



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

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

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ENVI • NUMBER 157 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, May 15, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. John Aldag**



# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone. We'll get started.

The purpose of today's meeting is to get a bit of an update on where we're at with protected areas and financing. We wanted to bring in departmental officials and hear about protected areas.

I think for me one of the really exciting things that we did early on in our mandate, as this committee, was looked at protected areas. There has been some action and investment made by the government on supporting protected areas in Canada. The committee had expressed a desire to have departmental officials back to give us an update on where we're at in rolling out some of the programs and things. That's really the purpose of the meeting today.

We have a couple of guests. Mr. Hogg, welcome from the government side of things.

Then we have Mr. Aboultaif and Mr. Hoback who will be joining us on the Conservative side. Welcome.

To the government officials, welcome back. There are many familiar faces and you've been with us many times over the past almost four years. It's good to see everybody back. We'll give up to 10 minutes for opening statements from each of the agencies, however they'd like to organize.

Whoever would like to start, please lead us off.

**Mr. Niall O'Dea (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment):** Thank you, Chair. It's great to be here today. Thank you to the vice-chair and the members of the committee for having us here to speak to an update on our current work on protected areas in Canada.

My name is Niall O'Dea and I'm the associate assistant deputy minister for the Canadian wildlife service, a branch of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

I'm joined by Mark Cauchi, who is our director general of protected areas of the wildlife service; and as well, of course, by our esteemed colleagues from Parks, Michael Nadler and David Murray.

I'd like to start by thanking this committee for the unanimously supported 2017 report, "Taking Action Today: Establishing Protected Areas for Canada's Future".

[Translation]

The initiatives I will describe are very much in keeping with the objective of the recommendations in that report, which was "to help Canada rapidly increase the extent of its protected spaces in a coordinated and equitable manner".

[English]

The issues at hand are of global significance. The report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, released on May 6, observed, with alarm, that biodiversity continues to decline in every region of the world, significantly reducing the earth's capacity to contribute to our well-being.

The international report also identified the expansion and strengthening of ecologically representative and well-connected protected areas networks as well as other affected area-based conservation measures as an effective policy response.

With 20% of the world's freshwater resources, 24% of its wetlands, 25% of its temperate rain forest and 33% of its remaining boreal forest, Canada has a unique opportunity to lead the transformative change called for in the international report.

Canadians are facing the impacts of climate change itself, and so is nature. Our efforts to establish new protected areas also provide an important contribution to addressing climate change, supporting resilience to climate impacts for both nature and people, and protecting critically important carbon stores in our peatlands, wetlands and forests.

In budget 2018, tabled about a year following the publication of your report, the federal government announced an historic investment of \$1.3 billion in nature conservation known as the nature legacy.

• (1540)

[Translation]

This was the single largest investment in the conservation of nature in Canadian history.

[English]

A key component of the nature legacy is the Government of Canada's \$500-million investment in a new Canada nature fund, which was launched last fall. The nature fund is facilitating an array of new partnerships that are enabling Canadians to protect and conserve Canada's important ecosystems. The federal government's contribution to the fund will be matched by partners, thereby supporting at least \$1 billion in conservation actions.

Today's focus is on Canada's land and freshwater conservation target, known as "target 1", recognizing that the Canada nature fund will also support Canadians in working towards the country's complete suite of 2020 conservation targets, protecting and recovering species at risk, improving biodiversity and contributing to reconciliation with indigenous peoples, as well as the sustainability of local communities.

The nature fund is already supporting projects that will quickly add to Canada's protected and conserved areas. Specifically, funding of \$14.5 million was allocated from the fund last year to near-ready or strategically important protected areas projects. The purpose of these quick start projects is to build momentum for meeting Canada's commitment to protect and conserve important sites for biodiversity.

A number of projects have been announced, including the recently established new provincial wild land park in Alberta, called Kitaskino Nuwenënë, the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes municipal park in Halifax, as well as protected lands around Georgian Bay. A map providing the location of 20 quick start projects can be found on our website.

The Canada target 1 challenge is the largest component of the Canada nature fund. This was launched in early December through an open call for proposals and will allocate up to \$175 million over the next four years to projects that lead to the direct establishment of new protected and conserved areas across Canada. The federal government will work with provinces and territories, indigenous people, and the private and not-for-profit sectors to advance Canada's commitment to protect 17% of our lands and inland waters by the end of 2020.

Target 1 challenge projects will increase the number of protected and conserved areas, and also expand existing areas to enhance the ecological integrity and connectivity of Canada's network of protected and conserved areas, as called for by this committee and in the international report I mentioned earlier. They will protect and conserve provincial and territorial Crown land, private lands and indigenous lands located across Canada.

By the March 29 deadline, 148 target 1 challenge proposals were submitted, coming from provincial, territorial and municipal governments, indigenous people and non-governmental organizations. The proposals are currently being evaluated, based on a number of objectives and criteria established for the initiative.

In parallel, the natural heritage conservation program, announced by Minister McKenna in Toronto on April 23, will provide an additional \$100 million from the nature fund to enable a coordinated approach to the acquisition of private lands and interests in lands for conservation. Every dollar of federal funding in the NHCP will be matched by a minimum of \$2 of funding from non-federal sources,

including in-kind matching, such as donations of land. Including this match, the national heritage conservation program will invest more than \$300 million in conserving nature.

The government is also using the nature fund to support the work of partners on new and existing national wildlife areas, including the recently announced Scott Islands marine national wildlife area and the Edézhzié indigenous protected area that will be designated as a national wildlife area in 2020.

On the margins of the recent nature champions summit, Minister McKenna announced the intent to create three new national wildlife areas, involving 27 islands in the St. Lawrence River near Montreal, and also a new national wildlife area for Isle Haute in Nova Scotia.

Environment and Climate Change Canada continues to work collaboratively with provinces and territories, national indigenous representative organizations, and others through the pathway to Canada target 1 process. A major step forward was taken with the release of the report, "One With Nature", in February 2019. This report, supported by all federal, provincial and territorial deputy ministers, provides a guiding framework of policy definitions and tools to enable progress on target 1.

