



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

ENVI • NUMBER 088 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

—
Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

● (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): Welcome.

We are back to FSDA. Pursuant to the order of reference of Thursday, October 19, the committee resumes consideration of Bill C-57, an act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

We have in front of us some guests from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

We have Julie Gelfand, commissioner of the environment and sustainable development. Welcome back.

We also have Andrew Ferguson, principal; Andrew Hayes, principal; and James McKenzie, principal.

We will open the floor to you. You know the drill: when you have a minute left, I'll hold up the yellow card; when I hold up the red card, I don't mean for you to just stop, but to wrap up.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Do we have the document in French?

The Chair: Yes. There is just a bit of a challenge with some of the distribution.

Go ahead, Ms. Gelfand.

Ms. Julie Gelfand (Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Office of the Auditor General): Okay.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, it is a pleasure for us to be here today to share our views on the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

As you indicated, I am joined by senior colleagues from the Office of the Auditor General, Andrew Hayes, James McKenzie and Andrew Ferguson. Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Ferguson worked for a very long time with the previous version of the Federal Sustainable Development Act. They are experts in this matter.

As Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, I feel a special responsibility to support your review of Bill C-57. My remarks are informed by our office's 20 years of audit work on the federal sustainable development strategies and will cover the following issues: expanding the focus of the act to include the social and economic aspects of sustainable development; the proposed new principles; and reporting on sustainable development progress and improving accountability.

[English]

I was pleased to see that the purpose of the proposed new act is to provide for a federal sustainable development strategy that makes decision-making related to sustainable development more transparent and subject to accountability.

I understand from the proposed section 3 in Bill C-57 and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada's comments before this committee that the federal sustainable development strategy required under the act must respect and support Canada's international commitments. These include the United Nations agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Paris convention, as examples.

Although some of the amendments to the act appear to embrace the three aspects of sustainable development, I am concerned about the limited scope of proposed section 10.1, which is focused solely on environmental impacts.

In addition, it is my view that the implementation of the Federal Sustainable Development Act will require a whole-of-government approach. In this regard, strong governance is crucial.

I would recommend that the committee consider whether an amendment can be made to proposed section 10.1 to authorize the Treasury Board and potentially the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada to establish policies and directives relating to the sustainable development impact of government operations and to report on sustainable development progress.

[Translation]

I am pleased to see that the new bill introduces several principles that must be considered when the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and departmental sustainable development strategies are prepared. My office will use these principles when we audit the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and the 90 departmental sustainable development strategies.

That said, we anticipate that we may have difficulty assessing whether the principles have been put into practice, because several are open to interpretation.

In accordance with the principles that are set out in the amendments to subsection 5a), the committee may wish to consider the merits of entrenching the cabinet directive on strategic environmental assessment in the Federal Sustainable Development Act. This could be a tool to support the consideration of economic, social, and environmental impacts of all decisions.

[*English*]

Our office supports the amendments which will require more than 90 departments and agencies to prepare, implement, and report each year on their sustainable development strategies. I see this as a positive step towards the integration of sustainable development considerations across government.

I plan to assess the departmental sustainable development strategies against the FSDS, the principles as outlined in proposed section 5, as well as the international commitments as outlined in proposed section 3, the purpose, of the new bill. I will be looking to see how departmental sustainable development strategies support Canada's international commitments, in particular, the United Nations agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals. I expect that most departments will need to go beyond greening of government operations. I will be looking to see how departments assess their policies and programs to achieve these international commitments and how they apply the principles to all of their activities.

With these amendments, I will continue to fulfill my statutory role with respect to monitoring sustainable development strategies. That said, I would have nearly 70 more entities to audit. The committee should be aware that this change will have significant resource implications for the office.

As a result of the increase in the number of entities that will be preparing progress reports, I highly recommend that reporting on departmental sustainable development strategies be standardized across government. By standardized, I mean that the results for all departments and agencies should be presented at the same time each year and in a common format, so that Canadians can understand the results that have been achieved and so that my office can provide a meaningful assessment of those results for parliamentarians.

As auditors, we support the idea of strengthening accountability for results. One way to achieve this would be for the act to specifically require deputy heads or ministers to acknowledge their accountability by signing off on the completeness and accuracy of their progress report on their sustainable development activities, much as you would see in financial statements.

• (0855)

[*Translation*]

You could also strengthen accountability, which was discussed at length during the committee's previous study of the Federal Sustainable Development Act, by incorporating accountability for sustainable development results in the performance agreements of deputy heads.

Madam Chair, I commend the committee for its work and hope that my suggestions will be helpful to you.

This concludes my opening remarks. We would be happy to answer the committee's questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

First up is Mr. Amos.

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

To our commissioner and team, I very much appreciate your willingness to come at short notice and to give us your assessment of Bill C-57.

My first question goes to the issue of resources. You state that with 70 more entities to audit, you will require new resources. Can you elaborate a bit further on what would be necessary for your office?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: That's a great question. I don't even know if we have assessed that yet.

Right now, over a five-year period, we assess 26 entities. Over five years, we're looking at around five different entities and some aspect of their departmental sustainable development strategy. If we have to do that for 90 entities, I'm not sure how we're going to that in a period that would be reasonable to present back to you.

We have not done the assessment of how many more resources it would require, but it's just a flag to say that if we go from 26 to 90 and I'm supposed to review these and present back to you, doing that will require something.

Mr. William Amos: You speak to the importance of standardizing across government the approach to reporting on departmental SD strategies. Do you have any perspective on what the nature of that standardization should be and how it should be framed? I ask that question because you referenced the increased resources that will be required for the number to jump up to 70 audited entities. I presume that standardization would better enable the auditing function. Could you—

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Absolutely. Right now, the way it's written in the proposed bill is that entities can report any time in the year, so it's going to be really difficult for us to be able to capture all that and present an overview of the results to Parliament.

One of the standardization items is that they are all presented at the same time so that we can then take them away, have a look at them, and give you some form of assessment. That's one form of standardization. The other form would be in how they're constructed. Treasury Board can issue those kinds of guidelines to departments to say what sections they want to see in each of the reports.

I'll just pass it off to Andrew. This was one of Andrew's big concerns.

Mr. Andrew Ferguson (Principal, Sustainable Development Strategies, Audits and Studies, Office of the Auditor General): You also mentioned that the departmental strategies are to respond to the federal strategy and demonstrate how they support that. As the commissioner mentioned, the federal strategy says that it will align itself with the UN SDGs. That would be another way, potentially, that departments could standardize their approach to reporting to align it both with the federal goals and the UN SDGs, as called for in the bill.

Mr. William Amos: You don't comment in any manner in relation to the principles that underpin the bill. There have been recommendations made by this committee, and then subsequently, the government has adopted some of the principles that were suggested. I wonder if you have any comments in relation to the legal principles that underpin this statute and Bill C-57 amendments.

• (0900)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I believe I did say something in my opening statement about the principles. We support these new principles. We will audit against them. We are concerned that, without more clarity on what exactly they mean, they can be open to interpretation. I can tell you that when we review both the federal sustainable development strategy and the departmental ones, I will be asking the question as to how they incorporated all those principles into the development of their departmental strategies.

What I've seen in terms of departmental strategies to date under the past law was that they were very much focused on greening operations like buying FSC paper and recyclable pens, but they did not seem to look at their policies or programs to say how they were going to achieve all of their international commitments: what are we as a department going to do to achieve the SDGs; what are we going to do to achieve the Paris commitment and all the other international commitments that would fall under the rubric of sustainable development?

I'll be looking at both of those things, how they apply the principles to their sustainable development strategy as well as how they meet those international commitments, which is, in my opinion, probably way beyond simply greening government operations.

Mr. William Amos: I think I'll leave my questions there.

The Chair: You're just about out of time with 30 seconds left.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

The Chair: You're welcome.

Mr. Sopuck.

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

When I look at the definition of sustainable development in the act on page 2, it means “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. That's the Brundtland definition. I'm glad that the government has accepted the Brundtland definition of sustainable development so it's quite clear that sustainable development is a development concept.

Is that correct, Ms. Gelfand? Would you agree with that?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Absolutely, and if you look at the sustainable development goals, good jobs, innovation, and strong infrastructure are all within the SDGs.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Except when one looks at the purpose, the purpose as implementing a federal sustainable development strategy that will make environmental decision-making more transparent, which very much jives with your point number five when you say you're “concerned about the limited scope of proposed section 10.1, which is focused solely on environmental impacts”.

The act starts off as a development concept under the definition of sustainable development, but then quickly devolves back to an old-style environment act. Isn't this inconsistent?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I mentioned in my opening statement about expanding the definition of exactly that, that it's not just about the environment. If we're going to achieve sustainability, it's about social and economic issues. We mention that, and that's one of the reasons we mentioned that you might want to consider looking at proposed section 10.1 to expand that.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Right. So measurements of job creation and economic growth should also be considered as measures of sustainable development. Is that correct?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: According to the SDGs, that's correct.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Good, I certainly agree with that.

