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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, October 20, 2016**

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**Chair**

**Mrs. Deborah Schulte**



## Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, October 20, 2016

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Before we get started with our witnesses, I want to ask a couple of things, because I know some people have to leave a bit early, so I want to make sure we get these things sorted out.

I want you all to know that I have sent thank-you letters to all of those who helped us on our trip and were there showing us around and organizing the excellent experiences and the meetings that we had there. On behalf of the committee, we've sent letters out to all of the groups.

We also have letters going out to all the committees, asking them to study the work that the minister has done with the new strategy and talking about needing to embed the sustainable development principles through a whole-of-government approach to ensure significant progress. Anyway, we sent a letter in the hope that it will catch their attention and interest them in doing a little bit of work on that too.

We've just had Darren's bill come through to the committee. I would propose that we have that in front of the committee after we do the drafting instructions at the beginning of November. That would put it on Tuesday, November 15, and it's an act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. We're going to have one session. I think we can manage it in one session, unless things really go sideways.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** We can call the Bloc as a witness.

**The Chair:** All right, all right; we are in public.

The sponsor, Darren, is going to present as a witness. I think the normal process is that he presents to us and then the department will present.

Are there any other witnesses that people feel are necessary to bring forward on this, or can we just have the two of them present and then do a line by line examination? Is that good?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Do you need a character witness?

**The Chair:** All right, I haven't seen any opposition, so we're going to go forward with it that way.

The other issue is that the Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council has given us many documents. They are all in English. They are a great resource to review, but we don't have them in French and it

would really be a massive undertaking to try to get them all done. We wouldn't be able to do it in time, so is there any issue with anyone around the table if we distribute these documents? They are only in English. Does anybody have any problem with that?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** Then we'll be distributing those. Thank you very much. That was the business of the meeting.

Go ahead, Mr. Eglinski.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC):** Madam Chair, again, we received another piece of correspondence late in the morning, and I know it's not the staff. I believe the witnesses are supposed to send the documentation in ahead—

**The Chair:** Well, not necessarily; we ask that they do, but it's not mandatory.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** It's not mandatory. It just makes it so difficult for us to look at it and try to study it and maybe do a little research when we have such little time.

**The Chair:** The witnesses are here to make statements in front of us. It's extra, a bonus, if we get their submissions ahead of time. It's not something we're requesting our people to do. We ask to have them, if they can provide them, but as you know, many of them don't have a lot of time between when we ask them to come and when they appear. They spend a lot of time preparing these statements, and some of them are working on them right up to the last minute before they come before us.

I hear you, and where they can, I know they do try. It's not always possible, but thanks, Jim. We do try. We do ask them to send it if they have it.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** I'm just a little bit older and I read a little more slowly than I used to.

**The Chair:** That's okay. I'm right there with you.

Are there any other comments before we get into a session with our guests?

I'd like to welcome our guests. We have three from the Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council. We have Roger Hunka. Is that how you say it? I want to make sure I am saying it right, but I'm probably not.

**Mr. Roger Hunka (Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council):** It's just like the song: a hunka-hunka—

**The Chair:** Okay. Welcome, Roger.

We also have Jessica Seward and Joshua McNeely. Thank you very much for being here with us today.

We have a couple of people by video conference. We have Anna Metaxas on my right. Welcome, Anna. Thank you for being here with us.

From Parks Canada, we have Kevin McNamee. Did I get it right? I got it wrong on Tuesday and I do apologize for that. He's the director of protected areas establishment branch. We also have Karen Jans, who is a field unit superintendent from Prince Edward Island. Thank you very much for being here.

We also have Chris Miller. He's also on video conference with us and he's the national conservation biologist for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Thank you for joining us as well today.

We have lots of witnesses in front of us and we have a lot or work to do, so we'll get started. If everyone's all right, we'll get started with the Maritime Aboriginal People's Council.

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Our presentation is fairly lengthy. We did hand out the presentation, so I will not read it throughout; however, I will comment on some paragraphs—it's produced in paragraph form—and I'll leave the rest for you to read during your leisure.

Again, on behalf of the chief and president of the Native Council of Nova Scotia, the chief and president of the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, as well as the chief and president of the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, and on behalf of Joshua McNeely, the executive director of Ikanawtiket, and Jessica Seward, who is our species at risk specialist, thank you for inviting us to this important panel.

I will skip paragraphs 1 through 9, which basically give a fairly good extensive background about the councils and their work, as well as a number of publications that we have produced over time. In paragraph 11 specifically we present the panel with some reports on the case study of the eastern Scotian Shelf integrated management plan, known as ESSIM, as well as some samples of other work we have done. We have also included a map of population numbers so you can understand the on-reserve population as well as the off-reserve population. The maps will be speaking about the experiences of the off-reserve aboriginal peoples in the three maritime provinces.

Again, we'll skip paragraphs 12 through 16 and go to paragraph 17. It's a quote, but it's an important quote that will help you understand where we're coming from:

There is a conflict of values and a diversion of interests between the homocentric western oriented Canadian (worldview) and the ecocentric Indian Nations of Peoples (worldview). At the heart of this problem lies the fundamental issue of value perceptions.

Paragraph 19 says we would like to share and speak on a few fundamental issues.

Paragraph 20 says that it is trite, but worthy to repeat, that mainstreaming sustainable development at all levels, "through the whole of all governments within the Federation of Canada", is an absolute necessity, as is the need to integrate the aspects of economics, civil society, and the environment.

These three—and we should also submit a fourth necessity, visionary leadership—are prerequisites to begin to adopt sustainable development in all of its dimensions and demonstrate respect for Mother Earth and her natural resources and her natural forces, which sustain all life forms on Mother Earth.

I will skip through paragraph 21, which ends by saying that aboriginal people's knowledge reveals that the future of humanity hinges on establishing a living life pattern based on a culture of life. Foremost to achieving this mind shift and this ethics shift is that states need to replace their current material-focused development models with models that place life, complementarity, reciprocity, respect for cultural diversity and sustainable use of natural resources, as the principal priorities of progress over individual greed, indulgence, and materialism.

From an indigenous person's perspective, no one person is able to comprehend the enormity of creation and the purpose and place of personkind on earth except the Creator, who has created all. It is from the divine that this great mystery emerges.

In paragraph 23 I'm going to relate a little insight into an aboriginal teaching, which may shed, again, more light to you.

It is told that a great bear came in a vision to the grandmother of the Mi'kmaq Nation. The bear spoke about the love of the Creator for the L'nu and said the Creator would never allow the true human to be destroyed on earth. The prayers of remorse have been heard, she was told, and the L'nu must accept a new teaching to be saved on earth. The bear said to the grandmother, "Creator has given to each true human three spirits. They each have a name and a purpose. The names are 'safe journey', 'wise council' and 'full provision.'"

● (1540)

"Safe journey" is given for protection and worship. Life on earth is a sacred journey. "Wise council" is given for peace and community. A time will come when all of the L'nu will live in community with one another. "Full provision" is given for assurance that everything the L'nu need for a good life has been provided to them on their land.

Moving to paragraph 26, we learn that a task that escapes reality escapes a fundamental truth: to preserve or sustain for the future, we ourselves must be prepared to sacrifice and drop our greed, giving thanks for what we have to sustain us rather than amassing and regaling ourselves with gold and trinkets and the fallacy of wealth creation as a culture guaranteeing eternal life.

Why does Canada set aside lands and waters as protected areas? If Canada is a society that truly believes in conservation and sustainable use with equitable sharing, as Canadians everywhere believe they do, then what is the purpose of designating 17% of our land mass and 10% of our water mass to be protected? What of the other 83% and 90%? Are they not protected, and why not?

Skipping to paragraph 31, what recommendations could possibly result from an itemization of national parks, protected areas, etc., when every day all of us in this room and every person in this federation of the peoples of Canada can point to an activity, works, project, or development that is not sustainable and that continues to reveal repercussions from the approval decisions—irreparable harm to biodiversity, scarred habitats, changed landscapes, polluted lakes and rivers, the renaming of lakes to become toxic effluent tailings ponds, wetlands diverted by channels to become dry and barren, and on and on? We shake our heads and wonder when it will end and how we can return to celebrate the culture of life as the eternal truth of our belonging to Mother Earth.

The Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council has been involved and continues to be involved in marine protected areas in the Maritimes. For 10 years after we started on the voyage and for four years since, DFO submitted the St. Anns Bank for approval to Ottawa. They're still awaiting an answer.

During the intervening period, Ottawa cancelled the eastern Scotian Shelf integrated management planning initiative, ESSIM, which had been brought forward and worked on by governments, industry, academics, aboriginal rights holders, and members of the public for several years to be the umbrella management mechanism under which other initiatives, such as MPA planning, would fit. During the intervening years, Ottawa had also begun the dismantling of DFO science and putting any talk about MPA selection management on a slow back burner.

St. Anns Bank alone could account for 4,364 square kilometres of protected area. It is true that MPA development by a true group of interests for a true purpose with a true intent of stakeholders and rights holders, with DFO leadership, was driven upwards, but thus far it has been denied from the top.

I'll move to paragraph 37. We would hope that 44 years after the Stockholm declaration, 29 years after the Brundtland commission, 24 years after Rio Agenda 21, and 14 years after the Johannesburg declaration, we would be able to say that 100% of Canada is conserved and sustainably used and that the benefits of Canada's vast resources are fairly and equitably shared. Obviously, we are not there. Tallying the results of your assessments and their acreages won't get us there either. How are we to achieve Aichi target 11 when we are not even talking in Canada about Aichi Targets 1, 2, 3, and 4?

