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Chair

Mr. Harold Albrecht

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC)): I'd like to call our Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to order. This is meeting number 49. Today we are following along on our study on licensed hunting and trapping in Canada.

We're pleased today to have four groups with us. We have from Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Gregory Weeks, secretary, and James Brennan, director of government affairs. From Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee), we have Mr. Brian Craik, director, federal relations. From Wildlife Habitat Canada, we have Cameron Mack, executive director. By video conference from Longueuil, Quebec, we have Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, Pierre Latraverse, president. Welcome, all of you.

We will proceed with 10-minute opening statements followed by questions from our committee members, so please try to stay within your 10 minutes. I'll give you a signal when you're approaching the end so we can wrap it up. We'll begin in the order that I introduced the witnesses.

From Ducks Unlimited, we have Mr. Gregory Weeks.

Mr. Gregory Weeks (Secretary, National Board of Directors, Ducks Unlimited Canada): Good morning and thank you, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee.

As mentioned, my name is Greg Weeks. I am a 20-plus-year volunteer with Ducks Unlimited, as well as the secretary of the national board and senior director in the province of Ontario.

I'd also like to recognize my colleague Jim Brennan, our national director of government affairs, who is here with me today.

On behalf of Ducks Unlimited and our 120,000 active donors and the millions of Canadians who support our mission, we are honoured to be here with you today. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on the economic and environmental significance of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada.

As an avid angler and a hunter myself, I'm sometimes asked how my recreational activities correspond with my environmental concerns and my passion for conserving the wetland and waterfowl resources that we have here in Canada. As I'm sure most of you agree, the reality is that the two go hand in hand.

Hunting truly is a lifestyle and an expression of our commitment to protecting valuable natural resources. It doesn't have a beginning nor does it have an end like a sport or a game; rather, it engages us

through a unique, lifelong relationship with the natural world. Throughout Ducks Unlimited's history, licensed hunters and trappers have played a vital role in the growth and development of our organization and in driving the vital conservation successes we have had on the landscape.

The genesis of Ducks Unlimited in North America nearly eight decades ago resulted from the responsible activities of conservation-minded hunters who were deeply concerned by the dramatic decline in wetland habitat and the need for strong waterfowl and wildlife populations. These community leaders decided to take action in Manitoba by restoring Big Grass Marsh in Manitoba in the midst of the prairie drought of the 1930s.

Today our organization remains firmly rooted in the Canadian hunting tradition. Waterfowl hunting remains a cultural activity that connects many of our supporters, and we continue to support our youth waterfowling mentorship program across the country.

Furthermore, the support of hunters and trappers has been critical in advancing our scientific research and on-the-ground conservation programs across the continent.

Wildlife scientists, hunters, and trappers in Canada and the United States were the main drivers behind the creation of the North American waterfowl management plan, also known as NAWMP, in the mid-1980s. It's widely regarded as the most successful conservation partnership in the world. Success under NAWMP has been driven by strong partnerships among hunters, waterfowl scientists, NGO partners like Ducks Unlimited, provincial and state governments, as well as federal governments in Canada and the United States. Since its inception in 1986, NAWMP has invested over \$1.4 billion in habitat conservation in Canada and the United States, which has resulted in almost 20 million conserved acres across North America.

In both countries, waterfowl hunters continue to fund this conservation through the purchase of licences and federal waterfowl hunting conservation stamps, and also through philanthropic donations. In fact, this year will mark 50 years that the U.S. state fish and wildlife agencies have been allocating a portion of their annual budgets to support waterfowl habitat conservation here in Canada. Ducks Unlimited Canada and our sister organization Ducks Unlimited in the U.S., will be recognizing this milestone at a reception at the Canadian embassy in Washington later in May.

Stories like these illustrate an important point about the profound connection hunters have with the natural environment and the significant role they have played throughout Canadian history in driving habitat conservation through their own initiatives. However, while the hunting community has achieved tremendous success through the support of wetland conservation across Canada, there is a clear and urgent need for federal leadership to further protect migratory birds and their habitat. That's why we are grateful for the government's national conservation plan, NCP, and the programs it supports, including the national wetlands conservation fund and the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program.

These initiatives provide critically important funding for on-the-ground conservation work, while at the same time supporting outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. We strongly support the steps this government has taken to protect Canada's cultural heritage through the NCP, and we recommend that this valuable initiative be maintained into the future and existing funding opportunities be enhanced.

● (0850)

We believe that this kind of continued investment is not only critical to protect wildlife but also supports rural job creation and economic growth, because just as hunting supports habitat conservation, habitat conservation supports the Canadian economy.

Like other groups that have appeared before this committee, I have already pointed out that there is unequivocal evidence of economic benefits of hunting and trapping. However, it is important to bear in mind that there are direct economic benefits from habitat conservation itself.

Recent studies indicate that for every dollar invested in Ducks Unlimited's conservation work, Canadian society enjoys \$22 in total economic benefits. These benefits include ecosystem services such as water quality regulation and flood control, contributions to tourism and outdoor recreation, and an estimated 970 full-time equivalent jobs annually.

A 2013 study by ecological economist Mark Anielski found that Ducks Unlimited's conservation and habitat restoration activities, largely supported by hunters, generated GDP benefits of \$77.1 million per year. The same study found that the more than 2.5 million hectares of wetlands and natural areas secured and managed by Ducks Unlimited Canada generated an estimated \$208.5 million in economic activity through Canada's recreation and tourism sector alone.

When leveraged by partners, including Ducks Unlimited, Canada's participation in the NAWMP means that nearly \$20 million in U.S. funding is made available through Canadian conservation work on an annual basis. This funding is heavily supported by hunters for the benefit of all Canadians.

A 2013 study by University of Toronto economist Thomas Wilson found that for every dollar of federal investment in Ducks Unlimited conservation activities, roughly 66¢ is offset by tax transfer recapture. As your committee continues to study the economic benefits of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada, we recommend that you account for those direct economic benefits produced through habitat conservation programs and projects, as these are

critical contributions to Canada's economy, as driven by hunters and trappers.

Government-led conservation programs and policies supporting the protection of wildlife habitat are vital to maintaining our country's hunting and trapping heritage. While hunter recruitment, interestingly, has taken a small upturn in recent years, the overall trend has been one of gradual decline. We believe that one of the main causes of this is an increasing urbanization of society. Canadians simply don't have the same easy access to our forests, marshes, and grasslands that they once had. Today, those wishing to hunt must travel further and further out of the city to access increasingly marginal wildlife habitat. The gradual decline in hunter participation since the 1970s has placed increasing financial pressures on NGOs and all levels of government. As reduced licence revenues and fewer tax dollars are generated from recreational hunting, this ultimately means that fewer conserved acres are put on the ground.

The Government of Canada's clear commitment to supporting hunters, trappers, and conservationists is critical. Today we urge you to further consider actions in support of licensed hunting and trapping activities in Canada, including making it easier for Canadians to discover the outdoors and take up activities that have been part of our cultural heritage since before our founding.

Thank you very much for your time. We're happy to answer any questions.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Weeks, and thank you for staying well within your 10 minutes. That's a good precedent for the rest to follow.

Mr. Craik, no pressure.

Mr. Brian Craik (Director, Federal Relations, Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)): I see you've accorded me some extra time.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Not really; we're a zero balance game.

Mr. Brian Craik: I thank the committee for having invited the Grand Council to participate here today. We were rather unsure about the goal of this meeting, but in any case we can give a characterization of the situation in northern Quebec.

Eeyou Istchee covers 339,698 square kilometres in James Bay, Quebec. Representing 22% of the province of Quebec, it stretches from the coast of James Bay and Hudson Bay to the height of land at the interior plateau. The territory is rich with a diverse range of ecosystem. It has marine waters, islands offshore, inland rivers, lakes, wetlands, hills and highlands, forest, taiga and tundra, all of which sustain a multitude of wildlife species, such as the woodland caribou, barren ground caribou, moose, black bear, polar bear, beluga, freshwater seals, and other types of fish—ciscoes, trout, prehistoric sturgeon—and many types of waterfowl colonies.

The territory and its resources are shared between the Crees and the Jamesian populations. The Crees slightly outnumber the Jamesian population. There are about 17,000 Crees. The Jamesians themselves live in seven localities in the southern part of the territory, while the Cree population is dispersed over the whole territory in 10 communities.