In terms of the location and the responsible minister, however, when you look at section 7 of the act, it looks like the office will be run out of the environment minister's department, and that all other departments will essentially report to the environment minister. Is that a fair conclusion? If you look at section 7, the office will be in the environment minister's office. Does that mean that the environment minister will have a veto over all other government departments?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: You'd have to ask the department that. I can't answer that, but obviously, according to the act, the Minister of Environment will be the one who brings together the federal sustainable development strategy. I don't know if that puts them on top of everybody else. However, I believe that it has been recommended in the past that the creation of the federal sustainable development strategy and its location may be better suited to a more central agency.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I recall that when I was part of Premier Gary Filmon's sustainable development effort, that effort was located in the premier's office and it ensured an equality of the ministers.

This is something that concerns me greatly. If the environment minister's office publishes a—quote, unquote—“bad report” on a department, that's essentially a veto.

In terms of socio-economic impacts, Commissioner, in your view, does that also include an evaluation of lost economic and job opportunities if a project does not proceed? For example, we know Canada builds pipelines in a very environmentally sound way. When energy east was lost, thousands of jobs were lost, and I use that as one example. Don't you think that an evaluation of the opportunity costs of the loss of environmentally sound projects should be part of the evaluation?

• (0905)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Whenever you evaluate a project in Canada, and whenever it goes to cabinet, there's usually a socio-economic lens that's put on almost every project that is brought forward. The whole purpose of the strategic environmental assessment tool is to include a third lens. I would argue that most projects are always looked at from a socio-economic perspective, but they don't usually include the third aspect, which is the environmental perspective.

If you're going to look from a sustainable development angle, you should be looking at social, economic, and environmental costs, and that was the whole point of bringing forward the strategic environmental assessment tool.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: You should also look at benefits as well. It's not all costs.

The term “impacts” to me is a negative term, and we often confuse environmental change with environmental impact. For example, in commercial forestry, a mature forest is converted to a young forest, and young forests have certain ecological advantages, if you will, over mature forests. Is environmental change automatically a negative, in your view?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Certain ecosystems require fire, for example, to continue to grow, so environmental change is not necessarily a negative impact.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay.

I'll go back to the location of the responsibility. It is a great concern that the responsible minister is the environment minister. I could see there being a lot of tension around the cabinet table if the minister plunks down a negative report on, let's say, the Department of Natural Resources, a true development department.

Obviously, we can't describe what's going to happen around the cabinet table, but can you see that being an area of tension between project proponents, development departments, and the environment minister's office?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: In terms of the federal sustainable development strategy, my understanding, and you'd have to ask the department this specifically, is that it will be the coordinator of the development of the federal sustainable development strategy.

You're asking me about specific projects and about environmental impact assessments. I'm looking right now today at the federal sustainable development strategy. The role of Environment Canada will be to gather that together. I know that other people have made the recommendation, and it is the case in many other countries—several other countries—that the development of the FSDS is located in a more central agency that reports directly to the president, prime minister, or whomever it may be.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan.

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

It's always a pleasure to have you and your gang here. We really appreciate your work.

I see a lot of consistency in the recommendations you're bringing forward, Commissioner, as you testified more than a year ago, when I wasn't on the committee.

There are a number of things that I find really odd about this bill. It was an opportunity, in fact, to update the law so that the departments and agencies have to assess based on sustainable development, and not the narrow factor of environment. Yet, even in the bill and remaining in the existing act, we still have this inconsistency. Sometimes we're looking at environment and sometimes we're looking at sustainable development, so I appreciate your bringing that to our attention.

I think they should have started over again, but I've made a number of proposals for change. Unfortunately, we can't propose some of the changes you're recommending, because they're not in the bill.

One of the things I find odd is that this bill recommends that Treasury Board be authorized to issue guidelines, and yet section 6 of the act appoints the Privy Council to provide oversight but no power to issue guidelines.

I've noted your previous sensible recommendation that the cabinet directive be entrenched in this act to try to connect the two. It remains a mystery to me that the minister is responsible for sustainable development policy for a whole entity and yet the Privy Council is saying that, for any policy, any directive, any spending, or any decision, you have to do a sustainable development assessment.

Do you think there is a need to take a second look and to bring those two together to have consistency?

• (0910)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I have recommended that the committee consider entrenching the current cabinet directive into the act, because right now that cabinet directive is really not being followed, as you've heard me say almost every year since I've been coming to this committee. As I indicated to Mr. Sopuck, there is always a socio-economic analysis of every proposal that goes to cabinet. There is also a gender analysis that's done. But the environmental analysis is not mandatory; it's just if they want to or if there are significant impacts.

I think taking the opportunity in this act to entrench that cabinet directive would help balance out the socio-economic perspectives and include and obligate departments to bring forward an environmental perspective to it, and that's why we recommended that.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay.

That is an interesting comment because a few years ago a number of us brought a case, which eventually went to the Supreme Court—and that was the Friends of the Oldman River Society v. Canada (Minister of Transport)—where it was proven, which was my argument, that a cabinet directive is enforceable. So you might want to rethink that, and people might want to be noting that a cabinet directive is an enforceable law.

One of the things I note in the act is that the minister can make regulations. Actually, it would be the cabinet, I presume, that would make the regulations.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: It's Treasury Board, I think.

Ms. Linda Duncan: That may be one way that the cabinet directive can be made binding in law, clearly, through regulations in the act. In all these years that we've had this act, no regulations have ever been issued, so that might be a simple way of addressing this if we can't make the amendments to the act.

I want to thank you for noting some of the missing elements in the principles. The justice minister has now said that the UNDRIP will be binding on all decisions of the government, so it's very critical that it also be specifically referenced in here.

Unfortunately, because the government did not come forward to change the provision that appoints a Department of the Environment official to provide the guidance, we can't propose an amendment by the rules of amendment, but certainly that is something you identified previously. When the committee reviewed this act previously, all the other nations seemed to have gone in that direction, so it's a good recommendation. Unfortunately, our hands are tied because of the rules of the statutory process. Hopefully we can have some additional amendments and shift that over.

I think the overall problem remains that, if the environment department is providing the direction, then it will also be seen as this being just about environmental assessment. That shift probably would send the message that when we do a strategy we have to go beyond environment, and we also have to do the socio-economic, but I think until that happens....

You seem to be indicating that, but you continue to make the same very sensible, constructive recommendations. Unfortunately, I think our hands are going to be tied on what amendments we can bring forward. I'd welcome any recommendations within the framework we have of how we might do that. One option might be through regulations that the cabinet issues.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Unfortunately, I can't answer that specific question, but I do want to indicate that it's not all countries that put their sustainable development work in central agencies. Some of them put it in the department of finance, for example. Many put it in the environment department. If you leave it in the environment department, I think it becomes an environmental strategy. If you put it in a central agency or with the minister of finance, you could potentially have a true sustainable development act.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fisher.

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

Thank you, Commissioner. It's always nice to see you.

Those are great rubber boots, by the way.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Thank you.

My apologies, I forgot my shoes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

A voice: No apologies needed.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I am a former biologist.

Mr. Darren Fisher: When we studied the act, we heard testimony that we should establish an advocate for Canada's future generations, and Environment and Climate Change Canada said, "You already do that. You already are tasked with looking after future generations and their needs."

I understand that the government is considering strengthening your mandate. Could you tell us a bit about how you feel, or if you feel you already represent the needs of future generations?

● (0915)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: At the national level, Canada is the only country that has a commissioner of environment and sustainable development located in the office of the supreme audit institution. There are seven or eight other commissioners of environment and sustainable development at a national level, and they are not found in the audit office.

It's true that in the definition in the Auditor General Act, there is a clause that says that taking care of the needs of future generations is within our mandate. When you're in an audit office, however, you must stick to audit methodology. You must remain objective and deal only with the facts of the audits that you do, so there are advantages and disadvantages to the model. In terms of taking care of the needs of future generations, I would suggest that I could do that by trying to select really good audits that deal with that, but oftentimes, I can't give you an opinion based on 30-odd years of working in this area, because I am in the audit office. There are pros and cons.

The commissioners of environment and sustainable development who are outside the audit office, however, have the disadvantage that it's much easier to say, "Oh, that person's just a greenie, and we can disregard whatever he or she says," whereas when you're listening to me talk about an audit, I am effectively the auditor general talking about that audit. It's very difficult to dismiss it because we use the exact same methodology as the auditor general.

That was a long and complicated answer to say that it's not clear and that there are both advantages and disadvantages to having the commissioner's office in the audit office. Does that help?

Mr. Darren Fisher: It does, but could you be specific about what, in your opinion, we might be able to do as a committee to strengthen that role? If we understand that the government is considering strengthening your role, give me one way we might do that.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I'm not aware that the government is considering that. That's news to me.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I know that back in the 1990s there was a big debate about where the commissioner of environment and sustainable development should be. Should it be a separate officer of Parliament? That was quite a large debate, and the then auditor general, Denis Desautels, argued that it should be in the audit office.

I know that members have asked me throughout the three and a half, almost four years that I've been commissioner what I think about that decision, and I say that it's up to Parliament to decide. I can tell you the advantages and disadvantages of having it in the audit office. There are big advantages to being in the audit office, but it limits me to talking about the audit that I've done. However, I do have the discretion to pick audits.

