



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

ENVI • NUMBER 145 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

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Chair

Mr. John Aldag

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I'd first like to welcome Madame Trudel and Ms. Block to our committee.

We have our departmental officials here today. Welcome back. I think we've seen all of you, not in the recent days, but probably weeks.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Fast. May I make my opening comments first, and then—?

Hon. Ed Fast: No. I think it will probably flow more smoothly—

The Chair: Is it a point of order?

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes, it is. It's a point of order I want to raise.

Colleagues and Mr. Chair, at the justice committee meeting on February 13, Randy Boissonnault, one of the Liberal members of that committee, stated the following:

I think...that, at best, committees of the House of Commons are political theatre that can occasionally achieve good studies.

That statement is in direct contrast to what both the Prime Minister and Government House Leader have said. In fact, the Prime Minister said on February 20:

...we have tremendous confidence in the processes that are in place to move forward—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): On a point of order, what's the relevance of this?

Hon. Ed Fast: I have the floor. I raised a point of order; I have the floor.

The Chair: Mr. Fast has the floor.

Hon. Ed Fast: This will not take long.

I'll repeat the quotation from the Prime Minister.

...we have tremendous confidence in the processes that are in place to move forward, including an investigation by the justice committee in which committee members are independent in their decisions on how to proceed.

We also have tremendous confidence in the officers...

Those are the Prime Minister's comments on February 20.

Mr. Boissonnault's comment also stands in direct contrast to what the government House leader said on February 25. I quote—

The Chair: What is the point of order that you're raising here?

Hon. Ed Fast: The point of order is that my privileges as a member of this committee have been negatively impacted by the fact that we have members of other committees claiming that the work we do here is at best to achieve good studies, but in fact is political theatre.

If I may continue, Mr. Chair, I'm almost at the end of my point. There's also a motion that I want to put on the table—a notice of motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Ed Fast: This is the government House leader's comment on February 25:

Mr. Speaker, as we said, we respect the work of the committees. We have confidence in the work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and all the other committees. We will allow them to do their work because we respect their work.

My question for you, Mr. Chair, is this. Does this committee and its members agree with Mr. Boissonnault's statement on the value of parliamentary committees, or do we agree with the Prime Minister and the House leader that committees are valuable tools in the parliamentary process?

The motion I am going to put on notice—

• (1555)

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Ed Fast: —is the following, for debate at another committee meeting:

That the Committee condemn the statement by the Member for Edmonton Centre and reaffirm the importance of the Parliamentary process and the role that committees play in Canada's system of government.

That is the motion that I place on the table.

The Chair: Thank you for that intervention..

As I was saying, today we're here on the subject matter of supplementary estimates (B) 2018-19 and interim estimates 2019-20.

We're a bit late getting started because of the votes that we just had, but the intention is to have the three departments and agencies present provide opening statements, and then we'll go into our regular round of questions.

My suggestion is that we'll stay with the witnesses for an hour; that was, I think, the desire. The witnesses have made themselves available for us on very short notice, and we truly appreciate it. Then at the end of that period we'll move into the second part of the meeting, which will be in camera, going into the forestry, ag and waste study report.

That's the plan for the meeting and the remainder of the time that we have today.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): I have a point of order.

The Chair: What's your point of order, Mr. Warawa?

Mr. Mark Warawa: The point of order is that this meeting that we're having right now with the witnesses who are before us—and I appreciate their being here—came from a desire that we have the minister invited here to deal with supplementary estimates—

The Chair: And the point of order...?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Are you interrupting me?

The Chair: I'm asking you to get the point of order, because I've introduced the witnesses and what we're going to be achieving—

Mr. Mark Warawa: With respect, Mr. Chair, I have the floor.

The Chair: What's the point of order, please?

Mr. Mark Warawa: We have this agenda today based on a request by this standing committee that we have the minister come here—and if the minister's not available, the parliamentary secretary—to deal with the supplementary estimates.

Complementing the minister or the parliamentary secretary, it was the decision of this committee—and Chair, you represent as the chair this committee, but the committee made a decision to invite the minister or the parliamentary secretary.... Complementing one of those two people would be the departmental officials. That was the decision of this committee, and you as chair are to enforce that decision.

Now, what we have today is not in line with what this committee decided. I would ask you, where is the minister?

The Chair: Let me respond.

The motion we had on Monday, or the direction I was given by the committee with agreement, is that we would invite the minister, and in her absence the parliamentary secretary, to join officials. That's what we did. We extended an invitation to the minister. We heard back that she was not available. We extended the invitation to the parliamentary secretary. We were told he was not available.

The invitation was made in good faith, as the committee asked me. I wasn't instructed to compel them to come. We invited them, and they weren't available. We said we would have departmental officials, and so we have many well-informed departmental officials here. I'm happy to hear their testimony and get into the discussion.

As we said on Monday, the minister has agreed that she will make herself available for the main estimates. We have that in writing, so there's agreement that she will be here for the mains. She was not able to come for the supps.

I think we had a brief discussion on Monday about the timing of this, because the supply day ended up being called for today, and so we won't be reporting back on these anyway. However, I still think we can have the conversation with the departmental officials about the intentions for these budgetary items that are before us. These have already essentially been deemed reported back to the House—they have gone back to the House as unreported.

That's where we are with the supps for today.

Mr. Mark Warawa: On that point, Chair, I appreciate the explanation and I trust that the intent was honourable, but the request to have the minister or the parliamentary secretary supported by department officials was made, I believe, by the committee, and as members of the opposition—and you have four members of the opposition—it is our only opportunity and our responsibility to question the government on the estimates and supplementary estimates.

If we do not—this is where it becomes a point of order—and our opportunity and responsibility to question the minister or parliamentary secretary was removed because of what happened....

To your point that this would have been passed anyway, the government has the authority to change and appoint when things happen, because it's a majority parliament. This is the second time while I've been on this committee that we as opposition members have not been given an opportunity to question the minister or to vote on the supplementary estimates.

I believe that's inappropriate and unparliamentary; our responsibilities are to question and have been removed because of the way this played out and, I believe, shouldn't have. This is the second time we cannot vote and cannot question.

• (1600)

The Chair: Mr. Warawa, if there's a specific reference within the committee business within the rule book—the procedures—then please get it to me so that we can figure out how to proceed. Right now I'm hearing that you're unhappy that the minister and parliamentary secretary aren't here. For a point of order, I need to hear what, from your perspective, is being contravened here.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Okay, I will do that at this very moment.

Hon. Ed Fast: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, this is about the third or fourth time you've done this in this meeting, and that is interrupting someone who has the floor. You cannot try to limit discussion at this table on matters that are important.

Mr. Warawa has brought up a very, very important point, which all of us on this side have serious concerns about. He is going to be quoting from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* to support the argument he's making.

The Chair: So let's hear from Mr. Warawa.

