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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): I'd like to welcome everyone this morning, especially Minister McKenna. Thank you very much for being here. It's always a pleasure to have you with the committee, and we're looking forward to today. This was one of our first studies. We're really glad to have it back and finally, hopefully, we will get it into legislation soon.

Also, welcome, Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Lucas, and thank you for being here with us today.

We'll hand the floor over to you, Ms. McKenna.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure to be before this committee. You guys do really great work and I love the fact that you're able to work together, which is great.

I'm going to start by recognizing that we're on the traditional territory of the Algonquin and Anishinabe peoples.

[Translation]

Thank you for having me here today to discuss Bill C-57, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

First, let me say again that this bill would not have been possible without your help. Your recommendations are the foundation for the amendments in this bill, and I look forward to a lot of interesting discussions as we move forward. Your report clearly showed that there is room for improvement in the current system.

The current act has had positive results. For example, it has helped Canadians better understand our progress towards sustainable development by providing a more clear overarching picture. And it has led to robust public consultation, and that has played an important role in shaping each strategy.

For example, our recent 2016-19 federal sustainable development strategy, or FSDS, was created with input from indigenous organizations, leading scientists with the Royal Society of Canada, and videos from youth. We've made progress and now we have the opportunity to take that even further, to make sure future governments continue down that path. Working together, that's what I hope we can accomplish through this bill.

Today, I'd like to say a few words about my vision for this bill and our renewed approach to the FSDS—what I hope we can achieve together.

Then I want to talk in more detail about how this bill responds to the issues you brought up in your report and why I think it's the right approach to strengthening the Federal Sustainable Development Act, or FSDA.

Finally, I'd like to address some of the concerns raised during debate at second reading.

[English]

Let me start by talking about what I'd like to achieve. Looking forward, my vision is an ambitious, aspirational federal sustainable development strategy that drives coordinated action across government toward common goals and targets. It's a strategy that promotes accountability through measurable targets, clear and balanced reporting, and strong oversight by parliamentarians. It's an inclusive strategy that reflects the priorities and perspectives of indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and all Canadians and that calls for action across Canadian society.

I think we can build on the improvements that we've made with the current FSDS. This strategy raised the bar with ambitious goals, strong targets and indicators, a clear commitment to sustainable development principles, and broad participation by federal departments and agencies. Bill C-57 would make these improvements permanent and help go further in future strategies.

[Translation]

Let me go on now to speak in depth about a few key aspects of the bill.

Your report said very clearly that revisiting the purpose is essential to improving the FSDA. The revised purpose of Bill C-57 differs in some ways from your recommendation, but I believe it reflects many of the same basic elements.

First, it shifts the act's emphasis to advancing sustainable development and improving quality of life, not just environmental reporting. Second, it moves from a focus on environmental decision-making to sustainable development decision-making, recognizing that sustainability goes beyond just the environment. Finally, it recognizes that the FSDS needs to respect our domestic and international commitments. That includes the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

[English]

You called for a more comprehensive suite of principles to guide our actions. This bill would add seven new well-accepted principles to the act. I want to note in particular the addition of intergenerational equity. This has been at the core of sustainable development since the very beginning, and it speaks to our commitment to build a greener Canada for future generations.

You called for the amendments to enable a whole-of-government approach, and for the government to review which organizations should be required to prepare sustainability strategies. Based on your recommendation, our bill would expand the requirements of the act to more than 90 departments and agencies, compared with only 26 today. The objective is to put sustainable development at the forefront of decision-making everywhere in government, not only in organizations with a strong environmental mandate.

We heard you when you called for stronger accountability and enforceability under the FSDA. That's clearly a major focus for us, with our strong commitment to results and delivery. The bill responds to that in a few key ways. First, it would require targets to be measurable and to include a time frame, thereby providing the flexibility to address a broad range of issues in the FSDS, including emerging issues, while also ensuring that we clearly define what we want to achieve, that we can measure our progress, and that we can be held accountable for results.

Bill C-57 would also introduce a requirement for departments and agencies to report each year on their sustainable development progress. This complements the current requirement for an FSDS progress report every three years and will ensure that any remaining challenges can be identified and addressed early, so that we can meet our targets.

Finally, I'd like to address some of the concerns brought up during second reading debate.

I'll start with the 2030 agenda and how it should be reflected in the FSDA and in our strategy. Our government completely supports the 2030 agenda and its 17 sustainable development goals. The current FSDS reflects those goals.

I want to avoid limiting the act and what will be addressed in the FSDS. We know that sustainable development is an evolving landscape. This bill clarifies, within the act's purpose, that the FSDS must respect and support the commitments we have now. Those include the 2030 agenda, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and others. But it also leaves room to incorporate future commitments and issues as they arise.

I recall the testimony of the Honourable John Godfrey, sponsor of the original private member's bill that led to the FSDA, who highlighted the risk of being too prescriptive with respect to FSDS content. Speaking before this committee during your review of the act, he noted that the original draft bill didn't really talk about climate change. Today, clearly, climate change is a key area of focus throughout our strategy.

I also want to note that implementing the SDGs through legislation is not a common practice around the world. In fact, sustainable development legislation is uncommon. Canada is

actually one of only five countries with sustainable development legislation, and no country that I'm aware of actually has a legal requirement for a sustainability strategy based on the 2030 agenda, so we are not an outlier in that respect.

Next I'd like to talk about a whole-of-government approach. For us, a whole-of-government approach means we're all involved. Sustainability is important for all of us. What is important is that we're all working together to take action to contribute to advancing sustainability. This bill includes amendments designed to support a whole-of-government approach, such as including more departments and agencies and specifying that all of them, including central agencies, must be engaged in developing and reporting on the FSDS.

I also want to mention the role of parliamentarians in implementing the FSDA. This is extremely important and something to which we gave a lot of thought. Our intention is for one committee to really take ownership of the act and the FSDS. Clearly, this committee has the experience and knowledge to help guide the implementation.

I have heard concerns about reforms to the Sustainable Development Advisory Council, specifically about allowing remuneration of members and reimbursement of expenses. The current act prohibits this, as it was originally a private member's bill. That means we are limited in the role the council can play. For example, with members located all around the country, it's unlikely I would ever have the opportunity to meet with them in person. Changing that provision would facilitate my ability to engage with the committee in an effective manner.

I also want to note that while this wasn't specifically recommended in your report, I said in my initial response last October that I would propose additional changes to improve the act's effectiveness and to ensure it reflects Canadian values. This is one example. The goal is to ensure that indigenous peoples and stakeholders can play a strong role in our sustainability approach.

● (0855)

[Translation]

I'll close by saying that this is a great opportunity to strengthen an important piece of legislation.

As a government, we are committed to a renewed approach to federal sustainability. We have a strong FSDS in place that supports our international commitments, including the 2030 agenda and the sustainable development objectives. We are continuing the conversation with Canadians about sustainable development and we are already beginning to report on our results.

Bill C-57 will solidify improvements we've made through the FSDS and build on our strengths, moving us toward the vision of an ambitious, accountable, inclusive strategy focused on results.

I welcome your views, comments and questions.

Thank you.

• (0900)

[English]

The Chair: We'll now move into questions.

We have Mr. Bossio up first.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you so much, Minister, for being here today.

As the chair mentioned, it is an exciting moment to have one of our reports finally being reflected in an act. In that reflection, we recommended in our report that the FSDA should have a whole-of-government approach and comprehensive engagement of all central government agencies to develop and implement a strategy.

We also recommended additional measures for improving enforceability and accountability of the strategy, which is one of my concerns. How does the bill ensure that departments are following the legislative requirements laid out in the act?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you very much.

I absolutely agree that we need a whole-of-government approach. I have seen this through my portfolio. When you talk about tackling climate change, you can't do it through just the minister, through Environment and Climate Change Canada.

I think what is really important is that we have taken that whole-of-government approach. The bill extends coverage from more than 26 departments to more than 90 departments and agencies. It would ensure that these departments and agencies are bound by the act to contribute to the development of the FSDA and its progress reports.

Critically important is that it formalizes the role of the Treasury Board. It enables consistent application across government efforts to green government operations. I've seen that it can be extraordinarily effective having the Treasury Board, as it reviews submissions, ensure that there is a whole-of-government approach. The bill would allow for further expansion to the act's coverage over time—for example, through the addition of crown corporations.

You also saw that there were submissions from the 26 departments and agencies. They all complied in providing their reports as to how they were complying with the FSDA, so I feel confident that this will result in a whole-of-government approach and will result in concrete actions.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you, Minister.

We also recommended in our report the creation of a future generations advocate.

