediments in Hamilton harbour, and we're continuing to do that work.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Is the goal to eventually take those sites off the list of sites that need to be remediated? Is that how it works?

• (1625)

Mr. Michael Martin: Yes. Certainly, under our agreement with the United States, we're both working to retire areas of concern. We've made progress in that regard, and the work we're doing in Hamilton harbour represents one of the most significant areas of current activity.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Excellent, thank you.

In fact, just this past Saturday the area that I represent in South Mississauga was able to take advantage of the national conservation plan that you spoke about. You also mentioned the national wetland conservation program. One of my priorities is the Rattray Marsh, and part of the program funding went to that. I think that's an example of an on-the-ground or in-the-water wetland restoration project that at a local level can really make a difference. In this case we're partnering with the Credit Valley Conservation Authority to do the work.

In Hamilton harbour, are we partnering with some American organizations as well as Canadian ones?

Mr. Michael Martin: Well, U.S. Steel, which is the successor of

Mrs. Stella Ambler: —Stelco.

Mr. Michael Martin: —Stelco, is a partner in that. They're providing steel actually to support the construction of the berms in the containment area that will ultimately be built.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's interesting. Thank you.

I'm not very good at reading these supplementary estimates (B), so if you could give me a hand, I noticed a line item under the national conservation plan, the habitat stewardship contribution program, under grants. I'm not sure which number I'm supposed to be looking at, whether it's \$11 million, \$2 million, or \$14 million, but perhaps you could elaborate on what that program does, where the initiatives are taking place, and what amounts of funding are going toward grants and contributions.

Mr. Michael Martin: The habitat stewardship program was an existing program that was put in place to help implement recovery actions and habitat restoration in support of the Species at Risk Act. We have expanded that program and, as I mentioned, created a new stream of activity to really be preventative in its focus.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): I am sorry, Deputy Minister, but I unfortunately have to interrupt you to be fair to the other speakers. However, I am sure that you will be able to take the floor at a later time and continue the discussion on the issue.

Thank you, Ms. Ambler.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Bevington for five minutes.

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: I just want to follow up on some of the questioning by Madam Freeman.

Within Parks Canada you have the same requirement to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions by 17%. How is that going for you?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: We are on target.

I can provide the latest information to this committee. We've been on target and we are taking our roles responsibly. We've significantly reduced, for example, our fleet, and even for the fleet that we now have we've used different standards to make sure we meet our objectives. The same applies to a lot of the equipment we use in an office setting. We have targets, as do all departments, for different parts of our operations.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Is there any money earmarked in these capital projects for that type of work?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, often if we're going to rehabilitate a building, for example, as part of the rehabilitation, we look at energy improvement.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Is there no specific money for that?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Well, we have money within our existing budget that we invest for such things as greening our fleet, replacing our fleet, and buying all of our general equipment in the office setting for major buildings, because usually it is very expensive. As we do a major rehabilitation of the building, we look at that and try to find economies. In fact there's an incentive for us to do that.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Do you think the 17% is a good number for Parks Canada? Parks Canada is a bit like Defence in that it has lots of vehicles on the road and it has lots of infrastructure in comparison with many other branches of the environment department. Are you at 17% reduction by 2020, or are you at a higher figure that would represent the larger volume of greenhouse gas emissions you produce?

●(1630)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, as is the case for all departments, our objective is to be at 17% by 2020. The challenge and the reality we have, which people may not always appreciate, is that we have a very significant fleet of heavy equipment, which includes, for example, the snowplows for the Trans-Canada Highway and so on. For those, we take the best of class when we purchase. Those have long life cycles, so as we replace them.... We are doing our share, and in fact we were recognized three years ago for federal leadership in that field.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Bloom, how are you doing, sir? It's good to see you here. Although you're not the largest department here, you're certainly vital to my constituents.

