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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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• (1305)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): I'd like to convene the subcommittee meeting if I can.

There is something in front of us that I believe needs to be done in camera. There's a discussion that needs to happen in camera.

Do I have agreement from the subcommittee to go in camera? You don't know what it's about but please trust me that it needs to go in camera.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I need everyone to leave the room. I'm sorry. We're going in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

• (1300)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1305)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

The Chair: Thank you very much to all of you who brought forward witnesses so that we could have a sense of how many witnesses may be coming forward, which will help us schedule. I do need to say that we did not get as many as I thought we might get on climate change. I know that was one of the topics where we didn't get too many.

I'd like to make sure I have the agreement from the subcommittee that we can have more time and that we don't make it strict that these are the witnesses and no more will be entertained. I'd like agreement that, ongoing, throughout the work of the committee, we can add witnesses as we go.

Is everybody comfortable with that approach? Obviously we want to have some rigour, but we may be made aware of somebody as we move along, and I don't want the witness list to be so strict that if you're not in the hopper now then you're not getting to come before us. Is everybody okay with that approach? Okay, great.

We had a couple of motions that came forward, talking about different approaches on how we may proceed. I wanted to have a quick discussion before we actually get into that, to just get an understanding from the committee. I know some of the comments before, when we talked about spending a little bit of time on the SDGs, was that it really wasn't valuable, it wasn't really working,

you didn't see it to be an important tool, and you didn't want to spend a lot of time on it. I kind of got that sense.

I saw the benefit and the value in that if we changed the way the act was done and the strategy was right, it could actually be a very powerful tool. I wanted to see if this discussion today generated a bit of interest in the committee to not just give it a cursory look, but to spend a little bit of time while it is in front of us. I know it means that there will be a little bit of difference in the order in which we had agreed we would move forward, but the CEPA is under way and we will continue to move that one forward. I do think that we want to move the other one along as well and I'm intending to do that with my suggestion that I had sent out to everybody before.

I'll open the discussion. Do we feel comfortable spending a little bit of time in April just wrestling this one to the ground so we can come back with some suggestions to improve the legislation?

Mr. Cullen.

• (1310)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): My feeling was never that it was useless, just that the tools employed were not that good. What I got out of today was three or four suggestions, and I think other committee members tweaked on them, that if it were housed here potentially or if included this measure or “measurables” as was talked about earlier... The question is only hard for me because I don't know the context.

Ultimately we need a proposed calendar with two here, one there, three there, four there—

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: —and that negotiation. But when you just say “more time”, it's easy to say yes to but I don't know what I'm giving up.

The Chair: No, I think we'll work through the details of what might work as a game plan for going forward. I just wanted to make sure that...

We had originally said that we would do CEPA, we would do the

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Protected areas.

The Chair: —protected areas, and then we would do the SDGs. Then the minister sent it over to us for a review because she set a deadline in April. As you heard, they're already doing consultations around the country and she wanted to have our input. That's on the strategy. I had thrown in a bit about the act, and that's why we had people coming today talking a little bit more about the act because I think it's not just the strategy that we want to report on. It may also be the act and that's what we heard today.

We'll go through the days and what we think might work, but I wanted to get the understanding that the priorities that we chose—two in concert and then three—might need to be relooked at because if we do the SDGs, then they'll be coming in on top of the other two.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: If that's the specific question, I don't feel dramatically moved after today. There is benefit. I worry about the rabbit warren of holes in the federal bureaucracy that one can slip down for months and years potentially. It's a very complicated, interesting, yet “in the weeds” type of discussion.

I pulled three or four things that I thought would be useful to pass on to the government as they're doing their public consultation, and those were the actors that you'd want to talk to. I mean those were the people at IISD, the environment commissioner, the former environment commissioner, the author of the bill for the act, the department....

The Chair: No, it was great. We had really good people today.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Eglinski, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): We got some very good information today, but I think things could be repaired quite quickly. They came up with a couple of suggestions that wouldn't be difficult to do, so I don't think we need to spend a lot more time on it. To tell you honestly, I think we have a good picture. I think everybody got a pretty good picture today of where the problem is, and it is easily repairable. I don't know if we need to do that or if it just has to be referred out on a report.

