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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

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• (1555)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): Welcome, everyone. It's been many months since we've been in open session. We're in a public session today, and it's really nice to be back in the public eye.

There are two things on the agenda today. One is the supplementary (A)s, and the other one, obviously, is our report. Hopefully, we're not going to have any more votes called right now, and given the host of guests we have in front of us, I thought we would show respect and do the supplementary (A)s first. Then we'll go back to the report, for which we will go into closed session.

I'd like to introduce our witnesses.

In front of us today from the Department of the Environment, we have Nancy Hamzawi, director general, environmental protection branch. Welcome.

We have Matt Jones, director general, strategic policy branch. Welcome, Matt.

We also have Sue Milburn-Hopwood, who has been in front of us before. Welcome back, Sue. You're the assistant deputy minister of the Canadian Wildlife Service.

We have with us Carol Najm, assistant deputy minister, corporate services and finance branch.

Next, from the Parks Canada Agency, we have Mitch Bloom, vice-president, strategic policy and investment. Mitch, you've been here before. It's nice to see you again.

We also have with us Sylvain Michaud, chief financial officer. Thank you for being here again.

Last, we have Rob Prosper, vice-president, protected areas establishment and conservation. Welcome.

Who would like to start?

Ms. Carol Najm (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Finance Branch, Department of the Environment): I'll start with opening remarks and then turn it over to my colleague Sylvain for his opening remarks.

The Chair: Thank you, Carol.

Ms. Carol Najm: Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here with you today to discuss the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (A) for

Environment and Climate Change Canada. In terms of these estimates, they include a total of \$24.1 million in new spending that requires parliamentary approval. This represents a 2.4% increase over the main estimates of \$987.3 million that were tabled in February 2017.

Our estimates include two items: the oceans protection plan and the youth employment strategy.

[Translation]

The government launched a \$1.5-billion national oceans protection plan in November 2016. The supplementary estimates (A) is seeking a total of \$221.7 million in 2017-18 for this initiative.

[English]

Environment and Climate Change Canada is requesting \$11.6 million for the oceans protection plan in these estimates and, through future estimates documents, will seek an additional \$48.6 million in funding from 2018-19 to 2021-22, for a total of \$60.2 million over five years and \$8.3 million in ongoing funding as of 2022-23.

[Translation]

The oceans protection plan will help develop a world-leading marine safety system for our country's three coasts that protects marine ecosystems. The oceans protection plan is a horizontal initiative, delivered by four federal departments.

[English]

This program will provide a national comprehensive plan that includes a suite of initiatives to modernize the marine safety system; put in place a mechanism to negotiate co-management of marine safety, with roles and responsibilities for indigenous groups; invest in the preservation and restoration of marine ecosystems; and, advance evidence-based decision-making in support of these objectives.

The funding requested by Environment and Climate Change Canada will better position Canada's marine safety system to prevent and respond to marine safety and pollution incidents by undertaking activities related to regional response planning, oversight of incident management, and the collection of baseline data from coastal areas of northern British Columbia. It will also implement a renewed 24-7 weather prediction capacity initiative in support of improved marine safety.

On the youth employment strategy, each year the government invests more than \$330 million in the youth employment strategy to help young Canadians gain the skills, abilities, and experience they need to find and maintain good employment.

To further expand employment opportunities for young Canadians, budget 2017 proposed to provide an additional \$395.5 million over three years, starting in 2017-18. In supplementary estimates (A), we are seeking in 2017-18 \$146.8 million of the funding that was announced in budget 2017. Funding for the fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20 will be sought through future estimates.

Each year, Environment and Climate Change Canada invests approximately \$3.2 million in the youth employment strategy. Environment and Climate Change Canada is requesting an additional \$11.3 million in supplementary estimates (A), for a total planned spending of \$14.5 million in 2017-18. Through the 2018-19 main estimates, Environment and Climate Change Canada will seek an additional \$11.3 million in funding, for a total planned spending of, again, \$14.5 million.

Since 1997, Environment and Climate Change Canada has participated in the youth employment strategy led by Employment and Social Development Canada by delivering the science horizons youth internship program. This program provides eligible employers with a wage subsidy of up to \$15,000 per intern to hire recent college and university graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines in environmental fields.

The ongoing funding in the main estimates creates 179 internships. The funding sought through these supplementary estimates is aimed at delivering an additional 785 new internship opportunities for youth in the green economy, for a total of 964 internships in 2017-18.

• (1600)

[Translation]

It helps young people aged 15 to 30 gain the skills, job experience, and abilities to make a successful transition to the workplace.

The youth employment strategy is a horizontal initiative, delivered by 11 federal departments and agencies.

I hope this summary of our initiatives included in the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (A) for Environment and Climate Change Canada provides the committee with the insight members had been seeking on the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (A) for Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Carol.

Who's next? Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Michaud (Chief Financial Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the 2017-18 supplementary estimates (A) for Parks Canada.

[English]

These are Parks Canada's first supplementary estimates to update the 2017-18 main estimates. The agency's submission amounts to increased and voted appropriations of \$38.4 million, bringing the

agency's total voted budget to close to \$1.3 billion. These funds will be spent on the following three items.

The first is \$20 million relating to a negotiated settlement with the Regional Municipality of Halifax associated with a long-standing dispute over the amount of payment in lieu of taxes paid by the federal crown for the Halifax Citadel national historic site.

[Translation]

Second, \$11 million has been allocated to hire 1,140 additional secondary and post-secondary students to work in Canada's national parks, national marine conservation areas, and national historic sites.