Do you have a breakdown that's readily available for the funding that's been provided to the three territories?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Yes. I don't have it with me, but we produce that on a yearly basis in order to monitor how the funds are being spent. I can generally tell you there is virtually identical and equitable distribution among the three.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: That's by population, I imagine.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: No, that's just by amount. The three amounts are about equal among the three territories. It's not based on per capita calculations.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: So the Northwest Territories takes a bit of a hit then.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's not per capita, sir.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Not per capita?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: No, we don't distribute it that way.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: But that's the reality of the north, isn't it? In the Northwest Territories our GDP is quite a bit larger than it is in the other two territories. Is that correct?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Contribution programming, as you know, is based on the parameters of our programs. It's based on who submits. It's based on meeting those parameters and the approvals around them. It's impossible to actually allocate on that basis.

That being said, as I pointed out, the distribution has worked out quite equitably among the three, but it's not based on GDP or population. Other services and investments, like the one we discussed today, sometimes target particular territories to particular opportunities, including the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: What's the policy of your agency when it comes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Well, for our organization in the north, we take that very, very seriously. As I know you understand, in almost everything we do we take that in line, including in our contributions, where we try to focus on renewables. As you know, most of the

energy produced in the north remains diesel-based. We try to get creative with all of our partners, to look for ways to make those investments with the contribution programming around renewable sources of energy, whether it's solar, wind, or other forms.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: How do you feel that's going so far?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I think it's an important thing to move forward, but like all technology, it takes time. We are making progress as the north.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you, Mr. Bevington. Unfortunately, your five minutes are already up.

We will therefore continue with Mr. Yurdiga.

[English]

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. Obviously this is very important. We have to continue on with our maintenance and ensuring that our environment's protected.

First, to Mr. Latourelle, approximately \$57 million is being appropriated for Parks Canada to improve the highways, bridges, and dams. Is this appropriation to address projects outside of normally scheduled improvements?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: This \$57.7 million is all based on deferred work for assets that are in poor or very poor condition, i.e., for highways, bridges, and dams. That is the priority of that investment of \$57.7 million.

That is augmented by our overall capital budget of approximately \$122 million, which we invest every year in our overall asset maintenance and recapitalization.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Will this bring that deferred maintenance or construction up to a level where we're caught up, or is this addressing the projects that are two or three years old?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It's addressing the most current and emerging emergencies. The overall backlog of deferred work is in the range of \$2.8 billion.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you.

Mr. Hallman, I'd like to address this next question to you. It's regarding first nations and aboriginal consultation. It's a very important aspect of environmental and sustainable development. I realize that we consult with first nations and Métis settlements. Do we have any mechanism to address Métis living outside the settlements?

●(1635)

Ms. Helen Cutts (Vice-President, Policy Development, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): Whether the aboriginal group, the Métis group in particular, lives outside or in a particular area, it's irrelevant to the conduct of the EA. In terms of what we do, we try to examine what the effects would be on the Métis. We would consult with them. We would go to the community and talk with them, hear their concerns, hear their information about what's happening on the project, and learn about ideas for mitigating those adverse effects.

Mr. David Yurdiga: So the Métis settlements are one group, the first nations another. Would you be dealing with all these Métis associations that represent the people of Métis settlements?

Ms. Helen Cutts: Yes. The way it works is that we look at the communities that are affected by a project. Then we talk to them and we gather the information. We do not limit our attention to only first nations. It's a full consultation with any of the affected groups, whether they're Métis or first nation.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you.

I have one last question, and I'll address this to Mr. Martin.

I see there's almost \$80,000 for reinvestment of royalties from intellectual properties. Can you explain to the committee what this item is about?

Mr. Michael Martin: Certainly.

There is a statute called the Public Servants Inventions Act. Under that act we may issue a financial award to public servants who have created an invention that has been commercialized. Annually we receive an amount equal to the revenue that arises from the licensing of such innovations that is remitted to the consolidated revenue fund. In 2013-14 those revenues for Environment Canada were \$79,757.

We do two things with that: we provide recognition awards for those individuals, and then, in particular, we invest in new scientific equipment that advances our mandate.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you.