If the government said, "We're going to meet the needs of future generations," I guess I could somehow figure how to audit on whether the government is ready to meet the needs of future generations, and to see if we can figure that out. It's not crystal clear. I don't have any specific recommendation. Those of you who have lived with the commissioner for 20 years—

Mr. Andrew Ferguson: I would add that in many of the audits, we do address issues that could compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We focus our attention on shortcomings in the implementation of current policy objectives which, if not addressed, could potentially compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Commissioner, you've said before that when a new FSDS is tabled, it should be deemed referred to all relevant committees. I guess the suggestion is that it's just going to come back to us. What are your thoughts on that? What specific committees do you think it should go to?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: If you look at the sustainable development goals, there's the Brundtland commission definition, and then there are the SDGs, which include many aspects of health, education, good jobs, infrastructure, clean energy, life on land, and climate action, all kinds of things.

It seems to me that this is much broader than just the environment committee's job. It's Natural Resources Canada, it's Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, it's Infrastructure, it's Finance, and all the decisions they make. That's why we have recommended in the past that the FSDS go beyond simply this committee, because yet again, this isolates it and it's made to be seen as just an environmental issue. If you look at the SDGs, sustainable development goes way beyond environmental issues.

• (0920)

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I can't get my next question in under 20 seconds. I might be able to get the question in, but I wouldn't get the answer.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I could keep talking for 20 seconds.

The Chair: It's all right.

Monsieur Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Gelfand. It is always a pleasure to welcome you here. I always like to discuss things with representatives of the Office of the Auditor General, because I feel safe. I commend your directors and you, and I thank you for being with us.

In your presentation, you spoke of the new principles being proposed. When you speak about principles, these are intergenera-

tional equity, prudence, the polluter pays principle, internalization of costs, openness and transparency, the contribution of aboriginal peoples, collaboration, and a results-based approach.

My question will be very simple, Commissioner. Are we not muddying the waters? Is there not too much here? At a certain point, are we not losing sight of things by casting too broad a net, which may mean that we will not reach our objectives? When we introduce a law, our purpose is to improve it. However, if we ride off in all directions and want to satisfy everyone and every principle, I think we may lose sight of the objectives.

I'd like to hear what you have to say.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: That is a very interesting question.

Until now, we examined the principles and came to some conclusions.

First, it is sometimes difficult to be very precise. For instance, with regard to the principle of prudence or the polluter pays principle, are we really going to calculate the cost of all the pollution? That is what the polluter pays principle means.

We were somewhat concerned. We thought two things. First, we wondered if we could be more precise in expressing what we wanted to say. That would help.

Secondly, we are going to audit the Federal Sustainable Strategy and the strategies in each department. We will have to audit them with these filters. We are going to examine all of the programs and strategies of the departments and verify whether they incorporated all of these principles into their work. It's a considerable task.

If I were at the Department of Health, for instance, and heard the commissioner say this publicly in front of everyone, I think this might cause some panic, because in my opinion, every department considers that the goal of its sustainable development strategy is simply the greening of government activities. However, it is much broader than that.

And so I will examine the principles. I would like them to be more specific, but I can tell you that we will achieve this. We are not exactly sure of how we will proceed. However, I will ask my colleagues, who are very brilliant, to prepare a methodology that will allow us to audit the federal strategy as well as the departmental strategies.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Commissioner, this means that these are evaluation criteria. These are elements that will allow you to do a good audit of the various departments.

Did I understand you correctly?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: For my part, that is how I am going to use them. We are asking you, as well as the cabinet, to try to be very precise in what you say on this topic, so that we may let you know if the principles were followed or not.

Mr. Joël Godin: You said earlier that you could not manage with the team you have currently. I see, having read the act and your comments, that this is a massive file, of extraordinarily scope, one that will require additional staff and a will to comply on the part of the departments.

Do you think the government will be able to make this transition and give itself the necessary tools to reach these objectives?

● (0925)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: You would have to put the question to government representatives.

Mr. Joël Godin: Fine.

In another connection, you probably know that I used to sit on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I have a lot of respect for the Auditor General, and for you and the members of his team. Once again, I will ask you if you have the necessary means to impose—and I did say “impose”—the need to respect the rules on the departments. The Auditor General, and you, as commissioner, make recommendations. The departments say that they agree with them and indicate that they intend to comply.

Of course after a year, you can verify what has been done or not, but are any sanctions applied? Do the departments have to be accountable?

That is where the problem lies. Everyone here is full of good will.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: In principle, the Auditor General submits recommendations and Parliament is responsible for accountability.

Mr. Joël Godin: Fine, but give us some tools.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Ask for action plans after each one of my reports, and ask the departments to render accounts after one year, and after two years, as do public accounts.

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Commissioner, and your team as well.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): As always, thank you so much for being here. It's always enlightening and enjoyable to have you at our committee.

I want to follow on from Monsieur Godin and Ms. Duncan.

Under the principles, targets are established that are measurable. If we are too prescriptive in that, it doesn't allow the breadth of the ability of our function to measure against those principles. You pointed out there are some departments that are doing a good job with this, and you're able to point to that on the sustainable front. If we're able to have a greater breadth in that ability to measure that, we're able to actually look at certain departments and say, “Okay, they're doing a good job on this and this. They could improve here and here”, and then we can actually use that as the breadth of those best practices, and we can then look at other departments and use those to measure others. We can't think of every scenario or every aspect of sustainability that we need to measure over time as it evolves.

Could you comment on that aspect of it?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I'll help you, yes.

I would suggest the committee look quite seriously at the sustainable development goals, including the targets and the indicators, and the Statistics Canada indicators, which are not yet

complete. The sustainable development goals, targets, and indicators give you a very good, broad, and full definition of “sustainable development”, including good jobs, infrastructure, innovation, energy, all that kind of stuff. We will be auditing the federal government on whether or not it's achieving very specific targets and indicators of the SDGs. That's part of our sustainable development strategy. Our goal is to try to get as many of both the Auditor General and my audits to look at very specific indicators within the sustainable development goal targets and indicators, and audit against those.

I believe if you're looking for a very big, broad set of indicators and targets, the SDGs could provide that for you. At this point, Stats Canada, I'm going to guess, has maybe around 50% of the indicators at a Canadian level. Once it gets those indicators for all the SDG targets, those will provide a very good framework for identifying whether or not departments, or Canada, are getting to a place of achieving sustainability.

Mr. Mike Bossio: You point to another line of questioning that was taken on by Mr. Sopuck. The emphasis is on development. Sustainable is actually in there as well. The economic, social, and environmental aspects all need to be considered under the sustainable development criteria.

Everything needs to be measured against the targets related to those SDGs, which do revolve around... it's not that we're leaving the economic piece out of that picture, but it's just that the other ones maybe have not had as much weight as the economic piece has. I think they all need to be considered.

Can you comment further on that?

● (0930)

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I would agree that most countries, including Canada, have always looked at the economic impacts. That's always been one of the criteria that's been looked at for almost every decision. The social impacts come next. We think about that next. Sometimes we think about the environmental impacts. The beauty of the sustainable development goals is that they include all of those things, like just societies, good education, good health care, life on earth, life in the water, climate action, and clean energy. That is really a wonderful way to describe sustainable development and to even go deeper to say, “Here are targets. Here are indicators”. That's what our office will be looking at, in terms of auditing in the future.

Mr. Mike Bossio: In your comments, you also said that the FSDA is more transparent and accountable. Can you give us a sense of where you see that's going to help you in your job?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I mentioned that the purpose is looking at sustainable development and not just environment. If you look at the purpose of the original act, it's about environment. The purpose of the new bill is sustainable development. I was pleased to see that in the purpose of the act. It's moving from just the environment to sustainable development. I believe that the new bill no longer requires performance contracts with the deputy. That's a decrease in accountability. I've suggested that you reincorporate that. We've also suggested that the deputy head sign off on the sustainable development progress report, much like a deputy head would sign off on financial statements saying that everything was complete, which is what we get when we look at the financial statements. We should get the same thing on the sustainable development strategies. These are all complete.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you, Ms. Gelfand.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Shields.

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

I'd like to welcome you back, Commissioner.

It's always great to be here with somebody of your expertise and knowledge. We always learn from your answers.

You've made some interesting comments that [*Inaudible—Editor*] my background when you talk about standardization in a sense—
[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Chair, I can't hear the translation.
[*English*]

The Chair: You can't hear the translation.
[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: It's not a problem.
[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry. I wasn't sure what you said because there was no translation.

Mr. Joël Godin: That's no problem.

Sorry, my friend.

Mr. Martin Shields: That's no problem.

Standardization is an interesting topic. I spent a year on a committee in Alberta where we were working with wetlands and the government wanted a policy. It took us a year to get a definition of what wetlands are, to be able to have something as a criteria.

To get something at grassroots to develop up so people will do more than just a little greening of whatever else, I think is a challenge for you. I'm very familiar with ACT, SAT, MCAT, LSAT and the development of those and input into creating them. It's post-secondary education and developing standardized mechanisms to deal with students. Those are always an extreme challenge. You're talking about, at 20% doing something and 80% not doing something, yet referring to a greening as superficial.

I'm a carrot guy. How do we incentivize an approach? I'm not into the penalty and the hammer because I don't think that gets you what you need or what you want. Accounting has had a long history of centuries of numbers and principles and we're moving into a new

area. However, for you to do your job—and you talk about reporting back to parliamentarians and meaningful assessment. I'm saying, what's the meaning of feedback to the departments and staff, so they understand it?