We leave you with a thought from a leading expert on marine protected areas, Dr. Peter Lawless of New Zealand, who recently visited Canada, the United States, and Australia to compare and contrast those states' methods for engaging their citizens in marine protected areas conservation, such as Canada's experiences with the Gully off the coast of Nova Scotia with those of New Zealand, such as the New Zealand government's engagement of the Maori for the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits from the Hikurangi marine protected area and the Marlborough marine area.

● (1545)

His visit also included an extensive meeting with MAPC. Thereafter, Mr. Lawless concluded:

The Mi'kmaq experience is very familiar in outline with the Ngati Kuri history of occupation. Their current situation, however, reflects the complexity of the

Canadian relationship with their indigenous citizens and a relative failure to fully grasp the nettle of reconciliation and recompense. It is notable that all parties operate in a far more legally focused frame than New Zealanders would be accustomed to. In the absence of an equivalent of the Waitangi Tribunal, the parties fall back on the courts, which are not really well constituted to research and resolve historical grievances. Policy, networking, [and] the methodology for marine protected areas formation are all weak, and the targets set by the Liberal Government are impractical without a brutal, top-down approach that would offend against its other principles of collaboration.

We have also provided the committee with a fair amount of documentation that you can review.

Marine protected areas or terrestrial protected areas require citizens' engagement. It is citizens who make it happen, not government alone. It's not a legal prescript that will do anything; we need to have it bottom-up and approved at the top, not the other way around.

With that, *wela'lin*.

We're prepared to answer any questions, or add more, or read more—whatever you wish.

Thank you very much.

● (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Hunka

We're going to hear from everybody, and then we'll open up to questions.

Thank you.

We'll move to Anna Metaxas, please.

**Dr. Anna Metaxas (Professor, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to speak before you as part of your study.

I have been conducting fundamental research that relates directly to key principles used in the design of marine protected areas—in particular, connectivity—as well as doing more applied research that directly pertains to particular areas under consideration or existing for about 20 years.

Most recently, my research group provided the data that led to the closures of Eastern Jordan Basin and Corsair and Georges Canyons as sensitive benthic areas in the Maritimes.

In addition to my research, I regularly provide advice to national and international fora, such as the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat process on the design of marine protected areas, the Endeavour Hydrothermal Vents Area Technical Advisory Committee, and the European Commission on the development of a strategic environmental management plan for the Atlantic Ocean.

In my opening statement today I want to focus on three main points about the science of marine protected areas.

I would like to start with the fact that extensive evidence that is published in the scientific literature supports the design of networks of MPAs that encompass at least 10% of the ocean, include a variety of ecosystems and habitats, and constitute a coherent assemblage of individual but linked MPAs.

The scientific literature has shown that a target of 30% is needed to effectively protect both the biodiversity and the ecosystem services that the ocean provides. In fact, in 2014, the World Parks Congress also recommended a target of 30% no-take MPA coverage worldwide.

The level of protection within an MPA will determine its effectiveness. Full protection is more effective than partial protection. Zoning of MPAs can allow some portions to be completely protected from any human activities and maximize benefits.

Protection should be provided for the long term, in perpetuity. The scientific literature has indicated that recovery of ecosystems can take many years and depend on a number of factors, such as the types of organisms, the uniqueness of the habitat, and the isolation of the MPA. For example, in our work we have shown that recovery of deepwater corals was not consistent after 11 years of protection. A review of the global scientific literature on MPAs indicated that it was only after 15 years that the positive effects of protection on fish became consistent.

MPAs are meant to protect a variety of species, habitats, and ecosystems, each with different characteristics. Therefore, MPAs cannot all be created equal. For example, the coastal and offshore environments have very different spatial extents, species, linkages with neighbouring habitats, and remoteness. Species can have very different lifestyles, occupy areas of different size, and move over different distances. Habitats can be unique and vulnerable, or not. Connections between areas can exist because of animal movement or because of exchange of resources and materials. All these factors will be important in deciding the size of individual MPAs, as well as the spacing between MPAs in a network.

It is important to remember that a network is defined as a collection of individual MPAs or reserves operating co-operatively and synergistically, at various spatial scales, and with a range of protection levels that are designed to meet objectives that a single reserve on its own cannot.

The second point I would like to make is to stress the importance of monitoring, which is the collection of data in a regular and systematic way to assess the effectiveness of MPAs in meeting their conservation targets.

Monitoring requires clear and measurable targets such as a percentage increase in a population within an MPA, or a difference in average size of a species, or a population inside versus outside the MPA. It requires the collection of data in an unbiased, scientific way that can directly measure change. Monitoring before the establishment of MPAs can collect baseline data in areas with little to no available information on habitats and ecosystems. Monitoring must be spatially and temporally efficient to balance available capacity with sufficient data.

According to DFO, Canada's ocean estate covers a surface area of approximately 7.1 million square kilometres. Of that, 10% is 710,000 square kilometres; and 30% is more than 2.1 million square kilometres. That's a vast expanse.

• (1555)

Some MPAs will be placed in remote locations, such as offshore or in the Arctic. Clearly, monitoring must be planned carefully, because it can consume many resources, but without monitoring we will not know how we are doing. We will not have a scorecard.

The third point I would like to make is that the scientific literature points to adaptive management as the best way to address ineffective protection. Adaptive management is an iterative process of decision-making that aims to reduce uncertainty by continuously evaluating new information in light of the conservation objectives and, if needed, making adjustments—that is, learning by doing. For example, if the precautionary approach is used in the initial design because of data gaps, the design can be modified as data come in. Boundaries may be adjusted or zoning considerations may be revisited if the proposed zoning proves ineffective.

Adaptive management is an extremely useful tool, because it can be applied when monitoring indicates that management action does not meet its targets or when information availability increases in areas with initially low baseline data or when conditions change as a result of local human pressures or climate change.

To be successful, adaptive management requires effective monitoring and transparency, but if adopted, it allows for network design to proceed even in the absence of extensive data, because adjustments can be made along the way.

To summarize, extensive scientific evidence exists to inform the design of networks of MPAs, to support efficient monitoring of the effectiveness of MPAs, and to recommend adaptive management of MPAs.

Next, I would like to present three suggestions on the way forward.

One has to do with a management plan.

Each MPA and MPA network should have a clear management plan that ensures efficient monitoring and evidence-based assessment of effectiveness. To determine effectiveness, MPAs must have clear conservation priorities and measurable targets, as well as criteria for determining whether the targets are being met. Additional targets should be defined for the network of MPAs in a region, reflecting the conservation priorities that can be achieved only by the interconnectedness of individual MPAs. Systematic monitoring will measure targets and assess them using indicators of effectiveness. There are a large range of indicators recommended in the scientific literature, and an effective management plan should select the ones that are most appropriate for the particular conservation priority.

As I mentioned before, it should be recognized that evidence will need to be collected over long periods—likely more than a decade—to determine effectiveness.

The second recommendation has to do with counting toward the 10% and beyond.

It is very unlikely that Canada will meet the 10% target by 2020 using MPAs established only under the Oceans Act. Current MPAs, as well as areas proposed by DFO, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada, cover only approximately 1.5%. It is my understanding from discussions with ocean managers that it takes an average of seven years to establish an MPA under the Oceans Act. Inclusion of other effective area-based conservation measures needs to be considered. However, the appropriateness of each of these measures must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Specific questions that need to be addressed include the following: Do these areas fall under the federal marine protected area strategy following the strategic priorities of any of the three core federal programs? Additionally, are these areas spatially defined? Do they have clear conservation objectives and targets? Do they managed year-round, over the long term, or in perpetuity?

Here I would also like to reiterate that the scientific evidence recommends a target of 30%, not 10%. Our only chance to meet this more effective target within a reasonable time frame is to give these other measures serious consideration for inclusion.

The third point has already been suggested, which is to increase public engagement. Relevant government agencies should use a systematic approach to provide the Canadian public with the current scientific evidence on MPAs. Specifically, they should provide information on the current status of MPAs in Canada: What are the targets we have committed to, and what is the proposed timeline for achieving them? How close are we currently to our target? What are the conservation priorities for MPAs? What are the different types of MPAs, and who is responsible for managing them?

They should present the scientific evidence on important design elements for effective MPAs, such as size, location, and full versus partial protection. They should also present the scientific evidence on the benefits of effective MPAs, such as increased biodiversity, increased biomass, and protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems and critical habitat.

• (1600)

A recent study with a survey of Canadians on their perception on 10 ocean-derived benefits reported that “clean waters” is highly

important to them, and 83% of Canadians favoured non-extractive rather than extractive benefits from the ocean. Informed Canadians can better assess ecological, sociological, and economic trade-offs and decide on their willingness to pay for MPAs.

In closing, I would be happy to address any comments or any questions by the committee.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We will definitely have questions, but we're going to hear from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society first.

**Dr. Chris Miller (National Conservation Biologist, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society):** Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

My name is Chris Miller. I'm the national conservation biologist with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, based in Halifax.

I've worked on protected area issues in Nova Scotia for about 20 years. This work has included a lot of collaboration with the provincial government, but it has also involved working closely with local communities as well as forest companies that have expressed an interest in protected areas.

Over that time, I've seen Nova Scotia make big strides in expanding its system of protected areas. The province has risen from near the bottom of the pack for total percentage of land allocated for protected areas to its current position as third in Canada, behind only British Columbia and Alberta.

If you look at Atlantic Canada as a whole, generally this part of the country lags behind in the creation of new protected areas. At the moment, jurisdictions with the lowest percentages of protected areas in Canada are Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are reasons for that. In the Maritimes, there is much less public land than elsewhere in Canada, so establishing large tracts of public lands as protected wilderness can be more challenging. It often requires significant investments by the provincial governments to acquire private lands for conservation. The Maritimes also lacks that vast northern area that every other jurisdiction in Canada has. This makes it difficult to achieve protected area targets using a few very large protected areas. Instead, lots of smaller sites need to be established, which can require a considerably longer time to do the necessary analysis and consultations.