[English]

The third is \$7.4 million to continue the work on developing and expanding Canada's national park and national marine conservation area systems and to contribute to the conservation targets Canada adopted under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

I would like to thank you, Madam Chair, and the committee, for your time today. We're happy to respond to any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

You guys have a lot more time. There are three more minutes if you have anything else to share, but we can get right into the questioning.

Who's up first? Do you want to go first, Mark? We're just getting the order sorted out.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Sure.

The Chair: We're out of practice. We haven't done this for a little while.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You'll each have six minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to everybody for attending today. It certainly is nice to have live faces that we get to interact with as opposed to each other, which we've been doing for the last number of months over a particular report.

My questions are for Parks Canada. I want to ask about the visitation levels in the parks and how important you think visitation is for the establishment and maintenance of the parks.

Mr. Mitch Bloom (Vice-President, Strategic Policy and Investment, Parks Canada Agency): Perhaps I'll start, and then my colleagues can join in.

Visitation is a key part of the mandate of parks. Managing that in the broader context of our other priorities, both heritage and the natural environment, is really what we do on a day-to-day basis, so it's fundamental. When you come into a year like this, where right now we're dealing with unprecedented numbers in visitation, because, of course, of free entry to the Canada parks system, that's a really big deal.

At the same time, picking up on the element of your question, we are always working to try to manage that visitation against the capacity we have in the parks, whether it's as simple as the visitor centres or washrooms, or things like our enforcement capacity to deal with human-animal encounters. It has a corollary effect across all aspects of what it is that we do and—

● (1605)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Can you tell me about some of the things you do to strike that balance?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Well, in the case of our physical assets, right now we're doing a lot to try to bring things back up to date to make sure we can maximize the use of the things we have, so that they're safe for Canadians to use. That has been a significant issue over the last decade. With recent investments, we're finally able to really carve into that and allow full use and access of what it is that we have, as opposed to things literally getting shut down and not being able to do that. Rob certainly can give us a lot more detail on that.

Rob, do you want to talk a little about what we do on the natural side to deal with those numbers as they come into the parks system?

Mr. Rob Prosper (Vice-President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada Agency): Sure.

Probably the way I would start is to say there's often a conversation around the idea of a balance in conservation and visitation. We tend to look at it slightly differently. We look at it from the perspective of how our social science tells us that actual visitations create lifetime supporters of conservation and protected areas. Encouraging additional visitation is actually quite critical to maintaining a constituency for conservation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay.

Mr. Bloom, you mentioned the increase this year. Do you have data? I realize that this year visitation is going to spike because of the free access, but what have the trends in visitation been like to this point?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's a great question.

Averaging it over the last decade, it's about a 5% increase year over year, so it's steadily going up. In the last year or so, it's moving up to about 7%. This year, the prediction is for anywhere from 5% to 10%. Again, the smallest things, such as weather, can really affect visitation at a particular point. Our top-out was probably around 24.5 million visitors to our parks system. This year, we're anticipating somewhere in the range of 27 million to 28 million visitors across the system.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Wow. Do you have data on the demographics of the individuals who are coming, such as urban versus rural, young versus old, and that kind of stuff?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Absolutely, and it's really interesting this year because of the giving away of our discovery passes to Canadians, millions and millions of discovery passes. As people would go online and ask for their passes, they would provide information to us about where they're located in the country. A postal code gets you a lot of information.

We have a social research shop within Parks Canada that takes in a lot of that data and does a lot of work. This year, for example, there's

a big emphasis on new Canadians, which of course will be picked up next year in free entry as well, and on youth programming in terms of trying to continue to grow the base, which, as I've said, seems to be growing quite naturally, by being able to make sure we can offer experiences to Canadians that might be different from those of others 20 to 30 years ago, who were looking for a different kind of park experience. A lot of time and research go into that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I know that the discovery pass has been huge. My wife ordered ours before I even had an opportunity to tell her about it. I think your social media or your outreach has been very effective in getting in touch with people.

Tying together my two lines of questioning, do you anticipate or are you worried about the maintenance and preservation of the parks in this particular year, given that hopefully there will be a larger spike? If so, what are you doing to ensure the integrity of the parks is maintained?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's interesting to talk about the spiking numbers. They tend to occur in very specific parts of the country and in particular park areas. Banff National Park is a perfect example. The Bruce Peninsula park is another perfect example. Both are very close to urban centres, and people from Calgary or Toronto get into their cars and go out and visit these parks.

In our top 20 parks where we saw this happening, and it happened in the past, each park had to go through an in-depth planning process to deal not just with the traditional 5% increase but with various scenarios. My colleague spoke about student hiring. We have significant student hiring, more than what we would have had previously. In ordering supplies, everything has been pre-ordered based on much larger numbers of visitors, but again, that tends to be concentrated in a somewhat smaller number of parks. It even includes our enforcement and other staff. From traffic management to everything else, we are ready to handle those crowds in those areas.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: To go back to Mr. Prosper's point about the visitors—or maybe you made it, Mr. Bloom—contributing to the base to make the parks last longer or become more sustainable in the future, this year will only help that, because so many more people will be exposed to this. Is that fair?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Absolutely, and we're also super-excited because the demographics, as you pointed out, are changing, and more people will come who have perhaps not experienced parks before. Free admission does help.

● (1610)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thanks.

The Chair: That's excellent.