Hon. Ed Fast: Okay, let's do that, without interruption, please, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay, but I'm going to make sure as we have interventions that we're not getting repetitive, that we're moving the conversation forward.

Hon. Ed Fast: Has he been repetitive? That's not your call.

Mr. Chair, you fulfill your obligations as the chair. Do it properly.

Most of us around this table have been.... This isn't our first rodeo, okay?

The Chair: I've given Mr. Warawa the floor here.

Hon. Ed Fast: All right.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Chair.

Bosc and Gagnon, in the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, say on page 980—this is under chapter 20, regarding committees—under the title “To Send for Persons”:

Standing committees often need the collaboration, expertise and knowledge of a variety of individuals to assist them in their studies and investigations.

This is referring to witnesses whom this committee calls.

Usually these people appear willingly before committees when invited to do so. But situations may arise where an individual does not agree to appear and give evidence. If the committee considers that this evidence is essential to its study, it has the power to summon such a person to appear.

A committee exercises this power by adopting a motion to summon one or more individuals to appear before it at a set date, time and location. The summons, signed by the Chair of the committee, is served on each of the individuals by a bailiff. It states the name of the committee concerned, the matter for which the appearance is required, the authority under which it is ordered, and the date and location of the appearance. It also orders the witness to be available from the time of the appearance until duly released by the committee.

Under the further explanation on this, it is stated:

This power, delegated to standing committees by the House, is part of the privileges, rights and immunities which the House of Commons inherited when it was created. They were considered essential to its functions as a legislative body, so that it could investigate, debate and legislate, and are constitutional in origin.

We have heard from the House and the Speaker of the House that committees are independent. We have heard rumours that in a majority government such as we are experiencing, the PMO provides direction to the Liberal members, who will then take direction from the Prime Minister's Office and do what the Prime Minister's Office wants, and so there's a pre-determined outcome. But we are told that this is unparliamentary; that the committees are their own creatures, and we then have a level of trust that we build in working with one another.

This is the issue before us today—and this is, I believe, a sound point of order—that the chair received instruction from this committee to call two people, the minister or the parliamentary secretary, and one of those two people could be supported by officials. I respect officials, I appreciate their expertise, but we wanted the minister or the parliamentary secretary.

Those were the instructions, but this is not what we got. It was our responsibility to question the minister—and so that I don't repeat myself, it was very clear—and that was the responsibility of the chair.

What we have today is not what was directed by this committee.

I would ask you, Chair, did you, to deviate from the instructions that were given by the committee, contact either of the vice-chairs—and hopefully it was both vice-chairs who were contacted—to say, “We can't get the minister, or we can't the parliamentary secretary. Do I have your okay to continue the meeting on the topic of supplementary estimates? Can we go ahead without the minister or

the parliamentary secretary?” It was clear that those were the people who were supposed to be here.

I look forward to your comment. This is not the first time this has happened, namely, that we have called for the minister to appear and the minister has refused to come to this committee. I don't know why she's refusing to come to this committee, but she has that responsibility.

• (1605)

My second question for you is whether we can by motion, as I've read here on page 980, summon such a person to appear. In this Parliament, does this standing committee have the power to ask a minister or a parliamentary secretary to be here, or is it a witness within the public?

It doesn't elaborate on that in this, but you have a clerk to support you in providing wise advice.

Does this committee have power or authority to call the minister or a parliamentary secretary and compel them to attend?

The Chair: Thank you for your comments.

Page 982 of the book you just referenced notes that we cannot order a member or a senator to appear. In light of that direction, I took what was the committee's direction to me, which was to invite.... We invited them. We were told that they were not available.

However, the direction was also that we invite the departmental officials. We extended the invitation to departmental officials, and they were able to make themselves available.

The analysts were able to do a great service in providing a summary of the estimates. I had heard the official opposition make a great appeal to be able to study the estimates, because as you said, this was your one chance to scrutinize where the funds are going.

We decided to proceed with this portion of the meeting. That's why, when the notice went out, we had one hour with departmental officials and then one hour in camera for report review. That is where we've gone.

No, we can't compel the minister to come. We invited her and she declined. The parliamentary secretary declined. Page 982 says clearly that we cannot order a member of the House of Commons or a senator to appear. As I said, we invited them and they declined.

That's where I felt it was still in our interest to go forward with the meeting. You said that you would like to hear about and question anyone on where these funds are going. Having looked through the estimates, I think there are some great questions that we could ask our officials about with regard to some of the decisions being made on the funds before us.

• (1610)

Mr. Mark Warawa: May I finish then?

The Chair: If it's a point of order, then yes.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Well, it's responding to your ruling.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Page 982 that you've referenced says:

There is no specific rule governing voluntary appearances by Members of the House of Commons before parliamentary committees. They may appear before a committee if they wish and have been invited.

This part is what I think is quite salient:

If a member of the House refuses an invitation to appear

—and we have that—

before a standing committee and the committee decides that such an appearance is necessary

—I think this is the perfect example of that, but what is the solution?—

it may so report to the House, and it will be up to the House to decide what measures should be taken.

I've read verbatim what's in the manual. We do not have the power to force the minister to be here. If the committee says, yes, a minister or parliamentary secretary is a reasonable person, to allow the members of the official opposition.... We're a democracy. We have an opposition. It's the parliamentary structure. Is it reasonable that we should have access at one of these standing committees to hear from the minister and for the minister or parliamentary secretary to be available to answer our questions on the supplementary estimates, the estimates and the mains? I would argue that, yes, it is reasonable.

We do not have the power, but we do have this option. If the member, minister or parliamentary secretary refuses an invitation to appear and the committee then decides that such an appearance is necessary—I would hope that I have that support from the Liberal members—it may report this to the House and it will be up to the House to decide what is the solution.

That would be my motion in response. You do not need 48 hours' notice on a motion that is relevant to what we're discussing right now. Or I can wait until I have the time and move a motion at that time, but in the spirit of efficiency...and I'm still speaking specifically to a point of order. This committee, I believe, has a responsibility to provide us the resources so that we can do our job as members of the opposition. Without that support, this committee I believe is not doing what a standing committee should do in a democracy that needs to be a shining example around this world.

Because a government has a majority, it doesn't need to give the official opposition and other opposition members no rights in the House. They can do that—they can bully—but because you can do it doesn't mean you should.

I'm hoping that we have support from the Liberal members of this committee and that they would refer this to the House, because it's not the first time. If it was one time, I wouldn't be speaking on this, but there have been multiple times that the minister has refused, and now the parliamentary secretary.... What we asked for, we were not given. We can't do our job because of that.

The Chair: I have Ms. Dzerowicz on my speaking list.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I think there have been a number of things raised. What I wanted to do is recommend that maybe we suspend the meeting, just to see whether or not we have some options in terms of proceeding with the agenda of today. Can we do that?

• (1615)

The Chair: At this point, I think....

Mr. Fast, did you have something on a point of order?

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes, I did.

The Chair: Okay.