To me, that's the most critical piece. Acts are irrelevant to me. I want those guys in the department to have some meaningful feedback, so they can see how they've changed or what they need to do. To me, that's what an audit is for.

How would you envision developing criteria from the grassroots that are going to be meaningful? I like standardized. I like a common date. You've mentioned a few things, but how would you see this happening?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: That's a great question to ask the Treasury Board.

What I am seeing is a kind of standardized reporting system with a big, broad outline, so that when we or you are looking at 90 of them.... If they're all written completely differently, I don't know how we're going to tally them all up, if you know what I mean.

•(0935)

Mr. Martin Shields: Yes.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: It would help if at least there's a provision saying, "We'd like you to report on international commitments. What have you done on those?"

I haven't even thought about all the elements of standardization. What we have thought about is what we would do with 90 departments reporting using different formats and how we would ever be able to utilize that information in a way we could present. Also, how would you look at those 90 and make any sense of them? It's more a case of a standardizing of reports—

Mr. Martin Shields: It comes to you to have to deal with it, so that's what I am asking you.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: We will think about it.

Mr. Martin Shields: You're going to have to deal with these 90 buckets. You have to have some ideas of how it could work. Treasury Board is one thing, but you have to end up at the bottom line.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: We could, if you wish, definitely provide some advice—but not right this second—on what we think would be a standardized reporting mechanism.

Can we do that?

A voice: I suppose so.

Mr. Martin Shields: You have to end up with the buckets.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Yes, and so do you.

Mr. Martin Shields: But you provide the report card.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Absolutely.

Mr. Martin Shields: We can look at the report card, but you have to build it.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I agree.

Mr. Martin Shields: Treasury Board has all the rules they can make, but you're the key.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Do we do that, or does the government do that?

Mr. Andrew Hayes (Principal, Office of the Auditor General): I think that, as the commissioner suggested, this might be a question the Treasury Board Secretariat might be best positioned to answer. What we are required to do is evaluate and examine the contributions that the departmental sustainable development strategies will make to the achievement of the goals of the federal strategy. In so doing, when we're looking at the 26 right now, we have an idea of how we are going to do it. With 90, it becomes a bit more challenging.

What's important is to recognize that we will do that work in the context of the way the strategies are prepared, and we haven't seen them yet.

I think, then, that when the commissioner is talking about standardization, there are two elements. The first is the timing of the reporting. If reports are coming in at different times across the board, it will be difficult for us to grab results, make them comparable, and make the messages clear to everybody. The second part is, as the commissioner mentioned, to have some consistent topics or consistent information coming through.

Mr. Martin Shields: I'll go back to specifics. When you talked about 20% versus 80%, what did you find in the 20% that made you say that these are doing some things? You mentioned some greening of things, but there must have been some positive things you found somebody doing, in that audit report.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I'm really sorry. I don't remember talking about 20% and 80%.

If we're talking about the strategic environmental assessment cabinet directive, what we found was that most of the time it was not applied. We found a couple of departments that did a good job. Those were Parks Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. They were taking the cabinet directive and applying it properly both to their minister and to cabinet. Many of the other departments were not doing so.

Mr. Martin Shields: Tell me about the ones that were. What were they doing differently?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: You would have to ask them why they were different. I would suspect part of it was leadership. They saw the cabinet directive and said, "We're supposed to follow that. Let's do it." Then, I think political will within the department is part of it.

Mr. Martin Shields: That goes back to—

The Chair: Martin, I'm sorry. You've done a good job and used the six minutes, sir.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Commissioner, can you speak to why you think it is important that the individual departments create their own strategies?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: If we're going to move to a sustainable development world, if we're going to try to achieve sustainable development and the sustainable development goals, each department should be looking at the SDGs, the ones that apply to them, and figuring out how they are going to help Canada reach those

international commitments. They should be thinking about how they are going to incorporate environmental, economic, and social aspects, opportunities and impacts, into all the decisions they make. If I were creating what a departmental sustainable development strategy would be, those would be two big criteria that I would use.

Andrew already mentioned that the departmental sustainable development strategies are supposed to show how they're supporting the federal sustainable development strategy. I'll be looking at both the principles and the purpose in those departmental strategies to see whether the departments are going....

Greening of operations is very important. I don't mean to make that sound as though it's not. It is very important, but the Department of Finance should be looking at every budget decision and asking itself what's the SD impact. Similarly, the Department of National Defence should be looking at every one of its decisions in terms of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of that decision.

● (0940)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Further to that, what do you see as the importance of making sure that all three of those pillars are properly accounted for or healthy? Do you see it as a detriment to the other two if one is superior, or vice versa?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: That's the whole principle of sustainable development. I would argue that, in the past, economics was the only thing looked at. Then we added the social aspect. Usually socio-economic goes together. That's the analysis that's done. That's the lens taken on most decisions, and most decisions don't have a lens that includes the environmental lens. When we include that, at least we're aware of what the opportunities and impacts will be of making that decision on all three parts of the sustainable development stool.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You mentioned the importance of standardizing the reporting process, and Mr. Shields was talking a bit about it as well. That makes a lot of sense to me. It helps to make the information very coherent in terms of the delivery back.

Do you also apply that to the standardizing of the development of the individual strategies? Would you insist that although the individual departments are developing their own strategies, there should also be a standardized approach to the way they develop them? If so, would that come from your office?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: It would not come from our office.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Where do you see that coming from?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I would encourage that there be some form of standardization in the development of departmental sustainable development strategies. Questions they could ask themselves are: "How are our decisions, programs, and assets delivering on our international commitments; how are we applying the strategic environmental assessment tool; how are we supporting the federal sustainable development strategy?"

Those could be some of the questions they'd ask themselves in their sustainable development strategy as they're preparing it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What do you see from a cost-benefit perspective between red tape or the bureaucratic processes versus greater accountability and oversight? Could you speak to the benefits of the bill?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: If Canada is going to achieve the sustainable development goals that it has agreed to achieve, departments have to change a little in the way they think about things. They need to start thinking about things from the three angles: social, economic, and environmental. That has a huge benefit, and I believe the costs will be pretty minimal.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Can you give an example of how a department might change that?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: They would apply the strategic environmental assessment cabinet directive to all their decisions. That would be number one, a very easy one. It's already there. It's something that, according to Ms. Duncan, is enforceable, and they are not doing it, which means that when a decision comes to a minister, particularly to a minister but even to cabinet, they are looking at the social and economic aspects, but where's the environmental opportunity and impact? It's not assessed.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Ferguson.

Mr. Andrew Ferguson: I could just add that over the years there has been debate on whether or not to have separate sustainable development strategies or include sustainability within the expenditure management system, as being integral to the departments' existing business plans and strategies. It was felt that we needed these separate strategies, at least for the time being, to make them come to life and be more explicit rather than be buried within a broader context.

I'm not sure that helps to answer your question.

• (0945)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes, it does. Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Commissioner, I notice that a principle has been added in, the principle of openness and transparency, and yet nowhere in the statute is there a requirement to consult the public beyond the advisory group, unlike the case with the cabinet directive, which requires the engagement of the public in doing sustainable development assessments of policy, spending, and so forth.

Is that perhaps a problem? It's a principle, but the act doesn't even reflect that principle. It could potentially be added in, and I'm going to be making suggestions how to do it. It is interesting, though, that all these principles are added in, but then the act is not amended to actually deliver on the principle of openness and transparency.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Go ahead.

Mr. Andrew Hayes: Thank you.

I think, to answer your question, there are opportunities with proposed section 10.1 of the act, which is the directive power that is being given to the Treasury Board.

In terms of one of the comments the commissioner made in her opening statement, there might be some value in looking at expanding it to allow the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to also issue directives to achieve exactly the sorts of things you're talking about.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Can I also add that when we're doing a preparedness audit right now, we ask whether the Government of

Canada is prepared to implement the sustainable development goals. We're doing this according to methodology that's being used by auditors general from around the world. One of the questions is regarding what the public engagement has been on the sustainable development goals. We'll be looking at that. We're reporting it in March.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay, here is a final question.

You have raised concerns that some of the principles are particularly vague. Could you speak to principle (h), collaboration, and principle (i), a results and delivery approach? I've never heard of those principles, and I'm wondering whether you think there might be a challenge in applying those when you're reviewing the strategy.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I would argue that it's going to be difficult to apply many of the principles. As I already indicated in the case of the polluter pay principle, which is a principle that those who degrade the environment should pay for it, am I really going to look for departments to...? Are they really going to pay? Yes or no? Do we have fines? It's that kind of thing.

We encourage you or the government to try to be as precise as possible, so that when we are auditing against the principles, we have more definition.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Perhaps when they do the strategies, they should say how they have applied those principles.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Exactly.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I never ask a question, but I really would like to ask a question. I've been listening—

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do we have to vote on this?

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I'll take your question.

The Chair: Thank you, with the support of the committee.

We did the study and we made recommendations as a committee to take it up a level and have it go to a higher, over-arching department or government operation that would oversee this. The government has said no, that it would like to have it in the department of the environment.