In case some of you haven't been in front of us before, what I try to do, rather than interrupt, is wave a yellow card, which means that you have a minute left. A red card means you're out of time, but don't just stop talking. Finish up your thought, and then we'll end that line of questioning.

Joël.

[*Translation*]

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

It's almost like a soccer game in here. I hope I won't get the red card too often.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for taking part in this exercise. As you know, we are trying to gain a better understanding of the situation and make the best possible decisions based on the information you can provide us with.

Your funding requests may not be contradictory, but I would like some clarification from you. It says here that you are seeking funding for 732 internships at a cost of \$15,000 each. You're asking for \$11 million, but, if I understand correctly, that money will also go towards 2,500 new jobs for young people.

Are we talking about two completely different programs or the same program? If it's the same program, there is not enough money.

Ms. Carol Najm: Thank you.

[*English*]

You're referring to the youth employment strategy and the science horizons program. The funding in supplementary estimates (A) is incremental to the same program. We're trying to reach more students. The existing reference level reaches 179 interns. Our objective is to deliver an additional 785 interns with this new incremental funding through the same program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: In Budget 2017, the government promised that the strategy would create more than 2,500 new jobs. If I do some quick math and divide \$10,990,000 by 2,500 jobs, I get \$4,396 per job. Yet, here, you talk about \$15,000 per intern. I'm just trying to get a handle on this. Are the 2,500 jobs promised under the budget going to materialize?

You said you wanted to increase the number of internships from 179 to 732. All I want to know is whether the 2,500 jobs promised in the budget are going to materialize.

Ms. Carol Najm: I believe the 2,500 jobs you're referring to apply to the entire federal government, not just to Environment and Climate Change Canada. The numbers for our department are the ones I gave, but I believe the figure you're talking about applies to the entire government.

Mr. Joël Godin: It's part of the youth employment strategy's focus on green jobs. Is that correct?

Ms. Carol Najm: The focus on green jobs covers a number of departments, not just Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Mr. Joël Godin: How many of those 2,500 jobs are in your department?

Ms. Carol Najm: I don't know off the top of my head, but I can get that information to you.

Mr. Joël Godin: Very well. Can you tell us a bit about the science horizons program? Is it partly based on the principle behind the new horizons program? Does science horizons focus solely on creating jobs for youth?

Ms. Carol Najm: Unfortunately, I'm not familiar with the other program you referred to. What is it called?

Mr. Joël Godin: It's called new horizons. It's okay. I'd like you to talk about the science horizons program.

Ms. Carol Najm: All right.

[*English*]

The science horizons program is to develop opportunities for young graduates and to encourage recent hires from colleges and universities in STEM fields, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, linked to the green economy. The STEM jobs in sectors of the green economy include jobs that require environmental skills, knowledge, experience, and competencies in order to produce these products and services of environmental benefit. Examples include architects and land use planners who incorporate sustainability into designs, air quality engineers, and conservation officers. The criteria for that program are very specific to environmental fields.

That's the difference between the science horizons program and the overall youth strategy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Is the internship for the summer only or the entire year?

Is it the same program that supports job opportunities for young people through the Canada summer jobs funding?

•(1615)

Ms. Carol Najm: The interns work on projects for six to 12 months, so they are temporary employees. I'm not sure whether it works the same way under the other program. Unfortunately, I don't know.

Mr. Joël Godin: Fine. Thank you.

Switching gears, I see that you are seeking additional funding for a new initiative to enhance weather prediction capacity. A lot of people clearly have a keen interest in weather predictions.

What new technology are you looking to invest in to enhance your prediction capacity?

[*English*]

Ms. Carol Najm: I will turn to Nancy to answer that question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nancy Hamzawi (Director General, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you for your question.

The new technology uses buoys that interface with GPSs. Although it tends to be used more in high-risk areas, it is also used in low-risk areas.

Mr. Joël Godin: When you were shopping around for new technologies, did the data show that it was an effective system?

Ms. Nancy Hamzawi: The purpose of the initiative is to assess the technology's effectiveness. It's a pilot project.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: You're welcome.

Linda.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you very much for being here today. My comments will probably be directed more to what I don't see in the supplementary estimates than to what is in them.

Perhaps you could interpret the supplementary estimates for me for both Environment and Climate Change Canada and Parks Canada. They're directly related to the UNESCO directives.

When I look at the new monies that have been attributed to Parks Canada, I don't see anything in the supplementary estimates specifically related to possibly new dollars that will be needed to deliver on the UNESCO directives, including action on significant government deficiencies and water management across jurisdictions, in other words, B.C. and Alberta in terms of the Peace-Athabasca onto the Slave. They want action on the scale, pace, and industrial development along those two rivers. They have called for a strategic environmental assessment.

I'd be happy to hear from both Environment Canada and Parks Canada on what measures are being taken and on whether these new dollars will be sufficient to also allow for the response demanded by February of next year.

Ms. Carol Najm: Rightfully so, a number of items announced in budget 2017 will only be present in future supplementary estimates. This includes any water-related items in the freshwater program announced in the budget. There has been no money coming to the department yet on any of those initiatives in these supplementary estimates. We are seeking them in future estimates, so I don't have an answer for you at this time.

Ms. Linda Duncan: So we anticipate no new dollars until the fall of next year. It will be kind of a tight timeline to do all of that work by February.

I notice that the minister has the power to pursue a regional environmental assessment where there are two jurisdictions involved. I'm wondering if there is some consideration by the department in the interim with regard to requesting that you work with CEAA on initiating that with Parks Canada.