While the environment commissioner does a great job in her role of keeping government accountable on a number of environmental issues, her role is a backwards-looking audit role. The main function of her role is not looking forward to future generations. Without a forward-looking advocate for future generations, how do we ensure that enforcement, oversight, and accountability of the FSDA are being carried forward by all of government?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Well, I certainly agree that consideration of future generations is critical to this act. That's one

of the principles that's embodied: that we need to be thinking about how the actions that our government is taking across the government are impacting on future generations. We believe that is clear with the principle embodied in the act.

We also do believe that the commissioner has a critical role. The commissioner does a very good job in looking at sustainable development monitoring. Her mandate includes a respect for nature and the needs of future generations. We believe that is an effective model, both for the act and also for the commissioner for environment and sustainable development.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Chair, I'd like to pass the rest of my time over to Mr. Amos.

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

Mr. Bossio, I appreciate that.

Minister and Parliamentary Secretary, thank you for being here. Thank you for bringing this legislation forward. It is really exciting to have parliamentarians working together.

I think this is a great step forward. This is an act that does need to demonstrate to Canadians that we can take leadership in shifting the way our federal government is accountable for its own behaviour. Hopefully, we can have the federal government lead the rest of the country as well.

There are some avenues that Mr. Bossio has pointed to already that could enable strengthening. One aspect I would like to see beefed up is the principles that are applied.

A number of principles were recommended in the original report but aren't reflected here. I'd like to hear whether you're open to other principles. There are some that stick out for me: the principle of prevention; the principle of non-regression, in light of what happened with the previous administration; the principle of environmental justice; the principle of a right to a healthy environment. Those are some of the principles that were pointed to in the original report.

I wonder if you could speak to your openness to considering others.

• (0905)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you very much.

I think it is important that we have a proper frame that sets out the principles. In addition to the basic principle and precautionary principle that were already in the FSDA, the bill proposes to add principles of intergenerational equity, polluter pays, internalization of costs, openness and transparency, involvement of aboriginal peoples, and collaboration in results and delivery. These were principles that were selected based on issues that were raised in the committee's report and those that are fundamental to sustainability and development. We are willing to examine and explore inclusion of additional principles.

I think it's very important that we not do what John Godfrey warned against, which is to be too prescriptive in terms of principles. We know that the concept of sustainable development evolves over time. As he pointed out, climate change was not something that people were really thinking about. The SDGs did not exist at that time. I think it's important that we have broad enough principles so that they can incorporate future ideas and concepts that come up.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: We now go over to Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for being at committee to discuss this bill.

I'd like to get you on the record on one thing. The Sustainable Development Advisory Council is being expanded in size under this bill. As you know, during debate in the House, we made the point that we would be supporting this piece of legislation subject to one small amendment, which was to eliminate the remuneration aspect of the Sustainable Development Advisory Council. Can you tell us right here and now that you'll be supporting that amendment?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I'll explain the background behind remunerating council members. Right now there is no remuneration for council members. As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, this was a private member's bill so there wasn't the ability to include that. This means that I can't meet with folks because their reasonable expenses can't be reimbursed. We have members located in every province and territory from coast to coast. We have youth members. We have folks who can't come and meet with me on their own dime. I think the key is to ensure effectiveness.

I understand that you would consider including reasonable expenses.

Hon. Ed Fast: Absolutely.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I think that's a very helpful approach. I think the focus is really on how we ensure that we are very mindful of taxpayer dollars, which I certainly agree with, while ensuring that this committee is effective. I think that is something on which we can find common ground.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you. That's very helpful.

The act, as you have stated, is a whole-of-government approach to addressing the economic, social, and especially environmental challenges facing government and government decision-makers.

You've talked about the whole-of-government approach. You're familiar with the cabinet directive. The cabinet directive, supported by guidelines, requires federal departments and agencies to consider environmental concerns early in the planning of policy, plan, and program proposals before making irreversible decisions. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, as you know, recently issued a report. There are actually a number of reports. In the fourth report she says the following about the whole-of-government approach and the application of the directive: "Overall, we found that the departments and agencies we examined did not apply the Cabinet directive to almost 80 percent of their proposals. Only the Public Health Agency of Canada prepared preliminary assessments" and did a reasonable job of that.

We are expanding the number of agencies and departments that are going to be covered by the federal sustainable development

strategy, and yet, even with this smaller number—26—of agencies that are covered right now, your department is not getting it done. This is certainly a failing grade from the commissioner, as 80% of the proposals did not apply the cabinet directive. That's only 20%. In any exam where you get 20% that's a failing grade. How do you expect that with the expansion of the number of agencies and departments that are covered, your department will be able to enforce what the act and the directive require?

● (0910)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Let me just make an important distinction. There is the Federal Sustainable Development Act, which is what we're talking about right now; then there is the cabinet directive on the environmental assessment and policy plan and program proposals, which makes each minister responsible for implementing the cabinet directive.

These are very different things. Clearly the cabinet directive is very important, and we need to do better; I certainly acknowledge that. The FSDA, however, is prescriptive, as you know. Each department that's subject to it must comply. It must report; it will be tracked. It's more robust, because each department must say how it is complying every single year. Then, every three years there is an opportunity to review overall whether we're advancing on the framework.

That distinction is very important. The Federal Sustainable Development Act will now be more robust, with the proposed changes. Parliamentary oversight will ensure that you will see whether there are problems, if you do not believe that with the new targets, which are now measurable and time-bound, parliamentarians will be able to directly see whether there is compliance with the FSDA.

Hon. Ed Fast: Minister, I refer you back to the fourth report. On page 1, under section 4.4 it talks about the cabinet directive and says:

Specifically, the Cabinet directive and its related guidelines require departments and agencies to

consider a proposal's effects on the goals and targets of the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy....

These two are completely intermixed. They clearly impose on the minister a responsibility to ensure that our departments and agencies of government implement Canada's federal sustainable development strategy. As your responsibilities expand now under the changes that will be made under this legislation, I want to know from you how you plan to ensure that our agencies and departments implement the federal directive and our federal sustainable development strategy, when in fact it appears—certainly from the commissioner's report—that this hasn't been done.

The Chair: You are out of time, unfortunately. It's a great question, and I hope we can pick up on that question with the next questioner on your side, but we ran out of time there. I'm sorry about that.

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you. I'll certainly pick up on that.

It's great to have the minister here and it's always great to see Mr. Wilkinson. He loves it when I say that. He's a great guy. It's great to see the deputy. This may be the first meeting I've been at with the deputy.

I share the concern raised by Mr. Fast, and frankly I'm troubled. I'm curious as to why the minister has ignored the advice of the committee, the recommendation of the commissioner, and the advice of other nations that have gone through the same exercise.

We can add on a long list of people who have to do reports, but given that the commissioner has said that we have had an abject failure since the initiation of this legislation—and frankly since 1990, with the cabinet directive—in doing these analyses, it's not just this statute; it's the cabinet directive.

I'm wondering why the minister has ignored the advice, which was very clear, that a central agency such as Treasury Board or the PCO, or the Prime Minister's Office directly, should provide the oversight to send a clear message and to provide for greater enforcement of these directives.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I think there are two parts to the question.

I would just reiterate that there is a cabinet directive on the environmental assessment of policy, plan, and program proposals. That is an across-the-board directive that departments must follow. It's not directly related to implementation of the FSDA. It is important with regard to how departments are going to respond to the requirements under the tool. The effectiveness of the FSDA is set out in the act. We have departments that are required to report. There's more robust reporting now, more robust targets. I'm very pleased that the committee said we have to have measurable targets, because I think the requirement was very weak, very vague, and not time-bound before. I think the fact that you now have a requirement, which will be in legislation, that each department—and there will now be 90 of them—be subject to the act and required to comply makes the act very robust.

I think departments will be held accountable in a variety of different ways. They will be held accountable publicly, because they will have to report and that will be transparent. They will also be held to account by parliamentarians and by this committee, which will be reviewing it. Our department and Treasury Board will be involved. I'm worried more about effectiveness as opposed to who is ultimately looking at this. It's about making sure departments deliver on their results. Ultimately, the commissioner will be looking at these reports. As I say, every department that was required to comply provided its report. There's an opportunity for review of them, including by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

• (0915)

Ms. Linda Duncan: With all due respect, I'm not convinced.

I've seen these reports. In various portfolios I've sat in, they file a report and it gathers dust. When they go to cabinet with a proposal for a policy, a program, or an initiative for spending, they do not

consider that report. I think it needs to go to a higher, central level, particularly since the 17 goals go way beyond environment.

Another thing in the bill that completely puzzles me, Madam Minister, is that you've said that this act has been updated to reflect the 17 sustainable development goals. Yet, clause 8 gives the Treasury Board only the power to look at the environmental impact, not the full 17 sustainable development goals. We don't really seem to be moving forward.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Is that a question?