Despite that, Nova Scotia has managed to outperform a number of other provinces that don't have such obstacles, such as Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba. I'd like to explore some of the reasons for that, but first it should be noted that Newfoundland and Labrador is a bit of an exception in this regard. It does have a lot of public land and it does have a vast northern region that can support very large protected areas, yet it still has a very poor track record.

The reasons for that are harder to explain, but I remain optimistic. The provincial government in Newfoundland and Labrador has taken a number of important steps in the past few years to improve their performance on protected areas. They formalized the completion of the Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve in Labrador, which increased the total amount of protected areas in the province by nearly 50%. This is also now the largest protected area in eastern North America. The provincial government has also indicated that it will finally establish the natural areas systems plan, which is a long-stalled system of protected areas that was created in the 1990's but was never formally designated. We are still waiting to see the details on that.

In Nova Scotia, the provincial government has committed to establishing about 200 new protected areas, totalling a quarter of a million hectares. It has also invested several hundred million dollars to acquire ecologically significant lands for conservation through direct land purchases and also by setting up a conservation fund to support land trusts.

These are big numbers for a small province. I was part of the small team of experts who selected those protected areas, working directly with provincial government staff, so I can attest to their conservation significance. They are good sites that are important for conservation. They are not the easy sites of low conservation value.

There are many reasons for the success in Nova Scotia. First of all, protected area targets and timelines were enshrined in a piece of provincial legislation called the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. This legislation requires annual reporting on progress toward environmental goals, so it's very helpful in ensuring that the government remains on track to achieve its protected area targets.

The Nova Scotia government was also open to collaboration with stakeholders early on. In our case, several environmental groups reached out to the forest industry and worked together to develop a jointly supported protected area proposal. This process was called the Colin Stewart Forest Forum and was a made-in-Nova Scotia solution to our poor performance on protected areas. The provincial government agreed early on to embed our joint ENGO and industry process within the formal provincial government process to create new protected areas.

The Nova Scotia government also agreed to do systematic conservation planning rather than take a piecemeal approach. Designating protected areas one at a time is a recipe for slow implementation and missed targets. Instead, Nova Scotia selected 200 protected areas all at once, as a system, and is now proceeding to designate these areas in batches.

I think it's also important to note that there is deep public support for conservation in Nova Scotia that transcends the political

spectrum. The initial protected area targets and timelines were set by the Progressive Conservatives in 2007. The final plan was developed and approved by the NDP in 2013, and the current Liberal government is now proceeding with implementation and officially creating the new protected areas.

● (1605)

I hope that the review being undertaken by this committee will take a close look at some of the successes in Nova Scotia and learn from our work. This is the biggest contribution that Nova Scotia can make toward the national 17% protected areas target. Full implementation of the Nova Scotia protected areas plan will not move the national protected area levels very much—we are a small province—but despite the obstacles in our way toward creating new protected areas, Nova Scotia has found a path toward meaningful contributions and has done a lot of heavy lifting to show how this can be done.

What specific help is needed from the federal government right now for protected areas in Nova Scotia?

The first is about marine protected areas. Please be ambitious with marine conservation and support the marine protected areas planning that's under way by DFO. Ensure that the minimum 10% targets are achieved and surpassed in the marine areas on the east coast. This is the single most important thing that the federal government can do in Atlantic Canada to help achieve the national protected areas targets.

Second, in 2013 the federal government protected Sable Island as a national park reserve but unfortunately failed to close a loophole that allows oil and gas exploration to occur inside the national park boundary. Please close that loophole. No oil and gas exploration should be occurring here. Nova Scotians care deeply about Sable Island.

Third, there is a very special place near Halifax called the Birch Cove Lakes. This near-urban wilderness area is very important to Haligonians. The provincial government has protected the public lands in this area, and the municipal government has declared that it wants this wilderness to become a regional park. Unfortunately, the city has failed to acquire the necessary private lands to make the park a reality, with developers owning a key piece of the future park. The federal government should help the city acquire those lands. This is a critical piece of green infrastructure for Halifax and would be compatible with the federal legislation that created Rouge National Urban Park near Toronto and the protection of Gatineau Park near Ottawa.

With that, I'll end my remarks. I would be happy to take questions.

Thank you.

● (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to hear from one more witness. We're going to hear from Karen Jans.

Go ahead, please.



**Ms. Karen Jans (Field Unit Superintendent Prince Edward Island, Parks Canada Agency):** Thank you and good afternoon, Madam Chair, distinguished members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen.

It's an honour to be with you today to share how Parks Canada Agency protects and presents nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, including one of Canada's smallest and most visited national parks, Prince Edward Island National Park.

I'll first provide you with a brief contextual summary of the characteristics of our national park and the environment in which it is located. I will then share with you examples of how we work with our local stakeholders and communities to address challenges and explore opportunities of mutual interest.

Established in 1937, Prince Edward Island National Park encompasses an area of approximately 22.2 square kilometres. This includes 16.4 square kilometres of land that has already been protected under the Canada National Parks Act, as well as an additional 5.8 square kilometres of land on the Greenwich peninsula, which will be protected under the act within the next 10 years. An additional 13.3 square kilometres of federal crown land adjacent to the park is also managed by Parks Canada. Since the 1950s, Parks Canada has been acquiring these adjacent lands in order to buffer the park from development and to compensate for the loss of coastal lands that are eroding from natural causes.

The park hugs the north shore of Prince Edward Island in three distinct sections: Cavendish in the west, Brackley-Dalvay in the centre, and Greenwich in the east. Parcels of adjacent federal crown land in the Cavendish area of the park are leased to local farmers to farm, contributing to the cultural landscape characteristic of Prince Edward Island.

Known for its warm sandy beaches, beautiful scenery, network of trails, and popular campgrounds, Prince Edward National Park is a major tourism attraction on Prince Edward Island. The beaches in the park are the premier attraction and have been valued as recreational areas for more than a century. The park also includes Dalvay-by-the-Sea National Historic Site, as well as Green Gables Heritage Place, the inspiration for Lucy Maud Montgomery's internationally renowned *Anne of Green Gables*. On average, the park hosts more than 450,000 visitors annually, concentrated within an 8- to 10-week period during the peak summer season.

Developing new and innovative programs and services allows more Canadians, including youth and newcomers, to experience the outdoors and learn about our environment and history. For example, hiking and cycling have increased in popularity within the park with the development of an extensive network of trails.

As Canada's largest provider of natural and cultural tourism, Parks Canada's destinations form important cornerstones for Canada's local, regional, and national tourism industry, and this is certainly true in Prince Edward Island. Given that tourism represents close to 7% of the gross domestic product of P.E.I.'s seasonal economy, Parks Canada plays a critical role within this sector.

I would now like to share with you examples of how we work with our local stakeholders and communities to address challenges and explore opportunities of mutual interest.

There are two partner Mi'kmaq first nations on Prince Edward Island. The Lennox Island and the Abegweit bands together have incorporated as the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island to work on their behalf and advance their common goals.

Parks Canada is privileged to partner with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy through an memorandum of understanding. We enjoy a highly collaborative relationship where we cost-share a salaried position, meet regularly to discuss issues and opportunities, and define joint projects to undertake.

One of the more recent high-profile joint initiatives is the very successful travelling exhibition entitled "Ni'n na L'nu: The Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island". The Canadian Museum of History has honoured this exhibition by including it in its prestigious international travelling exhibition catalogue.

Another example is the staging of *Mi'kmaq Legends* in the park, a performance-based interpretative experience developed and delivered by first nations youth.

In 2013, Parks Canada created the Parks Canada-Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island advisory group to facilitate effective and timely communications, as well as to provide a regularized forum for strategic engagement. All new visitor experience investment initiatives are developed within a fully integrated framework.

A prime example of that approach is the recently completed Robinsons Island multi-use trail. This initiative saw the decommissioning of an old 1950s campground, restoration of the land, and the creation of an eight-kilometre looped trail designed to attract young families. The trail includes mountain biking technical features, interactive interpretive nodes conveying Mi'kmaq connection to the land, key natural and cultural heritage features, and stakeholder stories.

The trail was designed in consultation with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, stakeholders, and special interest groups such as Cycling PEI, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, Island Nature Trust, and Nature PEI.

● (1615)

We have engaged youth groups, including the Girl Guides and environmental study students from the University of Prince Edward Island, as volunteers in the planting of thousands of tree seedlings as part of the effort to restore the Acadian forest on Robinsons Island and throughout the national park.

In 2015, Parks Canada entered into a memorandum of understanding with the University of Prince Edward Island. Undergraduate students, faculty, and graduate researchers in the areas of environmental studies, climate change, and sustainable design engineering engage with our staff to use the park as a living laboratory. Together with the university, we continue to explore how we may build on this very successful collaboration to enable evidence-based decisions that advance adaptive management and resilience of cultural and natural ecosystems in a dynamic coastal environment.

Finally, Madam Chair, I will address the ecological integrity of the national park.

Maintenance and restoration of ecological integrity is the first priority of national parks. Studies have indicated that between 1990 and 2010, due to coastal erosion, we have lost approximately 9.3 hectares of gazetted parkland per year, for a total of 186 hectares. The term “coastal squeeze” best describes the impact of a coastline that is migrating inland while infrastructure remains static.

Prince Edward Island National Park is reducing the impacts of visitation and infrastructure footprint by concentrating investments on improving those facilities most used by visitors or required for operations, repurposing or decommissioning the remainder, and restoring the land.

Since 2008, the infrastructure footprint has been reduced in the forested ecosystem by 156,000 square metres and in the coastal ecosystem by 3,200 square metres.