Ms. Carol Najm: I'll ask Parks Canada to answer because they're the lead.

Mr. Rob Prosper: To start, I would indicate that the response to the IUCN mission has a lot of different elements to it that are going to implicate a number of different departments. From an overall perspective, the response to the mission takes a certain process in which you have to go stage by stage.

The first stage is to undertake a state of conservation. That state of conservation gives an idea of what the area is like in terms of its state, as well as what potentially needs to be done in terms of improving it.

As well, we've initiated a strategic environmental assessment, which is something that was called for. We're just now getting into the stage of looking at a costed action plan. It'll take some time, working with our understanding of the circumstance there and working with partners, to determine what will ultimately be an action plan that's going to speak to the recommendations from the IUCN.

● (1620)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Related to that, I'm wondering if Environment Canada and/or Parks Canada—you can't speak for DFO, for example—has intervened in the joint federal-provincial assessment of the Teck Resources project. That's one of the major oil sands projects adjacent to the park that UNESCO called for Canada to step up to the plate and intervene on.

Mr. Rob Prosper: I can start.

As you're probably aware, the federal government will work as a team in terms of involvement in the Teck project and review. There's a wide variety of departments that are providing certain types of expertise to that process because they are regulators. Others such as Parks Canada, which is not a regulator in that particular case, provide expert advice to the federal team.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Do the terms of reference for that review already include your concerns that the proponent has to deal with, including the issues that UNESCO has raised?

Mr. Rob Prosper: The typical process that we undertake is to work through the federal department that's the regulator. We provide our advice through that area. The state of Wood Buffalo National Park, for example, is an important element of that.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I wonder if you could tell us a little more about what you're proposing to do under this strategic environmental assessment. It's encouraging that you're about to initiate it, but I wish you well in getting that done and reported by next February. Will you also engage the local first nations and Métis in developing that?

Mr. Rob Prosper: Absolutely. We're following the actual IUCN guidelines on strategic environmental assessment. Rather than develop a new process, we're using the IUCN guidance to frame what the strategic environmental assessment will cover. We are working with all of the indigenous groups on that.

Ms. Linda Duncan: The Mikisew Cree have contacted me and are deeply concerned that even their phone calls are not being returned. I wonder if you could give an undertaking here today that the Mikisew will be directly engaged as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Rob Prosper: We are dealing with the Mikisew Cree at all stages of the process.

The Chair: Thanks, Linda.

Will.

[Translation]

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me first thank our officials from Parks Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada for all their hard work these days.

I know that everyone in your offices is extremely busy because of the various reforms, internal policies, and major projects our government is pursuing. It's very appreciated.

[English]

I really want to underscore our appreciation for the hard work being done at Parks Canada and at Environment Canada more broadly writ. As someone who's worked at Environment Canada in the past, I'm thankful, and I want that message to come across loud and clear to your colleagues.

I want to ask about the \$7.4 million to continue work on the development and expansion of our national parks, national wildlife areas, and marine conservation areas. Obviously, this committee has indicated its strong desire to see enhancements.

I wonder if you could speak to how the \$7.4 million and other prior budgetary allocations will enable greater collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners, because I think that's going to be a major story as we move towards our Aichi targets. It's about how we are actually leveraging the money that we're investing to encourage our FPT partners.

Mr. Rob Prosper: That's actually two questions, so thank you for those.

On the first, in terms of the identified resources for supplementary estimates (A), it breaks down to approximately \$3.9 million for planning and negotiation. This is focused on areas of interest in terms of increasing the number of national parks and national marine conservation areas. Specifically, we're working, as I'm sure you know, in Thaidene Nene as one of the key areas on the east side of Great Slave Lake, as well as in the Lancaster Sound national marine conservation area. We're also doing planning on some other areas. We're utilizing those resources to advance the systems plans that we have. Those include the southern Strait of Georgia, the Magdalen Islands, and a potential NMCA, national marine conservation area, in James Bay and Hudson Bay. These are all based on the premise that the partners, i.e., the provinces, are onside, and we'll be working with the provinces to advance those areas.

As for what we're doing in terms of the pathway to Canada target 1 on a broader scale, we are working with other federal departments, provinces, territories, indigenous groups, industry, a whole variety... through a very complex process of engagement with an advisory

panel that was initiated last week. As well, we are working with a circle of indigenous experts. This is a group that we are counting on to help provide us advice on how to advance the idea of indigenous protected and conserved areas in Canada. They have had several meetings and are undertaking regional meetings and working with local and regional indigenous groups that either have an interest in indigenous conserved areas or actually have indigenous conserved areas already and are providing advice on those. We hope that's going to be a key part of the overall initiative.

•(1625)

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

I have only one question left, and if I have any remaining time, I would give it to John Aldag, although there may not be much left after this.

The Chair: You do you have two minutes.

Mr. William Amos: In the 2016 budget, funding was allocated for an environmental assessment and then subsequently for build-out of a bike trail in Jasper National Park, I think, leading to Banff. Could you please detail the status of that project? Has it been shelved? If the money is being reallocated, where is the money being reallocated to?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's still undergoing its environmental assessment, which is the normal process. Right now, they're doing the environmental assessment in various segments along the way, and any further action has to be subsequent to that assessment being completed. Some of the money that was allocated in last year's budget is being used in the context of planning the assessment work, but there is no trail being built at this point until the environmental assessment is completed, subject to what it learns.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): I want to look at the \$20 million related to the payment in lieu of taxes for Halifax. We don't need to get into how we got there, although I am curious. I'm just wondering if we have this kind of liability related to any other PILT, payments in lieu of taxes, with any other municipalities, or is everything else current? Where are we with payment in lieu of taxes, and will we see something like this in future main estimates or supplementary estimates?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I'll try to answer that.