The sustainable development goal is very close to my heart; I worked in international development.

Let's be clear about what the sustainable development goals are. It's not just about what government is doing to address the sustainable development goals; it's what a country is doing. The Federal Sustainable Development Act was created before the sustainable development goals were in existence. We've tried to broaden the scope. Of course, we as a country want to make sure that whether as the federal government, municipal governments, indigenous governments, or Canadians, we're moving forward to address the sustainable development goals. That's broader than the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

I know our government is looking at who is best placed to help lead that. This mechanism will play into how we comply with the federal sustainable development goals. Clearly, it's not just the federal government's action that determines whether we have clean drinking water. It goes far beyond that. As you see, we've taken the relevant goals as recommended by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and are tackling them directly through the purview of the act.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm left completely puzzled.

I don't believe you've spoken to proposed section 10.1, which limits the Treasury Board powers to environmental assessment and not to the full sustainable development goals, so I'm left puzzled.

I would like to reiterate what Mr. Amos said. Canada has already committed, under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, to deliver on environmental justice principles. They're clearly laid out in the side agreement to NAFTA. I would deeply encourage you to include environmental justice principles in that list, because doing so would be consistent with what Canada has already committed to.

Oh, it's over. Next round.

The Chair: Sorry. Maybe next round.

Thank you.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Good morning.

As I know you're aware, the committee here is also working on a heritage study. One of the witnesses we had was Christophe Rivet from ICOMOS Canada. I'm going to go through just a couple of things he shared with us, which I think make a nice connection from that study to the Sustainable Development Act and the sustainable development strategies.

He notes that cultural heritage is included in the international agreements related to the environment and sustainable development adopted by Canada. He notes that article 5 of the World Heritage Convention guides our assessment of Canada's compliance with it and offers us an opportunity to update our national tools. He goes on to indicate that that could include legislation to protect tools to guide decision-making and financial incentives to implement proper practices.

He indicates that another consideration is that international commitments made by Canada regarding sustainable development recognize the role of cultural heritage in achieving sustainability, including, under the 17 goals, making cities and human settlements inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

Last, he goes on to indicate that the federal sustainable development strategy that aims to guide each department on how to achieve sustainability is an important consideration, and that there is no mechanism to report how we achieve sustainable development while considering cultural heritage, but that there is an opportunity there to put that marker down.

My question is simple. Would you consider an amendment in some form, either in principle or in another statement, to bring in cultural heritage to the Sustainable Development Act?

• (0920)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Thank you very much, and thank you for all your advocacy and all your work throughout your career on protecting cultural heritage. It's clearly critical, and we need to take into account cultural heritage when we talk about ecosystem protection and also climate change. It has impacts on our cultural heritage.

The revised purpose is broad enough for the inclusion of the issue of cultural heritage, given that it specifies that the FSDS must respect Canada's international sustainable development obligations, so I do think it's broad enough. By implementing the act through the creation of the FSDS, we can put commitments such as the preservation of cultural heritage into action.

Mr. John Aldag: Fantastic. Thanks.

Now I'm going to kick the rest of my time over to Mr. Fisher.

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

Thank you, Minister, to you and your team for being here.

I just want to say that I was very encouraged by your response to our unanimous report which we worked really hard on. We worked as a really good, strong team, so thank you for your response to those recommendations.

Our committee found that enforcement of the FSDS was kind of lacking. I've noticed that the proposed amendments through this act

would remove the mandatory requirement to ensure that performance-based contracts include provisions for meeting the applicable targets referred to in the FSDS. Our committee recommended clearing this section up and basing it on all targets in the FSDS that are relevant to a specific department.

Can you speak to why that section was removed, and whether the act will still have the accountability measures to ensure sustainable procurement?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Section 12 of the act requires that:

Performance-based contracts with the Government of Canada shall include provisions for meeting the applicable targets referred to in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and the Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies.

This is something that relates specifically, as you note, to procurement rather than accountability of officials. Procurement is really the purview of Treasury Board, and it does have a strong procurement policy.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

I know I have a little bit of time left, and you sort of touched on this earlier.

Why does Bill C-57 not require the government to develop a strategy that meets the specific goals we referenced earlier?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: The purpose of the act has been broadened. I think that's really critical. Whether you talk about future generations, intergenerational equity, or the precautionary principle, I think it's these broad principles.

I think, once again, the private member who brought in the act, John Godfrey, talked about just being careful but not being too prescriptive, and he said that once you get too prescriptive, you're not going to be able to imagine.... As I say, no one could have imagined sustainable development goals or the Paris agreement.

Clearly, sustainability is an evolving concept as we see what challenges we have and as we make progress towards taking action on them.

I think we have the broad focus and the principles that allow us to be flexible and to take action on a wide variety of issues related to sustainability.

Mr. Darren Fisher: How do you feel that we can ensure that future governments are going to be held accountable for the things we're talking about today if they're not legislated to do so?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Once again, thank you to the committee. The committee has really pointed out that we needed to beef up the act, that it needed to be stronger. It needed to ensure that departments didn't just say, "Yes, we're doing good things," but that it actually required them to have clear targets, measurable targets, and measurable timelines. If you can't have a way of holding departments accountable for what they said they'd do, you're going to have a real problem.

This is a good shift, and the reporting requirements now... Whether it's being held accountable through transparency so that it will all be made public, through the committee, or through the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, there are a number of very strong measures that will ensure that government departments must comply, that they must do what they said they were going to do and must continue to be very ambitious as they go forward.

• (0925)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you very much.

As a proud Manitoban, I would make the point that Manitoba has had a sustainable development act since 1998. I hope you were able to utilize that knowledge, that traditional knowledge from Manitoba, to help write this current act. I should also note that the city of Winnipeg is home to the International Institute for Sustainable Development, which was negotiated by Conservative premier Gary Filmon and Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. I was on the founding board for that.

Manitoba has a very long history of sustainable development, and I would urge you to avail yourselves of the knowledge from Manitoba. I'm sure you will, given the new document that Premier Pallister has just put out.

In your remarks, Minister, you talk about who you consulted with. I was quite shocked to see that rural communities were not listed there. Rural and natural resource communities are at the forefront of sustainable development and are often the victims of bad environmental policy and also the beneficiaries of good environmental policy. Why were rural communities omitted in the consultation?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I certainly agree that Manitoba has been instrumental when it comes to sustainable development. I've spent much time working with IISD. It does really great work. I was pleased to see the Manitoba premier recognizing pollution, that there's a cost associated with pollution, and bringing in a price on it.

Look, there was a wide consultation. We reached out. Canadians had many submissions, including from natural resource companies. We were really pleased to see the feedback. It is important that we hear from all Canadians, that we hear all perspectives, and that we all be part of the solution. We heard from indigenous communities, businesses, environmentalists, and Canadians. They care greatly about this, and I agree that everyone needs to be part of it.

We reached out and asked for submissions. We were very active on social media. We reached out through a whole variety of different channels. Certainly we're always interested in hearing from all Canadians, including rural Canadians.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes, but even in the list you just gave orally about who you consulted with, rural, farm, and resource communities were omitted. It has been a great frustration of mine, having been on both the environment and the fisheries committees for almost seven years now, that departments consistently almost refuse to acknowledge that rural communities even exist and are part of this conversation.

When I look at the principles of sustainable development and compare them to the Manitoba principles of sustainable development, in the federal act as it's written, there's nothing that says this act facilitates economic development and the well-being of humans, or people's economic well-being. Why was that omitted?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: In terms of the concept of sustainable development, we certainly believe it includes economic development. It includes social, environmental, health, and economic development. That's understood in the term. I agree with you, and I've always said this, that the environment and the economy go together and you can't separate them. We have to move towards a cleaner future and we need to drive the investment needed to do that. I really support that.

Thank you to my officials. They've just confirmed that we did do specific outreach to rural communities. I certainly would never exclude any community. Farmers are doing amazing things, including in Manitoba. I met with farmers and agricultural associations, talking about net-zero tilling, about climate-resilient crops they're using, and about the amazing research they're doing. I am someone who believes we're all in this together. We need to be working together and ensuring that not only are we looking at the environment and principles in relation to how we move to a cleaner future but also ensuring that doing so contributes to growing the economy, jobs, and greater wealth, including for farmers.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Minister, I have only seven minutes.

The Chair: No, you don't; you have one and a half minutes left.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I want to make the point that as somebody who has worked in the forest industry managing a wastewater treatment plant for a company and also doing environmental assessment in the oil sands, I'm always irked by this idea that we are "moving to a clean economy" as if we are in a dirty economy now.

That is absolute nonsense. Everything that's built today in the natural resources industry—forestry, mining, pipelines—is clean and is done to the highest standards in the world. I recommend that you follow the work on the Modern Miracle Network, spearheaded by Michael Binnion, who is completely frustrated by the slugging that the natural resource industry gets from this government.