I am concerned that we have limited time and there are some areas of great concern to us. Conservation is one of those and we want to make sure we give time to that.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): My question was simply whether you have a proposal—

The Chair: I do.

Mr. John Aldag: Are you going to give that to us and what would that reordering and the reallocation of time look like?

The Chair: I sent an email out to everybody on March 8. That was before our previous meetings and I'm still sitting with that in front of me. We changed the March 22 meeting to the SDGs, to give people a sense of what the potential might be for discussions. This was focused on the act. We didn't get into the strategy at all. If you look at the strategy, there are some things where, having now had the opportunity of a week immersed in SDGs with the Commonwealth parliamentarians, I see an opportunity. We might want to add something to her SDGs to focus it.

In discussion, we may want to suggest that, but that's something that we would have to explore in a committee. I could write my own comments to her, but I think we could explore making sure that the ones that have been brought forward are the ones that we are comfortable with and that they're going to meet the intent of where we want to have things go.

Here's what I was thinking. We might need a little bit of time just to look at the strategy, even if it's one meeting, one meeting to focus on the strategy and maybe one more meeting to refine a little bit of what we heard today and how we may consider those changes a little bit more deeply around what was put forward in terms of the act to make it stronger. That means at least two more meetings, so let's go through what—

Do you have that in front of you?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: Okay, my apologies then.

We are finished in March with the Minister, her mandate, and the main estimates coming on Thursday. We have the 12th, the 14th, the 19th, and the 21st in April. We have to report back anything that we're going to send.... Well, we're being asked to report back on the strategy by the 24th, so we have four possible meetings where we could have these discussions. I would like to at least have two of those weeks to discuss, first, more details in the act so that we have an understanding of what we would like to propose in terms of changes, and second, in terms of the strategy, where we could have a little bit of delving into the direction that she's taking, the focus that she's come in with for the strategy, and any comments we want to make on that.

That's two meetings to cover the federal sustainable development strategy in April. I had four. As you said, I don't think it needs to be going down a rabbit hole or a rabbit warren. We just need to flesh out those comments so we can have them come back. One of those meetings will need to be covering the report that we send in. Our help here will put together our report and then we will need to accept that report in the meeting. We probably don't need to have the whole meeting.

The report has to be written so we can't just expect that to happen within the week. The staff are going to need a little bit of time to make that happen. If we had the two earlier meetings, April 12 and 14, it doesn't give them much time but we could potentially have something to assess on the 21st and then submit in time for the 24th. That's what I'm trying to do.

Go ahead, Mr. Amos.

●(1315)

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): I agree with Mr. Cullen to the extent that I don't think we want to spend more time than we have to on this. I think we're all quite ambitious in terms of what we want to achieve with our time.

I just want to make sure that there's enough time to discuss not just a response to the strategy that has been proposed and that we've agreed to comment on.... I think what today's discussion started to reveal, and I think this goes to Mr. Cullen's earlier desire to focus on climate as a matter of priority, is that the Federal Sustainable Development Act can achieve more for climate and we can do more by recommending, if the committee agrees, that certain specific measures be taken to ensure that the federal House is in order in regard to climate considerations in its operations.

I think we might need at least a meeting to talk about specific provisions we would want to see in an amended FSDA.

The Chair: I identified four meetings, because I had talked with the commissioner and others to figure out how much time would be reasonable to get it done well but not necessarily bury ourselves in the deep blue sea. I came up with four sessions to do that.

Are you agreeing with that or not? Did you agree that we needed a little bit more time than the two sessions? I was trying to follow what you were saying, and I think that I didn't get clarity.

• (1320)

Mr. William Amos: I think that what we need to do is to ensure that we have time. You've identified a particular witness we want to listen to. I think that we just need to make sure that we have time to actually discuss specific legislative changes as a group.

I don't know if that takes one meeting. If we come prepared and there are specific proposals on the table before we get to the meeting, we're going to be a lot faster. If there aren't and all of a sudden we're confronted with language we've never seen before and we're trying to review at that time, we're going to be a lot slower.

The Chair: Yes, it's not going to work.

Mr. William Amos: As long as we have a process that ensures that specific suggestions for either proposed legislative reform or regulatory additions.... As long as we come prepared, I think we can get it done quickly.