Parks Canada is currently in the process of consulting with Canadians on a new 10-year Prince Edward Island National Park management plan.

Parks Canada's many partners and stakeholders, including the Mi'kmaq first nations, have helped to create the draft plan, which sets clear strategic direction for the management and operation of the park by articulating a vision, key strategies, and objectives. It recognizes that improved park stewardship can only be truly achieved by working together, by creating connections for visitors and Canadians to the natural and cultural environment, and by embracing new and innovative approaches to sharing the stories of the people, the sea, and the land.

Once consultations have been completed in the fall of 2016, the plan will be revised and the final version will be tabled in Parliament in the spring of 2017.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, I trust that committee members will acknowledge that while Prince Edward Island National Park is a small national park within a small province, it undoubtedly has a large span of influence and consequence from both the cultural and natural heritage protection and the socio-economic perspectives.

Canada's national parks and national historic sites enable Canadians to experience their rich history and heritage in a special way, and these will play a big part in the celebration of Canada's 150th birthday next year.

Thank you for the privilege of presenting today.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I really appreciate the time and depth of information that you've all brought forward today.

We'll start with questions.

Mr. Gerretsen is first.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a number of questions, so I apologize in advance if I cut you off. I really need to move through them.

My first one is for Mr. Miller.

You spoke about Sable Island and the oil exploration that's occurring and things that could be done to improve the situation, and you talked about closing a loophole.

Can you explain a little more what that loophole is and perhaps provide some feedback as to why it has not been closed, to this point?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** Thank you.

Because Sable Island is a fairly new national park, the legislation that created it is only a few years old; it was from 2013. Predating that was the Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act, which guides the exploration of oil and gas off the coasts of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. That particular piece of legislation contains a paramountcy clause, which says that legislation prevails over all other legislation.

Whereas the Canada National Parks Act is very clear that oil and gas exploration is not allowed to occur inside national park boundaries, in the single case of Sable Island in this case, another piece of legislation overrides it.

At the time Sable Island was being designated—and perhaps Kevin McNamee from Parks Canada might want to elaborate, as this was one of his files—CPAWS proposed a number of amendments to the offshore accord implementation act that matches the intention of the Canada National Parks Act—a very simple amendment that would say that oil and gas exploration is not allowed to occur on the island.

• (1620)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Is there any oil and gas exploration going on now that you're aware of?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** There's oil and gas exploration going on all around Sable Island, but not on Sable Island. In the past, there had been a number of wells that had been drilled on the island.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to go to Parks Canada.

Mr. Miller spoke a lot about some of the unique challenges that the east coast or the Maritimes face. One of the things we've been trying to get at in this committee is what the difference is throughout the geography of Canada. He made some good points about the amount of northern space that the rest of Canada might have, space that's not present in the Maritimes.

Can you further explore that thought and provide some input into what some more of those challenges might be in the Maritimes?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** I can comment from the perspective of Prince Edward Island National Park.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I'm talking about the establishment and management, and how that might differ in the Maritimes.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** In terms of P.E.I., etc., most of these parks were created many years ago. Prince Edward Island was in 1937. It's a much different scenario for new parks that are being created now, and perhaps Kevin can expand on that a bit.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Okay.

**Mr. Kevin McNamee (Director, Protected Areas Establishment Branch, Parks Canada Agency):** First of all, we consider the national parks system in Atlantic Canada complete. We've represented all of the regions.

To go back a bit, among the challenges we did face, a major one was that many indigenous groups did not want to engage with us, in particular in Labrador, until land claims were negotiated and resolved. Proposals were set aside until the modern-day treaties were reached with people. Probably the most significant challenge was to have that process play out.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** That process doesn't happen in other parts of the country.

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** It depends on the different parts of the country.

In British Columbia, you don't have the negotiation of treaties in the way you do in, say, Labrador.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Okay.

Ms. Jans, you said that Prince Edward Island National Park gets 450,000 visitors per year. Do you know how that compares to other national parks?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** We're one of the most visited in terms of scale and size, absolutely.

What is kind of unique about us is that it's concentrated in a very short period of time, in the peak summer season.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** My question then is, how do you ensure a good balance between preservation and usage? If you're the smallest national park and you have such high usage, are you not concerned about preservation?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** We're always concerned about preservation. It's one of the priorities.

The way we manage visitation is that we very carefully concentrate visitation in areas of the park where we can actively manage its use. We work very carefully to design infrastructure that's going to have a minimum impact. For example, we have dune crossings. Wherever we need to restore dunes, we've discovered that dunes are really quite resilient. If you close off a dune for a period of three years, you can actually build it back up. Where we find that there's degradation taking place, we'll close the dunes down, or if we've had a blowout because of a winter storm, we'll do the same thing.

It's mostly managing how the use is done by visitors.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Just to play the devil's advocate to my own question, on the other side, do you find that those who are using the park are at a disadvantage now because of the protection?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** No, not at all. What's wonderful is that we put a lot of effort into outreach. We do involve community groups as well as part of that, and not just the visitors.

The visitors really care about these systems. When we close down a dune or we're trying to minimize the use of a dune by trails that are going over them and we explain why we're doing it, people tend to be very respectful. They care about it.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I think that's six minutes exactly.

**The Chair:** Yes, you're done. That was good.

Mr. Eglinski is next.

• (1625)

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for coming out today. The information you have passed on has been very informative.

My question is for Dr. Anna Metaxas.

Just about every group that has come in here has talked about the time it takes for us to reach agreements to establish protected areas, to develop parks, to make changes within our national parks. People have talked about the coordination of multiple layers of government—whether provincial, federal or municipal—with first nations, industry, and community concerns, and the competing interests of different groups. We hear it quite often. One group will say one thing, and the next group that's here with us will say the next thing.

I notice, Dr. Metaxas, that you stated in recommendation number 2, "Counting towards the 10% and beyond", that it "is very unlikely that Canada will meet the 10% target by 2020" and that the average is seven years to get something done.

Mr. Miller, you followed through on your seventh paragraph: "which can take a considerably longer time to do the necessary analyses and consultation". Here we are again today, with another group saying exactly the same thing.

In looking at that—and it is a very big concern to me and I think to most of the people here, from watching faces as we hear the evidence—I think there is no one in this room who would say we would ever allow anything to be done without proper consultation and without looking into the scientific aspect and the cultural aspect and everything else, but can you tell me or recommend or suggest some way that we can do it better? How can we make it faster?

We are not going to reach our limits because we need to do the due diligence, but from your perspective, can you give us an idea of how we might be able to do it better or faster?

**Dr. Anna Metaxas:** I will not pretend to understand how the government works. I'm a scientist. I do not know how—

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Oh, darn. I was hoping somebody could tell me.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Dr. Anna Metaxas:** I'm hoping you can tell me how the government works.

I can give you a different example that is from the area in which I was involved this year, a fisheries closure under the sensitive benthic areas plan. I came off the ship in July 2014 with data, which I presented to DFO in the Maritimes and then analyzed and gave to DFO by 2015. The closure was in place by September 2016, so it was just over two years from the time I walked off that ship. It's a fisheries closure, which means it is a lot more flexible in closing but also in reopening.

There are a number of those areas, and those are the other measures that we talk about. I think we really have to look carefully at those measures, and if they are measures that are working well, that have been closed effectively and efficiently, we should perhaps change their designation and include them in the long-term plan.

On accelerating the legislation, I am afraid I cannot provide any comment.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Mr. Miller, would you like to comment on that? I noticed it was part of your submission today, sir.

**Dr. Chris Miller:** With regard to marine protected areas, an important interim step is the closures that Anna mentioned. That's a fairly quick way the government can act to ensure that the integrity of a particular site is maintained while the more lengthy process of marine protected area establishment occurs. That's a band-aid solution; it's not a fix to the problem.

Another thing the government could do is to do multiple sites at the same time. It takes almost as long to do one site as it would take to do five or six sites as a single patch. I think that's the direction that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is going in designing an MPA network plan as a whole.

I don't know any specifics on implementation, but one clear thing that the government could do would be to designate multiple sites at the same time.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Thank you.

How is my time?

**The Chair:** You have one more minute.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski:** Okay, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Fast at this time.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Going back to Mr. Miller on the exception for oil and gas development within the park boundaries of Sable Island, was there a reason that the federal government chose to leave that exception there? I suspect there may also have been a provincial concern that it should be left open pending future consideration either by the federal government or collaboration with the provincial government to make sure that economic opportunities weren't being lost.

I will also open it for comment from Mr. McNamee. He may know what the background of that decision was.

•(1630)

**Dr. Chris Miller:** Very quickly, Sable Island is a very special place for Nova Scotians. It's a sliver of sand in the ocean that Nova

Scotians care very deeply about. I think most Nova Scotians want to protect it, and for the most part want it to be left alone.

That said, all around Sable Island there are oil and gas exploration opportunities, and that is occurring right now. The issue with the national park was whether this sliver of sand would be closed to oil and gas exploration while the rest of the area around it remains open. At the time that the legislation was being debated and discussed, CPAWS proposed a number of amendments that would have made it very clear that Sable Island is off limits to oil and gas exploration.

With regard to the provincial government, the offshore accord implementation act is a piece of mirror legislation, so it's both federal and provincial, and my understanding is that changes to that would require both levels of government to agree.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** You're saying that the result of that legislation was both levels of government agreeing, at least for the time being, to leave that exception in place.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fast, I'm sorry; I have to cut it off. Hopefully somebody can pick that up later.

We are now on to Mr. Stetski.

I just want to say that I'm very mindful that Mr. Hunka gave testimony that talked not to hitting the targets but to actually changing the whole approach. I want to make sure he knows we didn't not hear what he had to say, but nobody is asking questions about that.