That's all.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): You still had about 25 seconds, Mr. Yurdiga. At any rate, thank you.

I will now give the floor to Ms. Freeman for five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: On the \$391 million over five years that budget 2014 announced to deal with crumbling buildings, roads, and dams, my understanding is that in 2014 there was a commitment to spend \$1 million. Is that correct?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, maybe I can explain very briefly or try to make this simple, because it really is.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Please do.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The \$391 million is the amount in cash. This is how much we will spend over the five-year period.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: In year one we are planning to spend the amounts that are before you as supplementary estimates, the \$57.7 million. That's what we plan on spending.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: That \$57 million depreciates over the life of the investment we're making, so that's why you will see \$1 in the budget document, budget 2014.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: That clears that up. I had a series of questions as to where this 57.6 is coming from. Okay.

I'm not sure if this has been addressed. I'm sorry, at one point I was only half listening to one of my colleagues. They did talk about the amount announced on Monday, which was \$2.8 billion for improvement to historic sites, national parks, and national marine conservation areas. Is this new and additional money? That's really the question.

• (1640)

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, this is all new money, so none of that—

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Okay.

Over how many years is that going to be spent?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: From a Parks Canada perspective, over the next month or so, we will be able to confirm that. The Prime Minister, when he made the announcement on Monday, said that the vast majority of the federal infrastructure would be spent over a three-year period.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Do we know yet how it's going to be allocated?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: It's going to be allocated wisely, and it's going to be spent efficiently and with probity.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I'm sorry—

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Seriously, we've done a lot of work. In 2012 we looked at our 11,000 assets and identified the condition of each and every one of them, so we know where we are with every single asset that we own. We're going to be investing the \$2.8 billion. Again, it includes Parks Canada as the major component. There may be other departments, but it will cover our current backlog of deferred work. So we know where it is and then it's an issue of implementing that and developing the detailed plan. But this information came to us this week, so we will need some time to finalize the details.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Do we know yet how much is going to go to Parks Canada specifically, or how much is going to go to Heritage resources conservation? Do we know yet how much is being allocated to—?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: I would say that the bulk of the \$2.8 billion will be coming to Parks Canada.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: To Parks Canada.

Do you know how historic sites are going to be defined? There may be national historic sites that aren't part of Parks Canada or are having a hard time being recognized. Are they going to be able to apply for funding?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: The funding that's before you in the supplementary estimates is, again, for highways, bridges, and dams for this year in Parks Canada. The \$2.8 billion, as mentioned, mentions the historic sites also, but those are Parks Canada owned and operated.

We do have a grants and contributions program that's approximately \$1 million a year to support third party owned national historic sites. Some of those national historic sites, though, for example, are owned by provincial governments.

For example, in Charlottetown the federal government has invested \$10 million this year on a provincially owned—

Ms. Mylène Freeman: What if they're owned by municipalities?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: They can access and make submissions to our grants and contributions program, for which we have a call for proposals every year.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Does my colleague Mr. Bevington have a...?

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): You have 45 seconds.

[*English*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: In that case let's just keep going. I'll forfeit my time for another round.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Mr. Shipley, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm a visiting body to environment, so it's interesting to be here.

I want to touch on an area that hasn't yet been touched on—genomics. I am in agriculture, in farming, but whether you're in agriculture or not, genomics is playing an incredible part, whether it's in pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, or agriculture.

These are supplementary estimates; I understand that. I think I read that about \$800,000 has gone into renewal of genomics research and development initiatives. Can you talk to me a little bit about that and what it is? I don't know a lot about genomics, either, but I can tell you the significance of it as we move forward in whatever industry we're in. Genomics is going to play a significant role in terms of our economic growth and the ability to stay on the cutting edge in terms of advancement in technology.

Mr. Martin, I think you're on if you would help us a little bit with that part of it.

Mr. Michael Martin: Thank you for the question.

Yes, if approved, we will receive funding of \$800,000 for very specific activities. As you suggested, genomics provides a new tool that is potentially extremely significant to some of the work we do.