I have a point of order that I need to hear. At that point, I don't have anybody else and I'm ready to move into the meeting.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Okay. That's fine. If that's what you'd like to do, that's fine.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, my point of order involves the respect that each one of us as members of Parliament shows each other at this table. I've been here for some 13-odd years. I've participated in a number of different committees. We paid attention to the work that was being done. I am noticing that here at this table we have members who are plugged in with earbuds, presumably listening—

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Listening intently to you.

The Chair: What's the point of order here?

Hon. Ed Fast: The point is the respect that needs to be shown to each other as members of Parliament working at a committee collaboratively. It is a high degree of disrespect to have members at this table listening to something else. I assume it is the proceedings of another committee at which the former justice minister is appearing.

The bottom line is that we still have a member reading something.... Before, it was a newspaper. It was pretty clear that it was a newspaper. This is about respect. I want to put this on the record here. We have Liberal members at this table—

The Chair: Okay. This isn't a point of order.

Hon. Ed Fast: —who are supposed to engage—

The Chair: This is not a point of order, so I'm going to move on.

Hon. Ed Fast: —in the discussion around this table.

The Chair: This is not a point of order. I'm—

Hon. Ed Fast: What's the basis upon which you're ruling that this is not a point of order?

The Chair: Point me to a clause, a line, a paragraph in the manual. That's what a point of order has to be called on.

Hon. Ed Fast: You've ruled my point not to be a point of order, so it's your responsibility to show this committee—

The Chair: I'm asking you to direct me to what line, what paragraph, what section is—

Hon. Ed Fast: I can tell you that the privileges of being a member of Parliament are accorded to each one of us and we are to use them wisely. We're supposed to show each other respect, both in the House and at committee. What I see happening here at this table...Liberal members actually engaged long distance in other committee proceedings that have nothing to do with the matters that are before us today.

The Chair: Mr. Fast, I'm going to offer the observation—

Hon. Ed Fast: I've made my point. You know who I'm speaking to—

The Chair: —that every one of the committee members here from time to time has focused on things other than the matter at hand—

Hon. Ed Fast: I look forward to your ruling. I've made my point, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: —so I'm going to move into the opening statements.

I believe we're going to have the department go first.

Ms. Najm, if you'd like to start with your opening comments, that would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Ms. Carol Najm (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Financial Branch, Department of the Environment): Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here with you today to discuss the 2018-19 supplementary estimates (B) and the 2019-20 interim estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada.

With me are Matt Jones, the assistant deputy minister of the pan-Canadian framework implementation office, and John Moffet, the ADM of environmental protection.

The supplementary estimates (B) include a net reduction of \$1.8 million in funding that is seeking parliamentary approval. This is resulting from \$1.8 million in transfers between Environment and Climate Change Canada and other government departments. This represents a 0.1% decrease in the authorities to date, bringing the proposed authorities to \$1.66 billion.

Our supplementary estimates (B) include three transfers for Environment and Climate Change Canada and other government departments. There is \$160,000 from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and Parks Canada for the Assembly of First Nations Elders Council. There is \$59,500 for the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for improving the capacity of northern communities to predict changing ice conditions. There is \$2 million for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council to support the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.

In addition, there is a transfer of \$6.8 million from the operating vote 1 to grants and contributions vote 10 included in these estimates. This will allow Environment and Climate Change Canada to realign its funding with emerging priorities. These priorities include \$5 million in additional funding for the quick start component of the Canada nature fund and \$1.8 million for the indigenous guardians program.

Originally, the department approved to fund a list of proposals for both the quick start component and the indigenous guardians pilot program. Nonetheless, both of these initiatives have also identified a number of eligible proposals that have exceeded existing funding. In order to support these additional proposals that would benefit from immediate funding, Environment and Climate Change Canada has determined that the most effective way to meet this mandate commitment is by mobilizing external stakeholders through the use of grants and contributions. Therefore, Environment and Climate Change Canada proactively reallocated a total of \$6.8 million from within existing reference levels to ensure that these additional projects can move forward.

The 2019-20 interim estimates include an overview of spending required for the first three months of the fiscal year as it compares to the 2018-19 main estimates and the estimates to date. Environment and Climate Change Canada is requesting funding of \$426.8 million

through these interim estimates, which includes \$209.3 million in operating expenditures, \$20.6 million in capital expenditures and \$196.9 million in grants and contributions for April to June 2019 to cover financial requirements during the first three months of the fiscal year until a full supply can be attained through the 2019-20 main estimates.

Funding requested through the 2019-20 interim estimates will allow Environment and Climate Change Canada to provide national leadership for a wide range of environmental issues, including action on clean growth and climate change. It will also allow the department to continue its engagement in activities aimed at preventing and managing pollution, conserving nature and predicting weather and environmental conditions by engaging our strategic partners, including provinces, territories and indigenous peoples.

I hope this summary of our initiatives included in the 2018-19 supplementary estimates and the 2019-20 interim estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada provides this committee with the insight members have been seeking.

Thank you.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we go on, we have just heard quite impassioned comments about the need for respect at this table, and I'm just wondering if all the members want to be here to hear the opening statements or if all parties are willing to multi-task and catch the comments not at the table.

Before I go into the next round of witnesses... I see Mr. Fast has left. I don't know if we're expecting somebody to come in so that the opposition will have their full round of representatives here to be part of this discussion. I'm trying to balance the messages that I've been hearing throughout this meeting so far. If we want to have a respectful discussion, I would ask that everybody sit and that perhaps when our witnesses are speaking we be engaged in the testimony they bring forward.

Now we'll go to the Environmental Assessment Agency.

Mr. Alan Kerr (Vice-President, Corporate Services, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm Alan Kerr, Vice-President of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer. I'm joined by my colleague—

The Chair: Just a second, sir.

Mr. Warawa, you have a point of order.

Mr. Mark Warawa: On a point of order, page 1016 states the following:

When a standing committee examines estimates, it is free to arrange its own proceedings. Ordinarily, committees find it convenient to examine the votes assigned to them in groups...

They often or usually consist of a number of votes under one heading in the estimates, and occasionally both simultaneously. It continues:

Committees generally begin their examination of the estimates by hearing from the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary...for the activities and programs dealt with in the votes, who is usually accompanied by senior departmental officials.

I don't see a heading under supplementary estimates, so I've made an assumption that estimates and supplementary estimates are managed by the same policies.

The direction from this committee was right in order with the guidelines, with the policies of Parliament. That has not happened, Chair, so I'm going to move that—

The Chair: You can't move a motion on a point of order. You'll have to wait until you have the floor.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Then I'll be leaving the committee, because I don't believe....

One of the changes the Liberals made is that they don't have to have any opposition members here; the meeting can continue. I believe this is quite disrespectful to members. I believe it's unparliamentary that for this committee the ministers say they don't have to come and the parliamentary secretaries say they don't have to come. We have a Liberal-dominated committee here. If the opposition members don't want to listen, then they don't have to. I think it's quite disrespectful what has happened. I believe it's unparliamentary. The guidelines, the policies, have clearly shown that this is not the way committees should be run.