I'm listening to you say that looking at the socio-economic impact has been standard, that we got that right, but we really haven't been looking at environment. I'm seeing the benefit of having an environment minister making sure that this other piece gets in there, so I'm seeing why the government may be doing what they're doing. I also understand how we made recommendations to take it to another level.

Can you just comment on this? I'm trying to rationalize it in my mind. It's very important to me and to the committee, because we made that recommendation, but I also understand in what way there may be value in the way the government is doing this. I want to get your opinion on the matter.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: I think that when sustainable development is put into the environment department, it's ghettoized, and it becomes an environmental strategy and not a true sustainable development strategy. While I too recognize that the environment department will continue to push for looking at it from an environmental perspective, I think that if the Department of Finance, Treasury Board and/or PCO required an environmental assessment of decisions to add to the socio-economic assessment of decisions, it would be followed. I think they have more of a stick, and I think the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada just doesn't have that same kind of leverage that the central agencies have.

I know you recommended that as a committee, and that is why we personally would support that. We've seen it in other countries where that occurs, and then it becomes just part of everyday life. Ultimately, you would hope that we don't need a department of environment because all of us are thinking about these decisions from the social, economic, and environmental perspective all the time, and then it's sort of redundant because we're all thinking that way. But we're not quite there yet, so we do need an advocate for that. But to really make it mainstream, you would put it in a central agency.

• (0950)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: If that happened, you'd be out of a job.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: And that would be okay. If we were making decisions that included the environment as well as the socio-economic aspect, I would bow down.

The Chair: Excellent.

This has been a good discussion. Thank you very much again for taking the time to come and share your wisdom with us.

Ms. Julie Gelfand: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll suspend now and bring Treasury Board in.

• (0950)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (0950)

The Chair: We are going to resume.

I'm going to welcome Nick Xenos to the table. Nick is the executive director of the centre for greening government within the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Welcome, Nick. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Nick Xenos (Executive Director, Centre for Greening Government, Treasury Board Secretariat): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to talk about the work that the Treasury Board Secretariat centre for greening government is undertaking to meet the commitment under the federal sustainable development strategy to realize a low-carbon government.

As you know, Bill C-57 would formally recognize the leadership role of the Treasury Board Secretariat in greening government operations.

It is important to note that the centre for greening government will complement the leadership role that Environment and Climate

Change Canada plays on sustainable development writ large for the Government of Canada.

Specifically, the centre will provide guidance and coordination to departments on the low-carbon government commitment under the FSDS.

• (0955)

[*Translation*]

The proposed amendments to the Federal Sustainable Development Act would increase the number of organizations that report on the strategy and, therefore, on the low-carbon government commitment of the FSDS. This is consistent with the Centre for Greening Government expanding the inventory it maintains of federal greenhouse gas emissions to cover more departments and organizations.

[*English*]

Reducing the country's greenhouse gas emissions has been a priority for the Government of Canada. Canada committed to reducing its national emissions by 30% from 2005 levels by the year 2030.

In the 2016-19 FSDS, the Government of Canada committed to leading by example by making its own operations low carbon. The federal government set a target to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030.

Under the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, the government also committed to using 100% clean electricity by 2025.

[*Translation*]

The Centre for Greening Government was established within the Treasury Board Secretariat in the fall of 2016 to meet these low-carbon government commitments.

[*English*]

The centre has a mandate to track and report on federal emissions, to coordinate the government's overall efforts to green its operations, and to drive results to meet the government's greening objectives.

Earlier this year, we organized two round tables to explore two important topics. The first one was with federal employees on greening government operations to help mobilize employees. The second brought together our partners in business and academia to learn from their experiences in greening procurement and adopting clean technologies.

In July, the centre posted a dataset on the greening government section of Canada.ca showing that the government's GHG emissions were reduced by 19% in 2014-15 from 2005-06 levels. The inventory is made public through the government's open data portal, giving Canadians single-window access to tracking information on the government's emissions.

[Translation]

We are working to further expand this inventory to achieve a more complete picture of federal greenhouse gas emissions and energy use, to gain a better understanding of resources of emissions and identify areas of opportunity to take action. The centre is tabulating emissions reductions from the last two years and will report them as soon as they are available.

[English]

Going forward, we will update the emissions annually, and the data will include more departments and agencies, as well as an expanded scope of activities.

Drawing on the expertise of expert departments such as the National Research Council, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and Natural Resources Canada, the centre is providing guidance to departments on greening real property, fleet, and procurement. Departments are making progress in advancing energy efficiency and low-carbon projects. The largest federal emitter, for example, the Department of National Defence, published its energy and environment strategy and is purchasing renewable energy in Alberta. It's hiring energy managers for its major bases, purchasing energy performance contracts, and greening its administrative fleet.

[Translation]

The second-largest emitter, Public Services and Procurement Canada, is updating the heating and cooling plants that serve the Parliamentary Precinct and other federal buildings, working to make its office space and leases low-carbon and piloting a zero-carbon retrofit in one building.

[English]

By collaborating with the private sector and other stakeholders, the government will implement programs aimed at greening its operations and adopting green technologies, and it will mobilize federal employees to find new ways to reduce our environmental footprint.

Looking ahead, we'll continue reviewing the government's policies to strengthen greening and achieve its low-carbon goals.

[Translation]

The centre looks forward to continuing to work with government departments and agencies to do this.

[English]

Thank you for the opportunity to describe the work of the centre for greening government at the Treasury Board Secretariat and how that contributes to the government's efforts to achieve sustainable development.

[Translation]

I welcome your views, comments and questions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was very quick and it leaves more time for questions.

We'll start with Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Xenos, thank you so much for being here this morning. We appreciate it.

With proposed section 10.1, Treasury Board is added to the act. With Treasury Board being added to the act in this fashion, what advantage do you see as far as your being better able to enforce the criteria within the act is concerned?

Mr. Nick Xenos: On greening government, the act lays out a good framework and a good strategy forward. It's very clear on how we can work with departments and enforce that low-carbon government act. We've done many things.

First, we've tracked and reported emissions and made that public. The first thing is really important and the act has allowed us to do that.

Second, we're working with departments in a focused way on low-carbon government. The commitments and the strategy have been really clear and we're able to focus on and work with departments to accomplish those goals. We're able to look at the different administrative policies and instruments at Treasury Board to help on low-carbon government.

The proposed amendments also expand the number of departments. That's really helpful as well in terms of expanding the departments that will be reporting on low-carbon government.

• (1000)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Based on best practices from the previous level, what impact do you think you'll be able to have on these other departments that haven't fallen under this jurisdiction?

Mr. Nick Xenos: It will formalize their reporting and their actions and also open up the channels of communication on the guidance that we're going to provide. We connect them now with the expert departments, such as Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada, the National Research Council, and so on, so they're now involved. They've been doing various things to green their operations, but now it's going to be more formal. They'll need to report on it. They'll need to reach the targets, and so on.

Mr. Mike Bossio: The commissioner talked about, at a much broader level, being able to standardize the meaning of the STGs in particular. On your specific side, given that you have a mandate over the 90 departments in this specific area, is it your goal to standardize across departments how we can better achieve our carbon reductions?

Mr. Nick Xenos: The nice thing about looking at carbon, of course, is that it's very measurable. The committee will be happy to know that we can easily measure it and measure progress against it. Now that we'll have a larger set of departments reporting on it, it will formalize it, make it more standard and easier to understand the progress of each department, and so on.

Mr. Mike Bossio: You said there were two different round tables that you had organized. The second one brought together partners, business, and academia to learn from their experiences in greening procurement and adopting clean technologies.

What did you learn out of that exercise and that round table?

Mr. Nick Xenos: We learned several things. One is that there are many good solutions out there. We've seen that industry has a lot of solutions on which they can partner with us. I think also that what was made clear is that we need to go with our requirements as well. Departments are facing certain challenges to greening their operations, and the more we can crystalize these requests and go out to find solutions for them, the better. I think we have willing partners in Canadian industry, NGOs, etc.

There are also many different models out there for greening, so we learn from the best practices, from what various entities are doing. I think that was really helpful. Real property and fleet are really where most of our emissions come from, so we learned a lot, in terms of procurement of real property and fleet, about what's being done.

Mr. Mike Bossio: You said you had a number of administrative policies and instruments that you can utilize in greening operations. Can you describe some that you're using already and the impact they are having?

Mr. Nick Xenos: First is open data reporting transparency. Being able to make the Government of Canada's inventory of emissions public has been really helpful in tracking emissions. In terms of reporting and transparency, I think it's a really important one.

Treasury Board holds various administrative policies: the policy on real property, on fleet, on the investment plans. Departments come forward, of course, in major real property investments, which come forward to Treasury Board. We see the Treasury Board submissions on those. These are all policies and instruments that we can use.

Mr. Mike Bossio: What about enforcement, though, to ensure that we do go down the proper path? What are the different enforcement mechanisms that you have at hand to utilize?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Key to the enforcement side is, of course, that through all of these instruments, things come forward to Treasury Board. Whether it's an investment plan, proposals for particular projects, or expenditure authority for the projects, they have to come to the board. We can thus provide advice and work with departments to make sure they include a carbon lens.