It's not Parks Canada that actually maintains the government's payment in lieu of taxes program. PSPC does that on behalf of the entire federal portfolio. We have a very big portfolio. We also have very unique properties across the country. This particular one was the Halifax Citadel. Any municipality evaluates, to the best of its perspectives, what it thinks our properties are worth. The federal government then does its assessment. Hopefully they come to agreement, but that does not always happen. In this case, that did not happen over a period of quite a few years, which led to a final decision being made, and an agreement being negotiated between the parties—the federal government and the municipality of Halifax—for this \$20-million back payment.

To pick up your question, we haven't yet even negotiated the payments going forward. The liabilities are there. There has been much jurisprudence on this for a long time, and a lot of debate has gone on about how you value especially our unique properties. I guess at the end of the day, more will be seen in the future, because still more has to be done. I think that's the best way to describe it.

The Chair: I have to cut it off there. Thank you very much.

Jim.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you.

Well, someone has to answer this question, so I'm going to ask it first off. It deals with the carbon tax.

Pardon?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: The price on carbon pollution.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Right. In my research, a number of the provinces have cap and trade. Some are looking at cap and trade. Quebec currently has it, as does Ontario. I believe some of the maritime provinces are looking at it.

My concern with the federal carbon tax is its effect when they start to produce a radically different cost difference. I'll give you an example. Today Quebec is at \$16 a tonne. If they choose not to raise...and they don't have to, because Quebec has stated that they insist on carbon price sovereignty. They haven't agreed to anything. They're currently at \$16 a tonne. If they choose not to raise by \$10 a tonne, as required federally each year, by 2020 the federal tax will be \$30 a tonne in the provinces that do agree, such as Alberta or British Columbia. Ontario and Quebec will be at \$19 a tonne. By 2022 they will be at \$23 a tonne, according to the CaliforniaCarbon.info system, and the other provinces will be at \$50.

How does the government see balancing this off when there's such a drastic difference in the carbon pricing?

• (1630)

Mr. Matt Jones (Director General, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you for your question.

On carbon pricing, as you pointed out, there are a number of different jurisdictions, with different regimes and different price levels. There is a carbon tax in B.C. There's a bit of a hybrid system in Alberta, and cap and trade is being pursued in Ontario and Quebec. The exact purpose of the federal benchmark and the proposed backstop legislation is to bring a level playing field to the situation within Canada. We've had jurisdictions that have indicated maybe they could be willing to increase the price, or pursue pricing

if they don't have it now, but they want to compare with their neighbours and they don't want to be too far out of step.

The whole purpose of the approach and the design of the approach of the benchmark and the backstop is to bring a level playing field within the country so that while there are different systems, either cap and trade or different pricing systems, the level of stringency would be consistent across the country and there would be equal treatment. We've committed to do a study to ensure there is comparability between the different systems on the basis of stringency and the impact on the consumer.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: As I indicated, though, the statistics out there right now show that by 2022 there will be almost a 50% difference between Ontario and Quebec. Have you guys talked to those provinces or have you talked to the other provinces to see if there's an agreement for everybody to come fairly close together? We maybe don't expect it to be exactly on, but when it's \$23 to \$50, I think that's quite a variation. It kind of makes me concerned, because I'm from the west.

Mr. Matt Jones: Both Ontario and Quebec have signed on to the pan-Canadian framework, including the carbon pricing component, which includes the benchmark that was released well in advance of the pan-Canadian framework. The proposed price increases within the Quebec and Ontario systems were released prior to the development, as I understand it, of the pan-Canadian framework. That is the past estimate of increases in prices, but now with the benchmark and with the legislation that we intend to bring forward, there will be consistency across the country, explicitly to close those gaps and to have a consistent approach across the country.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Okay.

There's a second part to the question. This was supposed to be revenue neutral, but we know from information received from the Library of Parliament that the GST on carbon pricing, if we look at the two western provinces of B.C. and Alberta over the next two years, will be \$280 million. I'm wondering if the federal government has calculated what the GST or equivalent tax from Quebec and Ontario would be over that same period of time.

Mr. Matt Jones: I'm not aware of any forward projections of the potential revenues. I think we're waiting to see which provinces pursue which types of systems in the interim. There are a lot of decisions. What we're proposing is a backstop approach, so it's meant to apply only where—

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: My apologies, but I can't hear the interpretation.

[English]

The Chair: We've lost our translation.

An hon. member: It went the other way.

The Chair: Yes, that happened the other day. We had it flip back and forth.

Can we have that looked at? What I did the last time was flip it over, and it worked.

Is it back?

•(1635)

Mr. Joël Godin: It's okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matt Jones: Sorry, I'm not always so—

[*English*]

The Chair: It's okay. We'll just skip the translation—

Mr. Matt Jones: I'm sorry. I'll continue *en anglais*. Thank you.

Because the backstop model is really meant to fill gaps where trading systems or other pricing systems don't exist, our hope is that individual jurisdictions will implement systems that are consistent with this backstop approach. Until we know which types of systems are going to be implemented and if they're indeed consistent with the benchmark we've established, it's difficult to anticipate what the revenues would be.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Okay, I'm going to take it a little easier on you now. I have one last question.