With that, I will be leaving the committee.

•(1625)

The Chair: Then we'll move back to our witness.

Mr. Kerr, please continue with your opening statement.

Mr. Alan Kerr: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

As I was saying, I'm joined by my colleague Christine Loth-Bown, Vice-President of External Relations and Strategic Policy. We're here to discuss the 2018-19 supplementary estimates (B) and the 2019-20 interim estimates for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency.

The agency's team of highly qualified employees supports the Minister of Environment and Climate Change by conducting evidence-based environmental assessments for major projects in a manner that protects the environment, fosters economic growth and jobs, and supports sustainable development. Just as importantly, our environmental assessments also consider input received from the public, indigenous groups and many other stakeholders.

In 2017-18 the agency supported the minister in leading a national review of federal environmental assessment processes. In February 2018 these efforts reached a major milestone with the tabling of Bill C-69 in Parliament, which proposes changes to the current Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, including new rules for the review of major projects and an expanded role for the agency. In this regard, we are providing ongoing advice and support to the parliamentary process as the proposed bill is currently under review by the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources.

In supplementary estimates (B) for fiscal year 2018-19, the agency requests a single item for an interdepartmental transfer of \$100,000 to Environment and Climate Change Canada as part of a portfolio initiative. This contribution is for elders of the Assembly of First Nations to consult broadly with elders across Canada to develop a policy on indigenous knowledge by March of 2020. The agency is contributing to this initiative as part of its policy dialogue funding program to support the participation of indigenous peoples in the development of agency policies and guidance.

Turning to the interim estimates for fiscal year 2019-20, the agency requests \$17 million in funding, representing three-twelfths of the agency's anticipated expenditure authority for 2019-20. The funding requested through interim estimates supports the continued delivery of environmental assessments under the current Canadian Environmental Assessment Act as well as new and expanded activities in three specific areas: impact assessment; partnering with indigenous peoples; and cumulative effects, open science, and evidence.

Under the proposed impact assessment act, the agency will become the lead organization responsible for the federal impact assessment of designated projects. This will include major projects that are currently assessed by the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The agency will conduct assessments within strict legislated timelines. The significant responsibilities and enhanced programs proposed under the legislation include the following: a new early planning phase for project assessments, improved co-operation with other jurisdictions, increased opportunities for public participation and transparency, and supporting indigenous peoples and the public in an expanded role in monitoring impacts during the implementation and operation of approved projects.

The last time the agency appeared in front of the committee, we highlighted the agency's work in pursuing discussions on co-operation agreements with interested provinces in support of the objective of "one project, one assessment". This work continues, with a majority of provinces and territories having expressed interest to date. Further, the agency is planning to pilot several new elements of the proposed impact assessment act, with willing proponents, such as early planning and an analysis of socio-economic impacts for a project in the early stages of an environmental assessment under the current act.

The agency continues to advance key initiatives that will support the successful implementation of the proposed impact assessment act, including the development of policy and guidance to assist proponents by clarifying key concepts and changes. We continue to engage the multi-interest advisory committee established in August of 2016 by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to obtain advice across various interest groups on key regulatory and policy issues prior to the coming into force of the proposed impact assessment act.

•(1630)

The agency will soon establish, formally, a technical advisory committee on science and knowledge and an indigenous advisory committee, which will provide the agency with valuable expert advice and guidance for the transition to the proposed new impact assessment system.

In terms of partnering with indigenous peoples, as we noted at our last appearance, under the proposed new act, the agency will fulfill the role of Crown consultation coordinator for all designated projects. In this context, the agency will work to ensure effective collaboration and meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples. These goals will be achieved through the provision of increased participant funding for project assessments as well as the launch of a new capacity support program that will improve the preparedness of indigenous groups to participate in assessment processes and their ability to provide technical expertise related to impact assessment. In turn, this increased capacity is expected to result in strengthened participation in federal assessments, ensuring that indigenous knowledge, laws and culture are considered in impact assessments and influence outcomes. These efforts will support the government's reconciliation commitments.

The agency is currently holding workshops in regions across the country to engage indigenous groups in the development of policies for their participation in and co-operation with the agency on impact assessments, the new capacity support program I just mentioned, and the assessment of impacts on indigenous rights.

The agency has also made advances in support of the government's deliberative approach to cumulative effects. Working with other federal departments, provinces and indigenous groups, the agency will undertake three regional assessments over five years, which will support the management of cumulative effects and provide important information for future project assessments. Work continues on the first of the three regional assessments, which will study the potential impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration east of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In December, the agency announced the availability of funding through its participant funding program for the participation of the public and indigenous groups in this regional assessment. This initiative is being undertaken in co-operation with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and Natural Resources Canada.

Thank you for opportunity to be here today. My colleague and I will be happy to respond to your questions.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you for those comments.

Now we'll go to Parks Canada.

Mr. Michael Nadler (Acting Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members, for the opportunity to join you at this meeting and speak with you today.

I'm Michael Nadler. In my normal role, I'm the vice-president for external relations and visitor experience at Parks Canada. I'm serving presently as the interim chief executive officer of the agency.

[Translation]

Joining me today is Sylvain Michaud, Parks Canada's Chief Financial Officer.

I'd like to begin, if I may, with the 2018-19 supplementary estimates (B) for Parks Canada. These estimates are the last opportunity for the agency to adjust its main estimates for 2018-19.

[English]

The agency's submission amounts to an increase in appropriations of \$641,000, bringing the agency's total appropriations to \$7.19 billion for 2018-19.

Colleagues, Parks Canada is seeking approval for adjustments to its appropriations for the following four items.

The first is \$467,000, related to funding for the implementation of the Baffin and Ukkusiksalik national parks Inuit impact and benefit agreements. Previous implementation funding had expired, but renewed funding was approved recently to ensure that Canada's ongoing obligations can continue to be met in these important agreements.

Second is a transfer of \$225,000 from the Department of Transport to undertake important climate risk assessment reports and assessments to identify the climate change risks to the Gulf Shore Parkway in Prince Edward Island.

•(1635)

[Translation]

The third is a transfer of \$60,000 from Parks Canada to Environment and Climate Change Canada for a project under the stewardship of the Assembly of First Nations Elders Council. The funding will support the development of local and national indigenous knowledge networks for improved nature protection and conservation.

[English]

Fourth is a vote transfer of \$35 million from the agency's program expenditures vote to the agency's capital vote for its new parks and historic sites account. The purpose of this transfer is the creation, expansion and completion of national parks and national marine conservation areas, such as Bruce Peninsula National Park and Lake Superior National Conservation Marine Area.

In light of these requests for adjustments, I'd like to highlight some of the outstanding work that Parks Canada has accomplished this fiscal year in protecting Canada's natural and cultural heritage and sharing the stories of these special places, as well as its focus on important relationships with indigenous peoples.