I'll give you a chance.

Go ahead, Mr. Stetski.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Hopefully, we'll get to that.

I just have some information for Dr. Metaxas.

When we met with the ADM and director general from DFO a few meetings ago, they did say right up front, when I asked whether there are any barriers to reaching their targets, that they needed to change their legislation so that things could move forward, and more quickly than seven years. We're looking forward to seeing that happen.

**Dr. Anna Metaxas:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** I have a question for Mr. Miller.

I'm going to read this because I want to set the stage properly, I guess. You mentioned Sable Island in your opening remarks, and I want to follow up on that issue in terms of ensuring protected areas, in the larger sense, really are sufficiently protected.

As I'm sure you're aware, in response to a petition by the Mikisew Cree First Nation, UNESCO was investigating the government's failure to protect Wood Buffalo National Park, I think from the impacts of oil, gas, and hydro projects, including Site C in British Columbia. We should see the results of that fairly soon.

Wood Buffalo has been a world heritage site for more than three decades and could now land on the UN list of sites in danger. UNESCO has also repeatedly raised concerns about the impacts of oil and gas projects on Gros Morne National Park and has warned that its heritage site status may also be compromised, and you've spoken about oil and gas exploration on Sable Island.

The government is committed to restoring ecological integrity as a priority in our national park system, but we have heard concerns from a number of witnesses that our protected areas are not as protected as they should be.

In your view, what measures does the federal government need to take to ensure that our national parks in Canada are better protected and preserved?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** Thank you for the question.

Since we're discussing protected areas in Atlantic Canada, and that's what I'm most familiar with, maybe I'll start with that.

I think there would be tremendous public support for ensuring that the Sable Island site is fully protected. I know it could be complicated to fix the legislation, since making that change requires both levels of government agreeing on those changes. However, I think it's something that the public would support.

With regard to Gros Morne and the UNESCO designation, my understanding of that issue is that there are a number of holdings within the national park where some fracking and some oil and gas exploration were proposed. That would have had big impacts on the national park. UNESCO sent a team to Canada to investigate, and they concluded that there was a threat to the UNESCO site and that the way to fix that would be to implement a proper buffer zone around the park.

• (1635)

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Is that proceeding?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** I'm not sure if it's proceeding, but there's been a clear ruling from UNESCO that that needs to take place. Certainly coming up with a plan to actually establish an effective buffer zone is something that the federal government could do in collaboration with the Newfoundland and Labrador government.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Hunka, thank you for your presentation and for pointing out the 83% of the land and the 90% of the water that would not be protected.

However, we're quite challenged, because currently about 1% of marine areas and 10% of land areas are protected. I think we really need to start somewhere and grow that to 10% and 17%.

We've heard from many aboriginal people that they would be interested in new types of protected areas that basically share responsibility for managing these new protected areas, perhaps even a system of aboriginal protected sites across Canada. How do you feel about that, and would you see that, as some of the other groups that we met with do, as reconciliation as well?

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** The issue is not just picking out hectares of water or hectares of land. We must remember that we are looking at unique ecosystems, biodiversity, and habitats. That is what we are

trying to protect, not just a land mass. That is the key. Otherwise, you could pick a lake. You could pick all kinds of things. We are looking for unique, special habitats with unique species and so forth. That is the challenge.

What we have, though, is a problem where even DFO—and I would probably hazard Environment Canada—has not yet designed the guidelines for practitioners to operate under—the scientists, the biologists, and so forth. We are totally lacking information. This is a massive country.

It's not to chase down and get 17%. That's useless. That doesn't meet the targets internationally, and it doesn't meet the goals we have established for ourselves and internationally. That is what we are trying to protect.

As for the land masses the aboriginal communities have, the traditional territories they have talked about, yes, there are a lot of unique features there, but again, the crown has to work with the indigenous peoples of our country, and there isn't any evidence of that happening.

I would say we have a failure of governments themselves to come to grips with this issue of protecting unique ecosystems, habitats, and the biodiversity of this country. We are not doing that.

**The Chair:** You're done. Sorry.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Okay. We'll come back, hopefully.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fisher, go ahead.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks, folks, for being here. That was some great testimony.

I want to take a moment to thank all the members around the table who supported my private member's bill last night on mercury-bearing light bulbs. That was certainly a highlight of my life.

This government has made a firm commitment to improving and supporting ocean research and innovation. I am pleased that my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has a new Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship. I think Dr. Metaxas knows it as COVE. Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada are known worldwide for their outstanding ocean research at Dalhousie and other universities. I am thrilled, Doctor, that you could be here today from Halifax to join us.

With our vast oceans, as you mentioned, protecting 10% of our marine environment means basically monitoring 710,000 square kilometres. How can we best monitor MPAs while managing the huge associated cost? Is this a good opportunity for further ocean innovation projects? Do you have any quick thoughts on that? Is there anything out there that our government should know, or could learn from you on this?

**Dr. Anna Metaxas:** Thank you for the question.

I think monitoring is going to be a major task that we are not actually thinking about right now. We are just trying to draw those boxes.

There has to be some research done on how to do it efficiently. There could be economies of scale. For example, if you have closures, MPAs, or reserves that have similar types of species or characteristics—they are offshore; they are large, remote, or coastal; they are all plant-based environments, or not plant-based—I think there could be some strategies developed in one particular area that could then be reproduced across the lands or the ocean.

It is a serious problem. There is actually ongoing research globally—and we are starting to do a bit on the east coast—to understand what the most efficient way is of doing this monitoring. There are no simple answers, so we have to do the research to find out what the trade-offs are, the costs and the benefits.

• (1640)

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** It sounds incredibly expensive to monitor 710,000 square kilometres.

**Dr. Anna Metaxas:** That's right. To take a ship out for a day costs \$30,000. You do the math.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you.

Dr. Miller, coming from Nova Scotia, I am deeply proud of our provincial commitments—which you spoke about—for expanding our protected areas and for the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. As a province, we've been able to establish a massive amount of protected areas. You spoke about Fisheries and Oceans maybe coming up with a new philosophy, coming up with a network in order to hit targets more quickly. Is that a kind of made-in-Nova Scotia approach that they are looking at? Is that something that the federal government is learning from Nova Scotia?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** I think the EGSPA legislation is somewhat unique in that it sets a whole bunch of targets and timelines for a lot of different environmental issues at the same time. It covers everything from greenhouse gas emissions to water quality to protected areas. That is a unique element of it.

The sole purpose is to have the targets and the timelines with annual reporting, so that it transcends changes in government. That particular legislation was introduced under the Progressive Conservative government, a lot of the targets were met under the NDP, and now the current Liberal government is also continuing to implement much of the content of the legislation.

I definitely think there are some elements to it that are useful at the federal level, though the biggest success story for Nova Scotia on protected areas is actually the implementation of the protected areas, the actual creation of these areas. In many cases it cost a couple of hundred million dollars to acquire the lands that were most important for conservation. That political will is really key in making sure that we get to the targets that we set.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Do I still have some time?

**The Chair:** You have.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Dr. Miller, you mentioned Birch Cove Lakes in Halifax. The potential is there for an urban wilderness park. What type of support do you feel you need from the federal government to move forward with urban wilderness planning and protection specifically?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** Birch Cove Lakes is a fantastic area of Halifax. It's about five kilometres or so from the downtown area. There are

more than a dozen wilderness lakes there. It's a place that's visited by all sorts of people from Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford, and Sackville. People use it for recreation. You can go canoeing or.... It's the sort of thing that makes Halifax great.

However, a really important piece of it is owned by a private developer, and that particular piece is crucial for our access to the park. The city has written into its blueprint that it wants to acquire that land for a park.

The challenge is that the city has had a lot of trouble, especially in the last couple of months, in actually reaching a deal to acquire those lands. I think that if the federal government played a more active role, perhaps with some of the green infrastructure funding that may be available, it might help the city to negotiate a deal to acquire this really important property.

Again, I consider it to be green infrastructure. When I think about the future of Halifax, that national park quality site right in the middle of the city is really crucial. Whether or not it's appropriate for a national urban park is I think something that Parks Canada could look at. Certainly the improvements that were made to the legislation around the protection of ecological integrity makes it something that I would consider worthwhile to consider for Halifax.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Do I have any time left?

**The Chair:** You're done.

Mr. Fast is next.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Thank you very much.

I have a question for Mr. McNamee. In her notes, Dr. Metaxas mentioned a number of things under "Management plan" under her suggested recommendations. One was:

To determine effectiveness, MPAs must have [a] clear conservation priorities and [b] measurable targets, as well as [c] criteria for determining whether the targets are being met.

I'm assuming she means that this is not necessarily happening right now.

To what degree, if any, are those happening as we implement and manage MPAs?

• (1645)

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** Thanks for the question. I cannot speak to Oceans Act marine protected areas, but I can speak to national marine conservation areas established under our legislation.

Bear in mind, as we've mentioned to the committee before, that we only have four operating national marine conservation areas, some quite new, some still in the development phase. Part of what we do for each one of them is develop a management plan, and that management plan, through public consultation—and in some cases, such as that of Gwaii Haanas, developed through the Archipelago Management Board in collaboration with the Haida Nation—sets out a range of natural and cultural goals for the area.

We put in place those kinds of objectives, if you will, for the NMCAs. In some of them we have an active monitoring program for a number of issues. In a number of the other marine conservation areas, we're working to develop a monitoring program.