I met with a group of people from a labourers' union after your government basically shut down three pipelines. These people were devastated. These are little people who wanted to work on pipelines, make a good living and, again, these people now are lost.

I met with a welding organization. There was a bunch of welders who were looking forward to the Energy East project as a way to buttress their retirement as they move along in life, and because of a process gone wild, that project was cancelled and the hopes and dreams of these people were lost.

I would urge this government to care about people first.

● (0930)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I certainly care about people first, and I think people want to ensure that we have a sustainable plan. I've worked with many industry organizations, including in the energy sector, who understand that we're moving to a cleaner future. One hundred and ninety-five countries signed on to the Paris Agreement, as have businesses, as has everyone.

We need to move to a cleaner future. We need to lower our emissions, and I've been very pleased to see innovations.

Let's be clear. We did approve pipelines. Energy East did not go ahead. That was a market decision.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It was not.

The Chair: We're out of time. Thank you very much.

The next up is Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): I will be very quick, and then I will turn it over to Mr. Amos.

Squaring off a little bit of the conversation with Mr. Sopuck, Minister, did you purposely omit, in his words, rural Canada from the consultation?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: No. We directly engaged with rural Canada. Also, it was a very open process. I hope the members all reached out to their own communities to encourage them to provide input. That is extremely helpful. The committee has a broad base of contacts. I certainly encourage all members, if they have rural members who they feel they want to have greater engagement with, that they should take it on themselves.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

My other question is in regard to his comment regarding energy. Would you say there is always the possibility and opportunities to improve upon our extraction of resources when it comes to the environmental impact they have on the world? Is that not the entire purpose of making sure we're always improving upon the extraction of resources in what we do, and that we're always pushing ourselves to new standards to better protect the environment?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I want to thank the member for that point, because it's actually conservative principle that you want to be more efficient in how you extract resources. Efficiency includes efficiency in terms of the environmental performance, because that's just smart.

That's what I hear when I meet with energy companies. They are always looking at how they can improve, how they can do things better, and how they can do things in a cleaner and more efficient way. That relates to price on pollution, which is also a conservative principle. You want to put a price on pollution, and the most efficient way to reduce emissions and to move to a cleaner future is what everyone wants.

I certainly hear that when I'm in the energy sector. I hear that from farmers. I hear that from everyone. Everyone understands that our goal is to be more efficient, our goal is to ensure that we reduce emissions, and our goal is to increase innovation, which is certainly what we are seeing as we move to a cleaner future, and ultimately

our goal is to ensure that we have a sustainable planet for our kids and grandkids.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

Minister, I would like to get to the theme of objectives. The committee recommended in its report that broad objectives be established for sustainable development. One reason was that we looked at the draft sustainable development strategy and we were surprised, to say the least, that the strategy had these long-term aspirational goals that included freshwater and oceans and taking action on climate change. So that was an empty shell in terms of what we thought of as long-term objectives, but I don't find that the bill as proposed goes far enough and provides objectives in terms of transitioning to a low-carbon economy, positioning Canada as a leader in clean tech, and setting out objectives around the ability for all Canadians to have clean air and clean water.

Could you explore that theme a bit, and would you be willing to consider broad objectives as a component of this legislative initiative?

● (0935)

Hon. Catherine McKenna: The proposed principles for inclusion in the bill are very broad. They certainly do not exclude any of the areas you were talking about. Once again, I think it's always hard to be specific about particular principles. It could be an extremely long list, but it also could be a list that becomes non-inclusive of new principles. I think it's always a balance between implementing broad principles, which can include new areas or areas you're already working on, and being so prescriptive that you exclude other areas.

Since my deputy is here, and we're so lucky to have him, I'm going to ask him to say a few words.

Mr. Stephen Lucas (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): Building on what Minister McKenna noted, against the framework of the goals she noted, within the three-year individual departmental SD strategies, there is an opportunity to speak to specific concrete actions through which the goals and commitments the country has made, including the international environmental obligations, are being advanced. With the annual reporting, Parliament and this committee will have an opportunity to review that progress.

Mr. William Amos: This is important. It's about getting the federal house in order while demonstrating to other provinces how a larger government is able to drive sustainability outcomes. This is effectively the biggest corporate entity in the country. What discussions have you had with other provinces, as part of our overall climate objectives, about changing the way governments make purchases and so on?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I'm meeting with provinces and territories tonight, so we will be continuing that conversation. I think that's an excellent point. We all need to be looking at how we procure in particular, because that can be a huge driver of economic opportunity and clean growth.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Zimmer, welcome to the table. You're up.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for this opportunity.

In your speech, as has been noted by my colleagues on this side, you mentioned sustainability. You said we should be recognizing that sustainability goes beyond the environment. Recently, however, we heard from the Premier of the Northwest Territories that he has a problem with the Liberal version of sustainability. This is a Liberal MLA, who I think has ideals similar to those of your government. He said that:

northerners, through their democratically elected government, need to have the power to determine their own fates and the practice of decisions being made by bureaucrats and governments in Ottawa must come to an end. Decisions about the North should be made in the North. The unilateral decision by the federal government,

—that's you—

made without consultation, to impose a moratorium on arctic offshore oil and gas development is but one example of our economic self-determination being thwarted by Ottawa.

Please comment.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I certainly agree that we need to be working with the provinces and territories. We can't move to a cleaner future on our own. There's only so much the federal government can do, and provinces are the ones that often have the tools at their disposal to move to a cleaner future.

I'm meeting with the provinces and territories today. It's the Canadian Council for Ministers of the Environment, and we will be talking about issues such as how we move to a cleaner future and how we implement the made-in-Canada plan on climate change.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: With respect, Minister, you've already had the moratorium in place and now you're going to go and talk to territories and governments. Wouldn't it have been proactive to do that before?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: We've had many conversations with provinces and territories in the negotiation of the made-in-Canada climate plan. My deputy, my chief of staff, my entire team and I were back and forth with each province, travelling and doing consultations.

● (0940)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Minister, you and I both know that a conversation involves both listening and talking. Somebody's talking, and someone should actually listen to what the person on the other side has to say and then act on what they're proposing. A moratorium across the north, unilaterally imposed, is obviously going to dramatically affect first nations communities in a negative way. These communities are already hard hit economically, and now you hit them again with a plan for sustainable development.

We've heard you talk and talk, but the reality on the ground is that people are going to go without jobs. The premier said yesterday that the best social program is a job. You've just taken jobs away from the north.

Please respond.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I was very pleased that we had the Premier of the Northwest Territories standing up with the Prime Minister, with provinces and territories, to sign on our climate plan. They agreed to our climate plan. We had worked together and we're going to continue to work together as we implement it.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: A moratorium across the north shuts down 40% of their economy. You just shut down almost a half of their economy in the North.

I just bring it back to something that always troubles me. Usually leadership involves your doing something yourself that you believe in. I bet you fly more than I do, and I fly a lot. I think a lot of Canadians are wondering how you can talk a big game. We've seen Hollywood stars talk about this too. They talk a big game for everybody else, but do differently themselves.

Can you respond?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Yes, unfortunately I have to travel to meetings that sometimes require me to be there in person, including in the Northwest Territories. When I work with indigenous peoples, I need to meet with them directly. That is critically important so that I can understand them. There are some things that you simply can't do by conference call. I try to do conference calls. I buy carbon offsets, but there are times when... For example, in Paris, when we were negotiating the Paris agreement, we couldn't do that by conference call.

In terms of working with indigenous peoples—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Excuse me, Minister.

Certainly efficiencies could be found with your ministry when you fly. I think what we're all looking for, a more practical position for everybody, is sustainable development in terms of responsible resource development. We know we're going to need to use it. The government has said you're supporting pipelines, and we've heard that. We've not seen pipelines move forward. We have a Kinder Morgan project that is supposed to be being built as we speak.

I expect to see the leadership. When I see you make the announcement that it is approved, I expect leadership in seeing that it's actually built. It's one thing we've heard a lot of talk about, that you're pro sustainable resource development. Prove it.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Let's just be clear on the difference between the role of government and the role of proponents. Government approves projects, or doesn't. It does a proper review and then it's up to proponents. But we've been clear. The environment and the economy go together. We're in a transition to a low-carbon future. We've approved pipelines. We're also moving forward to ensure that we have the investment to move to a lower carbon future.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Can I just ask one more question before we're done?

The Northern Gateway pipeline was actually approved by the NEB with a certain number of conditions.

Why would a government disallow a project that had been approved by the NEB with conditions—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Chair, that is way outside the scope of why the minister has been invited.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: It's talking about sustainable development.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: No, we're talking about a specific bill. She's here today to speak to a specific bill, and now you're bringing up issues that are completely unrelated.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I'm referring to—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's my point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I hear your point of order.