As you're aware, the Government of Canada has committed to conserving 10% of its marine and coastal waters by 2020. On October 30, 2018, an agreement in principle was reached between Parks Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the QIA, outlining key elements of the future Inuit impact and benefit agreement for a Tallurutiup Imanga national marine conservation area in Lancaster Sound in Nunavut. This will become the largest protected area ever in Canada, at approximately 109,000 square kilometres. We're very proud of this achievement.

We're equally proud of work that we're doing to restore our aging asset base across places throughout the country. Parks Canada's program to invest an unprecedented \$3.6 billion in restoring aging assets is now entering its fifth year of implementation and is continuing to improve our infrastructure while supporting local economies and contributing to growth in the tourism sector.

In November, the agency tabled the Gwaii Haanas land-sea-people management plan to Parliament. This relates to Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve. This plan is the first of its kind and integrates historic and contemporary Haida knowledge. It also considers opportunities for those who depend on Gwaii Haanas for their livelihood. This will further increase appreciation and learning opportunities in Gwaii Haanas for people today and for generations to come.

Finally, I would like to address the Parks Canada Agency's 2019-20 interim estimates, which are represented at approximately \$361 million. These estimates represent the agency's spending requirements for the first three months of 2019-20.

Interim estimates support the introduction of an interim supply bill in March, presenting Parliament with the anticipated financial requirements of organizations during the first months of the new fiscal year until full supply can be obtained in June.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, once again, I'd like to thank you for your time today.

We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have. Mr. Michaud and I are here to do just that, and given our extensive knowledge of the agency's operations, we are well-suited to support the committee in its examination of supplementary estimates (B).

[English]

Sylvain and I have a broad knowledge of Parks Canada. We welcome the opportunity to be here and, to be honest, we are very well situated to help the committee in its deliberations today.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we'll get into questions. I expect that we're going to have a different flavour to the questions, given the current composition of the members around the table.

With that, I have Mr. Amos up first.

Will, you have six minutes.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to apologize on behalf of those who are not present for what I consider to be disrespectful treatment of Canada's civil

servants. I don't think it's fair to have to sit and wait. Everyone knew full well what the purpose of this meeting was. It turned into something different.

However, I would like to seize the opportunity by starting with some thanks and congratulations. I'll start with Parks Canada. I noted recently, and had a good conversation with your minister around, the Lutsel K'e Dene's approval of the plan to move forward with Thaidene Nene. I had an opportunity to paddle there for a significant period of time, and I did a bit of legal work with them around this particular protected area's initiative.

I want to give a shout out, given that we're in a public setting, and put on the record my congratulations to those parks officials who, as far back as half a century ago, were working on this file, people like Bob Gamble, Tom Kovacs, Pat Thomson and others who came in later on, Murray McComb and Kevin McNamee. My dad, of course, was involved—

• (1640)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): I was going to say, don't forget your dad.

Mr. William Amos: I think there are opportunities in life to put on the public record that some good Canadians were very patient. This is a great story that tells us something about what's happening today. What we're hearing from both the assessment agency, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada is that significant funds are being invested through the supplementary estimates to enable advance indigenous consultation, to enable engagement with indigenous communities so that they can responsibly and appropriately participate in project evaluation or protected area assessment—the list goes on—and to engage them in programs like the indigenous guardians program.

The lessons that were learned back in the late sixties and early seventies around Thaidene Nene were that you can't just tell them what's good and appropriate for the environment. In the case of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, it was the same lesson in the context of a project approval. You can't just tell the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Territories what to think and what to do. Those lessons were hard learned. It's taken a long time, but I think that our government is demonstrating that we are learning those lessons and that we're investing in order to make sure that we don't make the same mistakes that we did in the past.

I'd like to thank our civil servants and those who are not here today, but who are behind the walls at Terrasses de la Chaudière and other places in Gatineau and elsewhere, for their hard work, and I congratulate them on their successes.

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. William Amos: Well, I'm sure there are others among my colleagues who have other things to say.

Maybe I could ask if our civil servants here could comment on whether they think we're actually headed in the right direction with regard to indigenous consultation, both in a project evaluation context and in a protected areas context.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Might I start on Thaidene Nene and then...?

With your permission, might I add some names to that list? Steven Nitah, of course, has been a fundamental person in the negotiation of the establishment of that place. Your comment is actually highly relevant to our supplementary estimates, given the transfer of resources to Environment Canada to better integrate traditional indigenous knowledge into conservation activities. I really welcome that observation.

Without the Lutsel K'e Dene and the Northwest Territories government, that protected area would not have been possible. We, too, celebrate the resounding confirmation that the community gave to the establishment of that unique protected area. It truly will be a collaboratively managed space that integrates indigenous traditional knowledge with western science and acts of both conservation and reconciliation. We'd love to host you there, so if ever the committee would like to visit Lutsel K'e Dene, I think they would love to see you as well. It would be a real privilege and pleasure.

You can attest, I'm sure, to the beauty of the East Arm. It's a remarkable space.

Mr. William Amos: I would add Steve Ellis' name to that as well.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Yes, of course. Forgive me.

Ms. Christine Loth-Bown (Vice-President, Policy Development Sector, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency): With respect to indigenous knowledge and indigenous relationships in impact assessment, as was noted, we are funding, jointly across the portfolio, important work to be done through the Assembly of First Nations with elders to look at how indigenous knowledge is used and treated within assessments and with the other studies and scientific work that each of our organizations conduct.

Also, currently with an assessment, we have great examples of working collaboratively with indigenous communities to assess the impacts on rights that potential projects will have, to work to develop solutions and measures to potentially accommodate those impacts on rights, and to make sure that this is brought to bear in the impact assessment reports that go forward for decisions.

Then, as this committee knows, and has spent considerable time on, there are a number of important components in Bill C-69 that would make indigenous knowledge mandatory through assessments, such as the acknowledgement right up front in the legislation of the impacts on rights and, of course, the important changes to the recognition of indigenous jurisdictions in impact assessment.

• (1645)

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Jones.

Mr. Matt Jones (Assistant Deputy Minister, Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office, Department of the Environment): I would like to make a quick comment on behalf of my colleagues working on climate change. At Environment and Climate Change Canada, we established along with the Pan-Canadian framework three distinctions-based tables with the Métis nation, first nations, and Inuit with representatives from across the country. We meet regularly for a couple of days at a time both here in Ottawa and, importantly, in indigenous communities. This includes all of the departments and agencies involved in all aspects of climate change—from clean technology to carbon-pricing to mitigation and

adaptation policies. We have joint committees that have led to a number of sometimes difficult but very useful exchanges of information, debate and discussion that have been helpful in strengthening how we're implementing our policies and programs, and, importantly, how we will design future policies and programs. That has been a really important engagement tool for us.