We've been quite successful on the national park side. In fact, we're the only country that has a very robust, modern ecological integrity monitoring program. We're looking to learn from it to apply it to the marine environment.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** When Parks Canada is identifying how we're going to meet our Aichi targets, whether on the marine conservation side or on the terrestrial side, do we as a federal government actually take a holistic approach to it? Mr. Miller suggested that in Nova Scotia they would identify a large number of areas for protection and then would move forward essentially in concert on most of them. I think he used the term "in batches". Is that something the federal government could do to hopefully improve the process of moving these conservation measures forward?

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** I think Parks Canada is in a little bit of a different situation. What Dr. Miller is talking about is creating a protected areas network within one province, where you have a fair amount of crown land that the Nova Scotia government works with. They have the territory on which they can move forward in collaboration with others, while Parks Canada proposes looking at different parts of the country where we can pick up representative natural areas using its systems plan, which we've discussed before.

In some cases, if we're successful in establishing them... For example, in Labrador we had the national park reserve established to protect 10,700 square kilometres, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador agreed to protect a really important river ecosystem or watershed such as we were talking about on Tuesday, the Eagle River. You have that collaborative federal-provincial approach to protecting the landscape.

That's the kind of thing we try with some success to leverage during the establishment phase and then more actively during the management phase.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Thank you.

Ms. Jans, I'm intrigued to hear about P.E.I. National Park. Some of us here on this committee visited the western parks—Banff, Jasper, Haida Gwaii, Gulf Islands—and there were protection challenges within each of the parks that were unique.

In your park, the pressures for development to accommodate visitors probably continue unabated, and you have to manage that. In your testimony you suggested that you have reduced the amount of infrastructure within the park—

• (1650)

**Ms. Karen Jans:** That's correct, yes.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** —and made it more efficient, to ensure that your preservation goals can be met.

Are your visitor numbers going up, or are they static, or decreasing?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** Visitation has been slowly and somewhat steadily increasing over the last number of years, but what we're finding with what we did with our concentrated investments on the visitor infrastructure is that people are using our trail systems more. Biking and cycling in the Gulf Shore Parkway trail system is moving people through the park and getting them away from maybe just being on beaches, so we've been able to move people around as part of their visitor experience.

In particular, in the campgrounds we've diversified the products. We're offering products that are now more in line with what people use for camping experiences than they were before, and we're concentrating them in one or two areas, rather than many.

We have a wonderful opportunity, with the numbers of people we get there, to share stories about the importance of national parks and protection and conservation. We do that with our programming and our outreach.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Has there been any disagreement among the stakeholder groups within the park on any development projects that have been undertaken?

**The Chair:** Make it a very quick answer, because he's out of time.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** No, there has been absolutely no disagreement. They are very happy that we're upgrading.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We appreciate that.

Mr. Aldag, you're next up.

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Thank you.

As always, we have excellent witnesses and excellent testimony today.

Mr. Hunka, I very much appreciated your brief, although you had to skip through it trying to pick through some of the real gems of information there. You really nailed the dilemma, the homocentric world view versus the ecocentric, as you put it. This really leads us to the conflict of the 10% versus 90% or the 17% versus 83%. It's like asking how we deal with conservation in a western society and try to bring in the aboriginal values and perspectives. I think what we're trying to do is find solutions to marry those up. It's going to be a bit forced, but I think that's what we're trying to do.

Hopefully I got that right as I read your materials.

I'm curious specifically about two quick things in your presentation. One is the cancellation of the ESSIM, which I had never heard of before, being a westerner. What I understand, from the material you have, is that it looks as though on St. Anns Bank there was a marine protected area that was ready to go.

What would it take to get it back on track? Is that a DFO issue? Is it a somebody else issue? Who owns that problem? Is there a possible win there, if we can get people back to the table?

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** Thank you.

The ESSIM is the eastern Scotian Shelf integrated management plan. Nova Scotia has a large shelf. That was a plan to look at the overall area and at an integrated plan whereby you could then have various components, MPAs, included within that area. That was shelved because basically of provincial and federal misunderstandings of where we would want to go.

St. Anns Bank is again a large area. It's 4,000-odd square miles. I'll defer that to Joshua, because he's been very much involved in it.

Josh, maybe you could take that question.

**Mr. Joshua McNeely (Ikanawtiket Executive Director, Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council):** We started on St. Anns Bank in 2007, as we said in our brief, with a number of different meetings with a number of different stakeholders and rights holders, and developed a plan for it. It was submitted to Ottawa. For four years now we have not known where it sits. We know it sits somewhere, hopefully on the minister's desk.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Is that the DFO minister?

**Mr. Joshua McNeely:** Yes, I mean the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

In that time frame, many people.... We're on the fisheries round tables and marine protected area tables with fisheries users and oil and gas users and everybody else. We've seen a stepping back from wanting to be involved in marine protected areas, when it takes seven years and we still don't know the answer from one. Now the marching orders seem to be that we have to go from 1% or 1.5% to 10%.

The mentality that I see, especially among the fishing community, is that we agree with the intent of marine protected areas, but we need to be involved in the process. The result right now, at this stage in the game, is that if you're going to force it upon us, pick somewhere that I'm not fishing. That's our—

•(1655)

**Mr. John Aldag:** That led into another train of thought that I'm not going to necessarily go to now, but as we talk about seven years to create these marine protected areas, I would assume—we've seen this with Parks Canada—that for a lot of new protected areas, it takes time to develop the relationships, to build the trust, and to have the right conversations. If all of a sudden we're going on an accelerated plan, what's going to go out the door? Is it the relationships? That is a concern as we're looking at moving forward.

The other point of clarification I simply want to get is this. In your brief you mentioned that “the targets set by the Liberal Government are impractical without a brutal top-down approach”. Are we talking about the 10% and the 17%? Is this related to the Aichi targets, or is it something else? I'm just wondering which—

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** When Dr. Peter Lawless reviewed the situation happening in Canada through looking at and discussing things with a range of persons, including us and DFO, he realized that here it seems to be that we're looking for the government itself to put forward a view saying it wants a particular area to be a marine protected area or a terrestrial area, which is really not the experience worldwide. Worldwide it's usually communities and persons who say that there's a unique feature here, there are unique characteristics, there's a unique biodiversity, and we should protect that area, and that idea moves upwards. That is what he's referring to. It would almost put the government in a position of saying, “We have to meet the 10%; here, do it.” That is going to, as the doctor indicated, create horrendous management and monitoring issues.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Perfect. Thank you.

I'm going to move quickly to Parks Canada.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Ms. Jans, you mentioned 10 years for an additional protected area that's, I think, already being managed as adjacent lands.

Why is it going to take 10 years? Is it a legislative piece that's needed? Is it a consultative piece?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** No. Greenwich is part of the national park, and it takes that period of time to work through the legislation. We have to get it through the gazetting process.

**Mr. John Aldag:** So if there is political will, it could be accelerated.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** Oh, absolutely.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay.

I'll keep going.

**The Chair:** No, you're done.

It's really hard. We have so much we want to ask you, and there's just not enough time.

Mr. Shields is next.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me pick up on the issue Mr. Aldag was on. If I can clarify it—

Thank you for being here, by the way. I've been in that park long before you were born. I'm an old guy.

**An hon. member:** You are old.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** No, you're not.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Oh, yes, I am. I have a scar I got as a six-year-old from a jellyfish off the beach. I've carried it for many years. That was 1959, Madam.

I thought you talked about that plan having been ongoing for some time, when you talked about the 10-year plan. You've been working at this....

**Ms. Karen Jans:** No, we are in the process right now of creating a new 10-year management plan for Prince Edward Island National Park. The current one expires this coming year, and so we're in the process of creating a new 10-year one.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Okay, back up. You're saying you have started a process.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** Yes, we have.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** How long ago was that?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** It was last year.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Okay.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** We did a state of the park report in 2015, we started the process this past year, we've been going through several consultations, and we're in the last phases of public consultation.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Great.

Concerning the resources you might have used, such as a consultation process or science, can you tell me a little about it?



**Ms. Karen Jans:** First of all, we do what's called a "state of the park report" in which we do a situational analysis of where we are standing right now and what our indicators are like on the natural side, the cultural side, the externalization side, and in our relationships with first nations, etc.

We do that snapshot and then we work with the stakeholders and communities, as well as internally with our specialists, to identify where we want to go. What we have done here is essentially create a vision for the park for the next 15 years, and we've done it collaboratively with the communities.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** You're saying that you're just about finished that process.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** We're very close. We're not finished, but we've gone back out now.... Actually, next week we'll be going back out with a draft.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** So you've had the resources you've needed to get it done.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** Absolutely, yes.

• (1700)

**Mr. Martin Shields:** That's great to hear. Thank you.

Moving on to Mr. Miller, you talked about quality versus quantity. I think we've heard numbers for months and months on end, percentages. Can you describe to me, although I think I've heard it, what's important to you, quality or quantity, and how you would define the difference?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** In my own experience here in Nova Scotia, when I was invited by the provincial government to participate in a small team of experts that selected areas, we were looking for high-quality sites. We weren't looking for sites that just avoided conflict; we were looking for ones that contained species at risk, old-growth forest, that sort of thing.

The reality of Nova Scotia is that there is a big, heavy human footprint here. There is a lot of human impact. In many respects, finding those areas that are of high quality is important because so little of it is left.

With regard to quantity versus quality, there were constraints in Nova Scotia that were largely set by the EGSPA, and so we were mostly looking to fill up a basket with high-quality sites.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Why would that be any different anywhere else in Canada? Why wouldn't we be looking for high-quality sites versus quantity anywhere?

**Dr. Chris Miller:** My short answer would be that it's not a choice between quality and quantity; we need both.

We need to make sure that we're selecting areas that are of high ecological value. In many cases, those are the large intact wilderness areas that still remain—places such as the boreal forest of Canada, for instance, which supports woodland caribou. They need large areas because they have very large ranges. If we want to protect that species, we need to be selecting the best habitat and ensuring that there's enough of it.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Thank you.