For thousands of years the Crees have depended on the land and have lived within the cycles of natural life. They understand and respect the animals hunted, and this was fundamental for their survival. The animal has a spirit and will offer it to the hunter. It gives itself to the hunter to ensure survival of the people, who in turn must show respect for the animal in order for the animal's soul to be reborn. Respect for the animal is an important component throughout the process of hunting and the life of a hunter, and it is shown in many ways, but most importantly, respect is shown by sharing within the human society, harvesting only what is needed and what the population can handle, and ensuring that all parts of the animal are used. These principles have guided the Cree hunters and trappers in their use and management of their lands.

There are approximately 300 family hunting territories, which cover the whole of the 330,000 square kilometres. Each has a tally man in charge of the harvesting activities. Through their presence and continued observation of the land, along with the knowledge transmitted from past generations, they have acquired a wealth of information, providing important indicators with respect to animal trends, population trends, reproductive success, health, animal behaviour, use of habitat by those animals, and more. The role of the stewards and their management of the hunting territories are well recognized by Cree society and are protected by the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

The James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed in 1975, and it was protected by the Canadian Constitution in 1982 as a treaty. As part of this historic agreement, the hunting, fishing, and trapping regime was established, as well as the income security program for hunters and trappers and the Cree Trappers' Association. These three institutions have played an important part in supporting our hunters and trappers and in preserving the Cree way of life, which strongly depends on a healthy wildlife population.

The hunting, fishing, and trapping regime basically involves co-management by the Crees, Inuit, Naskapi, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec, who participate in making recommendations and in certain cases decisions that bind the minister.

Some of the key provisions of the regime are as follows.

The right to harvest any species of wildlife at any time, anywhere in the territory, is a Cree right except in settled areas.

- (0900)

The right to harvest is subject to the principle of conservation, which is the pursuit of the optimum natural productivity of living resources and the protection of the ecological systems of the territory so as to protect endangered species and to ensure, primarily, the continuance of the traditional pursuits of native people, and secondarily, the satisfaction of the needs of non-native people for sport hunting and fishing.

It recognizes the family hunting territories, also referred to as traplines.

It also recognizes the exclusive trapping rights over the whole territory by the Crees and the exclusive use by the Crees of certain species. There are exemptions to that. Caribou, moose, and game fish are all shared by the native and non-native community, whereas other things like whitefish, sturgeon, beaver, and those types of animals that were more used in the traditional way of life of the Crees are exclusively harvested by the Crees.

The priority of subsistence harvest over sport and commercial harvest is another element of this regime.

It also establishes the exclusive rights to commercial harvesting. In certain respects the Crees also have a right to first refusal for certain projects, although I believe that right is expired now. There was a 20-year limit on it.

It also establishes the exclusive rights of the Crees on category II land and their priority on category III land for establishing outfitting operations.

The Cree hunters and trappers income security program requires the head of the family to be in the bush for 120 days per year. It covers his or her family, as well. The program paid beneficiaries a total of \$23 million in 2012-13, which represented 68% of the families' incomes. There are 1,357 beneficiary units enrolled in the program. The average amount of benefits per unit for all the communities in 2012-13 was \$17,016. These family units total 1,904 adults and 771 children, representing 15% of the population.

Hunting has gone from being the only source of income in the 1950s to being a source of income that is partially supported by welfare payments, and so on, in the 1960s and up to the coming of the agreement. Then this program clicked in. If you look at it in terms of the economy, the importance of fur has gone from being their only source of cash and also a source of food, to the cash part of it representing less than 1% of the Cree economy today. The Crees are involved in mining and delivery of education and health services. They're also entrepreneurs and have started many businesses.

The Cree Trappers' Association was created to assist and promote the pursuit of traditional activities through the implementation of various programs and services. Here are some of the programs they provide. They maintain a voluntary harvest registry system for fur-bearing animals and the harvest of big game. They coordinate and participate in various studies through the collection of information. There is a moose jaw study, which indicates something about the health of the moose population. There is a harvest data for migratory birds, various traditional knowledge studies, and climate change studies, which are tracked by the Cree Trappers' Association. If you go to their website you'll see there's a portal that shows the observations that have been made by Cree trappers in climate change.

They contribute to the enforcement of the regime through the training of tally men as auxiliary game wardens and participate in the training of Cree wildlife protection officers. They contribute to the recovery efforts of various species, such as woodland caribou, freshwater seals, and lake sturgeon, through awareness building and the collection of information and observations. Conducting and training various safety initiatives is another role of the association, such as firearms safety and boat safety. Ski-Doo safety is another issue. They have other programs to help the trappers get through their lives.

• (0905)

All I can say is that it's not just those who are members of the Cree Trappers' Association who go out hunting, fishing, and trapping. The whole society does, as well as the Jamesian society. Many of those people go.

One person commented to me, "I work to keep my family and to be able to go out on the land whenever I can." I think that's the attitude that permeates the community.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Craik.

We'll move now to Cameron Mack, the executive director of Wildlife Habitat Canada.

Mr. Cameron Mack (Executive Director, Wildlife Habitat Canada): Good morning, Mr. Chair, and committee members.

Thank you for inviting Wildlife Habitat Canada as a witness in your study of licensed hunting and trapping in Canada. Over the next few minutes I would like to talk about wetlands, waterfowl, and the benefits they provide, including waterfowl hunting.

These are areas that are all in the federal interest and jurisdiction. In particular, I would like to advise you on the role of Wildlife Habitat Canada, the wildlife habitat conservation stamp, the contributions that waterfowl hunters make to conservation and Canada's economy, and the evolving role of conservation NGOs in helping to implement government natural resources policy.

I'll preface my remarks by saying I have only worked with Wildlife Habitat Canada for about a year as executive director; however, I'm also drawing on about 36 years of natural resource management experience at the international, national, and provincial levels, including nine years as director of fish and wildlife, and four years as director of natural resources science and research with the Province of Ontario.

Wildlife Habitat Canada is a national non-profit charitable conservation organization. Since 1985 it has invested over \$50 million supporting more than 1,500 conservation projects across Canada. In 2013-14, \$1.5 million in WHC grant funds leveraged over \$11.3 million in additional partner revenue, which resulted in more than 96,000 acres of wildlife habitat conserved across Canada. Conservation projects also support local and regional economies.

In many ways, WHC was ahead of the curve when it was created over 30 years ago. Its cornerstone was that habitat conservation was the fundamental tool to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. This was at a time when most agencies were still focused on individual species and population management.

Funding to support WHC grants comes from the purchase of the Canadian wildlife habitat conservation stamp. This funding is provided through legislation and a contribution agreement with Environment Canada. The stamp, which costs \$8.50, is purchased primarily by waterfowl hunters to validate their migratory game bird hunting permits.

WHC works through partnerships with communities, with land-owners, governments, non-government organizations, and industry to conserve, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. Nationally, WHC is a member of both the Green Budget Coalition and the federal hunting and angling advisory panel, as DU Canada is. We can play a strong linkage between environmental and conservation sustainable-use NGOs.

The Canadian wildlife habitat conservation stamp is often referred to as the duck stamp, which is the name that's used in the United States for their similar product, but the conservation work supported by the stamp goes well beyond waterfowl and wetlands. Water control, water quality, the conservation of ecological goods and services, biodiversity and rare, threatened, and endangered species are just some of the broader benefits supported by the stamp.

Stamp funds are earmarked for wetland, waterfowl, and benefits derived from them including waterfowl hunting, based on the three goals of the North American waterfowl management plan.

Anglers and hunters like earmarked funding. They are quite willing to contribute to conservation, but they want to know that is where their money is going.

Other examples of the use of earmarked funding in Canada include the creation of the Saskatchewan wildlife development fund in 1970, and in Ontario, the formation of the fish and wildlife special purpose account in 1995, which dedicates all fishing, hunting, and trapping licence fees and fines to fish and wildlife management, about \$70 million annually.

Waterfowl hunters have a long and proud history of wildlife and habitat conservation in Canada and North America, and they're generally very supportive of the stamp because they know they are contributing directly to on-the-ground efforts in habitat conservation and stewardship.

There are two major challenges affecting WHC's ability to make conservation investments.

First, nationally, the number of waterfowl hunters has declined precipitously from over half a million in the 1980s to about 200,000 today. As an example, in Ontario the number of migratory bird hunting permits reduced from over 130,000 in 1985 to just 62,000 in 2013, whereas resident hunting licences for deer, moose, and bear all increased during that period.

• (0910)

Second, at \$8.50, the wildlife habitat conservation stamp is still the same price as it was in 1991. As Mr. McLean mentioned last week, the hunting and angling advisory panel recently recommended to the Minister of the Environment that the price of the stamp be raised to further support WHC's conservation efforts. The U.S. has recently increased their equivalent duck stamp from \$15 to \$25.