The Chair: Let me make a suggestion. If we're going to do this, we have witnesses on the strategy and we'll just hash that out a bit in one of our sessions. It's up to us whether we think in half a meeting we could.... If we want to hear from anybody else about the legislative changes that may be proposed in the act and we give drafting instructions.... Which way are we going?

We heard some good suggestions about which way we might want to be going, but I think that it needs to be fleshed out a little bit with a discussion, for example, through drafting some instructions to our analysts for drafting our response for the minister in terms of making those changes. I'm thinking that the 12th and the 14th could be used: one for the strategy and the other to flesh out and do some drafting instructions for the act. I'm open. I put down four. I'm trying to get to two. From what I'm hearing, I'm not even sure I have agreement on two, so I'm not sure—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I might be in a foul mood today, but I'm very frustrated with the process at this point.

The Chair: Okay, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: While I appreciate Will suggesting that we could crank climate change into this and perhaps get something out

of it, I'm going back to what the committee agreed to. We passed it weeks ago.

While I appreciate the enthusiasm for sustainable development goals and strategies, and the conversation that we just had, I look at your March 8 proposal to us and the thing that we agreed to unanimously as a committee around climate change isn't there at all.

The Chair: Exactly.

Mr. William Amos: It's entirely built into the FSD review.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: No. Look, if it were, it would have been done already.

Mr. William Amos: Can you please read it to me, though? I'm convinced. I know I wrote it in there.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I can see “improving the effectiveness and implementation” in the motion right now .

We also heard today that a true FSD and sustainable development goals could include things like culture, language, and heritage. There are 169 different measurements on SDGs right now, of which climate may be fewer than half a dozen. It's hardly a climate change strategy and it's not the mechanism that the federal government is proposing to deal with climate change, according to the minister and the interprovincial conversations. It excludes the provincial elements. It excludes the economic aspects of the motion that this committee agreed to pass, and passed unanimously.

My frustration is that it's fine to say you suggested four and now you're willing to go down to two, but I'm saying, wait a second, this is not what we agreed to as a committee. What we agreed to was something entirely different.

Where I get frustrated is that we're on our eighth meeting today without a calendar. It's challenging, and the longer this goes.... It feels like we made some good working concessions at that meeting when we looked at different motions and tried to incorporate. I incorporated some of the Conservatives'. Mr. Amos and the Liberals huddled and reincorporated other things rather than vote against a motion to study climate change, and now we're trying to wed that motion that we voted for into another thing entirely.

I'm saying that SDGs, sustainable development goals, may be an aspect of the climate change conversation, but the largest conversation in this country dealing with the environment—and it's the new name of the department—is climate change. I am flummoxed and confused as to why it's taken so long to agree to the elephant in the room for this country, which is how we're going to meet climate change goals.

Do you understand my frustration?

The Chair: I don't think we're all on the same page. I really don't.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's probably true.

The Chair: What I'm attempting to do here is to exactly get to what you're trying to do, which is, let's make an impact on climate change. What tools do we have in the federal government to do that?

I realized that SDGs could be a very effective tool if there's an appropriate act, if there are appropriate measures, and if there are appropriate performance measures and accountability. I realized that we could have a powerful tool to effect results on climate change.

It was not on the original list; it was fourth. I thought this was an opportunity...and not to jump ahead of the other two. I want those other two to move ahead, as we agreed. But through the SDGs, if we do it right and we spend just a little bit of time on it...

Although we intended to go a certain way with the committee, I don't think we ever intended to close down our committee to something that might come at us from the minister or from somewhere else. I mean, the minister has asked us. We're not driven by the minister. But I saw an opportunity to see this process affect the impact and have movement on climate change.

That's why I'm kind of surprised, because your motion brought climate change up to a higher level in what we had agreed, and I thought, okay, this—SDGs—does that.

•(1325)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: My argument is that it absolutely doesn't, because if it were to, then in the reports coming out of the environment minister's office, SDGs would be the vehicle that would be implemented through the provinces' discussions. It ignores entirely the motion we incorporated in from the Conservatives around clean technology.

Then there's the private sector. SDGs are entirely about the workings of government—the procurement of government, the policies, whether ministers are being briefed properly when they're reviewing policies on climate change. That's all well and good. I'm not disparaging that. But to try incorporate it in and say that this is a replacement or an additive, I'm telling you, from my experience around this place, it isn't a replacement; absolutely not. It ignores the concessions the opposition made with respect to the clean energy industry. It ignores provincial, municipal, and first nations efforts with respect to achieving our goals, which is acknowledged by everybody to be critical to the federal efforts to meet those targets.