Mr. Mike Bossio: If they don't, are you going to send them back to do a better job, or can you just say outright, that it's complete garbage and to come back?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Well, of course, Treasury Board is a committee of cabinet, so the board can make decisions, approve or not approve items, and we can provide advice to departments.

•(1005)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Before I question our witness, I want to clarify something Mr. Bossio said regarding sustainable development as a development concept. The Brundtland commission was very clear that poverty causes environmental degradation, which is why the concept of sustainable development was created in the document, "Our Common Future".

Mr. Xenos, you made the point that between 2005-06 and 2014-15, government greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 19%. Those dates, I notice, were under the Conservative government. I assume

you're measuring government greenhouse gas emissions on a yearly basis. Are they declining at the same rate from 2015 to the present?

Mr. Nick Xenos: We've requested the information from departments from the last two years and are tabulating that information now. We're going to come out with the results, I'm hoping, shortly. As soon as we have the results we're going to publish them.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, again, a 19% reduction is something that our government was very proud of.

Your definition of clean electricity, when saying you want the government to use 100% clean electricity, is basically electrical generation that minimizes the greenhouse gas emissions. Is that fair? By your definition, does nuclear energy count as clean electricity, given that it does not emit any greenhouse gases?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Currently, nuclear electricity, because it has low emissions of carbon, is included—Ontario's, for example, or New Brunswick's, etc.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Good. That's a nice clear answer. I appreciate it.

You talk about your remit as the centre for greening government, yet your only criteria for greening government and your only criteria as environmental indicators are greenhouse gas emissions. There are many other environmental factors out there. Does your remit include looking at water quality, for example?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Right now our focus, as you can see in the current FSDS, is really on carbon.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It's clearly misnamed, because when I look at issues such as water management, the work of the International Joint Commission, biodiversity, invasive species, federal government polices related to the management of fish stocks, shouldn't all those be under greening government?

Mr. Nick Xenos: One thing I will say is that the focus of the centre for greening government is really on government operations. We're focused on government buildings, government fleet, etc. Carbon is obviously the focus, as you see in the FSDS.

We are looking at water and waste and looking at exploring options in that area and at what we can do in other areas. Really, right now, as the current FSDS says, we're focused on low carbon, but of course we're very interested in greening operations overall, again looking at government operations, not—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, again, your organization, the centre for greening government, is clearly misnamed. It's not your fault, but this is clearly misleading.

I look at this as a biologist. I see the state of some of our fish stocks; those are directly related to the federal government's management of marine fisheries resources. I look at cross-border water management issues, which are clearly handled through the federal government under the International Joint Commission biodiversity conservation, for example, or the federal rules under the Species at Risk Act, which are not being followed in alternate energy developments, such as wind generation.

Can you explain why you have "greening government" in your name, yet huge swathes of what is the real environment are completely outside of your purview?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Again, the centre for greening government is focused on government operations: stuff we own and stuff we operate. When we talk about such things as fish stocks or species at risk, etc., the departments that have the mandate for those are the bodies that deliver on those things. We don't have the mandate or expertise to look at fish stocks or things beyond greening government operations.

It's really the government footprint. Other departments, of course.... Parliament has given the mandate to other ministers and departments. We respect that, of course.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Well, then the name should be the centre for green government buildings, because the name is misleading.

Again, this is not pejorative towards you, by any means.

Getting back to the notion of clean electricity, would you consider wind-generated electricity as clean since it doesn't emit greenhouse gases? Yet, given the species at risk—many bat and bird species suffer high mortality rates from wind turbines—how would you rate electricity generated by wind turbines, given their effect on endangered species?

Mr. Nick Xenos: We look at the overall target for the government in reducing emissions, etc. We don't assess particular projects or look at particular wind or solar projects or whatever. We're really focused on the overall goal of the government. Of course, departments as they move forward with their initiatives look at the particulars of each initiative.

•(1010)

The Chair: You're out of time, Mr. Sopuck.

Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan: This will be a first. I agree with the concerns Mr. Sopuck has raised.

I must say that I'm a little stunned to discover the narrowness with which Treasury Board is considering their job. Was it Treasury Board who drafted proposed section 10.1, saying that you do guidelines and environmental impact of operations, or was it Environment who drafted that?

Mr. Nick Xenos: In this legislation we worked with Environment Canada on that language.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Are you aware of the concerns raised by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, that the UN sustainable development goals that Canada signed on to go far beyond environmental impacts and that all entities, including senior ones—the Treasury Board and the PCO—should be

evaluating against environmental, economic, and socio-economic impacts?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Of course I'm aware of the commissioner's report.

Just to be clear, the centre for greening government is one part of the Treasury Board. Obviously, across Treasury Board, submissions are looked at in all aspects, whether economic, social, environment, or others, but our centre is really focused on greening government operations. There are many parts to Treasury Board Secretariat as well.

Concerning the commissioner's report on strategic environmental assessment, the commissioner recognized that TBS has in place guidance and tools on the SEA. But of course, more is needed; that was clear. Treasury Board thus committed to developing additional guidance for departments to confirm and give clear demonstration that the cabinet directive was considered. We agreed with the commissioner's recommendations.

Ms. Linda Duncan: I remain concerned that you are only being mandated to consider environmental impacts, which of course I guess would explain why only your office of greening government is sitting here. Are there other people in Treasury Board who are looking at the social and economic impacts of the sustainable development strategies?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Do you mean in the federal sustainable development strategy, or are you talking about the strategic environmental—?

Ms. Linda Duncan: —and departmental strategies.

Mr. Nick Xenos: The departmental strategies.

Of course, when the departmental strategies come forward, ministers come forward with their departmental strategy and report to Parliament on it. We, the centre for greening government, will look at the environmental aspects. We lead on this low-carbon government commitment, one of the—

Ms. Linda Duncan: What you're telling me, then, is that you are the point of contact when Treasury Board scrutinizes the federal strategy and the departmental strategies—you, the greening of government office?

Mr. Nick Xenos: I'm the point of contact for the low-carbon government goal.

Ms. Linda Duncan: When you scrutinize, are you only looking at reduction of carbon or are you looking at other factors?

Mr. Nick Xenos: My mandate is to look at the—

Ms. Linda Duncan: Do you mean Treasury Board?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Well, as the Treasury Board Secretariat, there's annual reporting that departments do, whether through the FSDS, whether through the departmental results plan, whether through the departmental plan. Obviously there's a much larger reporting function within Treasury Board that looks at annual reporting to Parliament by departments on their mandate across all these issues and areas. Whether Fisheries and Oceans is reporting on their mandate and what they do on oceans, etc., this is also involved in the broader reporting to Parliament process. So, again—

•(1015)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay. I'm not talking about reporting to Parliament.

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: You have reported here that you are with the centre for greening government in Treasury Board, and your sole mandate is to work towards reducing carbon; it is not beyond that. You don't look to impacts upon vulnerable persons, implications of toxins, biodiversity, equity. You only look at reducing carbon—

Mr. Nick Xenos: The mandate of—

Ms. Linda Duncan: —on the federal sustainable development strategy and the department sustainable development strategies.

Mr. Nick Xenos: I think as departments go forward with their strategies, there are lots of parts of Treasury Board that are involved in the different areas.

Ms. Linda Duncan: No, no, no, but that's—

Mr. Nick Xenos: Okay. I'm not sure I'm understanding the question.

Ms. Linda Duncan: You're going to issue guidelines. You are empowered...if this bill passes, Treasury Board will be empowered to issue the narrow guidelines on environmental impact. What I'm asking you is, is it your understanding that Treasury Board is going to only issue guidelines on your mandate, which is reducing carbon, or is it their intent to issue guidelines on all of the sustainable development goals?

Mr. Nick Xenos: I just want to clarify the difference. If you're talking about the cabinet directive on strategic environmental assessment, then—

Ms. Linda Duncan: No, I'm talking about your being given a new power under this bill to issue policies and directives related to—

Mr. Nick Xenos: —to greening government operations, yes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: No, related to environmental impacts, okay?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes.

Ms. Linda Duncan: So far you've told us that what you simply focus on is reducing greenhouse gases.

My question is, is it the intent of Treasury Board to issue broader guidelines and policies and directives on all areas related to sustainable development?

Mr. Nick Xenos: We can, as it says here, establish policies or directives applicable to the environment.

Ms. Linda Duncan: —to the environment, so not to across-the-table development?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes. We can thus go broader, to water and waste. We can—Treasury Board can....

Ms. Linda Duncan: —but only related to environment.

Mr. Nick Xenos: —to environment. That's what this says here. However, there are—

Ms. Linda Duncan: I just wanted to clarify.

Thank you.

The Chair: Next up is Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you, Mr. Xenos. I appreciate your testimony, and thank you for enlightening us on the nature and scope of the greening government operations outfit.

The previous witness, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, recommended that we “incorporate accountability for sustainable development results in the performance agreements of deputy heads”. It's my understanding, however, that Treasury Board can already do this and already does so. I wonder if it would not be more appropriate for Treasury Board, instead of entrenching in law a particular approach to human resources management, were to more appropriately house it within Treasury Board.

Mr. Nick Xenos: There are currently instruments for accountability of senior management within Treasury Board: the management accountability framework, MAF, and reporting to Parliament, etc. Those instruments can be and are used, and Treasury Board does use them in the different areas.