Many conservation organizations rely on hunters heavily for support. For example, hunters are large supporters of conservation organizations such as Ducks Unlimited Canada, Delta Waterfowl, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and—here it goes, Pierre—La Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs. All four groups, in addition to many others, receive grants from Wildlife Habitat Canada that actively support and assist with government and private conservation initiatives.

At WHC, our success in contributing and advocating for wildlife habitat conservation is directly linked to waterfowl hunting. We need to pay more attention to promoting and increasing participation in waterfowl hunting. Waterfowl hunting contributes about \$327 million annually to the economy, or about 18% of the \$1.8-billion figure within the Canadian nature survey. That economic contribution is not easily replaced by other nature-related activities. For example, the average waterfowl hunter spends nearly seven times the daily expenditure of a birder.

Most important for the future of conservation, hunters and trappers are participating in nature conservation activities at more than three times the national average for Canadians over 18. As you are also aware, many other NGOs are actively engaged in hunter recruitment, mostly focusing on youth hunter recruitment. While youth participation is very important, it is obvious from the demographic age distribution of Canada that it requires other strategies so as to attract older Canadians to hunting as well.

Of all the areas in natural resource management in Canada, angling and hunting recruitment is one area we know little about. Furthermore, although there is a fair bit of information in the United States, we either don't use it or don't know about it. This is a major gap.

One thing you won't hear me talk about today is the good old days of natural resource management. I have no romantic notions about historical resource management. Natural resource management is more complicated now. There are more wicked problems, such as invasive species, climate change, mega-development of resource industries, etc., and obviously, there are more people, but having worked in natural resources since the seventies, I know that natural resources in North America have never been managed better than they are now. The science information and tools are much better. The general public is more aware and supportive of environmental priorities. People who work in conservation are as committed as ever, and they have better training and knowledge than folks like me. Also, there are better communication and educational tools.

One of the big changes I've witnessed in my career is the development of much broader partnerships for delivery of programs, none more important than the increasing role of NGOs in helping to implement government natural resources policy.

At their core, natural resources policies basically have three bits. First, they want to protect ecosystems from being damaged; second, they want to rehabilitate ecosystems that have been damaged; and third, they want to make people happy by providing some cultural, social, and economic benefits. Conservation NGOs are quite eager and capable to help implement them.

I will close by showing a cultural aspect of hunting that you may not be familiar with, and that is the linkage between hunting and wildlife art that has existed as long as the human condition. Stamps may be very small, but the U.S. duck stamp and Canada's wildlife habitat conservation stamp have had a major influence on the development and promotion of wildlife art in North America. Both countries hold a competition for their stamp image every year, and the artwork is also sold in print versions.

I brought with me today the first one, the 1985 print by world-renowned Canadian wildlife artist Robert Bateman. I put it on my side of the table because I figured that DU would try to auction it off if I put it on the other side.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cameron Mack: As you can see, a very small stamp has generated a lot of development and promotion of some beautiful art in this country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and committee members, for your time. I'd be pleased to answer any questions that you have.

• (0915)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mack, and thanks for bringing that very appropriate prop with you today to illustrate an area I would have never thought about in terms of wildlife conservation. That's great.

We'll move now to Monsieur Pierre Latraverse, from the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs.

Mr. Latraverse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse (President, Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs): Good morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning, everyone. My thanks to the committee for listening to what we have to say today.

My presentation will be about the federation and its affiliates.

The Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs is a not-for-profit organization that was founded in 1946. Its mission is to contribute to the management, development and sustainability of hunting and fishing as traditional, heritage and sporting activities, with due regard for wildlife and habitat.

The federation's objectives are: to represent the interests of hunters and sport anglers; to defend, protect, promote and ensure the sustainability of hunting and fishing activities; to promote responsible behaviour by hunters and anglers; to cooperate with public authorities in establishing wildlife habitat conservation and management programs; to cooperate with public authorities in establishing wildlife management plans that will assist the government to meet its ecological, social and economic objectives.

Today, the federation brings together more than 200 associations representing more than 125,000 members in every region of Quebec. In achieving its objectives, the federation can count on the support of its two affiliated organizations, *Héritage faune* and *Sécurité nature*.

Héritage faune is the federation's official foundation, started in 1980. Its mission is to provide various sources of funding in order to make possible wildlife, land and water management projects, establish programs for the next generation, and provide scholarships to graduate students for wildlife study. The foundation is also engaged in many projects with wilderness and environmental organizations in Quebec.

Sécurité nature was established in 1995. It is the federation's educational arm. It provides courses as part of the *Programme d'éducation en sécurité et en conservation de la faune* and coordinates the 450 volunteer instructors who give the courses all over Quebec. It also develops education programs in nature interpretation, in protecting and understanding the value of wildlife and its habitats, including the safety of those participating in outdoor activities. It also produces educational material on the appreciation, conservation and understanding of wildlife and its habitats, and on outdoor activities.

According to *Sécurité nature*'s statistics, the introduction to hunting with a firearm course is increasingly in demand in Quebec. In 1999, there were 10,750 participants. In 2006, there were 14,000 participants. In 2014, there were 20,000 participants.

In Quebec, the right to hunt is recognized in the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife. Two of its provisions are as follows:

1.3. Every person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law.

1.4. No person may knowingly hinder a person who is lawfully carrying on an activity referred to in the first paragraph of section 1.3, including an activity preparatory to such an activity.

In terms of community involvement in wildlife management in Quebec, the legislation provides for the participation of the hunting and fishing community in wildlife management. It determines the composition and the advisory role of consultation bodies such as the *Table nationale de la faune*, and similar regional bodies and technical wildlife bodies. Those organizations work together to develop management plans for the game that hunters are seeking.

In Quebec, hunting is considered as a factor in economic development. A number of regions view hunting as one of their major economic engines. It is also significant in major centres. Hunting and fishing opportunities on public lands are made available in various kinds of designated areas: the controlled harvesting zones, or *zecs*, which have volunteer boards of directors, private hunting areas, or *pourvoires*, wildlife reserves operated by a crown corporation called *Sépaq*, and free areas of crown land.

Private lands that are part of municipalities support almost 70% of hunting in Quebec. According to the surveys that the federation has conducted, half a million Quebecers are regular hunters and 700,000 hunt at least once every five years.

● (0920)

A total of 535,000 hunting licences were sold in 2014, including 173,000 for small game, 144,000 for white-tailed deer, 175,000 for moose, 14,000 for black bear and 11,300 for wild turkey. According to a recent study conducted for the Government of Quebec, each hunter spends an average of \$1,832 on 15.2 days of hunting, for a total of 4.3 million days of hunting in the province. Hunting represents an overall economic impact of \$540 million. The species that is most economically significant is the moose, on which \$205 million are spent, followed by small game, which generates \$138 million.

Those involved with wildlife face a major challenge because we can see that 68% of hunters are 45 or older. A great deal of recruitment activities need therefore to be organized all over the province. Hunting has social benefits. In addition to its major direct economic impact, because of vehicle sales, packages, outfitting, accommodation and fuel, hunting is important in protecting the environment, controlling damage, and protecting human health. It is recognized scientifically as one of the best tools in controlling animal populations.

The greater snow goose population is at 800,000 and it is causing damage to farms. Resident Canada geese are increasing in numbers and increasingly taking over city parks and golf courses. The continental white-tailed deer population is at 250,000 as a minimum and it is continuing to migrate north. Some areas in southern Quebec are overpopulated and there are many problems of damage, including to farms. There are also many road accidents there, with 6,000 collisions annually involving deer.

Since 2008, the federation has conducted a number of promotion campaigns in order to boost hunting, including among young people, making the activity "cool". That is how Quebecers see it. We have made short videos, conducted advertising campaigns about the image of hunting, and campaigns on Zoom Media.

We are now in the modern era of hunting and fishing. We have developed a number of tools using new technology in order to help hunters and anglers conduct their activities. We have created *Zone Chasse*, *whyhunt.com*, *Mentorat chasse*, *pêche et piégeage* as well as *allonspecher.com*, a map providing access to fishing areas.

In closing, the changes that Quebec's natural environment has undergone mean that many animal populations, like white-tailed deer, coyote and wild turkey are finding it an exceptional place to live. The development and management of the forests in less urban areas have allowed some others to expand, such as moose and black bear.

Quebec therefore has abundant game on which a major economic activity is built. As a result, many organizations are active, working with Quebec's Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs. The wildlife needs to be controlled if we are going to avoid major costs to society. Because of their activities, hunters actually protect farmers' crops and reduce the compensation that has to be paid to them.