Hold on a minute so I can make a ruling on the point of order.

You are straying a little beyond where we were with this committee. We're supposed to be looking at the bill, and you were talking about sustainable development but you were really drilling down on a specific. You have 30 seconds or less to bring it around to something more generic rather than a specific project.

Thank you.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Prove that the decision to cut Northern Gateway is sustainable, as you mentioned in your speech.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: I'm happy to talk about sustainability. It includes the economy; it includes health; it includes the environment; and that's the frame that we approach, how we move forward. That is certainly reflected in the Federal Sustainable Development Act and that's the approach we take as a government.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm outraged that our colleague across the way challenged my colleague here. I've been on committees for almost seven years now, and the four of us on this side are veterans of committees, and nobody on the other side has been on a committee.

I want to make the point that parliamentary privilege is real and it's important. We are elected by our constituents, and the Northern Gateway pipeline was in my colleague's constituency. It's clearly directly related to the concept of sustainable development.

Madam Chair, you have to give all of us a very wide latitude to exercise our parliamentary privilege.

● (0945)

The Chair: Mr. Sopuck, I gave you the chance to speak. I gave him his full time. I gave him more time because there was the challenge. I ruled on the challenge. I think it was appropriate and we'll leave it at that, please.

Let's move on with the opportunity we have in front of us, please.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, may I respond?

The Chair: Really? No. I've ruled. Let's just move on because we do have time here, and I don't want to waste the minister's time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Perhaps I can pick it up afterwards. Thank you.

The Chair: Fair enough.

I think we are done. We're at 9:45 now, so I think we're just at the end of the time. I was going to give an opportunity for one more question, but really, honestly, we're almost out of time. We're going to wrap it up.

Thank you very much.

We'll take a suspension.

● (0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0950)

The Chair: We are going to resume.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I want to follow up on the conversation we were having, before we entertain our next witnesses. I appreciate the fact that Mr. Sopuck indicated that there are four veterans on the other side of the table, and I have a great amount of respect for them. However, this isn't my first time sitting around a table or chairing a meeting or being involved in a meeting.

I want to point out for the record that, as Mr. Sopuck indicated about parliamentary privilege, one of the most basic and fundamental parliamentary privileges is a right for a member of a committee to address a point of order when they are of the impression that the meeting is not following the procedural order that it should.

I want to say that is exactly what I did. I raised a point of order. I addressed a specific deficiency in terms of the way the meeting was being run, as I saw it. Then it was up to the chair to use her discretion to rule on that, which is exactly what happened.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'll go to Mr. Fast, and then I'd really like to wrap it up and get back to....

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, if that is so and we're going to be really, really strict about containing the discussions we have around this table to the specific issues mentioned in the agenda, then I'm going to make a motion:

That the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change be invited to appear before the Committee in relation to the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2017-18.

That would be my motion for consideration at the next meeting of our committee.

The Chair: You have every right at any time to bring forward a motion.

Hon. Ed Fast: I have made the motion.

The Chair: We will consider that at our next meeting. Is that fair enough?

Hon. Ed Fast: That would address the problem, right?

With the supplementary estimates (B), we have a wide-ranging latitude to discuss anything we want with the minister.

The Chair: May I make a point? I heard the point of order, and I think I was fair in how I dealt with it. With regard to the question, we tried to just focus it. It was open, very open, and it was drilling down into specifics. We were trying to stay in more the specifics on the act, right?

• (0955)

Hon. Ed Fast: I'm not challenging you on your ruling, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I wasn't sure if you were.

Hon. Ed Fast: No, no.

Hon. Ed Fast: I am adapting to the ruling you've made, and—

The Chair: My ruling was...

A voice: You let him ask the question.

A voice: Are you challenging the chair?

Hon. Ed Fast: I'm not challenging the chair.

The Chair: I think I was fair.

Hon. Ed Fast: I made a motion.

The Chair: You made a motion, and you have every right to do that. We will consider that at the next meeting, and we'll go forward there.

I think I was fair. I gave the time that the member had left.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You let him ask the question.

The Chair: Mark, we don't need to debate. We're not debating here.

I want to make sure that everybody around the table knows that I am mindful that we are trying to stay somewhat on the agenda. I'm very flexible. I've been very flexible for two years now and I want to stay that way. I don't want the whole meeting to start to get controversial on both sides. I think the good work that we've been doing here has been helpful because we are dealing respectfully and cordially with each other. Let's not wreck that.

I tried to be reasonable. I think everybody has had their say, including me. Let's get back to the work of the committee today.

I want to welcome Paula Brand to the table and Mr. Wilkinson. Mr. Lucas is still with us.

Thank you.

Do you have a little something you want to tell us before we start questioning?

Go ahead, Mr. Wilkinson.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today.

This is an opportunity to ask perhaps some more specific and technical questions of officials. Paula is the person responsible for actually doing most of the work, working very actively to pull together both the strategy and the act. Of course, you've been introduced to Mr. Lucas in the past.

One thing came up earlier in the conversation, and I thought it might be useful to have Ms. Brand speak to it for a couple of minutes—the relationship between the SEAs and the federal sustainable development strategy and act—because this is a pretty important point that has been raised. I think it could use a little bit more elaboration, with your...

The Chair: Yes. I think that would be very helpful.

Go ahead, Ms. Brand.

Ms. Paula Brand (Director General, Sustainability Directorate, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Perhaps I'll just point out and describe each of these components, and then draw the linkage between them. We're all aware of the cabinet directive on environmental assessment of plans, policies, and programs, where every minister is responsible for implementing the directive. The department itself plays a particular role in establishing the environmental framework against which departments would assess their priorities.

The targets that appear in the FSDS itself become the objectives against which the Department of Immigration, the Department of Health, and so on will assess their programs, plans, and priorities. Those assessments find their way into documents like memoranda to cabinet and Treasury Board submissions, where those assessments and works are done by individual ministers and submitted through that process. The report—and the commissioner's report that we're often talking about—has chosen to take a handful of departments each cycle and assess where they are in those processes. It's not a comprehensive view of how that cabinet directive is being implemented, but in every cycle there are a few departments that are reviewed by the commissioner of the Auditor General. PCO has a role to play in terms of the oversight it takes when it's reviewing and providing advice on memoranda to cabinet in general, and they have responsibilities related to that. The bottom line is that all departments and all ministries have a responsibility related to strategic environmental assessment.

Departmental sustainable development strategies are a child of the broad federal strategy, in which each of those 26 departments is required to put together a strategy relating how they will contribute to the goals and targets in the strategy. The Minister of the Environment is not responsible for every goal and target in the federal sustainable development strategy; her responsibility is to coordinate the efforts of all 26 departments in elaborating that strategy. Be it Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada, or Health Canada, departments have specific strategies, and their ministers have responsibilities for the specific goals and targets inside those strategies.

Departmental strategies can include a lot of things. They include which goals, targets, and departmental actions departments are going to contribute to. They also include things like performance measurements and performance indicators, which can be used to track whether those targets are being put into place. They include other sustainable development contributions that a department may make outside of the federal sustainable development strategy. Many of you have noted that sustainable development can be considered broader than the goals and targets, and there are some departments that have commitments outside of the federal sustainable development strategy. Their departmental strategy includes those pieces as well, and it includes the public reporting dimensions on strategic environmental assessment.

The connections are in various places, yes, but the individual products and programs have different objectives. The strategic environmental assessment is your front-end decision-making advice to the minister's function. The federal sustainable development strategy and those departmental strategies are the plans, then, that come from those decisions. They include the monitoring means through indicators and performance measures, and then there is the public reporting side of that.

They are linked, yes, but they perform different functions inside of that. When we talk about "doing sustainable development", it does not always equal "doing your SEAs". There are a lot of things encompassed inside a departmental strategy that are related to sustainable development.

I thought I would just lay those pieces out for folks to understand where they are and how they fit together.

• (1000)

The Chair: I think that's helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you so much for being here and for that description. I guess I'd like to drill down a little more into that, because one of the recommendations we made is around this: how do we establish enforcement and accountability in this whole-of-government approach? The minister referred to the Treasury Board. The new provisions of the Treasury Board may establish policies and directives regarding the environmental impact of the operations of designated entities, and designated entities must take these policies and directives into account when preparing their sustainable development strategies.

We have strategies that are being developed, and then we have performance indicators. How are we holding departments account-

table to those measurements and indicators when they're not achieved?

Ms. Paula Brand: The notion of the original act is still the basis for many of the pieces you see in the bill, which is transparency. Transparency was a major portion of the first act, and it has been a major portion of our efforts to date.