On April 25, 2019, Environment and Climate Change Canada announced that significant new progress has been made against target 1 since the end of 2017. Since that time, Canada has increased the proportion of land and fresh water that is protected and conserved from 10.5% to 11.8%. This increase is equivalent to the size of Greece.

• (1545)

[Translation]

By supporting others, the government is strengthening and better connecting networks of protected and conserved areas in support of biodiversity, while contributing to reconciliation with indigenous people and the sustainability of local communities.

The report of this committee from 2017 recommended that the Government of Canada set even more ambitious targets for protected areas than those established to date.

The results of an Abacus Data national public opinion survey demonstrated widespread support across the country and across generations for protecting and conserving more natural spaces in Canada, and for meeting Canada's commitment to biodiversity.

[English]

The current set of global biodiversity targets conclude in 2020, and the parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity have embarked on a process to develop a new framework, with an updated set of global targets for the post-2020 period.

Progress made towards the 17% target, and the productive relationships that have formed with provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and the not-for-profit and private sectors, position Canada well to contribute to the international discussions that are under way. Indeed, Canada is co-chairing the international working group that's developing the new global biodiversity framework for post-2020, expected to be considered for decision at an October 2020 meeting of the parties to that convention, in Kunming, China.

[Translation]

Establishing new protected and conserved areas across the country, and contributing to the protection and recovery of species at risk is an important part of the government's plan for environmental sustainability and protection. The Nature Fund is supporting Canadians from across the country to realize broadly shared objectives, while recognizing the fundamental link between nature, a stable climate, human well-being and sustainable development for all. build a better future, and set an example for the world.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you for those opening comments. I look forward to the discussion we'll have with you.

We go now to Mr. Nadler, and his colleague, Mr. Murray, from Parks Canada, for opening comments.

**Mr. Michael Nadler (Acting Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada):** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks to all of you for the opportunity to speak today. As you mentioned, my name is Michael Nadler. I'm the interim chief executive officer at Parks Canada. I'm joined by David Murray, who is a key part of our establishment team, primarily focused on northern parks and protected places.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before committee today. Parks Canada is pleased to play a role in conservation nationally, and specifically in the implementation of the historic investments announced in budget 2018, and discussed by Niall a moment ago. We're working with a broad array of partners to advance conservation across Canada, and achieve international targets for biodiversity and the establishment of protected places.

The work the government is undertaking today on conservation will help to ensure that Canada is maintaining and growing a national network of protected landscapes that will support biodiversity, and care for our uniquely varied ecology, for generations to come.

[Translation]

I will provide four examples of our work, starting with the land.

Parks Canada is proud to contribute to Canada's commitment to protect 3.3% of Canada's lands. Our national parks are located in each of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories, and increasingly have been achieved through partnerships with communities and other governments, but especially with indigenous peoples. While not explicitly called "indigenous protected areas", they have increasingly adopted the principles behind the concept.

[English]

At this time, Parks Canada is working closely with indigenous peoples and the Government of the Northwest Territories to complete the final steps required to establish Thaidene Nëné national park reserve in the Northwest Territories, on the east arm of Great Slave Lake.

We are working with first nations in the province of British Columbia to establish a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region, which will protect some of Canada's last grassland habitats. These are among the most endangered ecosystems worldwide.

[Translation]

On the marine front, Parks Canada has made a significant contribution towards Canada's commitment to protect 10% of the nation's marine and coastal areas by 2020.

[English]

In August 2017, Canada, the Government of Nunavut and the Inuit of Nunavut's Baffin region, the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, signed a memorandum of understanding setting the boundaries of Canada's largest-ever conservation area: Tallurutiup Imanga/Lancaster Sound. This area spans some 109,000 square kilometres, and includes one of Canada's most diverse aquatic ecosystems.

Parks Canada is working closely with partners in Nunavut, and within the federal family, to move from interim protection for this very special place, achieved in 2017, toward the permanent establishment of Tallurutiup Imanga, in the near offing.

Moreover, we are working with federal, territorial and Inuit partners to assess the feasibility of creating several marine-protected areas in the High Arctic Basin. This area of Canada's last ice is an important conservation target, due to the presence of multi-year pack ice, upon which many species rely.

These are just four of the many protected areas establishment initiatives that Parks Canada is pursuing at this time.

• (1550)

[Translation]

These initiatives mark not only significant conservation gains and stand as important examples of Crown-indigenous reconciliation. Our agency is proud of its achievements in conservation and sharing protected lands with Canadians. We are particularly proud of doing this work in partnership with the communities, provinces, territories and especially indigenous groups.

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

Many thanks again for receiving us here today.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you for those updates from the Parks Canada Agency.

With that, we're going to get into our rounds of questions and answers. Each of our members will have up to six minutes.

We'll go to Mr. Amos for the first set of questions.

**Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our public servants.

It was said by Mr. O'Dea that the investment made by the federal government in the 2017 budget of \$1.3 billion over four years was the single largest investment in the conservation of nature in Canadian history.

How does that investment compare with the investments made, say, in the previous decade?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Mr. Amos, that's a good question, and I actually don't have that precise information in front of me.

The value of this one-time, focused investment is the degree to which it has not only been an investment in and of itself, but has also leveraged contributions from other parties.

What we've seen, particularly with the establishment of the Canada nature fund, is a strong interest from others in making counterparty donations, whether those be foundations or other levels of government or the private sector. That is not only a federal investment in nature, but brings more capital into the space of nature conservation in a way that allows us to advance those priorities.

**Mr. William Amos:** Thank you.

I would appreciate it if a written submission could be provided indicating the extent to which this is historic in comparison with recent investments. It need not be restricted to only the previous 10 years; it could be the previous 20 years, as you see fit.

I wonder about target 1 of the nature fund and the applications that are going through that process. In our region of the Outaouais, in the national capital region on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River, there is a significant and very exciting proposal that has been advanced. It proposes conservation in a series of areas, all within the national capital region.