They also reduce the problems caused by automobile collisions and damage to gardens. For all those reasons, hunting and trapping are legitimate activities that benefit society as a whole on a number of levels.

Thank you.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

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

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thanks to our witnesses. That was very interesting testimony.

Mr. Latraverse, I want to direct my first question to you.

This is the first time that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development has undertaken a study of licensed hunting and trapping. Do you think a study such as this is important? If you do, why do you think it's important?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: It is very important for the federal government to study the impact of hunting and trapping across Canada. People must become aware that we live with animals, that they can cause problems and that their populations have to be controlled.

Hunting is the best way to control populations. It generates economic benefits and has an effect on the management of the animals we hunt. For us, it is very important for the federal government to keep an eye on all these activities.

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

I couldn't agree more that this is a very important study.

It may surprise you and the rest of the committee that both the Liberals and the NDP made very public statements objecting to this study even being done. I firmly disagree with their position on this, and I agree with you about how important this study is.

Mr. Latraverse, I'm not from Quebec. From a cultural standpoint, can you describe the hunting and angling culture in Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: Hunting and fishing started in Quebec. When the Europeans—the French, that is—arrived, they would not have been able to colonize the lands along the shores of the St. Lawrence without hunting, fishing and trapping. It is part of our history, it is in our genes. Even the indigenous tribes recognized the skills in hunting and fishing for survival displayed by the French, the Europeans, who were arriving in New France at the time.

Today, we owe a great deal to the wildlife on the land and the resources in the water that allowed this country to be colonized. I remind you that Canada's economic development was first made possible by the fur trade and the relationships established as a result with the indigenous people in the country. That trade really marked the birth of Canada. It proves that hunting, fishing and trapping are historically important, and in terms of our relationships with the indigenous people.

● (0930)

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Latraverse, a study was done by Cornell University, which talked about the role of hunters and conservation. In fact, the study labelled hunters as conservation superstars. That's another good reason for the environment committee to study the conservation activities of the hunting and trapping community.

Mr. Latraverse, you described your passion for hunting and angling, but how has this driven you and your group's passion for conservation?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: We cannot hunt and fish unless the habitat for wildlife is healthy. The quality of the wildlife habitat is always the first thing that our federation's hunters and anglers look for. We work as hard as we can to keep the wildlife habitat in extremely good health so that we can use it. Hunting and fishing are a bit like gardening. We have to keep wildlife habitat very healthy so that the animals can live there and we can hunt them properly in order for them to be sustained and to establish some contact with nature. That contact is absolutely vital in fully understanding all the symbiotic relationships between the various inhabitants of the habitat.

Hunters and anglers have often been the first to sound the alarm in the face of certain problems with wildlife, well before conservation and environmentalism was in fashion. Ecology is a very new science. In 1940, people in my region were concerned about some problems with the wildlife and took steps to keep the habitats in good shape, all the while maintaining good relationships with the landowners. We must not forget that, in Quebec, 70% of hunting activity occurs in municipally owned areas.

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Latraverse, this is my last question.

You are a member of the hunting and angling advisory panel. What advice would you have for the federal government to enhance hunting and trapping in Canada along the lines that you have suggested?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: My advice would be to maintain the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel. The panel is important because it provides a Canada-wide vision of the issue.

Personally, for the 150th anniversary of Confederation, I would like to see a national conference on wildlife and habitat, as there was in 2012. Following that 2012 conference, Mr. Harper established the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel. The panel has made advances and also allows a sharing of things that are being done across Canada to keep habitats healthy. That allows people to participate on a societal level and generates very significant economic benefits.

● (0935)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sopuck and Mr. Latraverse.

We move now to Mr. Choquette.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. My thanks to the witnesses for being here. I appreciate the light they are shedding for us on nature conservation as well as on hunting and trapping in our country.

Mr. Latraverse, I thought you were going to tell us a little about the Sorel Islands, that incredible jewel that we have in our part of the country. I am the member of Parliament for Drummond and, in my riding, we have another jewel called the Forêt Drummond. I know that Ducks Unlimited Canada has worked very hard in the Forêt Drummond and the Sorel Islands to conserve the wetlands.

But there is a small problem with the Forêt Drummond. It belongs to Hydro-Québec, and it is currently for sale. So municipalities like Saint-Bonaventure, Saint-Majorique-de-Grantham and Drummondville find themselves with a difficult choice to make. The RMC of Drummond is in the process of considering the possibility of creating a regional park. That would help greatly in conserving that area of Drummond. I am going to get involved in the survival of the Forêt Drummond. It really is important for us in the region.

All that to say that there is also a little hunting and trapping in the Forêt Drummond. Therefore, if the hunting and trapping are to continue, the nature must be conserved. I feel that the work you are doing is really important and enlightening in that context. It is important for the federal government to continue to play a major role in nature conservation, in places like the Forêt Drummond.

My question is for you, Mr. Latraverse. I know that you have done a lot of work on climate change matters in the past. On your website, we can see that the issue is very important for you. Your files are filled with information about it and we learn that climate change affects Quebec hunters and trappers directly. You even sent one of your members to the United States to receive training in climate change.

How do you assess the effects of climate change on your hunting, fishing and trapping activities?

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: One of the major consequences of climate change is that range limits are moving north. At present, we can clearly see that the moose is gaining territory at the expense of the woodland caribou. The moose is moving north. So is the black bear. So certain species are moving in a significant way. Diseases then follow the wildlife, also in a significant way. You just have to

think about Lyme disease. The ticks that carry the disease came from the United States and have moved north.

Climate change brings with it other changes too. In the spring, the snow geese are arriving more quickly in the south of Quebec and are staying longer. That causes problems for farmers. These are examples of the effects of climate change, as we see them. That is why they concern us. However, perhaps there are other positive benefits we can attribute to some kinds of climate change. For example, we now have a spring hunting season for greater snow geese, which we did not have a few years ago.

Mr. François Choquette: Thank you, Mr. Latraverse.

I am going to give the rest of my time to Ms. Leslie.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Merci.

I have lots of questions about habitat loss, but I'm going to start with a question for Mr. Craik and Mr. Latraverse.

I come from northern Ontario originally. As I grew up we always hunted, not because it was fun, but because we were poor, and that was the reality.

[Translation]

I would like to talk about protecting hunting and trapping. I am very concerned by habitat loss. I have read articles about the caribou in northern Quebec and Labrador. The George River caribou herd migrates between Labrador and Quebec.

I am not sure if you can answer this question, but I read that the hunt was cancelled because of the loss of habitat.

● (0940)

[English]

Mr. Latraverse and Mr. Craik, I don't know whether you're able to answer or give any comment, but if you know anything more about the habitat loss affecting the George River caribou herd, I'd love to hear what you know and what impacts you're seeing. I have read that the hunt on this particular herd may never come back, and I think that fact is attributed to habitat loss.

Mr. Brian Craik: Actually, most of the problem with the George River herd and the decline of the herds in northern Quebec, the barren ground caribou, are due to a 100-year cycle of those caribou.

There is on the record another collapse that was noted approximately 100 years ago. Just before the collapse of those herds, the caribou migrated to the south. I guess they were looking for habitat. Then all of a sudden there was a dieback. In the early part of this millennium they started to die back, and that has continued. Right now the Cree and the Inuit are advocating closing the sport hunting of the animals.

The place where the real problem in terms of habitat loss occurs is further south. It's the woodland caribou that are in danger, and Quebec hasn't developed a plan for preserving the woodland caribou habitat, but there are—

Ms. Megan Leslie: Those two herds are genetically distinct. Isn't that correct?

Mr. Brian Craik: Well, they are genetically distinct, yes, but they're very close genetically. The barren ground herds and the woodland herds in Quebec are closer than, for example, the herds out west.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but your time is up.

We'll move now to Mr. Leef, please.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you all for your testimony today.

In respect to some of the habitat—I think Ducks Unlimited can talk about this—we've made some significant advancements since 2007 on boreal forest protection. In fact, I think that at this point Canada has about 10% of its total boreal forest protected.

How important is that for species at risk, for wildlife habitat, and in particular for waterfowl management in Canada? Maybe you could speak to the impetus for the spike in the protection and growth of that protection since 2007.

This questions is for Ducks Unlimited. Thank you.

Mr. James Brennan (Director, Government Affairs, Ducks Unlimited Canada): Certainly the boreal region is one of our highest priority areas. It produces an estimated 17 million breeding ducks every year, so it's an area of Canada that we have devoted a lot of scientific resources to studying, and also funding, working with all levels of government to protect it.