With respect to accountability and the enforcement types of measures, as was eluded to, we now have managed to embed those throughout the act, starting at the principle level and talking about results, about the accountabilities with respect to targets themselves that must be measurable and time-bound.

Under the old act, departments only had to create a plan. They never had to report against their plan. That provision is new, to require departments to report twice within the three-year cycle on what they've achieved.

As a sustainable development office inside of Environment and Climate Change Canada, we work with Treasury Board Secretariat to provide guidance to departments around what should be in the nature of those plans and those reports so that we have some consistency for you to view them.

Those reports will now be tabled in Parliament. Upon tabling, they will be immediately referred to this committee so you will have access to all that information. That is a major change in the transparency. Those levers along the way afford points in time for review and assessment by you, by the public, by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

All 26 departments released their plans the first week of October; that was our 100% compliance. Yes, everybody did what they currently have to do under the act and released their plans this past October. We're currently looking at all of them and bringing them together in an electronic form which we will release publicly when we have amalgamated them.

In the strategy, there is a commitment to do resilience and adaptation planning. That commitment in departmental plans was noted by many departments. We will amalgamate them so you will now be able to look at individual commitments and see how many departments are doing those things and the program measures they have in place.

All of that, we believe, improves transparency and accountability.

• (1005)

Mr. Mike Bossio: It's the hope that through far greater levels of transparency to a number of different branches of government via the committee, via parliamentarians, and via the commissioner, that transparency itself will result in a higher degree of accountability and enforcement to fulfill the mandate of achieving the FSDS.

Ms. Paula Brand: Transparency will play a key role and the specificity of having smarter targets and the tools to do those assessments will ease that transparency.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Bossio, the transparency applies broadly and certainly the committee will play an important role in that. The transparency will apply to ministers who will need to justify to their colleagues and the Governor in Council why they are not able to meet objectives and measurable targets that they've established within their strategy.

Mr. Mike Bossio: In the past the commissioner has reported on where people are. We saw in a most recent report that five out of 19 departments had achieved their impact analysis. I want to ensure that through these measures we're going to have greater fulfillment of the targets, because as we've seen in the past, that hasn't necessarily happened. They say that they agree with the commissioner and that they'll do better; and then they pooh-pooh us and move on.

Do you feel that these new measures, that level of transparency is going to increase that determination to do better?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Part of the problem in the past was that it was very difficult to measure whether you were achieving progress or not. There was no measurability in the targets. Absolutely, I think a combination of enhanced measurability with respect to targets and timelines, along with significantly enhanced transparency, will get us where we're all aiming to go.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Measurement means indicators. Can one of you list very succinctly the indicators of sustainable development?

Ms. Paula Brand: I have them. The ones that we propose to measure are in annex 2 of the federal sustainable development strategy. We have a list of them in annex 2. There's a section on performance measures, and there's a table indicating.... I don't have the count right now, but we have listed the ones we're committed to reporting against.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay. When I look at the purpose of the bill, I see improving the quality of life. Part of the quality of life of our citizens is the ability to have jobs and incomes. Are economic development and job creation among the indicators of sustainable development measurements of economic growth? Are those some of the indicators?

Ms. Paula Brand: They are not in this list right now. We have these indicators at the target level. We are undertaking work right now at the goal level of this strategy to assess what kinds of measures we will have in place for that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, again, I find that astonishing. To me that's strictly evasive, so quite obviously the Federal Sustainable Development Act is at odds with the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development, which is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising [the needs of] future generations". When Brundtland and the World Commission on Environment and Development wrote "Our Common Future", they were very clear that the concept of sustainable development was a development concept that actually had measurements in it for jobs, income, and people. In this current bill, even though you say something's being worked on in the vague future, in that list you just showed us, there are basically no indicators of economic development and job creation.

Go ahead.

• (1010)

Ms. Paula Brand: If I could clarify, there are a couple specific ones on the clean tech sector GDP and clean tech jobs.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Come on. There are millions of Canadians who have jobs. There are clear economic development opportunities. There are clearly pockets of poverty in this country: the Maritimes, for example, just lost 15,000 jobs because the government that you're a part of put in such a process for environmental assessment that the company just threw up its hands and decided not to proceed with the project. It's quite clear, and again, Ms. Brand, in your opening remarks basically you were saying we're going to have strategies for the strategies. I had an old farmer talk to me once, one of my constituents. I tried to explain to him some of the stuff that goes on in this place here. He kind of looked at me, puzzled, and he said, "Yes, but who's out there pounding in fence posts?" Again, my concern, in representing a rural, natural resources-based constituency is what happens on the ground.

It's quite clear that the....

I want to make another quick point. How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have a little over two minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sure. I want to drill down specifically to something related to the minister's commitment that this act should respect the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. I'm going to ask a very specific question here related to the environmental impacts of alternative energy development. I have a report in front of me here that talks about bird and bat mortality from wind turbines. If we look at bats, which are extremely critical species, many of which are endangered, in Ontario there are some 41,000 bats killed every year by wind turbines. Three of these bat species happen to be on the SARA list of endangered species: the little brown myotis, the northern myotis, and the tri-coloured bat.

I'm very curious, Mr. Lucas, as to why your department is letting the Ontario government and the Ontario wind industry get away with the slaughter of species that are SARA-listed, in direct contravention of the Species at Risk Act.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Chair, once again I have a point of order. I don't understand the relevance to the FSDA in that question.

The Chair: So—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It's right here in paragraph 4 on page 4, that this act respects Canada's commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The Convention on Biological Diversity has very clear commitments: the protection of endangered species. My question is directly related. I don't care how offended the other side might be. This is a legitimate question to ask.

The Chair: I think that's fair. It's a legitimate question. It's just that you got into the specifics of a particular case, so it was starting to get a little odd. I understand your point. Let's see what the answer is.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Without specifics, a question is meaningless.

The Chair: Okay, but it didn't wrap around to where you were getting it from, so thank you.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Maybe I can start. The first thing I would say is that, if there are questions with respect to policy of the government, the orientation of the government, then I'm happy to try to answer those. Those are not appropriate questions to direct to officials.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: What? Where's the act?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: With respect to the issue that you raised in the first instance, the focus of this act is on improving the quality of life of Canadians. If you go through the act, that involves the integration of environmental, economic, and social factors. The government is committed to that, very much, and that involves looking at all of those issues.

With respect to your question on the Species at Risk Act, the government has been very clear that we are committed to the implementation of the Species at Risk Act in a substantive way. We are committed to biodiversity in Canada. That means you have to actually look at a range of different issues that are going on from an economic perspective, and ensure that they are compliant with the Species at Risk Act. We intend to do that.

The Chair: You have 14 seconds.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: The question I asked related to biological diversity. What you're telling me is that the minister misled us when she said that the FSDS respects our commitments to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which has clear statements on the protection of endangered species. Quite clearly, what she said in her remarks does not apply.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think you must be misconstruing. This government is committed to sustainable development. We are also committed to biological diversity. There is no inconsistency with those.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much.

Ms. Duncan, go ahead.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, all, for still being here.

I look forward to the parliamentary secretary, the deputy, and Ms. Brand clarifying.

I had the privilege of attending the World Economic Forum in New York. That's attended by economists, investors, and banks, all

of whom are clearly embracing sustainability. I am proud to wear the button of the 17 indicators.

It is my understanding that we have now moved on from Brundtland, from sustainable development, to the principle of sustainability based on these 17 factors. Can you clarify if that is Canada's understanding?

• (1015)

Ms. Paula Brand: I think we elaborated on the definition of sustainable development in the act, which has been consistent with the previous act—perhaps not verbatim with Brundtland but consistent with Brundtland. I think we've heard the minister and the Prime Minister talk about Canada's commitment to the 17 sustainable development goals. As the minister said, implementation is going to be through action and how we are implementing the specific pieces of them. Some of those, five of the specific goals, have found their way into the current federal sustainable development strategy.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I don't think that's clarifying. I think our government would do well to actually clarify where we are on these principles, because I am not seeing them reflected in the bill that's before us.

I'll just move on. I had specific questions for Ms. Brand. It's great to finally have her here to talk to.

I'm wondering what role you actually play in ensuring compliance with the act. Do you communicate with other officials at your level, or do you have access to deputy ministers and senior officials in the Treasury Board, PCO, and so forth?

Mr. Stephen Lucas: Perhaps I can just say, at the outset of that, that we are engaging at all levels, from the work Paula does with officials at her level, up to my level, as deputy minister, working with my colleagues—

Ms. Linda Duncan: The statute empowers only the official appointed, so that's a little confusing. You might want to revisit that, because it leaves that wide open. There were criticisms, when our committee reviewed it, that it was not satisfactory. Since 1990 and the cabinet directive, agency after agency and department after department has abjectly failed to deliver on these principles, so there was a call for this responsibility to be placed at a higher level—as Germany and Wales have done, and as the OECD has been recommending. That's why I'm asking that specific question.