The Chair: Excellent, thank you. Madame Trudel, I will share extra time with you as well. Would you like to go next?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your presentations and input. Thank you, as well, for being here today.

In supplementary estimates (B) for 2018-19, Environment and Climate Change Canada is seeking an internal reallocation of \$6.8 million to support the quick start component of the Canada nature fund and to support the indigenous guardians pilot program.

From which programs is the \$6.8 million being reallocated? Did the programs achieve their objectives this fiscal year without the \$6.8 million needing to be spent?

Ms. Carol Najm: Thank you.

[*English*]

In 2018-19, Environment and Climate Change Canada received and approved an operating budget carry-forward amount of \$39 million from the previous year into 2018-19, and of this amount \$6.8 million was used to internally reallocate from operating to grants and contributions to support the quick-start component of the Canada nature fund and to support the indigenous guardians programs. There was no direct reduction to any specific program; it was from the carry-forward.

[*Translation*]

Did that answer your first question?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Yes.

Ms. Carol Najm: Your second question was about the programs directly affected.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Yes, that's correct.

Ms. Carol Najm: Did you have a third question?

Ms. Karine Trudel: No. Thank you.

My next question is for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency officials.

Further to Bill C-69, the supplementary estimates set out a \$49.3-million increase in funding to date. Will the agency's annual funding remain at the 2018-19 level going forward?

[English]

Mr. Alan Kerr: Thank you, Chair, I'll take the question. With regard to the funds allocated to the agency and how we will continue to live within our appropriation, we have many flexibilities in how we prepare to implement legislation that is still in front of the parliamentary process. We have a couple of different tools for how we recruit staff and how we prepare. We need to be able to respond to the changes in appropriations through future parliamentary processes. I hope that adequately addresses the committee member's question.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: I gather that you haven't hired any new staff yet. The funding is simply in anticipation of Bill C-69's passage.

[English]

Mr. Alan Kerr: Perhaps I'd clarify my first response to say that in fact the funding to the agency has been in two stages. We received the additional funds in the current fiscal year, and we have hired additional staff. Recognizing that future appropriations have not yet been approved, we make adjustments based on whether we hire indeterminate staff, term staff, or in some cases casuals. We also have opportunities both within the portfolio and across the Public Service of Canada to have deployments of employees to make sure that we have the resources we need to prepare for possible implementation if the legislation is approved through the parliamentary process, and that we also have the flexibility to remain within the appropriations made by future Parliaments of Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: If Bill C-69 were to be defeated in the Senate, would the contract employees who were hired lose their jobs or not?

[English]

Mr. Alan Kerr: As I said, not all employees are necessarily brought in on an indeterminate basis. Often we have deployments between departments of the Government of Canada. Also, there is a natural turnover of personnel as people move to new or different or more challenging responsibilities in other departments.

I don't think it would be appropriate to conclude that there may be possible losses of jobs because of that constant turnover. As we manage to the uncertainties of the parliamentary approvals, it's a natural part of our business of managing in the public sector in the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you.

Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Great.

My last question is for the Parks Canada Agency officials.

Will you spend the funds by March 31, 2019? If so, what land will you acquire?

Mr. Sylvain Michaud (Chief Financial Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Of course, the plan is to spend almost all of the funds by

the end of the year, but delays are always possible. Acquiring land is a multi-step process. If delays arise once the negotiation process has begun, it's not unusual for the acquisition to be postponed until the following year. However, the funding under the vote is specifically for those initiatives. In the case of land acquisition, the funding is not spent until the transaction is completed, however long that may take. For now, our intention is to spend almost all the funding.

You also asked about the land we will be acquiring. The largest portion is to expand the Bruce Peninsula National Park. In supplementary estimates (A), we received \$21 million to acquire land in the Bruce Peninsula National Park. I would say that is the biggest amount.

Next is the Lake Superior initiative, with about \$10 million in allocated funding. Small amounts for various parks across the country make up the rest.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Very good. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bossio, over to you for six or so minutes.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you all for being here today.

It's too bad that we all weren't here for the outstanding news that you've brought today on a number of different fronts, from Parks Canada to indigenous relations to climate change. There are so many different things that are happening right now in your files that you probably haven't experienced in a long time. It's great to have you here today to share that information.

We're seeing a lot of indigenous engagement. Is that a reflection of the intent around Bill C-69, and traditional knowledge and meaningful consultation that is expressed in the bill? We're already starting to see the intent of Bill C-69 being reflected now in a lot of the engagement that we're seeing with indigenous communities.

• (1655)

Ms. Christine Loth-Bown: With respect to project assessments, we have always been very active in our engagement with indigenous groups. On a project-by-project basis, the agency has a long history of having a participant funding program. We announce grant and contribution funding for indigenous communities to be able to apply to for their active participation in project assessments. That continues. We have many announcements that have come out with various project assessments to provide funding for that.

In addition, my colleague spoke about workshops that we currently have going on across the country. We had an open invitation under this participant funding program, as well, for a policy dialogue forum.

We are hosting workshops across the country to talk about the policy and guidance aspects of the proposed bill. That's an important component to make sure that as we are developing policy, guidance and potential regulations to support the bill, should it be passed, that we've been able to do those in a way that engages the communities that will be affected.

In addition to the discussions and workshops that are being held across the country with indigenous communities, we also hold sessions with industry, environmental organizations. As my colleague noted, we also continue to support a multi-interest advisory committee, which that is made up of membership from the national indigenous organizations, industry associations, and environmental and non-government organizations as well.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you so much for that extensive answer.

I see that there is specific funding for the guardians program. It's something that Mr. Amos and I have really advocated strongly for, because we see its importance. We went to Gwaii Haanas and Haida Gwaii and saw the impact that the Watchmen had there, and then we had Steven Nitah come here to committee and talk about the rangers in the north, with Valerie Courtois speaking about the guardians. Do we see, in the engagement that's happening with the guardians and those other entities, a role for them under a future Bill C-69 in the impact assessment area?

Ms. Christine Loth-Bown: With respect to those two programs, I think they are excellent examples of where indigenous communities have been able to get more active in the conservation and protection of their communities and the environment. Under Bill C-69, there's the opportunity for the minister to establish monitoring committees, and I think that's an important component of a project assessment.

We've heard a considerable amount of feedback from indigenous communities, and from other communities as well, in that they want the opportunity to be actively involved in the monitoring over the long term of the implementation of a project, in order to ensure that the conditions and the parameters that go around the approval of a project are lived up to at the end of the day. There's the opportunity under Bill C-69 to have very active monitoring committees and to sort of extend on a similar nature to what some of these programs are offering.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you, Christine.

To go to Parks Canada, I see a lot of great work being done with Thaidene Nene in the Bruce Peninsula and Lake Superior park initiatives. Is that a reflection of the \$1.3-billion investment in protected spaces? Are we now starting to see the fruits of those investments moving forward through these types of initiatives?