To give you an example, we currently use genomic techniques in support of wildlife conservation, to look at how genes interact with environmental stressors or specific contaminants. In fact, I had the opportunity to visit our lab that is co-located here at Carleton University, which is doing some of this work.

It provides a tremendous new tool to look at the impact that contaminants may have, for example, on migratory birds. It's helpful in terms of strengthening our environmental monitoring. When we look at indicators within key aquatic or land-based ecosystems and species, we can look at the impact of various contaminants on aquatic species in terms of their genetic impact.

It also can enhance our tool kit in terms of compliance and enforcement, because using genomic methods we can do more efficient analysis of fauna and flora. It's a very powerful tool that we're beginning to make greater use of.

The costs associated with it are also coming down significantly, as you're seeing in other areas.

● (1645)

Mr. Bev Shipley: I was going to ask you about that because the cost is.... I forget what the number I heard recently was, but it has come down something like 1,000% or some astronomical number in comparison to where it started.

With that, it's so interesting because I think it also helps to understand genome molecular activity and how it reacts to certain things. You talked about contaminants.

I wonder if you could touch on external partners. You don't do this all by yourself, so the best way to leverage anything and to be able to reach out and get the best value.... You mentioned Carleton University. I wonder if you could elaborate in terms of your external partners.

Mr. Michael Martin: This is, of course, part of a broader initiative. We do look to work with other university partners where they may have the capabilities. The reality is, though, that Environment Canada as an environmental science performer is certainly one of the leading institutions in the country and a significant performer globally through a variety of metrics.

To give you another example, in this specific area we would make use of other people's genomics sequencing capability to support our activity, but we often do that just on a commercial basis. For example, we can now sequence the entire genome of a migratory bird. The number I was given recently, it was only about \$2,000.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much, Mr. Martin.

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

Ms. Brown, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): I too am a visiting body to this committee, so thank you for having me.

My questions are for Mr. Bloom.

I was very fortunate, when I was first elected, to be on the transport committee, in which we had the discussion, first of all, about the extension of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act. Then two years ago at the foreign affairs committee, Mr. Bloom, you were one of our witnesses in our investigation into Canada's policy for the Arctic. We submitted that report to the House in May 2013, just at the time that Canada was taking the chair of the Arctic Council.

I refer to your remarks in committee, from a quotation that is actually in the report, which says:

[The] scale of resource development in this region is reaching unprecedented levels. World demand and commodity prices have brought global attention to the north's rich supply of minerals, metals, oil, and gas. Emerging markets around the world provide Canada with an opportunity to responsibly develop our natural resources for the benefit of all Canadians.

Then you talked later on about some 21 resource and regional infrastructure projects that were at various stages of the regulatory process in Canada's north. You talked about a further eight projects that are "set to potentially enter the environmental assessment phase in the coming 18 months".

With the changing complexions of the north, we heard from academic institutions, the private sector, environmental interests, government actors in the north, all of the actors.

Could you give the committee an update on some of the processes that are under way? What point are these projects at? How are they changing the face of the north? Are we doing a good job?

It's a lot to answer. I'm sorry.

• (1650)

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I won't answer the good job, but I will give you an update on how things have gone since I last appeared before that committee.

Projects continue to move through the environmental assessment systems in all three territories. That has happened. Projects are going into construction and/or production.

I'll use examples from two of the territories, one being Nunavut, where the Mary River Baffinland iron ore project went into production back in September.

How is it changing the face of the north? There are 600 people on site—it's about minus 30 degrees Celsius on an average day at this time of year—and that's remarkable. The number of Inuit employed at those sites is significant. We should and could do better. This is the biggest employer in all of Nunavut, and it will affect Nunavut's GDP in its own right, probably by about 20%, just using that one example.

I go to the Northwest Territories and use the example of De Beers' Gahcho Kué diamond mine, which is now going into construction as well.

In certain commodities, one iron ore and one diamond, you can see that things remain to happen. As I said then, it's largely due to the geology and the opportunity that the north offers.