Ms. Brand, as I understand it, the appointed official is at a DG level, and that raises the question as to what level of authority she has to hold all these other departments and agencies accountable.

Ms. Paula Brand: Just to clarify, the act calls for the creation of a sustainable development office. I play a role in that office, but Mr. Lucas is the official head of that office in terms of the department.

Ms. Linda Duncan: So, in fact, the deputy minister is that official.

Ms. Paula Brand: In terms of...

Ms. Linda Duncan: I'm just asking for clarification, that's all. I'm not trying to put you on the spot. It's not really clear.

My understanding is that Ms. Brand is appointed to be that official.

Ms. Paula Brand: No, I am not appointed as the official. I am the director general of sustainability in the strategic policy branch, reporting up through the ADM to Mr. Lucas.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay. I might follow up outside the committee, because I have another question and time is short.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: When I was the Public Works critic, we took on the Department of Public Works because of the absurdity of their sustainable development strategy. It included things such as increasing the number of recycled pieces of paper. So our committee did a review of the tax dollars that could be saved if the government invested in energy efficiency. I know this government is beginning to move in that direction, which to me raises the question that it's fine to do a strategy, but I wonder about the credibility of them.

There is a cabinet directive under which every official who is submitting a plan or policy proposal to their minister, whether or not it is being submitted to cabinet, must provide an assessment of sustainable development. What remains puzzling to me is that while the commissioner revealed to us that the Treasury Board requires a mandatory written report on gender lens, there is no such requirement on sustainable development. I'm really puzzled, because where the rubber hits the road is when a department or an official is proposing to do a project or proposal. That's where this should be happening, not in some vague overall policy. How do those tie together?

• (1020)

Mr. Stephen Lucas: As Paula noted earlier, the cabinet directive applies to all ministers, and through them, to their officials. The Privy Council Office has overall oversight for implementation through memoranda to cabinet and other mechanisms. She spoke to the cross-link at several stages with the federal SD strategy. In the new act, there's a specific reference to the role of Treasury Board, and specifically the secretariat, in terms of the greening government operations part and their role.

Ms. Linda Duncan: It only says "environment". It's very troubling to me that it only says they can do guidelines on environment and not sustainable development.

Mr. Stephen Lucas: To the specific point you were raising with regard to what is now called Public Services and Procurement Canada, it would address those considerations in terms of their procurement in greening government operations in the context of meeting the objectives of the environment in the act.

The Chair: Sorry, I need to cut that off.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you, Ms. Brand, for joining this conversation. It's appreciated. I think all of us really appreciate the hard work that has clearly been done to respond to a fairly comprehensive and dense report and to breathe some life into it with

this bill. I know there's a whole team working with you, and we really appreciate their hard work.

I'd like you to speak to the issue I raised earlier around objectives for the statute. I appreciate the minister's point of view that one would not in any particular piece of legislation, environmental, sustainable development, or otherwise, necessarily want to be so prescriptive when trying to achieve a broad range of outcomes. I appreciate that point. However, clearly in the past there have been challenges associated with the implementation of this act as a direct function of the fact that there really weren't objectives. When one sees as an objective "freshwater and oceans", it's next to meaningless. How do we get from not much of anything in the way of objectives that target where we want to go to something that isn't overly prescriptive but provides solid guidance for government's presence in the future?

Ms. Paula Brand: I do want to echo the minister's comments with respect to the principles. I think they're an important part in giving guidance about what a strategy should consider, so those principles are very important.

In terms of mechanics, over the course of putting together the last three strategies, there has been an evolution of their maturity with respect to specificity. The requirement to consult has really had a big impact on what a strategy would look like in the future, so it really does take into account a wide range of comments from Canadians and from folks. In the background, we do a lot of analysis of current issues and priorities to stay relevant. We do a lot of work to understand what other countries are doing to see what the issues are. We monitor emerging trends. We work within the interdepartmental community to understand those pieces and the work that's a priority across the government.

Therefore, the strategy draws on a lot of things. For a practitioner, the act gives guidance about where to go and the principles to use during development, which are very beneficial.

With regard to the consultation and the role that the commissioner plays during the consultation...the commissioner's office has done a very detailed review and they've been instrumental in making the evolution and the changes around progress. Therefore, as a practitioner, I think being able to have that scope and be responsive to the issues that are on the table at the time is very beneficial.

Mr. Stephen Lucas: One of the elements in the purpose is respecting Canada's domestic and international obligations. As I noted, that then translates into the three-year government strategy and the individual departmental ones. For example, our obligations under the Paris agreement as manifested in Canada through the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, involve over 15 different departments and agencies. Therefore, there is an expectation to see their commitments and actions specifically for that three-year tranche of their strategies being brought out and then reflected in the annual reporting.

•(1025)

Mr. William Amos: I come at this from the perspective of a past life as an environmental lawyer, and I know that many colleagues of mine in the environmental law community in Canada look to federal statutes for guidance on legal principles around environmental protection and sustainable development. Over the last 30 years, the Supreme Court has provided very positive guidance around legal principles that apply across Canada.

I'm not familiar with the principle of collaboration. I'm not familiar with the principle of results-oriented...I forget if it was results-oriented policy or results-oriented management. However, there are a couple of principles that are proposed in this bill that I'm not familiar with, and as I mentioned previously to the minister, there are several that we recommended that aren't in there.

I wonder if you could comment.

Ms. Paula Brand: As we said earlier, in terms of what is in it, we looked at the range of principles that were offered through the committee's work. We looked at a number of sustainable development agreements to look at the principles that Canada has already signed on to, in terms of some of those agreements. Then we also looked at codifying the kinds of things that the act embodies, so things like transparency, working together, being specific, and using and focusing on results. Those were some of the ideas and the concepts used to determine the principles that are proposed.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We move over to Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you. I'm going to take a little different direction here. Your department takes the lead in implementing the pan-Canadian framework on climate change. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Lucas: Yes.

Hon. Ed Fast: Under that framework, NRCan apparently is proposing a suite of building code changes that will require current homeowners to renovate and make their houses more efficient.

Are you familiar with that initiative?

Mr. Stephen Lucas: The pan-Canadian framework, which was agreed to by first ministers, does indeed include commitments that both the federal government and provinces and territories agreed to in terms of work to establish a retrofit code, which is then up to each individual province and territory to implement. It then establishes a code where retrofits are done.

Hon. Ed Fast: Apparently they're talking about these energy efficiency improvements being required when a major "life cycle event" occurs, whether it's a major renovation of the house or the sale of the house. The Canadian Real Estate Association has voiced very significant concerns that this could impose very significant costs on homeowners when they sell their homes or if they're proactively required to renovate. The estimates coming out of NRCan are around \$35,000 on average. I'm wondering if you can provide us with a commitment that the government will not require provinces to implement a policy that would require homeowners to renovate up to the standards required by government when they sell their homes.

Mr. Stephen Lucas: That's not my understanding of the approach. Again, the approach is to work with the National Research

Council and the federal, provincial and territorial community and stakeholders on establishing a retrofit code, which will then establish a floor for retrofits where they're done. But it's up to provinces and territories to implement. It's not tied to the sale of homes; it's on establishing a basis for improving energy efficiency through a retrofit.

•(1030)

Hon. Ed Fast: Who will determine what "life cycle events" are? Is it the federal government or the provinces?

Mr. Stephen Lucas: The implementation of any change in a building code is up to the provinces and territories. But again, the focus is on establishing a code as a floor for energy efficiency improvements. Indeed, there was a commitment to develop a new code for new buildings, for example, by 2022 to have a "net zero energy ready" building code developed that provinces and territories could look at.

Hon. Ed Fast: So it's focused on new builds, rather than on—

Mr. Stephen Lucas: Well, there's a proposal in the pan-Canadian framework that first ministers agreed to for a retrofit code to be developed through a consultative process involving provinces and territories, and then subsequently for it to be implemented by them. Other areas looked at included home labelling of energy efficiency improvements, which again would be up to provincial and territorial governments to implement. But to my knowledge not elaborated, in that context, was any requirement on homeowners to retrofit their homes.

Hon. Ed Fast: It has to be clear that we flagged that as an issue, as a very serious concern. We don't want to saddle homeowners with an unexpected cost for renovations when they may not have the resources to do them.

I do have another question. Going back to the principles of the legislation, Bill C-57, under "Principles", says:

(f) the principle of openness and transparency, which is the principle that the release of information should be encouraged to support accountability and public engagement.