Mr. Michael Nadler: It's a complementary phenomenon. The funding—

Mr. Mike Bossio: I know that these were being worked on for a very long time, but I don't know if this has helped to put them over the top.

Mr. Michael Nadler: Yes, exactly. Over the past successive federal budgets, we have seen investments in conservation that are allowing these establishment efforts to continue and expand our national parks terrestrially and our national marine conservation areas in the marine areas and the ocean.

What the nature legacy funding will allow us to do, though, is strengthen our conservation of these areas for the future. The funding that's going to Parks Canada out of that significant budget 2018 investment will actually ensure that these places are protected, stored and conserved for generations to come. We're strengthening our

science capacity and our ongoing conservation capacity with that funding.

Mr. Mike Bossio: You mentioned some developments at Gwaii Haanas. Can you expand on that a little? I didn't really catch the full picture. I did realize that there were some developments there, so that was a pleasant surprise, having been there and seeing just how incredible a place it is and how magical it is

Mr. Michael Nadler: Forgive me, but can you remind me, sir, whether the committee visited Gwaii Haanas as group? Or did you—

• (1700)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Yes, as part of the protected spaces study that we did.

Mr. Michael Nadler: I should have known that. I apologize.

Mr. Mike Bossio: That's all right.

Mr. Michael Nadler: I would encourage all of you to read the Gwaii Haanas management plan that was tabled recently in Parliament. Under our legislation under the National Parks Act, these management plans must be tabled in Parliament. That plan really truly is a statement on co-management and collaborative management of both land and water.

If there's one area where Parks Canada is striving to strengthen our work, it's in managing terrestrial spaces and adjacent waters. Gwaii Haanas is an excellent example. Above all, it's an example of collaboration and true co-management of a protected place with indigenous peoples. That management plan is a product of a collaborative government arrangement and reflects the aspirations of the Haida as well as the Government of Canada and all Canadians.

Mr. Mike Bossio: To move on to the pan-Canadian framework, can you give us an update, Matt, on how that's rolling along and on further advancements that you see in the near future?

Mr. Matt Jones: There have been a number of developments recently. Somewhere here I have a bit of an itemized list, but the high points are numerous. I think a lot is happening on green infrastructure and bilateral agreements with provinces on the infrastructure side. When it comes to regulatory developments, there have been a number of draft regulations published that John could tell you more about, including our efforts to accelerate the phase-out of coal-powered power plants. Carbon pricing, of course, is moving forward, as is well known and well documented.

In terms of some of the funding programs, I know our colleagues at NRCan have launched a number of programs and have completed a number of intakes of project proposals, including for communities that are looking to move off diesel generation, which of course, as the committee knows well, is a dirty form of heat and electricity generation as well as an expensive one. There are a number of projects moving forward there, again, including in a number of indigenous communities. The low-carbon economy fund continues to invest in programs and projects with provinces.

We've done a call for proposals and have evaluated proposals related to a sub-stream of the low carbon economy fund that's targeting individual projects. One has been announced. That was the project in downtown Toronto that takes cold water from the bottom of Lake Ontario and uses it to cool office towers. We're expanding that project. That's just one example of many to come, so we can expect some announcements on a number of those in the near future.

We also have another sub-fund of the low-carbon economy fund that targets smaller projects. The view was that we didn't want indigenous communities having to compete with multinational corporations, so we have a big project fund and a smaller one. For that intake, the deadline for proposals is in March. We're expecting a collection of projects then, which we will then evaluate and hopefully move forward with funding. There's a lot more that we could probably talk about, but those are some of the highlights.

John, is there anything you'd like to add on the regulatory side?

Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Stewardship Branch, Department of the Environment): The one additional major regulatory item that we continue to work on, which Matt did mention, is the first draft of the regulation for the clean fuel standard that will—

Mr. Mike Bossio: I was just going to ask you about that, so that's good.

Mr. John Moffet: That will require a reduction of the carbon intensity of fuels in Canada over a period of about a decade, and it will apply to all fuels essentially—liquid, solid and gaseous fuels. The goal of the regulation will be to reduce emissions by about 30 megatonnes by 2030. We plan to publish the draft regulation that's applicable to the liquid fuel stream by this spring or early summer, and then bring in the rest of the regulation over the next few years as we refine the details and continue consultations with industry.

• (1705)

Mr. Mike Bossio: That's fantastic.

The Chair: I'm going to jump in, Mike.

Looking at the clock, I see that we're going a bit late. We had originally invited our guests to be here from 3:30 to 4:30. I do want to see if our guests will be able to stay a bit longer.

Does anybody have any day care pickups or anything like that you need to deal with?

Okay, what I'd like to do is then move over to the three colleagues who haven't had a chance. They were in a six-minute slot. We're not going to go into the final portion of our meeting, the report review, today. We'll just stay with this. I would like the colleagues on this side to have a bit of time.

Madame Trudel still has more time. If you decide you would like more questions just wave at any point, and we'll inject you into it. We won't go right to the end, but I would like Darren, Joe and Julie to have some time for interaction as well. Then, Madame Trudel, if you have more, just let us know.

Darren, Joe or Julie, do you have anything?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have a whole lot to ask, but I'm interested in

the climate risk-assessment money. There was money last year and there's money this year. What types of things is Parks Canada doing under that climate-risk assessment? I think the money has been similar the last couple of years. Is this something that you think we are going to need more significant amounts of money in order to mitigate the risks of climate change?

Mr. Michael Nadler: Parks Canada manages a very large asset base. A number of our assets are heritage places, and some of those risk being impacted by climate change. Others include significant transportation infrastructures. Indeed, as the committee is probably aware, we're responsible for a number of provincial numbered highways, as well as elements of the Trans-Canada Highway system.

Transport Canada has a program evaluation of those assets—or their assessments, at least—to assess the possible risks to those important transportation corridors from climate change. We have a number of these highways and are concerned about the risk of climate change to those assets. We'll continue to work with Transport Canada on their assessment.

In terms of our built heritage assets, those are internal risks that Parks Canada must manage, and we do that on our own. A number of our places are being assessed for mitigations that we might implement to protect them from the impacts of climate change.

You're absolutely right, Mr. Fisher, there's an increasing number of those properties that we have to assess right now.

Mr. Darren Fisher: It's not just speculation that you'll need to ask for more each year.

Mr. Michael Nadler: We would work with Transport Canada on the transportation side of the equation. We are now assessing our own assets regularly in terms of climate change considerations both in the north and across southern Canada.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Joe and then Julie.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): I'm good.

The Chair: Julie, do you have anything?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much.

Thanks for your patience, and thanks for being with us today.

I think it was the presentation made by you, Mr. Kerr—thank you so much—that I have a couple of questions on. It says, under the proposed impact assessment act, that the agency will become the lead organization. I think you're going to be doing a number of pilots to see how to get it all started.

Just for my own understanding, how is this pilot also going to benefit the companies that are trying to do some of the development that might require the use of our new legislation? Maybe you could talk to that.