One section would be around the Dumoine, Noire and Coulonge rivers. Another would be around the Boucher forest, and the other would be around the Chats Falls or Sault-des-Chats area. There is also a section for Baie McLaren. A series of areas are being grouped together.

Just the submission of that proposal represents a significant achievement, because all conservation groups from across the Outaouais realized that individually they probably wouldn't get there, but if they gathered their forces and prioritized, they would be able to put together a very strong proposal.

On their behalf I'll ask, in what type of timeline will decisions be made; and will there be representation from across Canada in the decisions made for that nature fund?

• (1555)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** As I mentioned, we have seen 148 final proposals come in on the target 1 challenge, just over \$800 million in requested funding for \$175 million that we have available to us, so there is a very strong field.

In terms of the process, we're looking to move quite quickly. We've have gone through a rigorous review process, both at the regional level to ensure that regional representation and now at the national level, and are working in the next couple of weeks to put

forward a recommendation to our minister with the plan that she be positioned to make a decision on those recommendations in June. Therefore, we would be expecting news quite soon on the current suite of proposals we have before us.

**Mr. William Amos:** Okay. That's very exciting and I am very pleased to hear that you've been able to marshal the resources necessary. I can't imagine it has been easy, with 148 proposals and having to bring both the scientific and the financial analyses to bear.

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** I'd be remiss in not noting the massive support that our colleagues at Parks Canada have provided to us in that exercise.

**Mr. William Amos:** Thank you.

In that same vein, you're comparing projects that have not only a conservation value, but also a partnership value, because as you said, for the first time the federal government is investing in a manner that leverages its funds towards initiatives that don't simply involve the federal government, but go far beyond, to municipalities, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and so on.

To what extent is the uniqueness or the quality of the particular relationships that are in question, the collaborations that are in question, an important factor in decision-making?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** It's a good question.

There are two dimensions I would speak to. One is that indigenous reconciliation is a key purpose of the nature legacy and a key focus in our review of proposals. I'm seeing indigenous leadership, whether it be in the co-management of a given area or even leading the management of that area, is an aspect of our review of those proposals.

The other piece where unique partnerships come in is with respect to the matching funding that's identified or the matching resources that are identified for specific proposals, and some of the stronger proposals we've seen are those that bring together a diverse match of both funding and resources from a variety of partners. When you speak to uniqueness, that's where it emerges from.

**Mr. William Amos:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll move over to Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

I'll summarize the chronology of events a bit. In 2010, there were the Aichi targets, established under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. In 2015, the federal government, provinces and territories announced Canada's Goals and Objectives for Diversity by 2020. The year 2020 was therefore the deadline for more than 17% of land and inland water areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas to be protected.

Can you tell us today, in May 2019, where Canada stands on these objectives? Are we going to meet the deadline? Are we going to achieve these objectives, exceed them, or be late?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** That's a very good question. I'll try to answer it.

We're getting there. In April, we announced that we had increased from 10.5%—our percentage in 2015—to 11.8%. This is the result of provincial and territorial efforts to define new protected areas, combined with our own investments under the “Quick Start” heading of the Spaces stream of the Canada Nature Fund. For its part, the “Challenge” component of this same stream of the Fund will go a long way towards helping to move quickly from 11.8% to 17%

I would be lying if I said it's not a challenge. After all, it is the title of one of the components we have used in our Fund. To increase this percentage, we are also relying on gains obtained other than through the Fund's support, such as the recognition of new protected lands by provinces and territories, as well as a fairly major contribution from our funding, including this “Challenge” component of the Fund.

• (1600)

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** Please allow me to add something, which would also answer Mr. Amos' question a little.

The targets exist, it's true, and they are important. However, the Aichi targets include other elements to promote biodiversity around the world and in Canada.

For instance, one of the aspects of our work that is really important and progressing well is the collaboration between several levels of government. This not only helps us to achieve our targets, but also to establish links between our protected areas and therefore facilitate the movement of species and animals, for example.

Even if the priority must obviously be to achieve the targets, the other aspects of the Aichi targets are just as important. We work together across the country, with one voice, to succeed.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** I think you're right when you say that targets are only one element among many. The various stakeholders, here in Canada and probably elsewhere in the world, are becoming more environmentally vigilant and are developing ways to be so.

I will come back to my question, however. Can you give me a snapshot of Canada's protected lands today, in May 2019, knowing that the target for 2020 is 17% for land and inland waters, and 10% for coastal and marine areas? What percentages are we at today, when we are eight months—20 months, rather—from the 2020 deadline?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Absolutely. The current percentages are 11.8% for land and freshwater areas and just over 8% for marine areas. This leaves us with just under 2% to fill in for marine areas and about 5% for land areas.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Can you situate Canada relative to other countries in terms of the objectives and targets that each has set for itself? Are we early, late or average? Can you tell us if, like all other countries, we face different obstacles or constraints that will prevent us from achieving our targets?

In fact, we may reach the target for marine and coastal areas, with only 2% missing in 20 months. But let's be honest: in my opinion, we won't close the almost 6% gap in our target for land areas. Correct me if I'm wrong, but chances are we won't be able to do that by the end of 2020.

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Each year, we report on our progress on the 20 targets set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity. I would

say that we are on schedule for the majority of these targets. For those targeting terrestrial protected areas, we have a little catching up to do. That is why we are counting on the Nature Fund, which will allow us to move forward fairly quickly. We are sure to get there on time.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Stetski, you have your six minutes.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Thank you.

It's good to see several of you again. I appreciate the work you do every day.

When we completed our report, there were a couple of things that we were wondering about. One was ultimately what might count towards the protected areas land. I'm wondering what kind of decision was made on what sorts of lands would count towards the 17%, particularly—the 10% less so.

• (1605)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** I'm happy to speak to that—and Michael, feel free to add.

I spoke briefly in my remarks to the pathway to Canada target 1 process, which is a federal, provincial, territorial, indigenous exercise to look at, in part, precisely that question, to provide guidance that would be shared across Canada about what counted or not towards our 17% target. In that context, we've developed shared Canadian guidance in the “One with Nature” report that's now available online. That sets out the definitions for protected areas, for other effective area-based conservation measures and for indigenous protected and conserved areas.