While I appreciate the effort to try to make the two things work or to bring it up in a different way, my implicit direction back is that it doesn't; absolutely not. I'm an open-ended guy, and of course I don't think things are built in concrete, but I'm eight or nine meetings into this committee without a calendar and frustrated. We've proposed calendars. We've gone around and gone around. Now there's a suggestion suddenly on SDGs.

We don't work for the minister. The minister has asked for advice. We had a day on which we heard from the leading people in this country about this thing. We heard three or four recommendations that the analysts can give back to us, and we can sign off or not. But going two, three, or four meetings into this thing is another conversation that's been plunked into this committee that the committee did not contemplate when we first put our calendar together.

Mr. William Amos: Madam Chair, could I make a comment, please?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

I agree with Mr. Cullen to the extent that it would not be fair for us to try to take the climate change work that we agreed to do and fit it into the FSDA work, which we also agreed to do. I don't think that's the suggestion.

You correctly articulated that in the FSDA stuff, there are no SDGs in this. It's just a sustainable development strategy. We agreed to do FSDA stuff. It clearly indicates in the resolution that was passed that we will assess the FSDA with a view to improving the effectiveness and implementation of legislation to ensure accountability of federal institutions, and that this may include integration of climate change considerations at all levels of federal decision-making.

There was a specific focus on climate, but that's not to take away from the other resolution passed. It's simply to say that we agreed to focus on climate considerations in the FSDA, in reviewing the FSDA. These are both great climate conversations to have.

I agree we need a calendar. We will get to a calendar.

The Chair: We're trying to get to one.

Mr. William Amos: I don't think there's any competition here. All we're doing right now is suggesting that there are some major gains to be achieved on climate accountability, to bind this government and future governments so that the operations, policies, and programs are rendered so that the footprint is lessened. If we're able to achieve a series of legislative and regulatory recommendations following the FSDA that will help ratchet up federal obligations, and that will show a way forward for other governments to improve the measurability, say, of climate outcomes in relation to government operations, that's great. I think we have the power to do that. What we don't have the power to do....

We'll see how this plays out in the resolution you've proposed and the work we do in relation to that motion, which I look forward to doing.

We will see how much we're really able to influence those processes, whether it's clean technology or intergovernmental matters; I think our ability to influence will be less. But I think if we present to the government a series of recommendations that says we want the FSDA to be changed in this way and that way, we can have a major impact on probably the most significant actor in the climate question in the country.

•(1330)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: The concern we have is that SDGs are mentioned in the motion as the second item, unless I'm reading a motion that was further changed.

Mr. William Amos: It says, "may include".

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Well, they all say, “may include”.

Mr. William Amos: I guess what I would propose is that we place our focus on the climate aspects of the FSDA.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. William Amos: That's what I suggested to the witnesses, and that would be my approach going forward as well.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Perhaps, but what I have to deal with is that I have the former commissioner saying there are 197 different measurements of SDGs, which is true—

The Chair: Yes, but on SDGs, there are 17, right? There are 17 and then it works down.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There are 17, and exactly how many of those deal with climate?

The Chair: A few.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's the test that I deal with. My concern right now is our national targets and how we're going to get there. That's a very fair question for all members on all sides of the House to be asking. I very much appreciate the efforts, or the adaptation efforts, if we can use that term, to try to get some things done, but if you then say....

Environment Canada does report on these measurabilities right now, on what kind of climate outcomes and GHG outcomes are happening—badly, but they do.

The Chair: Badly.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes, but in terms of the reporting mechanisms you're talking about right now, this is a heavily government-focused, bureaucratic motion that we're dealing with. I'm suggesting that there's a pile of people banging on our doors right now who may be at that provincial-federal table but probably aren't, frankly. This includes first nations, by the way, that didn't have a great experience in Vancouver. They're saying they need to be inputting into this thing somewhere, and they think our committee will be wonderful. It also includes the clean technology sector, which has left this country...and so on. I can make my arguments for it.