In terms of greening government operations, we have good interdepartmental discussions and work that we do with departments directly and through the existing reporting, whether it's through FSDS or other mechanisms. We have a pretty good relationship with those departments and a good way to get to those goals.

Treasury Board generally has various instruments dealing with senior personnel in different areas related to their accountabilities under the the different policies and administrative policies, etc.

Mr. William Amos: Are those made public? Is the public made aware of the superior or the inferior performance, as the case may be, of senior government officials in relation to the sustainable development performance of their departments?

Mr. Nick Xenos: For example, in terms of greening government operations, we have made public how each department is doing related to the goals in the low-carbon government. We have made that public. It's open and transparent.

Mr. William Amos: Okay.

Reviewing your testimony, you've indicated that one of your mandates is to drive results to meet the government's greening objectives. I note that the target was set to reduce GHG emissions of federally owned buildings and fleets by 40% below 2005 levels by 2030. Does the greening of government operations centre provide for department-by-department targets?

•(1020)

Mr. Nick Xenos: Ultimately, the 40% target is what each department should shoot for, so again, we've made public how each department has progressed against that target. Again, that's on the website and available.

We're asking all departments to hit that target, but you can also look at the distribution, if you will, of the emissions. There are a few departments that have much higher emissions than others, so there might be more cost-effective ways in certain departments, or other ways. There are a lot of ways we can get there, but ultimately every department should shoot for that target.

Mr. William Amos: I understand that. I just think it's much more challenging when there aren't very specific targets for each specific department to meet. Getting a check mark for going in the right direction is a little different from having a hard target that you did or didn't meet.

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes.

Mr. William Amos: Also, it makes it much more realistic, in my estimation, that the government will achieve its 40% reduction target if it specifically knows what reductions by each department are going to be achieved.

Do you not think the Canadian public would have greater confidence in the ability to achieve that target if there were department-by-department targets?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Sorry to be unclear, if I'm unclear, but each department's target is 40%.

Mr. William Amos: I see. Okay. That must make it very difficult for some departments and much....

Mr. Nick Xenos: We've seen the profile of the departments. We've been sitting down with the departments to look at an action plan to get there. We've encouraged departments to take a whole-of-department view. They should look at all of their assets, look at their investment plan going forward, and assess where the opportunities are to get to the 40%.

We've had good progress to date, I think. We're working with each department because each department has a particular situation, a particular case, and particular kinds of assets and operations. We are working with each one, though, to address that and to try to bring a solution set that's tailored to that department.

Mr. William Amos: Okay.

Does your centre for greening government operations have the human resources necessary to follow through on this major task?

Mr. Nick Xenos: We've been resourced and set up by Treasury Board, so we are well set up, I think, to do what we are doing right now.

Mr. William Amos: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Xenos. Since you speak French well, you will be able to correct me in my language.

Mr. Xenos, before continuing, I would like to understand the figures you quoted in your opening statement. You spoke of a drop of 19% in 2014-15 as compared to 2005-06. You were talking about

government greenhouse gas emissions, and not about Canada as a whole?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes, the government's greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Joël Godin: Fine.

Your objective for 2030 is 40%, if I understood correctly. That means that from 2005 to 2014, there was a 19% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the various departments. The work was well done over the nine-year period. Now you say that the target for 2005 to 2030, so for a 25-year period, is 40%, which means that we have reached the halfway point. Is that correct?

At the national level, you spoke of a 30% reduction from 2005 to 2030. I would like this to be clear, so that we understand each other well and can show that the previous government did good work. Now the centre which was created in 2016 is there to do the follow-up, coordination and research.

Mr. Xenos, with all due respect, I would like to know what the value added is for Canadian taxpayers here. Good work was done in the past, and we are adding a structure to do the follow-up, coordination and research.

Once again, there is nothing concrete. There is nothing that will allow us to reach our objectives faster, which would be desirable. Personally, I am not convinced that this centre will allow us to attain our objectives. Isn't it just an additional administrative structure that will make it harder to reach the objective?

Earlier, the commissioner was here with us. Everyone has the same objective, which is to reduce greenhouse gases, improve our planet, do sustainable development and respect the environment.

But what will this additional structure add to that?

● (1025)

Mr. Nick Xenos: Thank you.

I will begin by providing a few concrete examples.

First, our centre is responsible for the inventory of greenhouse gases emitted by government operations. We address the requests to the departments and develop the definitions, protocols, methodology and so on, in line with all international standards. We are the ones who ask the departments for their inventory, we tabulate the information and publish it. The centre manages all of that to report on our progress in meeting the target.

Secondly, since we have the inventory and the data, we can do an analysis to see exactly where in the departments there are opportunities to reduce greenhouse gases in a more cost-effective manner. We can see where these opportunities are. We can also coordinate activities such as the purchase of electricity. We can gather the right people so that they can coordinate things the government could do better, and see where there are more economies of scale, rather than proceeding one department at a time. Those are a few examples.

In addition, we can bring together the departments that are experts and make sure that we work with them and the client departments—if I can call them that—that have less expertise, but manage a lot of properties, in order to accelerate the adoption of best practices, and the implementation and attainment of the target.

Since we are also at Treasury Board, we can also analyze recommendations and adjust policies that are directly related to greenhouse gases. I am speaking here in particular of policies related to our car fleet or to real estate, for instance. This gives us the opportunity to examine Treasury Board tools at the administrative level and at the government operational level, from the angle of reducing greenhouse gases. Those are a few examples of what we do.

Mr. Joël Godin: In fact, I understand—

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: What was done previously to achieve the 19% results?

[*English*]

The Chair: Quickly, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nick Xenos: There have to be more analyses, and departmental expertise on the issue has to be compiled. In this way, we can adopt best practices and have a more solid inventory.

[*English*]

The Chair: Sometimes it's that low-hanging fruit. It's easy to get in the beginning and then much harder to get later on.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Bossio is taking the first part of my time.

The Chair: Okay, you guys, work it out. You have six minutes.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Could you tell me when we have two and a half minutes left, please, Madam Chair?

The Chair: I'll let you know.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I want to follow up on Ms. Duncan's line of questioning around proposed section 10.1 and the focus on the environment. Are there other mechanisms and instruments under the purview of Treasury Board that it can utilize to ensure that government achieves its international SDG commitments?

• (1030)

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes. Across Treasury Board, there are many instruments. Treasury Board is the management board for the Government of Canada. It's the cabinet committee that looks at all those issues such as expenditure analysis and the expenditure authority that departments look for. Treasury Board is the employer for the Government of Canada.

Treasury Board looks at all Treasury Board submissions on all programs and projects, so of course Treasury Board has a broad mandate in that sense and can use all those instruments across that board.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Does it use them?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes, it uses those instruments across the board in different areas to ensure departments are delivering on their mandates and—

Mr. Mike Bossio: Their commitments?

Mr. Nick Xenos: —their commitments.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Including the SDG commitments?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Including the SDG commitments.

Mr. Mike Bossio: How does the Treasury Board itself fare when it comes to meeting the FSDS targets?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Treasury Board also has an annual departmental sustainable development strategy. In there, it reports against all of the targets. I don't know that it's for me to say if it's a good job or not. I think it's probably more for this committee and the commissioner. I'll leave you to make that judgment.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Okay.

How far has the Treasury Board itself come to greening its own operations?

Mr. Nick Xenos: As we are at Treasury Board, we of course want to focus on greening Treasury Board's operations as well. We've created a TBS-Finance green network—we're in the same building—within Treasury Board, so we are looking at different ways in which we can green our own operations.

Really, Treasury Board is just leasing two buildings that are owned by Public Works. Our footprint is relatively limited. It's a small department, but of course we're looking across the board at working with employees, looking at fleets, and looking at tenant behaviour in our buildings. We, our headquarters, are in a LEED gold building. There is composting and good waste diversion. It's a water-efficient building.

I think there are a lot of things that we're implementing within Treasury Board as well.

Mr. Mike Bossio: The final thing I want to point out is the 19% reduction that you talked about. Is that on the previous 26 departments? Now we're actually going to be dealing with 90 departments. Is that right?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Really, then, that 19% number didn't represent all of government. It represented 26 departments, or just under a quarter.

Mr. Nick Xenos: The 19% represents 15 departments, the 15 major departments. With the proposed amendments, we would expand that to cover more departments.

Mr. Mike Bossio: There's a lot of work to do.

Mr. Nick Xenos: There's a lot more work to do, but we do know what the other major departments are. They've been working in various areas, of course, but there's still work to do to get to the 40, for sure, yes.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Once again, thank you so much, Mr. Xenos.

The Chair: Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: In your testimony, you make a comment about the second-largest emitter, PSPC, “working to make its office space and leases low-carbon and piloting a zero carbon retrofit”. That jumped out at me. We recently finished a study on built heritage. One of the suggestions was that we look at incorporating in built heritage some heritage-friendly building policies in PSPC and making it a “heritage first” kind of procurement strategy.

As we look at amendments for this act, I'm curious about where we stand now. When you make comments about working towards making office space and leases low carbon, how does heritage fit into it? Are we there already? Do we have the tools necessary to make those kinds of considerations, or do we need to be more explicit in this legislation on how to encourage agencies, departments, and Treasury Board in putting heritage first in its policies and actions?