Likely your question is most focused on that middle category, which is the other effective area-based conservation measures. This is looking at working landscapes whose primary purpose may not be for biodiversity conservation, but as a result of the way they're managed, they result in biodiversity conservation outcomes.

A key example that we've established recently in partnership with the Department of National Defence is CFB Shilo in Manitoba. That's a site where DND operations have for a long time taken pains to ensure biodiversity conservation in the large areas of that base that are not regularly used for training operations. That area is now a contributor to Canada target 1.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** You say you're comfortable with the criteria. Was it drawn from the IUCN? I used to work with Manitoba Parks. I know where Shilo is for sure.

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Okay. I hope it meets your standard as well.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** On target 1, is it both lands and marine proposals, or is it strictly land for this target 1 proposal that closed recently?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** For the challenge funding, the focus is terrestrial and fresh water. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is making significant investments in its own regard for marine-protected areas, as is Parks Canada.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** MP Stetski, to respond a bit as well to your first question, as we know from the experience at Rouge national park, as we are learning in consultations near your riding in Osoyoos around South Okanagan, it is possible to achieve conservation gains even when the land is being used for other purposes, like ranching or farming in Rouge national park. These other conservation measures are effective, we're learning, and we're finding our approaches of conservation as a consequence.

We're advancing a number of marine initiatives right now. In fact, we just recently signed an MOU with the Inuit of the Baffin region—the Qikiqtani Inuit Association—and the Government of Nunavut on a feasibility assessment for a significant marine-protected area in the High Arctic, this area of the last ice, which would contribute significantly to the targets.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** There were two groups set up to run proposals through. I guess that might be one way of putting it. One was a sort of NGO group, and the other was an indigenous group. How are those groups being used as part of establishing the 10% and 17%?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** There's a national advisory panel, which would be the NGO-led group, and as well the indigenous circle of experts. Both groups have produced reports that have been foundational to the work we are currently undertaking; they provided advice that fed into the production of the "One with Nature" report that I previously referred to. In particular, the indigenous circle of experts was a significant contributor to the definitions of indigenous protected and conserved areas that exist within the "One with Nature" report.

We have also continued to receive advice and input—not from those groups in that form, because they were disbanded once those particular activities were concluded, but from the membership of those groups—concerning approaches to developing indigenous protected and conserved areas within Canada and the further elaboration of that concept, as well as with respect to partnering effectively with foundations to provide support to new protected and conserved areas that are proposed as part of our Canada nature fund.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** The committee shouldn't underestimate its own influence, though. Your own report helped us to shape many of these concepts too. We truly appreciate your work in that area.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** The other concern we had was whether staffing levels would keep up or expand along with the work. How are things happening with staffing in your organization?

• (1610)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** I'm happy to speak to the Canadian wildlife service context. It's been a very busy year since the funding we received through budget 2018. We're expecting a growth of roughly 200 FTEs to support the initiative and have made rapid progress to staff up those positions.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Is that collectively with Parks Canada?

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** Parks Canada has a separate allocation of \$220.8 million over five years; that's for restoring some capacity that had been reduced in past years.

Also, as we've been observing collectively in this meeting, the targets themselves and the Aichi commitments are changing the way we view connectivity and biodiversity, and management in that space requires new skills and new abilities and new approaches. We're therefore bringing in capacity to work on connectivity and collaboration across jurisdictions on biodiversity and broadly on conserving landscapes, rather than individual places.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Excellent.

**The Chair:** Now we're going to move over to Mr. Fisher for his round of questions.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks, folks. I appreciate as always your being here to give us an update.

Niall, you mentioned our unanimous report. That report is something that I think we're quite proud of. Mr. Nadler, you mentioned the impact that report had on bringing forth the \$1.3 billion investment. It's incredible.

Our committee worked very hard on that report, and we had a high level of support from former municipal politicians. One recommendation that I and probably my colleagues—who are no longer on the committee, with the exception of Mr. Stetski—were really proud of was the recommendation that the federal government partner directly with municipalities.

Niall, you mentioned Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes. That gives me a chance to come, of course, to one of my favourite topics —

**Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** I never heard that before.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** —when we're thinking about the quick start program, thinking about the nature legacy, thinking about the nature fund and their huge investments in protected spaces. Again, going back to partnering with municipalities, we had the \$860,000 for Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes.

Do you have any other examples of relationships or new partnerships with municipalities that have resulted in protected spaces?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** It's a good question. I may ask my colleague Mark to speak a little bit to it.

Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes was certainly a key one, an opportunity to partner with the Halifax Regional Municipality to protect the 135 critical hectares of urban wilderness.

Another initiative I can speak to is our efforts to have municipal protected areas recognized as such for the value that they provide. In a recent data intake for the contributions to Canada target 1, we've seen a number of municipalities in both Alberta and B.C. identify parks within their municipal boundaries that make that contribution.



Those have been two key aspects. Rouge is another key example.

Maybe, Michael, you want to speak a little bit to that.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** As part of the journey in our work on all the biodiversity targets, in collaboration across three levels of government and with indigenous communities and others, an important takeaway is to recognize the high level of excellence that municipalities apply to conservation. We've all learned a lot, actually, from having municipalities that are able to balance multiple uses and still achieve significant conservation gains within their boundaries. Blue Mountain is just one example of many.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Another example is Kejimikujik National Park, another area of land that is beloved in Nova Scotia, and very beloved to my constituents as well. Recently I heard about the chain pickerel getting into the park system, eating the Keji brook trout, the Blanding's turtles, the ribbonsnakes and so on.

Mr. Nadler, what does Parks Canada do to ensure the protection of ecological integrity of these protected areas when something such as this happens?

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** I can speak generically and then specifically on that, though you might have seen some of the recent media coverage on the file.