Now, that's obviously coming out of the government, coming out of the minister's office, a commitment to openness and transparency. I think you know that we've had tremendous frustration trying to get information out of your office about the economic impact assessments that have been done with respect to the national carbon tax. We received an almost fully redacted document, and what we would like to see is a full analysis of what the carbon tax will mean for the average Canadian.

We now understand that NRCan has also done a similar economic impact study on the forest industry. That also has not been released. The mandate letter to the minister says information like this should be open by default in order to achieve that new bar that the Prime Minister was going to set for openness and transparency.

Can you tell this committee now that you will release to us any economic impact analyses that have been done on the carbon tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Fast, we've been very open and transparent with respect to carbon pricing.

Hon. Ed Fast: You have this information—

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: As we've discussed in the past, there are facts and figures that are out there on the Internet, which we have posted on the website for you to go and review. This is a conversation we've been having for several months, and it has been an open and transparent discussion, and it will continue to be so—

Hon. Ed Fast: You have not released the full report; you know that. It was heavily redacted, and NRCan has said that they're not going to release their report. It is important for Canadians that they understand what it means for the average Canadian family when the government implements a carbon tax policy—

The Chair: We are out of time, and we are trying to focus on the FSDA.

Hon. Ed Fast: This was—

The Chair: You're talking about how we're going to be able to do accountability on these things, so I understand where the question was coming from. But, anyway, we're out of time on that one. We're going to move over to Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can you speak to what you see as the benefits of having each individual department create its own strategy? I know you've already talked briefly about it.

Mr. Stephen Lucas: I'll take that at a high level, and then perhaps turn to Paula.

I think it goes to the questions that have been posed with regard to accountability and specificity, with transparency as a key mechanism to enhance it. The higher level purpose and principles in the act are made manifest in terms of action through the overarching three-year strategy. But critically important are the actions that individual departments and agencies will take—now expanding to 90—to be able to implement those on a rolling three-year cycle, and to be accountable, ultimately, to Parliament for those actions. Certainly, with the additional accountability mechanism, which we think is quite powerful, of reporting year after year on that...and on specific performance measures that they will bring to bear across....

• (1035)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: When the departments are responsible for creating their own strategies, would they be in consultation with you as to how to do that? Do they reach out to you and ask whether you can advise them in this area or that area?

A voice: That's a good question.

Mr. Stephen Lucas: Indeed, Madam Chair, it goes to the question raised by Madam Duncan. The act does provide for the establish-

ment of an office. It specifies not an individual but an office. We do play that role in helping support—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That will be within the department.

Mr. Stephen Lucas: —the development of those strategies, indicators, and measures across government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: There's been some discussion about whether or not being within the department is the best place for this to happen; maybe it should be within the purview of the PCO, or the PMO, or somewhere else. I'm curious. Notwithstanding the fact that I'm asking you to comment on the capabilities of your own department, would you not agree that within the department whose responsibility primarily relates to environmental sustainability as a premier objective, that you would be more suited to help develop those strategies with the individual departments than perhaps with a different organization or department that is more holistic? You specialize in this, do you not?

Mr. Stephen Lucas: Indeed, and I think that is why it has been established in the department. Indeed, the decision to sustain the machinery of government within the act is due to that expertise in sustainable development and certainly in environment and climate change, as we coordinate and support other departmental efforts, for example, on clean growth and climate change, biodiversity, and these other areas of importance.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: When it comes to the accountability, I know that Ms. Brand—and Mr. Lucas, for that matter—touched on the accountability and the reports being tabled in Parliament and on Parliament and this committee specifically having the opportunities to challenge it. Can you talk to us about the difference between what currently exists and what is being proposed in the legislation?

Ms. Paula Brand: As I mentioned, currently under the act, departments are required to make their plans. That's it.

What we're proposing is that departments, one year after making their plan, will in fact report on their plan. They'll report on their plan to Parliament, and that report, as I mentioned, will be referred directly to this committee. That creates a chain that did not exist.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: They make the plan; they report on the plan. If they can't deliver on what they came up with, would you not say that they will be held relatively accountable for that? It's not as though the plan is imposed on them by the PCO or the PMO or somebody else; they make the plan themselves; then they are the ones who report back on it and hence need to be accountable for it.

Would you not say that it puts them in an awkward position if they can't deliver on their plan?

Mr. Stephen Lucas: Well, it puts them in a position of being accountable for what they've committed to. I think that's the point of that regular reporting, of the review by the committee, and ultimately of the authority of Parliament to approve plans and vote the resources to implement them—and of the reviews provided for by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Chair: We have 40 seconds for the Liberal side.

Go ahead.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When we did the study for the FSDS, we heard testimony about the need to establish an advocate for Canada's future generations. Environment and Climate Change Canada has said that the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development already considers the needs of future generations. We also heard that the government would consider strengthening the commissioner's mandate to better reflect some of our recommendations, but we're not seeing that in Bill C-57.

I'm wondering whether you've heard some of that discussion or whether it's covered by something else.

• (1040)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think it's covered in the sense that sustainable development by its very nature is about future generations, so it's very much reflected in the purpose of the act itself. It is also reflected in the fact that the commissioner herself has a mandate that includes consideration of future generations. That's the position that has been taken in Bill C-57.

The Chair: Mr. Zimmer, we have just time for your questions.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: This is a question for Mr. Wilkinson, again with reference to the minister's speech and the bill itself and with sustainability as the topic. I want to quote the Northwest Territories premier, from a statement he made yesterday, and I want to add a little bit more into the record. The premier said:

For too long now policies have been imposed on us from Ottawa and southern Canada that, despite good intentions sometimes, and ignorance other times, are threatening our economic potential and the decades long work that we as a government have taken on Indigenous reconciliation. Whether it be ill conceived ways of funding social programs, or new and perplexing restrictions on our economic development, our spirit and energy are being sapped.

He goes on:

New funding approaches that distinguish between peoples may help to improve outcomes on reserve in southern Canada, but could divide Northern communities....

Restrictions imposed on our vital energy and resource sector—40 percent of our economy and source of middle class jobs and incomes for many of our people—are driving companies away, and with that go the jobs that sustain healthy families and community life. Staying in or trying to join the middle class will become a distant dream for many.

We've heard the minister talk about sustainability. We've heard a lot of talk—there is always a lot of talk in Ottawa—but policies such as the ones you're proposing are affecting real people's lives in these northern communities. They affect northern indigenous communities in my part of the province in northern British Columbia, and really across the north—any rural part of Canada.

Please explain how this is sustainable.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think, as the minister said, in the modern era the economy and the environment need to go together. As we move forward, we believe strongly in the concept of sustainable development, which inherently is about ensuring that economic initiatives and environmental practices go together.

We believe very strongly in—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Wilkinson, I've heard that said many times.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: You've asked a question. Do you want an answer?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: But we've heard this many times, the same... and you're reading off a page. We've heard that answer many, many times.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'm not reading off a page.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: The reality of it is that we're hearing from community leaders and from communities that it's not sustainable, as you are saying from your speech. I'm just challenging you to develop a policy that actually is sustainable. When we hear from premiers that 40% of their economy is being shut down by a policy of your government, that's a concern to me.

I'll pass the rest of my time to Mr. Sopuck.

The Chair: You asked a question. Do you want an answer?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: I already got it.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I know that the committee is going to be shocked at this, but I actually agree with Mr. Gerretsen on one point he made regarding the positioning of sustainable development in the federal government. When I ran the sustainable development program under former premier Gary Filmon, I reported directly to him.

Wouldn't it be better if the Federal Sustainable Development Act was managed out of "head office" in the federal government so you wouldn't get this inter-ministerial conflict that will probably arise because of this act?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: I don't think we've seen any kind of interdepartmental conflict. As the deputy talked about, the relevant expertise lies in Environment Canada. It acts as a coordinating function to ensure departments are working on similar pathways and are compliant with what the act requires. It's no different from how the Official Languages Act is coordinated through Heritage Canada. To be honest, it's very consistent with how international practices are done in other jurisdictions.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sure. Again, we also have the concept of ministerial responsibility. Under the Federal Sustainable Development Act, it sounds like coordination is another word for authority. Given that it's obvious the environment minister will have some "authority", however defined, over other departments and ministers just by virtue of being able to comment on their actions, how do we square that with the concept of ministerial responsibility? If a department says that the environment minister told them not to do something so they couldn't do it, where does a citizen go? What happens to the concept of ministerial responsibility, which is a foundation of the Westminster system?

• (1045)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: This is completely consistent with the concept of ministerial responsibility. Departments are responsible for putting together their own plans, including their own targets, and for reporting on their own progress. Each minister is accountable for the performance of their department in that regard.

The Chair: Okay, I'm going to have to end this. I'm being told that it is 10:45.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

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