Having said that, in the oil and gas sector things have quieted down significantly. That is largely due to global forces. You have seen that the glut in oil production has meant that higher-expense districts, such as in the Northwest Territories central Mackenzie Valley or the offshore Arctic, really aren't the optimal places to go.

Having said that, the overall pace continues. Companies continue to put their projects through the environmental assessment in all three territories; funding is a bit more challenging now—that's just a global force—and things continue to happen in the north, including this construction. We're quite positive, seeing this happening.

Ms. Lois Brown: Could you comment at all on the maritime infrastructure that is going in and how it is changing the north and the opportunities there?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: A lot of effort goes into not just doing it but answering the question about where to put these efforts optimally. There are many government departments, whether it's the coast guard, or Environment Canada in some of its own investments.... We have to have the proper charting, navigational aids, and obviously ice-breaking when and where needed. There's a lot of effort trying to figure out what we need and where we need it.

From my perspective, because of the importance of the marine corridors to serve communities and other opportunities, Nunavut is an area into which much effort is going, and we are making progress. That is the reason some of these companies are now moving into operation, and they require and rely upon marine transportation.

Ms. Lois Brown: If I remember correctly, and I haven't gone through the report for awhile, there was a company named Gedex, I think—I don't remember for sure; I would have to go back. They were a mapping company that is working in the north and doing a tremendous amount of work on resource location and also to help identify how we can work—

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Ms. Brown, I must unfortunately interrupt you. You have nevertheless managed to make your point.

Mr. McKay, you now have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Martin, in your speech you said the estimates included \$44.6 million in grants and contributions. When I look at the line for grants and contributions, it's composed of three things: operating expenditures, capital expenditures, and grants and contributions. The grants and contributions are \$25 million rather than \$44 million, or am I misreading it?

Ms. Carol Najm: What you don't see is the statutory amounts that go to the NCC, which are \$18 million, and that brings it up to the \$44 million.

Hon. John McKay: I'm trying to reconcile what was said in the speech, which was the estimates include \$44.6 million for grants and contributions. When I look at the line in the supplementary estimates, it's \$44.6 million total, but it includes grants and contributions, capital, and operating. Am I right about that?

Mr. Michael Martin: You're absolutely correct, Mr. McKay, my mistake.

• (1655)

Hon. John McKay: My first question would be, why are we seeing a 3% increase in your basic budget, which is really your operating expenditures? Why wouldn't this have been done in March?

Mr. Michael Martin: As you have seen there are a series of specific programs, specific activities, for which we are seeking funding.

Hon. John McKay: Are you increasing your staff? Most operating expenses are for staffing. Is staffing increasing at Environment Canada?

Mr. Michael Martin: We have about 6,400 FTEs—

Hon. John McKay: Full-time employees.

Mr. Michael Martin: —and you're familiar with that term. There are always fluctuations in our staffing level. We continue to recruit. We have recruited over 100 new indeterminate staff so far this year. We also have retirements. It's a normal phenomenon.

Hon. John McKay: Is it within the range of 2% or 3%?

Mr. Michael Martin: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: Six months after the fiscal year end you come and say, "I need \$16 million". I'm rounding there.

Mr. Michael Martin: It relates to the specific programs—

Hon. John McKay: Okay.

Mr. Michael Martin: —and activities, and where they're at as they move through the system.

Hon. John McKay: The question I was asked the most frequently as I travelled across Canada on my own mini-environmental tour was, what's up with the weather? I've been given to understand that the weather services have been laying off staff, but here you have a \$10-million request for weather services. How does that break down in terms of staffing?

Mr. Michael Martin: We're not laying off staff in the Meteorological Service of Canada. We're significantly reinvesting in the meteorological service. In these supplementary estimates we are seeking resources to support three things that are core to the business: our monitoring networks, which constantly need to be maintained and made more resilient; our supercomputing capacity, which is at the core of our predictions system; and the work we do to strengthen weather warning and forecast, which is a constant process that we do to improve the reliability of our forecasting capability, not only for one- or two-day forecasts, but for forecasts that are further out.