Ecological integrity is fundamental to every decision made at Parks Canada. It's rooted in our legislation. It's actually rooted in the agency's establishment, too. Even the legislation establishing Parks Canada as an agency makes clear reference to the importance of ecological and commemorative integrity in the management of our protected places. It permeates all aspects of decision-making and policy-making in the agency and is our focus in the management of every national park.

That circumstance is a really compelling example of the types of challenges we're facing that simply can't be solved within our own boundaries. We need to work with multiple jurisdictions and players to address and respond to that challenge.

There are some initiatives that we're undertaking ourselves. You might have seen that we're separating off an area in Keji so we can try to restore species that are being out-competed by this invasive pickerel. It's a really aggressive invasive species and a real threat to the ecological integrity of the aquatic area of the entire park.

• (1615)

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Our government is doing a whole lot of things to combat climate change. What impact does this massive investment in protected areas have on mitigating climate change?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** MP Fisher, I'm happy to speak to that.

It's interesting. There was a recent report in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that spoke to the contributions that nature-based solutions can make to climate change and attributed some 37% of the climate mitigation solution potentially existing in the preservation and enhancement of our existing natural environment. Those are things such as conserving wetlands, peatlands and forests, which represent some of the most significant carbon stores currently on the planet, and then can also help with climate adaptation, ensuring the resilience of watersheds, as well as the resilience of coastlines to coastal erosion and things of that nature.

There are many contributions that nature can make to climate, and of course, preserving a stable climate system is critical, particularly to the protection of species at risk.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Do I have 10 seconds?

If we didn't have that recommendation to partner with municipalities, would places such as Blue Mountain Birch-Cove be able to expand as they did?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** No.

That's a 10-second answer.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** That was quick.

**The Chair:** There you go.

Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank my colleague, Mr. Fisher, for pointing out the unanimous nature of the committee's report. This demonstrates our commitment to take the necessary measures to protect our environment, work to reduce our environmental footprint and actively and positively fight climate change.

Mr. O'Dea, I wonder about the amount you mentioned in your speaking notes when it comes to Canada allocating up to \$175 million over the next four years.

Has the money invested over the past 10 years—in fact, since the adoption of the Aichi targets—produced the expected results? More concretely, how many millions of dollars must be spent to gain 1% on our conservation targets?

Is my question clear?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Yes.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Do you need \$200 million to reach the 17% target or will \$100 million be enough? Or is it more like \$2 billion? I'm looking for a concrete figure. Can the results be quantified in financial terms?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** That's another very good question, but it's quite difficult to answer.

Please allow me to give you some context. It is cheaper to acquire hectares, or spaces, in northern Canada than in southern Canada. However, it is clear that the majority of species at risk, including those that are most at risk, are found in southern Canada. So this problem also needs to be addressed.

The actual cost of a hectare varies greatly. When it comes to our targets, we need to balance our desire to obtain as many protected hectares as possible—and therefore achieve our target percentage—with our efforts to ensure that this network of protected areas is well connected and representative of the diversity of habitats and species in Canada.

That's why it's a little difficult to answer precisely about the real cost of targets. What I can say, however, is that, over the past 10 years, there have been many commitments from other parties to support these efforts and achieve these targets. As a result, the funds from the former natural areas conservation program were equivalent to twice the federal investments, which represents a significant added value for Canada's biodiversity, particularly in southern Canada.

• (1620)

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Canada is a special case because it is the second largest country in the world in terms of area. I understand that there are areas with low density and others with higher density. Our reality is different from that of European countries, which have an extremely high density. However, in simpler terms, is it possible for you to establish the gains obtained based on everything that has been invested since 2010?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** I don't have that data with me, but we can certainly provide it to you.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Could you send it to the committee?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Yes.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** What I want is very simple: the amounts invested by the federal government since 2010, and the gains they have made in terms of inland and coastal areas.

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** We can certainly get the answer to you.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** On another note, in your remarks, you mentioned a proposed national wildlife area encompassing 27 islands in the St. Lawrence River near Montreal. Could you tell us more about that?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Yes, absolutely.

We announced this project at the Nature Champions Summit held on April 24 and 25 in Montreal, Quebec. We are conducting this project in partnership with the Montreal Port Authority and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Responsibility for this series of islands in the St. Lawrence River will be transferred from the Montreal Port Authority to the Department of Environment and Climate Change for the establishment of a new national wildlife reserve, as there are several others.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Is it possible to estimate the gains that this project will bring us in terms of the target percentage of protected areas?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Yes, absolutely.

There are 27 islands, with a total area of 775 hectares. This region includes Boucherville, Varennes, Verchères and Lake Saint-Pierre.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Right, but what would the percentage of gains made be?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** We're talking about several zeroes after the decimal point.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** In other words, the gains would be minimal.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** It's important to keep in mind that even a really small area can be very important in terms of conservation, area or even biodiversity.

**Mr. Joël Godin:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Dzerowicz, over to you.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thanks for the great presentation. The issue of biodiversity—the concern around the large number of species at risk of extinction in the world—is a huge concern to Davenport residents.

I have a lot of letters from constituents. One who wrote to me said, “Please use your voice in parliament to make RADICAL, IMMEDIATE change to respond to these findings.” She's referring to an article written in The Guardian, I think just a couple of weeks ago, that stated, “Scientists reveal 1 million species at risk of extinction in damning UN report”. She goes on to say, “We need to enlist the best conservation scientists [we have] to stem the tide of extinction in Canada, and support other similar initiatives around the world.”

First, is our historic \$1.3-billion investment in nature conservation stemming the tide of extinction in Canada? If so, how?

• (1625)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** It's a good question. I'll answer it in part and ask Michael to speak to the Parks Canada contribution. It's a big question.

Yes, I think it's giving us a unique opportunity, in two primary senses. One is this work towards the establishment of new protected and conserved areas, which, in their establishment, provide values for a whole series of species at risk.

The other dimension, of course, is that we're enabled through this new funding to advance a transformed approach to species at risk conservation in Canada, which is moving from a species-by-species approach to a multispecies approach focused in priority places, on priority species where those exist and on priority threats in sectors.