Certainly, it's continentally important under the North American waterfowl management plan. In fact, a large proportion of the diving ducks that fly south every year, particularly greater and lesser scaup, come out of the boreal region, so it's very important for waterfowl continentally.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Thank you.

A lot of times we talk about the financial contributions, the legislative and policy direction that provincial and federal governments can take in terms of wildlife management conservation projects and conservation regimes.

The one thing that strikes me personally as a former conservation officer, a lifelong hunter, and indeed, a guide and an outfitter in Yukon Territory, is having a minister right now in the federal government in Canada who not only understands and appreciates the role that hunters and trappers play in the conservation management of our wildlife, but who has also lived the life herself as an Inuit woman.

She spoke to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters in Toronto on March 21, where she said:

Canada is a country of hunters, fishermen, and trappers. It is these people, who have lived off the land, who have true appreciation and respect for conservation. People who hunt or fish will naturally try to protect the environment, because they want to make sure they can go hunting or fishing next year. It is they who are true environmental stewards. Any discussion on conservation must include hunters and fishers because they are the experts on this topic.

My question for each one of you is, can we actually have a conversation in this country on conservation without the inclusion of hunters? How important is it, if not only just symbolically, that we

have a federal Minister of the Environment that understands this very point?

Perhaps you could move in succession, quickly, and we'll start with you, Mr. Craik.

• (0945)

Mr. Brian Craik: You must realize that aboriginal people have a hunting tradition, and it's very important to have them at the table and involved.

No, you can't have a debate on preserving the wildlife unless the hunters, trappers and fishermen are at the table.

Mr. Gregory Weeks: I can't agree more. I think the point that should be noted by everyone is that conservation started with the hunting and angling community. Ducks Unlimited, as I mentioned in my presentation, was started by hunters. We were the first environmentalists, I believe, aside from our first nations people.

A conversation about conservation cannot occur unless we include hunting, fishing and trapping communities.

I do agree it's important to have proper representation in the government with someone who understands the importance of including our organizations as hunters, anglers and trappers in that conversation, along with other interested parties.

Mr. Cameron Mack: The one comment I'd make, Mr. Leef, is there is one thing we have to be careful about. I think hunting is very important. Angling is an important component for what we've talked about here. The other thing is, though, we can't categorize everybody separately because many birders are hunters—

Mr. Ryan Leef: Absolutely.

Mr. Cameron Mack: —and many people who enjoy the outdoors, campers and others, all of them obviously have a role to play in conservation as well.

Certainly, the history has been in terms of having people who see real value in the resource. Back in the 1920s and 1930s in the United States, it really was the hunters of the country and of North America who mobilized and brought together the natural resource management systems we have today with licensing, allocations, and all those sorts of things.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Latraverse, perhaps you could comment on that question.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: It is important to be clear about things. As the representative from Wildlife Habitat Canada has just said, it is important to bring everyone together.

However, when the time comes to pay the bill, only the hunters are buying their stamps. Birders and people not engaged in wildlife activities very rarely do so. However, the stamps that hunters buy benefits society as a whole. There really has to be a major debate about the way in which the hunters' and anglers' money is spent—the ones spending the money to protect wildlife areas—so that those who do not harvest wildlife understand it fully.

That bridge needs to be built. Using the assistance of the Hunting and Angling Advisory Panel and Wildlife Habitat Canada, the government must promote a message to encourage those who do not harvest wildlife to pay for it as well. It is not just up to hunters and anglers to protect wildlife habitat through the donations they make and the stamps they buy.

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Thank you, Mr. Leef.

Mr. Casey, welcome.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to take a page directly out of Mr. Leef's book and ask each of you to comment on this.

Can we have a conversation about conservation and habitat protection without including the topic of climate change? How does climate change affect the work of your organizations and the interests you seek to advance?

Let's go around the table on that, starting with Mr. Mack.

● (0950)

Mr. Cameron Mack: Climate change is obviously something that has to be taken into account for all natural resource management strategies. Really, if you look at one of the largest threats we have in the world now, it's loss of biodiversity. The largest threats in that loss of biodiversity would be things such as climate change and invasive species and some of those other things.

In many respects, though, many organizations are developing adaptation strategies that are looking at how we set up wildlife for success through what happens in terms of climate change, to mitigate some of the impacts through proper land use planning, for example, with corridors by which animals can choose to move. It's more difficult for fish, obviously, than it is for others.

One of the most critical things for government is.... You can tell a lot about government's natural resource management commitment by looking at what it is doing around monitoring. Monitoring is one of the first things to go in budgets, because people don't really see it, but it is monitoring and the underlying science that are really going to be able to help us to manage the impacts of climate change and ensure that biodiversity is conserved.

Mr. James Brennan: I think the issue of climate change is inextricably intertwined with hunting, trapping, fishing, and certainly environmental policy and overall land management. We have seen more incidents of severe weather right across the country

Mr. Sean Casey: You don't need to tell me. I'm from Prince Edward Island.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. James Brennan: Absolutely.

Certainly in the Prairies we have seen a lot more water on the land than we have seen in recent years. From a Ducks Unlimited standpoint, it is impacting our projects. We build diking systems typically to 100-year floodline conditions. We have seen one in 300-

year flooding twice over the last decade. It is really having an impact on our ability; it's forcing us to rethink how we build and implement programs and projects on the land.

There are many unanswered questions about the impacts climate change is having on the boreal and what the impacts are on breeding birds in the boreal forest as well. There is frankly much more science that still needs to be done to give us a better understanding of the real impacts.

Mr. Brian Craik: We have to consider the warming climate. It affects the whole territory in northern Quebec. There have been many deaths caused by it, because the traditional knowledge of where it is safe to travel on the ice has meant that you have to rewrite the book. That's why the Cree Trappers' Association has put in place the portal to report on those types of changes to the habitat.

Also, on the coast there are big changes in habitat as a result of global warming and the mix of the changes of the flow regime due to hydroelectric development. I think that up in northern Quebec the two are mixed: the impact from hydroelectric development and global warming. The fact is, though, that nobody is really studying those things right now.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

Mr. Latraverse.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: Climate change is a very important issue. As I said, some examples are positive. The wild turkey that has invaded all southern Quebec is one example. There weren't any wild turkeys there before. They create some problems, but they are an addition to the wildlife resources now available. The same is true for the white-tailed deer, which are travelling farther and farther north. There are now white-tailed deer in Abitibi and Lac-Saint-Jean. There are consequences to that, such as Lyme disease and the ticks found on moose.

One of the fundamental aspects of climate change that worries me the most is the migration of chronic wasting disease, more commonly known as mad cow disease. I cannot imagine the problems that first nations would have to face should chronic wasting disease move from Alberta to the north and affect the caribou. That would be absolutely terrible.

However, climate change makes it possible to basically have international transportation throughout the year on the St. Lawrence River and a part of the Great Lakes. Montreal has become an open seaport all year long because there is less ice on the St. Lawrence River, which generates economic benefits. It is not all black and white, except that, for the residents of the St. Lawrence River, climate change has a major impact both in terms of wildlife and of commerce.

Wildlife habitat protection in response to climate change must be achieved according to biogeographic regions, based on where the habitats are. The impact in northern Quebec is not the same as in southern Quebec, where we can plant things earlier and where the animals come earlier. That is the case with the snow geese, the Canada geese and ducks, which feed at that time since the fields are open much earlier in the spring. As a result, the migration is more intense.

We therefore need to examine the problem as a whole, not just one aspect.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Mrs. Hughes is next, for five minutes, please.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Thank you very much. I really appreciate the information you have provided us.

[Translation]

The NDP clearly supports hunting, fishing and preservation. The information provided by the witnesses is really helping us educate people. We need to be able to participate in promotion and preservation. That is what you are doing and it is very important.

[English]

I want to note as well that I met with Ducks Unlimited yesterday. You brought to my attention that in northern Ontario, so far Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 948,000 acres of wetland habitat on 1,175 projects in Ontario, and that this conservation activity represents an accumulative investment of more than \$3.5 million over the last 30 years. I think that is quite impressive. I can just imagine what else you could have done or what else you could do with the proper funding in place. I think it's quite admirable.

As well, Mr. Mack, the information that you provided us on the conservation piece is quite important.

When I look at what has been happening with the climate change piece, I think we have to be mindful of some of the information Mr. Latraverse and Mr. Craik have mentioned. Also, I saw a film not too long ago about how quickly the ice is melting and the impact that is having on eider.

Could you discuss a little more the challenges and threats of climate change and what the federal government's role and responsibility could be in helping to address some of the preservation issues you have raised, as well as some of the climate change issues we should be taking action on or some of the information on policies we should be looking at?