Of the \$11.6 million for the oceans protection plan, is any of that going to the cleanup of abandoned vessels on the west or east coasts or inland waters?

Ms. Nancy Hamzawi: In terms of the funds allocated to Environment Canada, we are not looking at derelict vessels. Those are with another department.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fisher.

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

This is probably going to be a little shorter than I thought, because a few people have touched on some of my topics.

Thank you for being here, folks. I appreciate this.

I'll touch first on something that Mr. Aldag touched on, which is the HRM negotiated settlement, the \$20 million.

Mitch, I think you indicated there is no annual deal going forward.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: What I was saying was that they haven't yet negotiated the going-forward approach. The first step was to deal with the back payments, which went back to 1997.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. Not to put you on the spot, but assuming that this \$20 million, plus the \$4 million that the HRM received in that 19- to 20-year period.... It's \$1.2 million, and some of that would be back interest or things like that. Is there a way forward or are we going to assume there is somewhere around \$1.2 million a year in PILT?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Going forward?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Yes, or is that just—

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It might be, but it hasn't been negotiated yet. If you do those kinds of numbers, it will be over \$1 million a year—\$1.2 million or something of that nature, probably—but it's still to be negotiated.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. Just for fun now, the HRM estimated that the land value was \$42 million. I was told—and I'm not certain about this—that the federal government in 2012 indicated it was worth \$10. Or is that \$10 million?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I'm sorry, I don't know. Again, we don't do those negotiations. We just pay the bill.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. I guess your assumption, then, is that it's going to be somewhere over \$1 million a year going forward? At least, that's an assumption, but I would never hold you to it.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's a reasonable assumption, and we will do our best to budget towards those things.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

For the Parks Canada folks, I assume you're aware of the generational opportunity in Halifax that is Birch Cove Lakes. You did talk about partnerships with indigenous governments and provincial governments. You didn't mention municipal governments. One of the recommendations in our protected spaces report is that Parks Canada and the federal government consider partnerships, including territorial, indigenous, provincial, and municipal governments.

Will touched on the \$7.4 million, and you did give us some feedback on the Magdalen Islands. Also, I think you said something about the Strait of Georgia, was it?

Mr. Rob Prosper: It was the southern Strait of Georgia.

Mr. Darren Fisher: The southern Strait of Georgia, so it's \$3.9 million in negotiation and a few million in expanding parks. Is that the difference, just \$3 million across the country for expansion of parks?

Mr. Rob Prosper: Yes, probably the best way to initiate an answer to that is that the majority of the conservation gains are likely to come from other jurisdictions—provinces and territories—that are primarily the landholders.

Mr. Darren Fisher: And municipalities.

Mr. Rob Prosper: Yes, and municipalities. You're absolutely right. I would say that although a municipality or an area in a municipality would not probably result in a large land area.... You actually need 100,000 square kilometres to get 1% terrestrially. However, a lot of municipalities are in areas of high biodiversity, so opportunities in municipal areas and with private landholders are all the types of things we're looking at, because they're all going to contribute to the ultimate goal, which is biodiversity.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I would certainly in future budget years encourage you to consider taking a close look at Birch Cove Lakes and a partnership with the municipality there in Halifax.

I did want to ask about what Jim asked about with regard to the abandoned boats program. You don't administer that through ECCC, but you do administer oceans protection, which includes the money for the abandoned boats. I was a little confused by your answer.

• (1640)

Ms. Nancy Hamzawi: With regard to Environment Canada's enhanced capacities in terms of these funds, those would be associated with more emergency preparedness and response. We're looking at things like regional response planning, enhanced meteorological services, which we heard about in a previous question, and enhancing our science capacity. There are indirect support mechanisms to that work, but that is very heavily engaging other government departments in terms of the derelict vessels.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay, I appreciate that.

If there is any more time, I'll pass it along to Mr. Bossio.

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Actually, I just have one quick question.

The normal budget for the youth strategy plan is \$3.2 million, and you've added another \$11 million for hiring an extra 1,140 secondary and post-secondary students to help in the parks this year. Under the youth employment strategy, are all of those rural jobs?

Ms. Carol Najm: I would have to get back to you on that. I don't know.

Mr. Mike Bossio: You don't know?

Ms. Carol Najm: I don't know. I'd rather come back to you, unless Parks wants to answer that.

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: Can you repeat the question?

Mr. Mike Bossio: Of the \$14.2 million that's allocated, \$11 million is for 1,140 jobs. Are those all rural jobs?

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: Are they rural? They're across the country. We have jobs created for students across the country. They could be here in the national office in Gatineau, but I think for the most part, they're probably...but again, I don't have the statistics with me.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Do you have any data on the multiplier effect of the investment that Parks Canada makes into the rural parks areas and what impact that has on rural economies?

The Chair: Be really quick.

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: I don't have this information.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I don't have it either, because it's not my part of the organization, but we do a lot of that work. If the committee is interested in that information, we can certainly take that back and share it with you.

Mr. Mike Bossio: If you would, that would be greatly appreciated.

The Chair: That would be very helpful, for sure.

Next up is Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the people being here today answering the questions as well as they can.

When the environment minister was here last—and I just want to make sure I have this right—we put out an economic analysis, a pan-Canadian report, including a document that goes through our approach to carbon pricing. That document only states that the economic costs of a pan-Canadian framework will be modest and that the impacts of carbon pricing, including for households and businesses, will become available as each province and territory clarifies the precise design of the carbon pricing system.