Going to Mr. Hunka, I think, having wandered through the legal world at one time in my careers, that this fits in a little bit with what you were saying. On the other hand, not being as negative about it, I find most legal people want to try to keep it out of the court system, because that's a better way to solve problems.

When you describe your process, I ask, having read the document, how you would envision it happening without a legal something at the end of it. Do you see no legal entities in this process at all?

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** I see a legal entity in the context that Canada will have declared this to be a marine protected area, and both levels of government—in the case of Nova Scotia, the Government of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada—have declared a specific marine area to be a marine protected area. That becomes the legal instrument, through the Oceans Act or through the terrestrial acts.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I understand consultation, working for consensus, and all the rest of that, but at some point there has to be some legal documentation, some legal court documents that are verified and that everybody accepts. Do you agree with that?

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** Well, yes. All stakeholders and rights holders would have to agree that yes, this will be a marine protected area.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Your idea of building consensus, then, does eventually end up in a legal framework.

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** Well, obviously, yes, it would.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Okay, good. I was wondering about that, because I was reading it and turning it the other way around, starting at the grassroots and building it up, but did it end in a final legal framework? I think I have that clarified. I just wanted to make sure, because without that, I think we have a problem.

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** The Gully is a prime example. The Gully was not brought about by governments. It was academics—university scientists and so forth—who said they thought we should protect this area, and it went upwards.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Right.

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** Finally it was given sanction by the federal government. The provincial government didn't object to it, but said, fine, we'll have it as an MPA.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** That's great. I appreciate that.

I'm done.

**The Chair:** You're good with your timing. I don't know how you get that sorted out so well all the time.

Mr. Bossio is next.

**Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** I have just one question, for Anna Metaxas and for Chris Miller. Then I'll be sharing the rest of my time with Mr. Aldag.

In the testimony of both of you—Anna, you alluded to this in your testimony—we've seen, and in other reports that we've done as well, that in order to achieve this target and continue to achieve it and monitor it we pretty much have to legislate the targets that we need to achieve and the review of those targets and we have to update plans to achieve and enforce them.

Do you think that's really the only way we're going to get to those targets? Are those means imperative?

**Dr. Anna Metaxas:** First of all, I think it's imperative that we have clear targets.

I guess I would like to clarify what I mean by a target. I heard about Parks Canada suggesting that there are conservation strategies, priorities, etc. That is absolutely correct, and management plans include protecting the health of the ecosystem, to give you an example, but the “health of an ecosystem” is a bit vague. What we need to do is say that for this particular ecosystem, health means this. It means we have so many of these animals, or we have so many new animals coming in, or so many new plants. That's the target that we can then go back to measure every year or every five years or however frequently we need to do it.

The conservation priority is of a broader character than a target. The target does not need to be legislated, because it will be specific to the particular reserve, protected area, or whatever you want to call it. What needs to be legislated, I think, is that there be a measurable target, not what the target is for every single one, because they will vary.

• (1705)

**Dr. Chris Miller:** On the terrestrial protected areas, Nova Scotia is currently ranked third in Canada, while the other Atlantic provinces are at the back of the pack on protected areas in terms of total percentages. What are the reasons for that?

What I highlighted in my opening remarks is that there are three main reasons. One is that there is clear legislation that says this target will be met by this time and that there is an accountability measure on that. That's really important. The real-life experience from Nova Scotia was that as successive governments changed through time, the legislation stayed the same.

Number two is systematic conservation planning versus a site-by-site approach. If you're doing one site at a time, it's going to take you forever to reach your targets. Use the proper science, use traditional ecological knowledge, select the areas as batches, and ensure that you meet your targets.

The third one is collaboration very early on in the process. Bring in people, start to build a consensus, make sure you talk to everybody who has a stake and an interest in the conservation. Doing that might take a little longer to get things started, but overall, with implementation and getting support for the final plan, there's a much greater chance of success.

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

Go ahead, John.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thanks.

Parks Canada, I'm curious about this parcel of land we were talking about. I don't know whether either of you would be able to give the information, but I'm wondering what other equivalent pieces of land are within the Parks Canada holdings that are simply awaiting legislation to bring them under the protection offered by the National Parks Act, which would then give the kind of mandate for ecological integrity and other protections.

Is that something either of you would be able to do? Maybe we could direct it to the agency.

**Ms. Karen Jans:** I'll let Kevin speak specifically to it, but I will note that we manage it as if it were under protection.

**Mr. John Aldag:** But you wouldn't have the same authorities for charges and....

**Ms. Karen Jans:** That's correct; however, it is managed according to the same standards.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay.

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** I think we can provide you with a broader list.

For example, one of our priorities will be that once we secure a park impact and benefit agreement with the Nunatsiavut government for the national park reserve in the Mealy Mountains, it will clearly require legislation to protect it. There would be a number of other national parks, such as Gulf Islands, that would have some small parcels of land that, when the time is right and opportune, we would bring under the act.

Just to clarify, when we negotiate establishment agreements, between the time that the land is transferred to Canada and when it is brought under the act we negotiate the ability to have the province designate our wardens as able to enforce certain wildlife and visitor safety things. It's not as if the land is just not watched over.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Sure, and that may be true for newly negotiated lands.

In my career with Parks Canada over three decades, I was responsible for a number of federally held lands that did not have that protection because of the history of how they were acquired. They had never been gazetted and protected, so there are pockets out there, and it will be interesting to see how many of those there are.

You had also—

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds. You're done.

**Mr. John Aldag:** I was going to get you to make a comment on marine protected areas and the establishment around MCAs in the Atlantic provinces, but that's something we could get through a written brief.

**The Chair:** Yes, we could do that.

Look, what I'm going to do is I'm going to add three more minutes to questions for each party, so we'll add the three to Mr. Stetski. He's going to have six minutes. Mr. Fast will have three, and then it's back over to this side, so you guys figure it out, okay?

• (1710)

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** In the spirit of collaboration, I was going to ask Mr. Bossio to go over and distract the chair so we can get some extra time in here.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** We've heard from a number of witnesses over the last several months in terms of meeting the 10% and 17% targets. I'm quite optimistic when I look at the interest among aboriginal communities, for example, to see protected areas, both in terms of being able to pursue traditional activities and in terms of reconciliation.

Earlier this week, we heard about the possibility of a “wild and scenic rivers” concept, similar to what they have in the States. If we could apply that to Canada, that would be great for connectivity between protected areas in many ways. That's one way that would help us reach the target.

We have DFO, the Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada, and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada working together as a group to reach these targets, which is very positive. We have the federal-provincial Parks Council, which is a collection of provincial, territorial, and federal groups working towards the target. Then, of course, we have a network of environmental groups across Canada that are very interested in reaching these targets.

I'm hopeful that we can actually reach the 10% and 17%, but we've also heard from a number of witnesses—and I'm going to pass the question around to each of you—that we need to have, beyond the Aichi targets of 10% and 17%, a greater conservation vision for Canada moving ahead. I'm interested in what you think that greater conservation vision should look like for Canada. Also, how do we get Canadians on board and involved in that vision?

I'm going to be totally unfair and ask Mr. McNamee that question first.

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** I appreciate the question being put to an agency that has to negotiate it, but I think maybe the fair way to turn it around is to say that I think there has been a fair amount of work over the past decades in trying to articulate a conservation vision for the country. I think you've heard about a lot here.

Aside from protected areas and things like that, which you are obviously going to pronounce on in your report, there are two things that you may want to come to grips with, one being the connection between protected areas and climate change. I think that too often the debate has been about how climate change will affect protected areas, as opposed to what it is that protected areas can do. There's a fair amount of work that's been done globally and internationally in terms of their contributions to conserving biodiversity, protecting ecosystem services, etc. There are two reports that I think we could provide the committee and that I think would amplify that.

The other thing, I think, is a conservation vision that reflects the robust testimony that you have heard from indigenous people. If I may say to the committee respectfully, don't just focus on what indigenous people—and I don't mean to speak for them—can contribute in terms of protected areas. You have heard, more than any other committee before, how they view the land, how they make decisions, and how the elders and others from generations past have looked at the land and how they treat the land and use the land. This committee can really bring that into a conservation vision unlike any other committee has ever done before.

I think those are two thoughts for you.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Thank you.

Mr. Hunka, this is for you and your team. What we've heard from some people is that at least 50% of the land and 30% of the marine areas should be protected.

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** I'm hopeful we will achieve that. We shouldn't just give up, but it's a process of working through it. If it takes 30 years, 40 years, it doesn't matter. The issue is for Canada. This is the common domain of Canadians. The common heritage of Canadians, all forms of Canadians within this federation, is to be serious about protecting our biodiversity, the habitat and so forth. It's a cultural life that we have to adopt.

That's what I see as the vision—not a culture of trade-offs, but a culture of life. When we protect these marine protected areas or the land masses or the uniqueness, what we're doing is promising that we won't disturb it. We watch it, we work with it, but we're not going to pillage it and plunder it or scar it. In other words, love it.

It's a culture of life. It's part of us. Treat that area and learn from that area the beauty that the creator has given to us. I think that's the vision that I'd like to see.

•(1715)

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Mr. Miller, and if there's some time I will come back and—

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Dr. Chris Miller:** Thank you.

If you think about the 10% and the 17%, I think it's quite clear that's not enough. There's a risk that these have become islands of protection in a sea of disturbance, and that's certainly not the intention of the Aichi targets. The 10% and the 17% goals are interim steps toward something bigger.

I think what the federal government, hopefully through this process, can come to realize is that just by implementing some of the existing commitments that are in place, we can achieve those interim targets. Where we move after that...I mean, the CPAWS position is that at least 50% of our public lands and waters would be protected.