• (1000)

The Chair: Mr. Brennan.

Mr. James Brennan: Sure, I'll take a stab at that.

I think that, as I mentioned before, climate is certainly having an impact on how we manage projects in the settled landscapes. In the boreal, there's a whole host of changes that we're trying to monitor, that scientists and the government are trying to monitor, to get a handle on.

One of the areas of concern is the increasing population of mid-continent lesser snow geese, for example, that are having a pretty devastating impact on parts of the Arctic shoreline in the far north, because the populations have grown to the extent that they are damaging the available food and habitat up there. There is certainly a strong link to land use practices in the south. The birds are returning north in better body condition, but the climate is generally warmer

up north, and the changes in predator movement have been impacted as well.

In terms of southern landscapes, we're concerned about the Great Lakes shoreline and what impacts climate is having on the changing.... We've had some variable fluctuating water levels. The water levels have gradually been decreasing in the Great Lakes. That's having an impact even on coastal wetland mapping, and what those wetlands look like on the Great Lakes shoreline as a whole. Continentally, the Great Lakes wetlands are among the highest in importance to migratory birds, not just waterfowl, in all of North America, so we're concerned about that as well.

The Chair: Thirty seconds, Mr. Craik.

Mr. Brian Craik: When the EM-1-A hydroelectric project was approved by the federal review and the provincial review, there was a recommendation in there for the federal government, the Quebec government, the Manitoba government, and the Ontario government to get together and create some kind of an institute that would study Hudson Bay and James Bay, because very little is known about that. The people of Sanikiluaq have made known the issue of the eiders, but there are also issues with the polar bears and the belugas. Another big issue is the way of life of those people who live on the island, the people of Sanikiluaq.

The Chair: The time is up. We'll have to move to Mr. Toet, please.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Thank you to our guests today. It has been very enlightening.

Mr. Brennan, I have had the opportunity to visit Oak Hammock Marsh in Stonewall, several times in my life, and a couple of times in the last number of years. It is one of your facilities.

You talked about the effects of water in the Prairies and some of the diking systems. One of the things that really struck me when I was at your facility in Oak Hammock Marsh was an overhead I was shown of wetlands from the sixties and seventies compared to today. One of the things that we're looking at in Manitoba—you talked about some of the flooding aspects there—was really brought home to me. Wetland loss has probably played the most significant role in some of the floods that we've had, which you talked about, the one in 300-year floods.

Could you perhaps talk about that a little bit? I think it's important that we understand there are other contributing factors. I would say that the wetland loss is a much bigger contributor to those issues and concerns in the Prairies than anything else at this point in time.

Mr. James Brennan: We've had 200 years of fairly dramatic landscape change in settled areas of Canada, particularly in areas that are deriving income from the land. The land has been cleared; many of the wetlands have been drained. We have lost about 70% of the basins on the Prairies. It's unfortunately a trend that continues today. We lose about 80 acres of wetland every day in Canada.

The wetland basins, particularly in the prairie pothole region, are nature's way of retaining water on the land. When you remove that retentive capacity from the land, you are putting more water downstream into creeks and feeder streams. Of course, in the case of Manitoba this is flooding the Assiniboine, and the Red is becoming flooded as well.

That water has to go somewhere. Not all of it can go fast enough into the big lakes, and even when it does go into the big lakes, we're seeing a tremendous amount of shoreline damage from higher water levels and major ice dams that are forming. At the historic Delta Marsh in Manitoba there was very severe damage done to buildings on the shoreline.

The prairie basins are not only retaining water and slowing down the flow rates into the rivers and lakes, they are the kidneys of the land as well. They are holding back nutrients that are running off the land. Of course, that's another issue, not only in Manitoba but around the country, involving algal blooms that are being exacerbated by higher levels of nutrients in the water.

There are a number of services that wetlands provide. From a policy development standpoint it's important to recognize wetlands not only for the wildlife benefits they provide, but also for the ecosystem services benefits they provide.

• (1005)

Mr. Lawrence Toet: It's important to acknowledge that as we go forward.

In the province of Manitoba we spent a lot of money. You referred to some dyking and work like that. We've spent millions and billions of dollars on this type of infrastructure, when really, rehabilitating some of our wetlands, which is done at a fairly cost-effective rate, would have probably given us the same effect, or probably a better effect because we're not moving these nutrients but actually leaving the kidneys in place, as you said.

It's something that should be looked at very closely at all levels, to see how we can prevent flooding and how wetlands can play a major role in it going forward, at a much more cost-effective rate than what we're doing now, while having a much better impact on our habitats.

I just want to put this out. In response to Mr. Leef's question, you all spoke to the need to include hunters and trappers in any conversation on wildlife habitat. I think we'd all agree with that very strongly. Could each one of you speak to a project that your organizations have undertaken that are protecting and conserving habitat in your regions or the areas you're involved in? I think it would be good for us to hear of some actual projects that you're doing. Obviously, we can't get into a lot of detail; we have a very short time, but I would appreciate that opportunity.

The Chair: You have a very short time, 25 seconds.

Mr. Brian Craik: I was involved with the EM-1-A hydroelectric project. Hydro-Québec and the Crees together have maintained the habitat along the diversion. There was a partial diversion of the Rupert River into the La Grande system, but by virtue of maintaining the habitat in the lower stream, the hunters and trappers and people who like recreation are still able to use that river. In fact, it looks like a natural river right now.

The Chair: I was distracted by the fact that we were expecting votes, but there will be no votes, so we are free to continue our session.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Chair, I was hoping that other members of the panel would have the opportunity to forward some ideas of projects to the clerk.

The Chair: If at any point in the proceedings you have material that you were not able to cover in one of your responses, we more than welcome that response in writing.

Ms. Leslie, you have five minutes.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I'm going to pick up from where Mr. Toet left off. He was talking specifically about wetland loss. I would like to broaden it to habitat loss.

Maybe what I'll do is pose my three questions, and if you can answer any of the three or if you have perspectives on any of the three, I would like to hear them.

When it comes to habitat loss, if we are to protect hunting and trapping and ensure that we can continue to hunt and trap in the future, from your perspective what are some of the biggest threats to habitat loss? Sometimes I hear it's cities, and sometimes I hear it's resource development or farms, but what is it from your perspective and the perspective of the work you do with your organizations?

Then, if you're able to, perhaps you could give an idea of what could be some opportunities. I think about, for example, hunters. One might think that hunting could contribute to...that we are over-hunting and end up in a situation in which we're putting undue stress on a species. In fact, the opposite is true. Hunters want to ensure that a species is viable and will naturally conserve.

Are there other groups for whom there is a sort of unexpected opportunity to work with particular groups who actually want to engage in conservation?

We are federal policy-makers. At the federal level, what are some policies that we can really put our efforts behind? Naturally my mind goes to SARA, the Species at Risk Act, but of course that's only species at risk. Many of the other policy options I see are provincial or municipal, so I wonder if you have federal advice for us.

Mr. Mack, do you want to kick it off?

• (1010)

Mr. Cameron Mack: Yes. I think the first question was around the real challenges to habitat loss. I think one of the biggest challenges we have is the death by a thousand cuts, basically the cumulative impacts of a lot of people doing very little things that over time result in major effects. We often deal with projects particularly at the federal level that are big projects and that sort of thing, but in many cases it's the things that people do every day in their own lives: whether they clear the weeds out in front of their cottage or whatever else, and when you start to multiply that across the landscape, it really makes an impact.

That comes to the pivotal point: you really have to know how much habitat is out there so that you know when you've lost it. Inventory of habitat is a huge thing, because then you can monitor whether you're losing it; you can assess whether your policies are working or not, and you can report back to the public on how your policies are working. I think that would be one of the key elements.

The other one, also related, is cumulative impacts. Habitat is one thing, but when you start to look at what a species is actually bombarded with, some habitat loss, combined with climate change, combined with an invasive species that comes in, combined with some different land use strategies that affect it, it all adds up to something you never would have predicted in the beginning.

Science is becoming a lot more complicated, such that you can't look at just one individual thing. It's all connected.

Mr. Gregory Weeks: To follow up on Mr. Mack's comment about the connectivity of the environment, one of the successes of our organization in conservation has been that we try to approach conservation on a holistic basis. We try to work with all stakeholders. I think it's very important in any decision regarding habitat or climate change that we engage everyone in the conversation. Science drives the decision ultimately, but in order to have our stakeholders, our communities buy into any change and buy into the policy that is developed, we have to engage them and ask for feedback.