Hon. John McKay: I've been given to understand this is becoming quite a challenge because climate change seems to be driving some extreme weather events. It's been hard to keep the modelling up to speed so that Canadians get timely and accurate forecasts. Is that a reasonable observation?

Mr. Michael Martin: That's not my understanding. It's the case that we are developing far more sophisticated tools that reflect the progress in our understanding of the global climate system. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, and that is a function of the phenomenon of climate change and the general warming we see in the climate system.

Hon. John McKay: Yes.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Mr. McKay, your time is up, unfortunately.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: I have to start asking for Albrecht back.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): I will now give the floor to Mr. Woodworth for seven minutes.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: *Merci*, and I'd like to begin, if I may, by just inquiring if Ms. Brown would like to finish off the question that she didn't quite get in earlier. If so, I'll let her speak first.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Woodworth.

If I may just finish my question about the north, I know that we had great discussion during our investigation on the Arctic report about the changing demand for jobs and training in the north. You talked a little bit about the construction and renovation of buildings at Yukon College. I wonder if you'd talk a little bit about how that's going. Are we starting to see graduates from those training courses, and are they moving into job opportunities?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Thank you for the question. I'll take that in two levels. I think that, when I last spoke to that committee, we were talking about our northern adult basic education program which was, as I think I mentioned, literacy and numeracy, and that has been advancing very well across all three colleges. People are moving through the program, and I think, as we had hoped, we are seeing some transition into vocational training as well as other pursuits. So the program is achieving what we had hoped.

Today I briefly mentioned, as part of supplementary estimates (B), a bit more of a bricks-and-mortar investment which is specifically around the opportunity for training people for resource development in specifically the mining sector. We're excited. It's \$5.6 million from the federal government being matched by an equal amount from the territorial Yukon government. It's demand. That's what's driving the creation of this and that's what's driving these investments. We continue to have a labour gap, a huge labour gap in filling these projects. We'd just as soon see them filled by northerners as well, hence the investments here and in some of the other territories. There are a lot of ways to go, but we are closing that gap slowly.

• (1700)

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I'll resume then. I'd like to also go back to a question that I didn't quite finish concerning Monsieur Latourelle, and that is the issue of having led the search for the *Erebus*, Sir John Franklin's ship. I'd like to begin by asking you to help clarify what that had to do with Parks Canada. What part of Parks Canada's mandate would have involved your leading that search, and how important is it to Parks Canada that you were involved? Let's start with that, if I may.

Mr. Alan Latourelle: Mr. Chair, we are responsible for national historic sites, not only for those that we operate, but we also support the minister in the designation, so the commemoration program, and the *Erebus* and *Terror* were designated as national historic sites. They were the only two in Canada that had not been located although they had been designated by a previous minister. We've been working with the Government of Nunavut using traditional knowledge since 2008 and even before to try to locate these Franklin ships.

This year we worked with 10 partners across the federal government, with the private sector and non-profit sectors: the Arctic Research Foundation, for example, the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, the Government of Nunavut, several departments, the navy, and Canadian Hydrographic Service.

Regarding the search that we did this year, part of it was not only searching for the ships, but there are a lot of broad benefits to the government in terms of sea-floor mapping, because as we search, we do the mapping and we work together. The coast guard has been an extremely effective partner. It's within our mandate. We also are responsible for federal archaeology. In Parks Canada, we have underwater archaeologists. They are the individuals who have led the overall partnership. I think, in terms of what it means to us, this has been an amazing moment in the history of our nation, the pride in our nation, and getting a sense of the history of this great country.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Thank you very much. I just wanted to make sure to get that on the record, because we deal often at this table with broader environmental issues and we sometimes forget that the subject of preserving historical and cultural artifacts and sites is really within our mandate as sort of supervising or overlooking Parks Canada. So I appreciate that.

I'm going to ask you a question that probably isn't fair at this point, but I will anyway. Is it too early yet to say what plans might develop for that particular site and those artifacts in terms of connecting Canadians with them? Or is that still in the formative thinking stage?