We have two provinces. It's pretty clear what B.C.'s been doing for years, and Alberta's in. What's the cost?

Mr. Matt Jones: We'll be doing analysis based on the full country, so I don't have that information at the moment. We've been focused on implementing our benchmark and our backstop approach, and the analysis will be forthcoming when we have greater clarity on the rest of the provinces.

Mr. Martin Shields: That could take years, because you don't have them all in and you're talking about 2022 if you're saying that. That's your backstop, 2022, so that's a cop-out. You have two provinces. You're doing it now, and we know you're doing it now, because you know their systems. You are refusing to release it province by province—is that what you're telling me?

Mr. Matt Jones: I don't have that information.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

I will move on.

Let's go to the inventory and touch a bit on that. One of the things we saw when we were working with protected areas was that quality versus quantity became very apparent. When you talk about DND properties—there's Suffield in my region, and there are many of them. You're talking about provincial and about municipal, and you might think it's small, but I'm looking for money in here to get that inventory done. I think that's a really critical piece, because it's really quality stuff that we see in a lot of those places. I'm missing that in here.

Mr. Rob Prosper: You're correct in terms of the quality and how important that is. The target is 17% for terrestrial and freshwater. However, if the quality is not there, you're not leveraging that investment in creating additional protected areas. Looking at—

• (1645)

Mr. Martin Shields: I got that, but where is your money to get that inventory done? That's going to take a bureaucratic process with the province and municipalities. There's no money in here for that.

Mr. Rob Prosper: Maybe Environment...

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): There is an existing system of collecting the information on the protected areas. It's a program that's already funded. There's a complicated system that comes into Environment and Climate Change Canada.

One piece that has been missing is the private lands part of that. Funding was provided to that maybe four years ago, and Environment and Climate Change Canada is implementing.... We are now getting more data into the system on the private lands.

Is that what you were looking for?

Mr. Martin Shields: Could you follow up and tell me how the process works in working with the provinces, how you're accounting for the municipalities, the federal lands, like DND? How are you accounting for this and what is the process you're using? Could you get that for me?

Mrs. Sue Milburn-Hopwood: Yes, we could get that back—

Mr. Martin Shields: That would be great. I really appreciate it.

Last, we talked about acquisitions. One thing we ran across is having money available and having a lot of it when you need it. Timing is important. We saw, in the Salt Spring Island area, opportunities to get some pieces of property. You need cash, and you need it now. You don't need bureaucratic years to get it. Our suggestion is that there needs to be money available to get specific pieces of property quickly. I see a very small number in here.

We can think of a property that went up for a million bucks, which would have been critical, but it wouldn't happen under what we have here.

Mr. Rob Prosper: I believe, if I hear you correctly, you're referring to the new parks account. Essentially it's a fund that has a seed fund in it, the idea being, I believe, and I stand to be corrected, that when opportunities arise from a surplus in other lands that are no longer needed, those funds can actually go into that fence fund for the purpose of investing in other areas.

Mr. Martin Shields: My point is that it's much too small. You need to access a quantity of cash soon, in hours, days, weeks. You can't wait, "Okay, we have a fund over here", and then six months later, some decision is made. These are critical pieces in the biosphere that are out there and that we can't get because there's not enough money or the process takes too long.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I can't speak to the money, but there was a recent change, which just got through the Senate and we're awaiting royal assent, under our Bill C-18. It allowed us to change the nature of that account so that we could actually invest in existing parks, additions and expansions.

You were right. There was an inability to take that money and spend it strategically and quickly had something come in. That amendment will now allow us to...not just for new parks but also for the ongoing expansion of an existing park where there is an opportunity as you describe.

Mr. Martin Shields: Great, but I still think the pot of money you're talking about is too small. I think these are critical pieces that we need to.... If you're going to make sense out of this in biospheres, it's different. It's like the Flathead park that I will talk about, next to Waterton Lakes National Park. Flathead park needs to be part of the protected areas. We need to be moving on it. We can't sit around and wait for that, when it's out there and sitting there. It's not purchasing; it's protecting.

Anyway, I'm out of time.

The Chair: You are out of time, but those were good questions.

Mike Bossio or John Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: Are we the last ones?

The Chair: You are, and then it will be Linda. Linda will be last.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

I wanted to go back to the park establishment stuff. We've been talking a bit about that. Does Parks have a current valuation of 2017 dollars for what it would cost to complete the systems plan as currently envisioned?

Mr. Rob Prosper: I do not have a number to do that, although we do use notional targets for the purpose of initiating negotiations as to what it might take to establish and run parks in different circumstances. For example, for a northern terrestrial park, we have an idea, a baseline cost of operating that type of park, which is obviously quite different from that of a southern park in a more developed area. We have those types of guidance numbers. But in terms of an amalgamation of what that would take to complete the system, no.

• (1650)

Mr. John Aldag: Okay.

It's interesting. We did our protected areas study, and it was something I think we looked at. In this year's budget there were millions of dollars for new park establishment, but as we advocate for meeting our Aichi targets, it would be useful to have a dollar number that we are at least striving toward so that we could ask Finance and the cabinet to put those kinds of resources toward it.