Our organization has been very successful at that. It's not a one-tiered governmental approach. We at Ducks Unlimited have come to know that. One of my jobs on the board is to try to engage all of you folks, along with your colleagues at the provincial level and also at the municipal level. Until we have that kind of cooperation, unfortunately any kind of change that goes forward is going to be fraught with all kinds of pushback. I think that is an important consideration and should be at the heart of any policy.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move now to Mr. Carrie for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Latraverse, how is your organization interacting with young people to introduce them to hunting?

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: First, we have a mentorship program. We ask experienced hunters to assist young people, through online discussions, for example. After those discussions, there might be meetings. We have a comprehensive mentorship program to help young people learn how to hunt. That is really important. Right now, most hunters in Quebec are over 45 years old. The loss of revenue because of the decline in the sales of permits, hunting and fishing gear will be very high if no one takes their place. The next generation is so important.

We are working with modern digital tools. We have created the Zone Chasse app. Any smart phone with a GPS system will tell you where you are in the province, regardless of the place, what species you can hunt, where and when you can do so, as well as the laws that apply to the species. You can hunt in a controlled harvesting zone, in a wildlife refuge or in a private hunting area. We have set up all those elements to help young people.

The same is true with the website allonspêcher.com, which shows you where the boat and canoe launches are, which lakes are accessible, which types of fish you can catch, the best bait you can use, and so on. Those are all modern tools accessible on Android, tablets and smart phones to help people understand what hunting and

fishing are. It is an important part of our strategy to raise awareness. Those tools have been well received by the public.

• (1015)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you very much.

[English]

My next question is for Ducks Unlimited.

Mr. Brennan, you were talking about the importance of protecting wetlands. I think this is something whose importance in our country people don't realize. Could you expand a little on the work you do to engage with private landowners to protect and conserve wetlands, and could you let the committee know whether you think it's successful and, if so, why you think it is successful?

Mr. James Brennan: The vast majority of our work has been with private landowners since our inception in 1938. The simple fact of the matter is that among the most valuable waterfowl habitat, much is in the settled landscapes of southern Canada, which is largely in private hands.

Typically the way we work is that we enter into a voluntary conservation agreement with a private landowner. The terms of the agreement would lay out what it is that we would do. In some cases it's a full-blown restoration of a lost or degraded wetland; in other instances it would be enhancement of the project.

In eastern Canada we tend to put up nesting boxes for cavity-nesting birds, primarily wood ducks. Occasionally we'll get goldeneyes that use them as well. We'll do that type of enhancement work while educating them, helping them understand the hydrological cycle that their wetland goes through every year.

As a result, we will raise money privately through our community fundraising program, through our major gift program. Then we will leverage the funding of other partners, including small business, corporations, and other levels of government. We will try to pool that money together, along with investments from the landowners themselves, to do the restoration work on the land.

Really, there are many stakeholders who are involved in the process. It's a very synergistic program, and it has been very successful. We have conserved about 6.2 million acres in Canada since our inception, a large portion of which is in working with private landowners.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Carrie. Your time is up.

We'll move to Mrs. Hughes for another five minutes, please.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Thank you very much.

Earlier, most of you spoke on the economic benefit and impact of some of the challenges you're having. With respect to the national conservation plan, is it adequate to do the type of conservation that needs to be done? Basically, is what we are doing sufficient? I think I'd like a bit of an answer to that. Do you need more of a long-term plan for funding? What do you need?

The rest of it could also be answering the question from my colleague Megan Leslie, which not everybody had a chance to answer. It would be great to have that feedback.

• (1020)

Mr. James Brennan: The important thing to look at is the model, and I think the partnership model is one that works.

If you look at the North American waterfowl management plan and the partnerships it brings to the table in terms of leveraging money from different interested parties into the land, that's a working model that has produced tangible results, certainly since the mid-1980s. That's a fact that was acknowledged by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development about a year and a half ago in the commissioner's report.

The national conservation plan programming has been very well received so far. In fact, certainly on the wetland conservation fund, the program is completely oversubscribed.

You asked what is required. We would suggest more money going into that particular program is required. It's being driven by demand. There are many, many landowners and many conservation groups out there who would like to participate in that program, but there simply aren't enough funds to have the kind of impact that could be had through the full expression of that activity.

You asked about policy. Certainly the federal government has a long-standing federal wetland policy, which we think merits taking another look at. It was created by the federal government in 1991, and the operational principles were established in 1996. It's a good policy. We think there's an opportunity for the federal government to show leadership with its provincial counterparts. We'd like to see effective wetland policies in every jurisdiction in Canada, backed by legislation and regulation.

We'd like to see habitat loss mitigation sequences in place in every province and territory. There is some very good legislation on the books in the Atlantic provinces right now, and certainly steps are being taken in other provinces to get to a point where habitat loss is being addressed and offset. Certainly Alberta has a new policy, and I know that Manitoba is working on a policy as well. But the policies are not the same across the country, and that's certainly an issue.

The Chair: Would any of the other panel members like to respond?

Mr. Mack.

Mr. Cameron Mack: I think earlier on I talked about the fact that you can protect something or you can rehabilitate something if it's screwed up. I think one of the good things about the NCP is that it does have a fair amount of money engaged in protection through land securement and other things. The reason that's important is it's a lot cheaper and generally more effective to protect something than it is to fix it up afterwards. Yet we spend so much money on rehabilitation when in some cases we haven't really done the math to figure out whether we should be focusing on protection in a bigger way.

I think the government needs to be very leveraged if it's in the rehabilitation business. That goes back to what Jim was saying about doing a lot of stewardship projects. However, they're highly

leveraged with local groups. We're getting free labour in many cases, volunteer labour. Also, industries and others are providing cut-rate infrastructure and that sort of thing. It would be very costly for the government to actually replace the kinds of things we're managing to do as partners in stewardship. There's a protection component of the NCP that I think is a very wise investment, and there's some in rehabilitation.

How I try to demonstrate why protection is more important than rehabilitation is by saying that if you drink black coffee, it's a lot easier to protect it from cream than it is to rehabilitate a double-double later.

The Chair: I was going to use a dental connection there: it's a lot easier to brush and floss than it is to put crowns and bridges everywhere.

We move to Mr. Sopuck for five minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: We've heard a lot today about the linkage between hunting and conservation. Obviously, anything that inhibits the recruitment of new hunters or hunting itself could have some conservation consequences.

This is why I was very alarmed when I read *Hansard* from October 27, where Jean Crowder, the New Democratic MP for Nanaimo—Cowichan, said that she supports legislation in which “animals would be considered people and not just property”. That same day, Françoise Boivin, the New Democratic MP for Gatineau, said that animals should be treated with “the same protection that we afford to children and people with mental or physical disabilities”.

This is obviously an attempt to introduce an animal rights policy into the federal government. I should note as well that there is an NDP MP's private member's bill, Bill C-592, which many of the traditional groups are objecting to. This bill has the potential to unintentionally criminalize all sorts of accepted animal use practices.

As well, when we looked at the effects of the long gun registry on hunter recruitment—the long gun registry was brought in by the previous government and eliminated by ours, of course—that had a serious impact on hunter recruitment.

I'd like Mr. Weeks, first, and Mr. Latraverse, second, to answer the following question. What are the conservation consequences if we lose a significant portion of our hunting community?

• (1025)

Mr. Gregory Weeks: Well, from our perspective at Ducks Unlimited, the hunting heritage is very ingrained in our organization. As I've mentioned, our organization was conceived by the hunting community and is very strongly supported by the hunting community, and from that perspective, we support the hunting community as part of our fabric. We also have a youth mentorship program that we support. In addition to that, we are very active in the school systems throughout Canada, in helping to educate classes from grade 3 up to high school. We don't shy away from our hunting heritage. It is ingrained in our fabric, and it's an important aspect of what we are. That is why we support hunting in Canada.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Latraverse, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: It is very important that hunting activities can continue in Canada. It is absolutely essential for keeping game populations healthy. Wildlife harvesting activities are also crucial for reducing road accidents and damage experienced by farmers because of the overpopulation of some wild species, such as the snow geese or the white-tailed deer. We need to consider hunting as the best tool for managing animal populations. More importantly, it brings major economic benefits. We therefore completely agree that hunting is the best tool for managing animal populations, for many reasons.

[English]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Latraverse, you made a comment that I noted. You said that hunters and anglers are essentially the only ones who pay for conservation. I think there is a lot of truth to what you say. I understand that at the hunting and angling advisory panel the groups are considering new ways to raise revenue for wildlife and fisheries conservation. In fact, you are almost asking to be taxed, which is unusual in Canada these days, but from my standpoint as a hunter of many, many decades, it is completely understandable.