That new form of engagement with provinces and territories, the private sector and indigenous peoples is enabling us to accelerate multispecies action plans that allow us to better use the investments we're making and that others are making to advance that progress.

Also, it has given us the opportunity to lead at an international level. I mentioned our chairmanship of the open-ended working group under the convention on biological diversity. This investment gives the profile and the legitimacy to Canada in our international engagements to help drive ambition in that broader global conversation. That's certainly our hope as we head towards Kunming in 2020.

Michael, would you like to add to that?

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** Again, one of the transformative elements of that funding and those investments is that they are bringing together multiple jurisdictions, indigenous groups and a much broader collectivity of interests in responding to what is a very serious situation, as your constituent observed. That is transforming the management of species and conservation from within the boundaries of individual protected areas to looking at landscapes and really respecting the fact that animals don't care much about our boundaries, right?

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Can I just interject there? One of the other questions that came up at my last climate action town hall was whether or not we're protecting species across borders. When you're talking about how they don't care about our lines but they have their landscapes, are we also protecting across borders? I guess the immediate border is the U.S. one.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** Or even provincial ones, right?

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Oh, of course.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** We manage ecological spaces at Parks Canada that traverse boundaries, and it really is important to be able to work effectively with multiple provinces and, for that matter, multiple communities.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Even across the U.S.-Canada one?

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** Yes, even with the United States.

I guess in some ways the convention on biodiversity is really focused on bringing nations together around these issues. There are a number of initiatives, in which we play a part, that are looking at the movement of species. Climate change is causing shifts in ecosystems. They're not respecting the original boundaries of protected places either, because of a changing climate, so we've had to reshape how we approach collaboration across borders and jurisdictional boundaries.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** Just to be clear—because I'm always asked, “What are you doing now?”—do we actually have some initiatives right now in terms of across borders? We're hoping to do more. I think you gave the great example of the work that we're doing internationally, which I think will help to increase the amount of work that we do across borders, so we are doing some things right now.

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Yes. I think a key example, a concrete example, would be the North American wetlands management program. This is a long-standing collaboration with the U.S. that actually sees a lot of U.S. counterpart funding come to support the conservation and protection of wetlands in Canada. Don't pin me on the number, but I think some \$800 million has been provided through that fund over the years to support wetland conservation.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** How do we compare to other countries in terms of protecting our biodiversity? How are we doing? If I look at the top five countries that have a lot of biodiversity, how are we doing in terms of protecting our biodiversity and our species that we have here?

• (1630)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** If we look at the international reporting, I think we are on par, if not better than many, but none of us are doing great. There are close to 600 species on the endangered species list in Canada. That's in part a matter of identification and quantification,

but it's also revealing of the challenge. It's a small part of that one million species challenge that has been noted by the international group, but it's certainly an area where we all have continued room for improvement and a global challenge that we're making efforts to address currently.

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz:** I think we have one more minute, Mark. Go ahead.

**Mr. Mark Cauchi (Director General, Protected Areas, Canadian Wildlife Services, Department of the Environment):** Just to add to Niall's comments, I think one of the things that people are really excited about in terms of Canada's approach is the bringing together of the species and the spaces in the nature fund as a holistic approach of managing these issues together, looking at cross-border issues, as you say, looking at it nationally and looking at it regionally and locally.

I think that's what has generated a lot of excitement, as well as the really tremendous progress that's been made on a hectare basis, both terrestrially and in terms of the ocean targets. We were at 2%, I think, a few years ago, and we're getting to 8%. There's been a real push, thanks to the committee's help, all-party support and tremendous support on the part of Canadians, to really make progress.

**The Chair:** Great. Thank you.

We have six minutes for Mr. Aboultaif and Mr. Hoback. You can divide up the time however you like.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thanks, Chair.

Good afternoon.

I have a document here on “Conservation Finance in Canada” that lists five areas where financing can be available to, first of all, deal with the environment and enhance environmental responsibility and in the meantime generate jobs and so forth. It's all good: green bonds, ecotourism, conservation fees, renewable energy development, debt restructuring and carbon offsets.

Have any of these areas been tackled? Have you done any calculation of what the costs are and what the anticipated costs can be for any government to take on this program? How optimistic are you for a good result from practising such things?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** It's a good question. I think we are in the early days of working on conservation finance.

The traditional financing of conservation through government, foundation and other resources is well established. An area that we focused on in the recent nature summit was a discussion on innovative finance mechanisms for nature conservation. There is progress on that happening globally.

These are things such as looking at how something like wetland or peatland conservation could contribute a carbon offset that would be counted within a kind of cohesive carbon trading system. It can include other things. The environment minister of the Seychelles joined us in Montreal and spoke to a debt-for-nature swap, where, with international financing organizations, they were able to exchange sovereign debt for a commitment to a certain percentage of nature conservation. That's likely not a similar challenge for Canada but certainly on a global basis is a legitimate avenue of pursuit.

Certainly, private sector companies such as Shell have expressed strong interest in exploring opportunities for nature-based solutions. Often, that comes in looking at where an offset for an existing industrial activity could be provided through something like conserving an area of forest or an area of wetland for the long term, in exchange for the development of a resource project of one kind or another.

There are series of pieces of work under development. I'd say that it is early days. In terms of the actual quantification of what that could provide in the Canadian context, it's something on which we are working to deepen our analysis currently.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** These programs are twofold. One is engaging the private sector in helping, away from government direct involvement, assisting or supporting the efforts to deal with the environmental challenges. On the other side we have the examples from around the world that could be beneficial to us in taking on something like this. We can look at similar economies under the G7 or the G20 and learn from advanced countries.

Are you aware of any good examples that Canada could look at from that perspective? And why not speed it up? I believe that by engaging the private sector in programs like this, we could speed it up and get to the target faster than in a government initiative.

• (1635)

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** Just to add to what Niall was saying, there's lots of experimentation happening in the United States with green bonds. Particularly at the municipal level and state level, we've seen a lot of experimentation there. Canada is looking at what's happening in many places in the U.S. in that respect.