Mr. Bloom, in your last comment you touched on this idea of moving forward with park establishment money. As you noted with Bill C-18, new flexibility was given to establishment funds. Again, looking at future resources moving forward and what we need to complete the unrepresented areas, if we've started costing out additional lands, with the flexibility that comes through Bill C-18 to add to existing parks, I'm wondering if we have any sort of idea of what that current need could look like to help with the planning of future estimates. Has any thought been given to that, or is it on a more opportunistic basis as opposed to a strategic basis?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I will add to what my colleague said with two quick comments. As you pointed out, there's a negotiation to every park. That's why when we fund these things, the way we get them funded is, in phase one, through planning and negotiation. That will then dictate other elements as to how the park gets established and what associated costs there are. Notwithstanding that it's true we do use formulas so that we are applying a logical, consistent approach, it's albeit very dependent on where you are and the type of park you have. A northern park versus a southern park would be a very good example of that. So yes, that's taken into consideration.

I would also add that in the government's recent budget we received some funds to help support the ongoing maintenance, I would call it, of our assets, which are quite large in the case of Parks Canada. The government also announced that we will be undertaking a medium- and long-term review of our asset base, which does have implications for some of the questions you asked around our parks system. As we continue to expand the parks system, it will be important to make sure that we are doing it in line with the expectations of Canadians in terms of what those parks do. We are talking about the next year and a half, I would say, to think that through as part of what the government committed to in its last budget.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay. Thanks.

Perhaps we could hear from both groups on the student side, which I'd like to explore a little bit. We've talked a bit about this, but I'm just trying to get a sense of it. During the very first round of questioning we heard about the expanded pressure, with Parks Canada in particular, that may be coming from the increased interest from Canadians to visit this year, the free year during Canada's 150th. I also know that within the federal service there's this balance of students coming in to supplement work versus replacing work. For both Environment and Climate Change Canada and Parks Canada I'd be curious to hear the plan.

I think in Parks Canada's submission, you indicate there's 1,140 additional secondary and post-secondary students. How much of that work is envisioned to supplement the work already being done in the agency, and how much of it is actually just to do employee jobs to respond to the increased demand?

As well, I'm interested in hearing about the kind of work the additional students at ECCC will be positioned to play in the coming year.

Mr. Sylvain Michaud: For Parks Canada, those jobs are to provide students with opportunities to learn about the natural and cultural environment. They are, in that sense, real jobs. It's also about creating opportunities for young people to gain valuable work experience at Parks Canada. It's not so much to replace current employees as it is to provide the students with those new opportunities. Part of the strategy is also to make sure that people can pay for their studies. It's providing a source of income.

Ms. Carol Najm: For Environment Canada it's a little different. Our program is delivered through a third party. We fund employers who hire students. It's not really students who work within Environment Canada. They work in multiple industries, including not-for-profits, academic institutions, and so on. We provide the money through contributions to employers to subsidize interns.

• (1655)

Mr. John Aldag: Thanks.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds left.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay.

Does Parks Canada get any oceans protection plan funds?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I don't believe so.

Mr. John Aldag: It wasn't touched on.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I don't believe so.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay.

The Chair: That's great. Thank you.

Linda, you have three minutes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: My questions fall well after John's.

I am informed that we already have a lot of staff vacancies in the national parks, particularly in interpretation. Certainly, that's the case in Alberta. There is going to be a heightened workload because of the minister's inviting everybody and their dog to the park—hopefully no dogs off leash. It's important for visiting the park, and I'm sure John can speak to this, that you have a quality experience, and the staff could have burnout. Plus, if we are going to have only students now, that's more work to supervise. When can we expect that all these vacancies are going to be filled?

My second question is this. I am hearing concerns from people in Banff. Your budget says to expand the national parks. There are people who do not want the Banff town boundaries expanded. I'm wondering if you could speak to that process as well.

Mr. Rob Prosper: Those are two different things, the expansion of the Banff townsites versus the expansion of national parks. We are interested in expanding the number of national parks to fill out our systems plan, and we are undertaking negotiations in—

Ms. Linda Duncan: My question is about the townsites, not about expanding the parks protection.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I'm fairly new to Parks. I wish I could give you a more comprehensive answer, but in terms of townsites management, it is a real collaboration.

In the case of Banff, it's an incorporated municipality, so it has quite a bit of power, unlike any other townsites. My experience so far is that things don't happen in the Banff municipality without the municipality driving much of it. It does all of its own development planning and things like that. I have no knowledge of anybody thinking about expanding the municipality. If it does happen, then it will push up against Parks Canada's normal operations and mandate.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Can you comment on the vacancies?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: That's a good question.

Gosh, we are always trying to hire folks. It's hard to say. Staffing anywhere is a challenge in a country with a fairly active labour market. I think the important part, and my colleague didn't quite touch on this, is that we work very closely with our bargaining agents. We met with them even last week, to find the balance between seasonal employees, student employees, and indeterminate and term employees. Our parks generally don't operate 12 months of the year, so it is quite an interesting equation that we have to do to provide that high level of service when things really push up through the summer season. We do, of course, try to maximize and do our best to have a base that's there to operate the things that we do 12 months of the year.

Ms. Linda Duncan: It doesn't sound like there is going to be fast-track hiring.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I didn't say that. I just said there is a balance in how one does human resources in that complex environment.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was very good. We had some good questions, and you can get the general gist of where the committee is with some of the work you're doing. We are very anxious to hear the answers that you were saying you would report back. We look forward to receiving that. I'm sure there will be more questions coming as we see more of what's unfolding in the coming months. Thanks again.

I'm going to suspend the meeting temporarily until we go in camera for the next session.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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