I've had the good fortune of working with Miawpukek First Nation in Newfoundland, along the south coast. They talk about conserving all of their traditional territory. I think that's an approach that we really need to look at. The leadership that indigenous communities are providing in maintaining holistic protection of the landscape is something we should explore.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will go over to Mr. Fast.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Hunka, I took note of your reference to Peter Lawless's visit to Canada, among other countries, and his comparison of the process that takes place in the various jurisdictions for engaging citizens in the development of marine protected areas.

As I recall, I believe you focused on two things. One was the legal environment in Canada, which perhaps frustrates the ability to do a bottom-up approach. Then you talked about that approach itself, an approach that has to be driven by communities, by regions, by the stakeholders on the ground.

Would you be able to expand on that a little more? The legal system we have in Canada is what it is, but I think you went beyond that. You talked about a legal culture that prevents us from effectively moving these initiatives forward in a timely way.

**Mr. Roger Hunka:** At the end, we will need to have some umbrella that says this is a marine protected area and those who violate will somehow be sanctioned.

The systems are in place, but I don't believe that Parks Canada, DFO, Environment Canada, Natural Resources, or any department would be against, or try to impede, citizens, scientists, aboriginal groups, from saying, "I think this area is worthy. I think that because of this biodiversity, this uniqueness, this habitat, this is a wonderful candidate to explore and further work on."

From there, we have the universities and we have the BIOS building up. We have the institutions. We have the capacity, the human capacity, the knowledge. We do have that at hand to build up those areas.

Peter was saying the top-down approach pushes people away from that rather than vacuuming them in; when it comes from the bottom up, people will buy into it. That is where the hope is.

I truly believe that we will achieve these targets, but it doesn't necessarily mean by those dates. As long as we're working towards it—all of us in Canada, all the provincial jurisdictions, territorial jurisdictions, and everyone else—we will achieve them. Then there are larger challenges, and the largest ones will be the monitoring. It's great to have an area, and then there's the monitoring. Those are things that will evolve. It's iterative. It will happen.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** There is very little time left, and I think you led into what Anna Metaxas was saying in terms of her testimony as well.

Mr. Fisher, you are the last one.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** All right. Hopefully I'll have some time to share with—

**The Chair:** Just be quick.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I'm looking at Parks Canada.

I want to go back to Birch Cove, in Halifax. This is a place that really matters to the folks back home. It really matters. We're talking about a chain of lakes and trails that you can get to by city bus. This is a generational opportunity.

Is this something that Parks Canada would consider looking at supporting? Is this something that Parks Canada would take into consideration and give some type of support to in order to enable this to happen? If we miss out on this opportunity, it's lost forever.

• (1720)

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** I think it's something that we'd like to hear more about and—

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I'll take that as a yes. That's perfect. Thank you.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** Well, I would say that it is something we need to take a look at, because I think that with the election of the government and the 17% and 10% targets being put out there, a number of organizations have asked us to take a look at some things. We have to balance off what our mandate is under the Parks Canada Agency Act in terms of representing natural regions, plus the other opportunities that are out there. People do approach us and provide us with information.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you for that.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Darren, can I build on that?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Yes.

**Mr. John Aldag:** I was really interested in your comment that the terrestrial system in the Atlantic provinces is essentially complete. Ms. Jans was talking about loss of terrain and how there's erosion happening. Are there any plans? I know that "expansion" is always a sensitive word in the Atlantic provinces because of expropriation being used to create some parks, but are there any strategies—willing buyer, willing seller, as an example—to deal with loss of habitat and with increasing footprint in terms of possibilities to improve the ecological integrity of the existing protected areas? Do you have any comments on that?

**Ms. Karen Jans:** If I can comment regarding Prince Edward Island, yes, it is a small park on the coast, and one of the things identified through our current management planning exercise is the gap in a land acquisition policy. We've identified that as a priority. We need to get it in place because, since the fifties, we've just been reactive when an opportunity came forward.

**Mr. John Aldag:** With that, going to what was just said about other mechanisms, I think this is something that needs to be looked at. Within the existing parks, there could be land acquisition programs for expansion that may need some guidance, but also, what are the other ones?

Sable Island, I think, is an example that had come on fairly quickly, as are things like the Rouge park. Are there opportunities to do that kind of near-urban park to add to the protected areas? It's outside of the existing systems plan, but it may be something for us to explore.

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** Yes, absolutely. In fact, you can look at things close by, such as the Thousand Islands National Park, which a number of years ago was doubled in size because of an opportunity that arose. Also, Nahanni was expanded sixfold.

Lands have been added to a number of national parks, and we realize that at a certain point we're going to have to revisit our systems plan. Please don't interpret my comment as "we're not looking at doing anything else", but right now, in terms of representing regions, we have done the job there.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Is there a land acquisition policy right now that would guide this kind of thing, or could we be encouraging the minister and the agency to develop it to fill what is perhaps a void?

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** The 1994 Parks Canada policy does have policies with respect to the expansion of national parks. We have a policy of willing seller—

**Mr. John Aldag:** With funding?

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** Sorry?

**Mr. John Aldag:** With funding?

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** It's a policy, and I think we realize when we look at... We have three national parks, including the Bruce Peninsula and the Grasslands, which still have not reached their full and final boundaries because we require land that has to be bought from private landowners. We also, as you've heard, need some land in the Gulf Islands.

There is not an ongoing source of funds for land acquisition, in part because of the costs. The opportunities sometimes don't come along for a while. The committee will have a chance when...I believe it's the Rouge bill that has something with respect to the new parks and sites account, so you'll have an opportunity to further discuss that.

**Mr. John Aldag:** When we were in the Gulf Islands, we saw a great lost opportunity and—

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. John Aldag:** —it's unfortunate to see that playing out across the country.

**The Chair:** We'll end it here, but that speaks to the comment we heard that sometimes when the opportunity comes up, you have to move quickly. It sounds as though you need to have a reserve fund sitting there for these opportunities, because by the time government goes through the process to make that decision, somebody else has bought the land. It's not going to sit around for long.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** I'm sorry. I realize you're out of time, but is there a way for us to comment back to the committee on the Sable Island issue that was raised? We didn't have a chance to address that.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Yes. We are really grateful for the time that everybody has taken today and for the wisdom you've shared. If there's anything that came up, anything you heard or any questions that you thought were hanging, any reports or more information on specifics that you have, we welcome it. Maybe as you're going home today, you'll think of something that you wish you had shared. We are starting our drafting instructions at the very beginning of November, for two sessions, and then we are handing it over to our analysts for a report to be written, so we will need it fairly soon.

Go ahead, Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. John Aldag:** I don't know how long it could be, but if there's even a 30-second response on the Sable Island one, it would be—

**The Chair:** Okay. I promised that I wasn't going to go over today, but, please, if it's short, go ahead

**Mr. Kevin McNamee:** Just to be clear, when the Sable Island National Park Reserve was created, the federal-provincial accord acts that Chris described were amended. One, it prohibited oil and gas exploration and development from the surface of Sable Island. Two, it established the 200-square-kilometre buffer zone around the island that prohibits oil and gas exploration and development out to one nautical mile—an unprecedented decision.

The Government of Nova Scotia insisted that as a condition of establishment, low-impact seismic activity could be permitted by the offshore petroleum board. In testimony before this committee, which considered that legislation, the Nova Scotia government made it clear that it was a deal breaker for establishing the park.

The important point they made was that first of all, the board confirmed to this committee that no work was imminent in terms of low-impact seismic activity. Second, they were going to be working with us, and we would be consulting the public on what “low-impact seismic activity” means, because “low impact” was not defined in the legislation.

They affirmed that the current seismic information for the region was adequate but maybe needed to be updated at some point, and they might need access to Sable Island to do that. They undertook such activity in the 1990s, and an ecologist who lives on the island confirmed that the approach had no impact.

As you've heard, the reason they need to do it is there's hydrocarbon development in the offshore beyond there. They need to make sure that when they are drilling, they have a very clear understanding of the seismic structure. If, as a result of being denied access to Sable Island to do some offshore work that would be permitted but has nothing to do with the park, they cannot undertake that seismic activity, there may be a gap in the information related to drilling in other places that could cause an issue with respect to drilling.

It was a condition of establishment. It was a well-founded argument in the view of governments, so to change it would require a renegotiation of the agreement with Nova Scotia and amendments not only to the Canada National Parks Act but to the accord acts.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Before I let everybody go, we've put on your table a draft press release that, as we had agreed on Tuesday, we were comfortable with. It was rewritten to reflect our comments. If nobody has had a chance to read it, it just says that we're looking for briefs.

We are thinking that we're just going to add one sentence to it which says, "The committee may choose to invite some of these groups or individuals to appear as witnesses." It's just so the people don't think that there's never a chance. We're not saying that there's going to be a chance to come before the committee, but it leaves the door open if we should want to, based on the briefs. Okay?

Do you guys want time to judge this? If so, we'll do it next Tuesday. We were trying to get it out, but it's not a panic if you want to do it Tuesday. Do you want to wait?

**Hon. Ed Fast:** If it stays this way, I'm okay.

**The Chair:** Well, that's the change right there. It's not anything.... Just have a look at that.

**An hon. member:** It's the same thing.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** That's what I'm saying.

**The Chair:** We just put one sentence in, and the reason I thought we should... It means that when people see this out there, there's no appreciation that we might call on them.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** I think you're raising expectations by doing that.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** If you just leave it this way, we still leave it open for us to call them.

**The Chair:** Yes, we could. Are you good with it?

**A voice:** Yes.

**The Chair:** We'll send it out. I'm fine. Let's get it out.

All right; thanks, everybody.

This meeting is adjourned.

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