Endowments have been discussed quite a bit in this space. The Rainforest Trust in B.C. is an example of one in Canada. Certainly, there's lots of interest in potentially looking at that in the future as well. We are working on this. It is complicated, but at the same time, we're managing the Canada nature fund and moving funding into communities. We are very much interested in the innovation space. We plan to do more work on this, including looking at places like the United States and elsewhere for inspiration.

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Thanks for your time, guys. I appreciate the information. One thing we're seeing in Saskatchewan with these funds coming in and buying property is that they're not taking local expertise into context. To use an example, down in southwestern Saskatchewan we have a bunch of ranchers. Lots of grasslands have been purchased, and instead of working with the ranchers, they've gone their own way. They upset the local community and they upset everybody else. They really didn't get the desired results in protecting the environment. There are

other examples of where they worked with the ranchers and worked with the community and all of sudden had the desired results.

What is your process of making sure, as you administer these funds, that we will actually achieve the results and that we will include the entire community in the area in which those funds will be spent?

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** As Niall mentioned in his opening remarks, the foundation for everything we're doing, really, is partnership. We will be supporting projects with federal dollars that have the ability to demonstrate partnerships and consultation and collaboration. That's really inherent in and endemic to what we're trying to do here.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** What kind of evidence shows that? What I'm concerned about is that you have a lot of money to spend and they themselves have a lot of money, and there may be more focus on spending the money than actually achieving the results.

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** One thing we've done as part of the proposal phase is to ask for letters of support from partners. We want to see demonstrations of support in the community for various proposals for protected areas. We are giving a certain degree of points in our assessments for proposals that have strong partnerships. We recognize that it takes everyone, and that some partnerships do take time to build. Obviously, we want to reward and put our money behind those projects that have strong partnerships and collaboration.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Bossio.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you very much for being here today. It's great information. I have a lot of stuff I want to talk about, so I'll try to go quickly.

I really commend the investments through the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada. In my own riding there's the Napanee Alvar. The Nature Conservancy has bought a big chunk of that land. It's having a huge impact on the endangered species the eastern loggerhead shrike, which is really important to our region. I'm really proud of the fact that we've gone to great lengths to protect this species.

A big part of the report highlights protective corridors for forest wildlife, which we see in the west but not so much in the east. I know that in the report Will Amos and I spoke about the corridor between Algonquin, La Vérendrye and the Adirondacks. I know that a number of people and a number of groups are trying to do that, but the conservation authorities are organizations that could play a really strong role in Ontario, especially eastern Ontario. Unfortunately, as you heard, the Ford government has cut funding for the conservation authorities just at a time of the massive flooding that's happening in eastern Ontario this year and in past years. They're cutting to the bone there. The problem for the local conservation authorities is that they'd love to buy this land, but their operational funding keeps getting less and less every year.

Is there anything we can do, as a government, to help offset that and take advantage of this incredible resource to try to build that for the connectivity in corridors in eastern Ontario, Quebec, and upstate New York?

●(1640)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** There's certainly a strong emphasis within the investments that we're making to look to enhance connectivity between existing protected areas where we can. As you note, there are a number of players that have interests in land, including conservation authorities, that can help to make some of those linkages. I've seen maps of various places in Canada, including Ontario, that show the kinds of contributions that these small landholders or land managers can make to create those critical connections for wildlife.

I think that in the context of our current funding envelopes, those types of proposals are eligible and welcomed. It will be, I think—

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Will that be for operational support or just for the purchase of the land?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** It'll be for the purchase of the land; that is the predominant focus of our effort. I think that's the reality of the current push that we're in, which is to seek that opportunity for the establishment of protected areas and conserved areas.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Thank you.

That's certainly something that we need to consider down the road, and it is something that I think in our next mandate we'll try to push forward because the value is there to do it.

Another big thing that has happened recently is the cut of the 50-million tree program in Ontario and the impact of that. Once again, with the flooding that we're seeing happen and the soil erosion that is happening, we don't need to be cutting tree plantings. We need to be increasing tree plantings. The Ford government, once again, doesn't seem to understand the reductions in emissions and the elimination of soil erosion that trees can provide in the conditions of climate change that we're dealing with. Under drier conditions, the retention of moisture in the soil helps our farmlands as well. All of these things are a valuable resource.

Rob Keen, the CEO of Forests Ontario, commented:

We need to realize that to have a healthy economy and a healthy society, we need healthy forests. To have healthy forests for our future, we need to plant more trees.

Here are some numbers from an article in Canada's National Observer:

To date, the 50 Million Tree Program has planted 27 million trees, or 15,000 hectares of new forest. On average, this means that every year the program has planted 2.5 million trees on approximately 4,000 properties.

According [to] the 2019 Environmental Commissioner report, average forest cover in southern Ontario stands [at] 26 per cent, with some areas seeing as low as five per cent of forest cover.

The report identified that 30 per cent of land needs to be planted with trees to restore the forest cover in southern Ontario to optimum levels. That equates to roughly 680,000 hectares.

Can you provide a viewpoint that here we're making significant investments in protected spaces in order to grow our forests and grow the ability to tackle climate change, from both an adaptation standpoint and a mitigation standpoint, through emissions reduction?

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** As Niall mentioned, the focus on the target 1 challenge is really on hectares and land acquisition. There is some space for restoration and stewardship of the landscape inside those projects. It's not just all about land securement.

Environment and Climate Change Canada does have other programs, though, that do support restoration, including some of the species at risk programming that we've discussed, as well as the habitat stewardship program, which does support land reclamation and land restoration. However, provinces do play a very important role here in managing lands and forests. Where we are funding, we try to work as closely as possible with those jurisdictions.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Finally, I want to add that I guess when we talk about what we've accomplished towards meeting our Aichi targets, going from 1% to 8% of marine protected areas in the last three and a half years is incredible. It's remarkable the amount of ground you've been able to accomplish in that short period of time.