Mr. Nick Xenos: In terms of the heritage and greening, for example, those heritage buildings pose a particular challenge, of course, because their heritage aspect is really important, and of course we'd want to preserve that as much as we can. I think the heritage of the Parliament Buildings and of a lot of the things the government owns is critical, and I don't think we want to take anything away from that.

On the other hand, for heritage buildings, as they're older, you can go hand in hand to protect heritage and lower your energy requirements for those buildings. Often, they're quite old, and just a general refurbishment of the buildings or a retrofit keeping their heritage character will get you a lot of carbon emissions savings. Upgrading the water and those facilities will get you a much greener building in the end. I think it's very consistent. I think you can do both.

In terms of the greening government part, we have instruments. In terms of the broader heritage components, my counterpart Ms. Kathleen Owens was here on October 19, and she spoke at length on the heritage considerations. I would defer to her. She would be the expert in that area of heritage and real property. In terms of greening, I think we're okay.

• (1035)

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

Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In the Federal Sustainable Development Act, there is no word for the term “greening”. Where do you get this definition? What is greening? What's your definition?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Of the centre for greening government?

Mr. Martin Shields: No, the word “greening”.

Mr. Nick Xenos: Well, in terms of the centre for greening government, our mandate, of course—

Mr. Martin Shields: No. I'm looking for the definition of that word.

Mr. Nick Xenos: For the word “greening”, I would—

Mr. Martin Shields: You're throwing it around here, and it's not in this document. Where's the definition for that word?

Mr. Nick Xenos: We're using it in the environmental sense.

Mr. Martin Shields: Which means...? Words mean things. Sometimes they're really important.

You throw that word around. What does it mean? You have no definition for the word “greening”.

Mr. Nick Xenos: We're using it in terms of looking at the environmental impacts of government operations and in terms of focusing, we're looking at carbon, but we're also thinking more broadly than that. But it's not—

Mr. Martin Shields: From my point of view, if you're talking about the public, people, parliamentarians, and a broad understanding, I think you need a definition for that word, because it's not in this document that we did. There's no definition of the word “greening”. If you're from Saskatchewan, it means the Saskatchewan Roughriders—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Martin Shields: —and we all bleed green, right? I'm not from Saskatchewan, so....

Words mean things. Without that clear definition, I think it leads to some confusion about what actually it is that you're doing. That would be an encouragement on my part.

When you talked about doing workshops, you said that you did two round tables, one with staff. Can you describe the length of this, where it occurred, and who was involved?

Mr. Nick Xenos: Yes. We held a round table here in Ottawa, because we started with staff in the Ottawa capital region. We had a morning session here in Ottawa. We looked at ideas to mobilize employees on environmental issues in government operations.

Mr. Martin Shields: What level of staff was there?

Mr. Nick Xenos: What level in terms of how senior or in terms of how many?

Mr. Martin Shields: Both.

Mr. Nick Xenos: I think we had 50 or 60 people there from all levels.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay. If you're talking about the grassroots level, we just heard the commissioner talk about how people can pick off easy little things and go back and say that they did green things, right? Are you going to do follow-up? Are you going to work at the grassroots level with staffing?

Mr. Nick Xenos: With staff at all levels? Is that what you're asking?

Mr. Martin Shields: Yes.

Mr. Nick Xenos: A lot of staff have a real big interest, of course, in environmental issues. What we've found is that they're really committed and really interested, so we're tapping into that network, that grassroots network of staff who are really keen on greening, and asking how we enable them to do that, and not with central command and control. How we enable and give tools to staff to green in their area of responsibilities inside their areas is I think what we're looking at, for sure.

Mr. Martin Shields: On that one session you've had, if I'm developing something that I want grassroots staff in on from top to bottom, unless they have a lot more input and a lot more working together, I'm guessing your buy-in is not there. I would encourage a much stronger approach with the grassroots, or you're getting superficial....

Mr. Nick Xenos: Okay.

Mr. Martin Shields: When you talked about the second, you talked about your partners out there and some excellent things that you found.

Can you give some examples of the innovation that you found?

• (1040)

Mr. Nick Xenos: Sorry, in talking with our partners, for example?

Mr. Martin Shields: Yes.

Mr. Nick Xenos: For example, the Canada Green Building Council has come out with a net zero standard for buildings. They've defined what a net zero carbon building would look like, and they've piloted it with 16 partners across the country. One of those buildings is a Public Services and Procurement Canada building in Toronto.

We're looking at those 16 buildings and seeing what they've done and how they're reducing their carbon and getting to net zero carbon in terms of their building. That's a good example of where we're looking at the construction industry and partners that are doing good things.

Mr. Martin Shields: Have you partnered with the municipalities, with the regulations that they're looking at and attempting to do?

Mr. Nick Xenos: I co-chair, with B.C., a federal-provincial-territorial community practice. We're working with the provinces, because of course they're looking to green their operations as well.

I've also talked to various NGOs that work with municipalities to get a sense of what municipalities are doing. I'm always very interested in best practices and examples of what municipalities are doing.

Mr. Martin Shields: They've often been the leader in this in the country. They've done a lot of work. If you can connect into that, I think there's some leadership that has been done municipally that you can translate from, so that would be good.

Mr. Martin Shields: The commissioner said that we need leadership from Treasury Board on developing the report cards, the buckets, for them to be able to report on. She's looking for leadership from Treasury Board to give them some standardization and timelines that work to make this make sense.

Is that something you're working on?

Mr. Nick Xenos: I noted her testimony here. I was here and listening.

Definitely I think if we can standardize things and make it clear on how folks can report, that would be a good thing.

Mr. Martin Shields: Great, thank you.

The Chair: Yes, and bringing it at the same time, so that you can bundle it up and we can be effective in the review.

Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Chair, I'll be quick, because I think I'm going to pass my time to Mr. Bossio when I'm done.

We talk about greening government services all the time. I speak about greening government services because I think we need to show some leadership from here.

I'm happy with the success that the country has had with the 19% reduction. Regardless of who was at the helm when this happened, I think this is great. A 19% reduction over 10 years is good, but there's a lot of work to do.

I'd like to focus on your comments about the single-window access to tracking information about the government's GHG emissions. I think Canadians want to know about these success stories, and I don't think we're telling the story well enough.

With regard to Canada.ca, direct us on exactly how we would be able to go in on a regular basis, if someone is sitting at home and wants to do a checkup on our report card.

Mr. Nick Xenos: Sure, we can send a link to the committee of the exact website, if that would be helpful.

The Chair: I think what he's getting at is that unless you have insider trading, how would you be able to find it? How do you make it easily accessible?

Mr. Darren Fisher: We never do a great job of disseminating information.

An environmental lawyer can go in and find this stuff very easily, but for someone who's surfing Facebook, what's the easiest way to keep tabs on the government to see the successes?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Or failures.

Mr. Nick Xenos: Ultimately you can just google "Government of Canada greenhouse gas inventory", and it will lead you right there.

I agree with you that dissemination is a key area in which we can always do better. We have put up infographics to make it simpler and clearer on summarizing the data. We've done very clear infographics at a high level, and then we've tweeted the results and used social media. We've also posted the actual data—the inventory of data by department, by province, by year—so that Canadians who wish to can go even deeper into the data and find out exactly how departments are doing and where.

We've tried to span that communication side from high-level infographics to the data sheets of the data, if you will, and used social media to get it out.

Of course, I'm happy to take ideas on how to do better.

• (1045)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Well, I think it's great to say 19%, but I think Canadians want to know whether we are retrofitting our older buildings, putting on solar panels, those types of things, "this is what the Government of Canada is doing to green government services." It's sending a message to industry that this is what we're doing, starting at the top and showing some corporate leadership.

I'll pass any remaining time on to Mike.

The Chair: You're out of time. There is no time to pass on to Mike.

I'm looking at the clock on the wall over there and it's quarter to, unless the committee is willing to go for another minute to let him have a question.

Okay, I see acceptance here.

Go ahead, Mike, but make it quick, please.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I just want to get a confirmation.

I discussed with you earlier about proposed section 10.1 and the environment, and whether there are other mechanisms and instruments within the purview that TB can use to ensure we're meeting our commitments.

On the FSDA, in a sense does this enable a central agency department to be able to hold departments accountable to ensure that we meet those sustainable development goals outlined in that FSDA, those international commitments?

Mr. Nick Xenos: I think it's a very useful tool for Treasury Board to use, as collectively departments will create it, report on it, and report on it individually. I think it's very helpful for Treasury Board

to see those reports and to cross-reference that with Treasury Board submissions, or other expenditure reviews or expenditure authorities and things like that.

To me, it's a very helpful and useful information tool for Treasury Board.

The Chair: We're going to have to stop it at that. I know we have a lot more questions, but we're out of time.

Mr. Mike Bossio: That's good. Thank you.

The Chair: We are going to go to clause-by-clause on Thursday.

Everybody has to have their recommended amendments in by four o'clock tonight. I had hoped we would have more of them in earlier so that we could all have a look at them ahead of time, but it looks like we're down to the wire.

On Thursday we start at 8:45 on clause-by-clause. Please get your amendments in by four o'clock tonight. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <http://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.noscommunes.ca>