Can you speculate on where we could possibly get some more revenues for fish and wildlife conservation? Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: I could give you an example from Quebec.

A few years ago, in Quebec, hunters, anglers, trappers and all the major wildlife organizations asked the government to increase the cost of permits and to give a portion of that increase back to wildlife. Eighty-five per cent of the increase has been given back to wildlife because of a financial measure called Réinvestissement dans le domaine de la faune. At a round table with the government, the major wildlife organizations determine the best actions that need to be taken to have healthy wildlife and increase the revenue generated by the economic benefits of hunting. That has given some outstanding results.

Right now, 175,000 moose hunters are spending substantial amounts of money to practice their sport in light of those reinvestments in wildlife, which are available because of the permit fees. It is very rare that those who like to observe wildlife buy hunting permits.

•(1030)

[English]

The Chair: Merci beaucoup. We'll have to move on to the next questioner.

Mr. Leef, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Ryan Leef: My question will be for Mr. Craik. It dovetails with what Mr. Latraverse was saying about hunters paying.

As an outfitter, I worked with the Kluane First Nation in Yukon Territory for three successive years when they had an exclusive opportunity to offer hunts in their traditional territory for Dall sheep. Those hunts were auctioned off over those years. One year the sheep went for \$165,000; the next year it was \$175,000, and the following year it was \$315,000. It clearly demonstrates the philanthropic view of hunters in general because the tag itself is about \$10 in Yukon.

On your end, you have an opportunity, exclusive rights for Cree on category II lands and category III for the establishment of outfitting concessions.

How many outfitting concessions are there? Do the Cree have a similar regime where they're able to turn some of the money from hunts into conservation-based projects?

The Kluane First Nation used 50% of the proceeds to go directly into conservation-based projects on their traditional territory. Do you have anything like that in your region?

Mr. Brian Craik: Well, it's a little different because, I believe, there are about three outfitters right now in the north, and they're all in trouble because of the collapse in the caribou herd.

There's not much more that can be said. There's not much revenue being made in those outfitting camps right now.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Are there opportunities for the Cree to utilize a similar type of program to effectively rehabilitate that caribou herd? Are there conservation objectives in mind to participate in that sort of thing, using that philanthropic angle that hunters are clearly prepared to participate in?

Mr. Brian Craik: The herd did not collapse as a result of some kind of external cause. It collapsed because of nature.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Carrying capacity.

Mr. Brian Craik: Carrying capacity was exceeded and they basically ate themselves out of browse.

Mr. Ryan Leef: You have to wait for a bit of restoration based on other management principles.

Mr. Brian Craik: It may take 25 years.

Mr. Ryan Leef: That's a fair point. Thank you.

This is a question for everybody to comment on quickly.

I'm looking back to 2011. Our government created the hunting and angling advisory panel. MP Norlock brought in a bill respecting a national hunting, trapping and angling heritage day. We have the national conservation plan to restore, preserve, and reconnect Canadians to wildlife and nature.

The recreational fisheries conservation partnership fund has restored 2,000 linear kilometres of habitat. We've leveraged about \$7 million against \$25 million invested by the federal government with over 100 projects. There were hundreds of community partners involved in that.

We've established a hunting and angling caucus. We've had a strong stance on traditional products, such as seal products markets for aboriginal and Inuit people. The fisheries committee is undertaking a recreational angling study right now. This committee, the environment committee, is reviewing hunting and trapping contributions to Canada.

As Mr. Sopuck mentioned, getting rid of the long gun registry had an impact on hunter recruitment. We have a Minister of the Environment who is a hunter first, and a born Inuit.

In your recollection, have we ever seen a federal government in Canada's history engage themselves with hunters on a conservation front like we have seen in the last four years?

The Chair: We'll begin with Mr. Craik.

Mr. Brian Craik: I personally haven't been involved with that a lot, but I know there has been more dialogue between the aboriginal people and the federal government, and I think it's appreciated.

• (1035)

Mr. Gregory Weeks: I don't know whether I can comment historically, but what I will say is that the opportunity to be engaged at this time is greatly appreciated, and it's important to me as a lifelong conservationist and hunter that we're being asked to sit at the table with this committee to voice our views.

Mr. Cameron Mack: Having been on the provincial scene for a long time—and this is fairly new to me—I will say that being on HAAP has been a very valuable experience. I think it's very good to get people together from across the country who have a vested interest in conservation and in hunting, trapping, and fishing. To provide policy advice to the ministers has been really great.

As I said earlier, I see many good things in the NCP in terms of the focus on protection and rehabilitation. There is some good stuff being done.

The Chair: We're a little over time, but finally, Mr. Latraverse, give just a 15-second response, please, if you can.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: We are very happy to take part in the hunting and angling advisory panel, which is very important. We thank the Conservative government for setting up this panel and for allowing us to participate in the 2012 conference.

We really hope that, in 2017, at the 150th anniversary of Confederation, Canadians will be reminded that hunting and fishing have allowed this country to exist. It is in our genes, our traditions, it is part of—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Latraverse.

We're going to move to our next questioner, Mr. Casey, for five minutes. Then, unless there is a call for further...we're nearing the very end of our time.

Mr. Casey, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sean Casey: I want to direct this question to the folks from Ducks Unlimited, but I would invite each of you, once you hear their response, to respond as well, if you have a reaction to it.

There is currently before Parliament a private member's bill, Bill C-655, that proposes amendments to the Criminal Code to prevent harassment of hunters and anglers. One of the apparent motivations for this is developments in technology, including the use of drones.

I'm the vice-chair of the justice committee, and quite frankly, it drives me crazy that every real or perceived problem can be

addressed by an amendment to the Criminal Code, but I guess I'm divulging my bias.

My question for you is, how pervasive is this problem, and are the measures presently in place adequate to address it? In your view, is this problem so pervasive that an amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada is required to address it?

Mr. James Brennan: Certainly, interfering with legitimate hunting activities is not permitted under the law. I know that in the province of Ontario it is not permitted under law right now. Cam may have more insight into that than I have.

I'm not personally aware of any drone activity interfering with hunting. That's not to say it's not coming. If you can land a drone on the White House lawn, perhaps this is something we need to be concerned about, but I'm not personally aware of any examples of its happening.

Mr. Sean Casey: There is no outcry from your members.

Mr. James Brennan: We haven't heard anything from our membership about it.

Mr. Sean Casey: Okay.

Do any of the other witnesses have any comments or perspectives to add on this question?

The Chair: Mr. Latraverse, it looks as though you are preparing to respond.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: In Quebec, that is already in the legislation.

Section 1.4 states: "No person may knowingly hinder a person who is lawfully carrying on an activity referred to in the first paragraph of section 1.3, including an activity preparatory to such an activity", which refers to hunting and fishing.

However, there are problems. Take Lake Saint-Pierre, for example. People practice kitesurfing there around people who are hunting migratory birds in the fall. So there are problems. I have seen some people scare off geese that were heading toward places with hunters. The same goes for waterfowl hunting in more populated regions. There are problems.

People are increasingly living in urban centres and they don't understand hunting activities. They don't understand that migration is part of the natural course of seasons and that we can kill some birds. That is part of our history and tradition. Hunting and fishing are traditional, heritage activities.

The fact that more and more people live in cities is causing perception problems. We have seen this in the different reactions of people in cities and people in the countryside at the simple sound of a firearm being used for a legal hunting activity. That can actually cause problems. It is absolutely fundamental that governments educate people about that.

• (1040)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Craik, did you want to respond?

Mr. Brian Craik: What I can say is that there is a continuous dialogue with Quebec and with the federal government and among the aboriginal groups through the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee. That type of issue is dealt with, if it becomes serious, through that committee.

The Chair: Are there any further responses on that? You have about 40 seconds.

Mr. Casey.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to ask Mr. Latraverse another question.

You said that a piece of legislation governs this problem in Quebec. Does this piece of legislation work well? Do we need to amend the Criminal Code to solve the problem?

Mr. Pierre Latraverse: That is part of the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife. Wildlife enforcement

officers and Sûreté du Québec officers can apply this legislation. If someone files a complaint, there will be follow-up. I wouldn't be able to say whether it is a criminal matter, but the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife guarantees the right to hunt and fish properly if the standards are followed.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Again I want to thank all of our witnesses for your time today.

To those who are here in person, thank you for your input.

Mr. Latraverse, thank you very much for your patience in dealing with the technology challenges. It has gone very well.

Thank you to all our committee members as well.

This meeting is adjourned.

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