Mr. Alan Latourelle: At this point, we found the site. We brought back the ship bell, as you may be aware, so it's in our laboratories being restored. It may take up to 18 months. It's a bit unpredictable because it has been in the ocean for 160 years.

The objective for us is first to make sure that we learn the most from the site before we make final decisions. It's a bit like a crime scene. As our underwater archaeologists go in there, we want to make sure we don't disturb evidence that's going to give us some new knowledge of that history and what happened to the ship. Once we've completed that work, and based on our experience elsewhere but also on that of other countries in this type of situation, we're probably looking at four or five years of underwater archaeology diving and recording before a final decision can be made.

• (1705)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Very good.

I hope at some future point we'll be able to get some more information from you about all of that search operation and plans going forward.

Mr. Martin, I wonder if I could take a moment to go back over some information which I believe you gave us about the \$4.3-billion commitment by the current government to clean up contaminated sites. At least, I think it was the current government. When was that \$4.3-billion commitment made?

Mr. Michael Martin: Thank you for the question.

I would have to verify the timeframe that covers that. The program first began here in 2005, so since budget 2005-06 and over the 15 years of the program, it's \$4.23 billion.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Since 2005-06, I think you mentioned there were some 15,000 sites in which there had been remediation. Did I get that figure correct?

Mr. Michael Martin: It's 1,530.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Sorry. It's 1,530. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you, Mr. Woodworth. Your time is up.

We will now begin our last round of questions, starting with Ms. Freeman.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, we have no more questions. I will therefore thank our witnesses and also take this opportunity to introduce two motions on your behalf.

The first one reads as follows:

That the Committee propose to the Minister of the Environment to invite Members of the Opposition to join the official delegation, from December 1 to 12, 2014, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Lima, Peru.

The second one says:

That the Committee invite the Minister of the Environment for an update on the climate change mitigation and adaptation negotiations with the provinces and the stakeholders on Canada's post-Copenhagen objectives; and that the Minister inform us of the position that Canada will take at the negotiations during the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Lima, Peru, from December 1 to 12, 2014.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Mr. Woodworth, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Chair, as is our usual practice when matters regarding committee business are concerned, I move that we go in camera to discuss this.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): One moment, Mr. Woodworth, I will check with the clerk.

The clerk told me that the motions would be read only, not introduced, because they were received yesterday only.

Since it has not been 48 hours, they cannot be debated today, unless you want to continue the meeting in camera. That is not really necessary. We will debate them when it is possible to do so.

Are you okay with that?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I understand. I'm sorry, I just assumed there was proper notice.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you for your testimony, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Shipley, did you have something to add?

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: I just had a question. I thought we had started another round. When Madam Freeman said she was done, does that mean we're all done?

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette) Yes. It is now 5:10 p. m. We are going to suspend the meeting for two minutes to allow the witnesses to leave the table, after which we will resume to vote on the estimates.

• (1705) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Ladies and gentlemen, if you will, we are going to resume the meeting.

I have the votes before me. We are going to vote on them.

[*English*]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AGENCY
Vote 1b—Program expenditures.....\$122,211

(Vote 1b agreed to)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Vote 1b—Operating expenditures..... \$1
Vote 5b—Contributions..... \$975,525

(Votes 1b and 5b agreed to on division)

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT
Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$16,816,675

Vote 5b—Capital expenditures.....\$2,447,610

Vote 10b—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions.....\$25,347,450

(Votes 1b, 5b, and 10b agreed to on division)

[*Translation*]

PARKS CANADA AGENCY
Vote 1b—Program expenditures..... \$62,072,656

(Vote 1b agreed to)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Shall the Chair report the same to the House?

[*Translation*]

We have a problem here. I was told that the chair, Mr. Albrecht, will be away until Monday. We are asked to submit the votes to the House tomorrow. If the members of the committee agree, the vice-chair will submit the report to the House tomorrow morning. Do you agree?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. François Choquette): Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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