The land's increasing by 2%.... You've said yourself, to put things into perspective, that it's the size of Greece. Would you say, given the investments and the attention that this government has made in this area, that we're fully committed to achieving those targets and, as you had mentioned yourself, that we're on target to achieve our Aichi targets?

●(1645)

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** I think that it's fair to say that, with this recent injection of funding, we have a trajectory to reach those targets. I think we have the funding. We have the partnerships, and we have the land-based opportunities based on Canada's geography to make those. This is not to say that it won't be challenging, but we are optimistic that those targets will be achieved, yes.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** We're not just committed—we're absolutely committed.

Niall and I work on this stuff daily, but we're not alone. This effort has brought together a number of jurisdictions and interests around this objective, so we're all rolling in the same direction. In some ways, the scope of that collaboration is unprecedented.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Would you say the funding is the catalyst?

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** It's an important contributor, for sure. Again, I do want to underscore that your report as a committee was an important contributor. There are other contributors as well, but absolutely, the funding has been a contributor.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Stetski, you have the final round of questions here. Your allotment is three minutes, but I've been fairly generous with the clock, so I'll take that same spirit with you. If you want to push the clock a bit, feel free to do so.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Thank you. I'll try to keep it to two questions.

In my past lives, I've worked with national parks, Manitoba Parks, and BC Parks as a public servant under many different governments. I want to talk for a minute about the \$1.3 billion; I was happy to work at getting signatures from other MPs in support of it.

We're coming up on an election, and I'm interested to know.... Out of that \$1.3 billion, do you have any idea of how much has already been spent? Also, how much of it is "election-proof"? If it's not, I really encourage you to be thinking about ways over the next few months to park that money in such a way that it will survive an election regardless, in order to benefit conservation.

I don't know if you can answer that. How much of the \$1.3 billion is gone? How much of it is committed in such a way that, regardless of an election outcome, it will still be there for conservation?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** I can answer in part and then turn to Michael. The profile of the funding for personnel and other resources is relatively stable over the years of the program. Reasonably speaking, we've spent roughly a fifth of that funding to date, and by the time of the election we'll have spent another half of another fifth.

In terms of the contribution funding, that's where more multi-year investments are taking place. If you think of a \$500-million Canada nature fund envelope, we've invested \$14.5 million at this stage in the quick start process. We expect to invest up to \$175 million more in the upcoming decisions around the target 1 challenge. There has been a series of significant investments also made on a multi-year basis in species at risk conservation.

I wouldn't hazard the precise number that has reached at this stage, but I think a considerable investment—likely a little over half of that existing pot—has been or will be committed in the coming month or so, and the results of those investments we'll see over the next four years.

Michael, do you want to add anything from a parks perspective?

**Mr. Michael Nadler:** As I mentioned, some of that funding announced in budget 2018 is coming to Parks Canada. We're investing now and will continue to invest. We're also on a five-year cycle.

The one thing that I guess I would observe is that the Aichi targets are real and present. They'll be there in 2020, and we will all have to continue working to achieve them, but please understand that the convention on biodiversity is also aware of the species challenges facing the planet, and there will be new targets for sure. After 2020, we'll probably be coming back to this committee to talk about those challenges as well and how we can work together.

• (1650)

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** I would just encourage you, going forward, to try to make every dollar election-proof, if you can, out of that \$1.3 billion.

Second, just quickly, on the role of the public in terms of the new protected areas, I wasn't 100% clear. Are the committees still there? Or are they no longer there? Are they part of the reviewing? Is there any public review involved with the 148 or 149 proposals? Also, what's the role of the public going forward once those land pieces have been selected?

**Mr. Niall O'Dea:** Those pre-existing committees no longer exist in that form. We did receive external advice through a separate process for assessing the challenge fund proposals that came from public organizations and indigenous peoples, to make sure we had a full understanding of those perspectives in supporting the expert-based advice that was coming to us through our own teams, through our work with Parks Canada and work with CIRNAC and other colleagues. Those have all been inputs to that decision-making process to date.

Once successful projects are selected and identified, the way public engagement happens on them will be in the hands of our

partners in some manner. In many cases those will be the provinces and territories whose Crown lands many of those programs will be initiated on, so I think we will see a variety. I think there's something close to 50 different pieces of legislation in Canada that provide for the establishment of different forms of protected areas. The requirements of those pieces of legislation will be the primary guidance for how those public consultations and engagements are then done.

Mark, did you want to add anything?

**Mr. Mark Cauchi:** Many of the proposals that have come in mention consultation plans. They are required to submit a work plan as part of their proposal so we can see in those proposals whether consultation is planned. In some cases it has already happened, and they are looking for funding moving forward. That's one thing we look for.

As you probably well know, Environment and Climate Change Canada operates national wildlife areas, migratory bird sanctuaries. The minister has already announced our department's intent to create new ones. She has announced the three NWAs in Montreal and the one in Nova Scotia. We will be doing public consultations and stakeholder consultations on those NWAs so people have an opportunity to share their views.

Obviously, there's a lot of support so far for those NWAs, but people have questions about whether they can still fish or hunt or how they will be impacted, so those are legitimate things we want to look at.

**The Chair:** That's the end of your time, Mr. Stetski. You've gone a little beyond. That's excellent.

I want to thank each of our guests here today, our departmental officials, for joining us and speaking so openly and clearly about some of the investments and initiatives you have under way. Thank you to each of you, your departments and your teams for the work you're doing on something I think our committee sees as being very important.

We've heard reference to the committee report we did that was supported by all parties, and I think it really does demonstrate how we can do some great things in this country and government when we work together. It is exciting to see how we had money flow and support from government as well as the opposition in moving forward on conservation in Canada, both terrestrial and marine.

I wish each of you and your respective teams well in continuing to advance this important work. As was said, we're making great progress, but there's a lot more work to be done. I think it will be important in the next government that the environment and climate change committee continue pushing on this because the work's not done, and we need to keep some attention on it.

With that, we're going to suspend and clear the room except for the members and staff. We will come back in a few minutes. We have some committee business to attend to.

The meeting is suspended.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*









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