Ms. Christine Loth-Bown: We're currently looking at assessments that are in the current system with particular companies that have approached us to say they would like to do a pilot with us to test some of the ideas laid out in Bill C-69, because they see many benefits in that piece of legislation. These are primarily around the early planning segment, so they can sit down and look at the early planning and at how we can do the tailored impact statement guidelines and look the consultation plans. We've been approached by companies to test those. There are a couple cases that our operations staff are working on with companies to lay that out.

Some of the companies have said that what they find particularly appealing about what's proposed in Bill C-69 is that early planning and the ability to scope. There is this certainty of process in terms of the information required, as well as the certainty around whom to consult and engage at the end.

Another aspect of the question, and what Alan talked about in the presentation, is a regional assessment that we are currently conducting off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. We're doing that with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the offshore petroleum board. The objective of this pilot—and we're working with proponents who are doing exploratory drilling offshore—is to look at exploratory wells and do a regional assessment.

It's in that particular regional geography, but it's also specific to a type of activity, which is exploratory drilling. The intent behind that was discussed in a consultation paper we did with respect to the project list on designated physical activities. The day the legislation was tabled, there was also a consultation paper that went out to look at reviewing the regulation on the designation project of activities. What it says in that paper is that, if the regional assessment is to be successful, there would be an opportunity to potentially exempt those activities from a further impact assessment.

On the one hand, you're doing a regional assessment to assure Canadians that the activity has been assessed, but because exploratory drilling has a very quick turnaround time, you're not asking a proponent to do a lengthy process for a very short activity. You're getting the environmental assurance, but doing it more expeditiously.

• (1710)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: That's helpful.

I have another question. It seems as though we've transferred additional dollars to Environment and Climate Change Canada for the elders of the Assembly of First Nations to consult broadly with elders across Canada.

There is such diversity of opinion around, in many ways, development and how to actually conduct these types of assessments. I wonder if you can talk for a couple of minutes about whether the Assembly of First Nations will actually summarize what they're hearing or we will be with them every step of the way and we should provide a bit of a summary. Could you maybe talk a little bit about the process and how we get to some sort of a conclusion?

Ms. Christine Loth-Bown: I'll take that one as well.

You raised the point of collaborative policy development. We attempt to do collaborative policy development across the board, but in particular in areas like indigenous knowledge, it's really important that it is indigenous community members who are leading our perspective on how we treat indigenous knowledge.

In this particular case, it is the elders of the Assembly of First Nations who are hosting sessions across the country to talk to other elders about indigenous knowledge, how it should be defined, how it should be treated, and how it should be used. They will then provide a report back to us collectively for us to use in the work we do.

In the case of the Environmental Assessment Agency, we need to be putting out a policy framework and guidance on how indigenous knowledge is used in impact assessments. This will be an extremely important tool for us to bring into that policy work.

At the same time, we also have colleagues who are hosting workshops across the country to talk about our indigenous knowledge policy as well. It's a bit of a twofold thing, because the AFN work is specifically directed towards elders, but we also wanted the workshops across the country to speak to communities and other organizations across indigenous knowledge. We're doing both and we'll take that feedback and then design a policy in a collaborative way.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

Mr. John Moffet: Maybe I'll elaborate a little bit just to emphasize that in this process, we're not privileging the AFN as the spokesperson for all indigenous knowledge holders. We're really asking them to be conveners as a way to reach out to indigenous elders, to your point that there are a range of perspectives. So we haven't gone to one organization and said, "Give us your views." We've gone to them, as a convenor, to reach out to a subset, and then we are arranging other initiatives as well so that we have the full perspective.

• (1715)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you. That's very helpful.

The Chair: Madam Trudel, do you...?

Ms. Karine Trudel: No.

[Translation]

The Chair: All right.

[English]

Mike wanted one more question, and I'll leave it to everybody to decide. We won't go longer than 12 minutes, but if it's less than that, then we'll adjourn.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I don't know that they'll be able to provide an answer, but I'd like to see if there is an update anyway.

As you know, we did a report on CEPA. That's very near and dear to my heart, in particular given the impact within my own community of a chemical called 1,4-Dioxane, so I am always interested in any kind of updates that might exist around CEPA reform.

Mr. John Moffet: I can give you a brief update, but I'll start with the minister's response, which was that the committee identified a number of directional improvements that could be made to the implementation of the act and the department is committed to undertaking as many of those as possible. A lot of that work is under way and will be reflected in the next CEPA annual report.

Then there are some areas the committee recommended that would necessitate actual amendments to the statute. The government committed to consider those recommendations and to introduce amendments to the act in the next government, so after the election. In the interim, the government also committed to continue to engage with stakeholders to discuss the full set of potential amendments, including those that were recommended by the committee, with particular emphasis on three sets of amendments.

One set is around the so-called chemicals management plan, which really encompasses a lot of the environmental protection authorities in the act, the science and regulatory authorities. We've had extensive engagement with stakeholders for the past year on that, which will continue for at least another year on how that program could be improved and reoriented in the future.

The second area is the regulatory gap on first nation reserves. We have initiated consultations with first nations, in conjunction with CIRNA, because we see this as a subset of a broader governance issue on reserves. Again, the goal will be to conduct those consultations and then use those to inform any new government, post-fall 2019, of what the options are to address that issue.

The third very specific issue that the minister committed us to address is to do some more thinking and consultation, both with external stakeholders and with the Department of Justice, around substantive environmental rights. Those discussions are under way.

The Chair: Mike, sorry, I'm going to have to jump in.

Mr. Mike Bossio: That's fine.

The Chair: I just learned that Madame Trudel needs to head back to the House. It's not great for us to continue without any members of the opposition here, so I do want to end the meeting at this point to respect that.

I have one really quick point. Tomorrow, the plastic pollution study revised work plan will be sent out to all members. We'll set a deadline in the note as to when you need to have comments back. Otherwise, that's what we will be working from when we get back to that study, after we finish off the two reports that we're working on now. Wayne will get the revised work plan for our next study tomorrow, but there's no urgency.

With that, thank you so much to the witnesses. It's always a pleasure to hear from you.

Mr. Jones.

Mr. Matt Jones: I'm very sorry, but I want to flag something that I failed to mention during my update on the PCF, namely, two online resources that might be useful to the work of the committee. One is called the "Climate action map", which is found on the Environment and Climate Change Canada website. It's an interactive map that shows individual projects with federal funds invested, whether from Infrastructure Canada, NRCan or Environment Canada. That might be a useful tool of interest.

The other is another interactive map at the Canadian Centre for Climate Services, in which we have compiled Environment Canada data on precipitation and temperature, both historical and projected into the future. You can click on different parts of the country and see not only historical trends, but also future projections. That is another useful tool.

I regret not mentioning those in my original answer. Thank you for the extra time.

● (1720)

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Again, thank you to all of the witnesses.

Madame Trudel, thank you for being here.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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