This is where I'm curious. It's sort of like a renegotiation of a negotiation that we completed. In that first negotiation we had, the Conservatives had this idea around looking at the clean tech sector. We said, okay, and conceded to adapt that into the climate change study. I won't speak for my Conservative colleagues, but it's an unusual place to go—

The Chair: But that's fourth on the list. From what we agreed, it was fourth on the list.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right, and in the first calendar I was sent, it was said that we might get to that fourth item maybe by the fall.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Do you understand, then, that I sit back and say that the opposition parties have tried to make some concessions, agreed to this timetable, and we're going to then spend all of these meetings, including four extra meetings, on a topic that we didn't contemplate before simply because the minister asked for some consultation from committee?

That is to say, if the minister gets up tomorrow morning and asks us for another consultation process, we'll spend another few meetings on that as well. That is a bad way for the committee to work, because it's beck-and-call time, and we're obviously not that.

The Chair: I had entertained bringing climate change up into June. I didn't do it, because I was still trying to figure out what we're going to do. It doesn't have to be in the fall. We do want to continue making progress on the ones ahead. You don't seem to see the opportunity that I do to have an impact on climate change with the sustainable development strategy and the changes to the act. I think you do see it but you still feel that it's.... I think you heard the discussion there that they felt they had to bring it down to within the purview of the departments to have it approved. That wasn't the original mandate or intent when they brought this forward, which was about what the federal government could do to have impact across the full spectrum.

Our commissioner mentioned how powerful it would be if you applied this to the budget, which many departments do not. There's so much we need to do. It's a small step but it's a fairly significant step if we can get changes to the act that give it teeth, that make sure it's applied and that it's applied more broadly. It doesn't have to just say “make sure we reduce the paper in that department”. It's one of those decisions the department is making on the broader environment of Canada that can have significant impacts on the environment. That's what I see.

When I see what we have the ability to change.... Maybe because you've been in government longer than I have, you feel that this thing has been on the books for a long time and it hasn't really gotten any legs and teeth and it really isn't where we need to spend some time. I get it. I get the perspective. Maybe I have hope because I only just got here.

I am hopeful that we can give it legs and that we can make it useful. It's a powerful piece of legislation, and it's something that other governments around the world, other parliamentarians, are struggling with—making sustainable government, sustainable development goals that are now embedded for the first time in this sustainable development strategy. How do we give it teeth? How do we make it work? I'm seeing that as an opportunity to further your fourth goal, which is how we make this committee have an effect on climate change.

I don't know what else to say, but I do know that at some point today, we better wrap it up, because we're going to have to get to how many days we are going to give to these different topics. If we go back to not spending any more time on the federal sustainable development strategy, whether one or two or none, and we just leave it and wait until we finish with these other two tasks, protected areas and CEPA, then we will miss an opportunity. That's what I see, and I want to make sure we don't do that if we can avoid it.

Go ahead, Mr. Eglinski.

•(1335)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I thought that at the last session we had here, we all agreed, whether formally or informally, that we would hold two sessions and we would look at it. We've held one. Now you come back today and you want to add another three.

The Chair: No, I had sent this to you guys back on March 8 before we started to actually figure out the schedule, so it's not that I'm changing it. I put out there very early on what I thought we wanted to do following on Nathan's motion on the 9th.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Okay. I think that we can work and have another session. I think it would be very worthwhile. I think this is a very excellent topic to deal with.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I'm prepared to go on to the 14th for half a day, and if we need to stretch it, we'll stretch it. But I think we can do due diligence in the next two meetings or a meeting and a half, but I'd like to see us start to move ahead on some of the original recommendations. We're eating up time and that time is valuable.

I totally agree with what everybody has said here, but maybe I have a few more concerns about conservation that I really want to spend time on. I really want to give due diligence to the things we agreed on originally.

The Chair: Okay. I think we all agreed that federal protected areas were going to get some of our attention early on, and that was going to be in conjunction....

Did you guys want to add anything else before I throw a proposal on the table again?

Mr. William Amos: I'll quickly mention that I think if we focus our FSDA analysis, and we move quickly into recommendations and focus particularly on the issues that were raised today and specifically on climate, then I think we can achieve...as you suggest. I'm on your page, Chair. I think you're demonstrating our good faith intent by trying to integrate climate into this.

The Chair: I'm trying to.

Mr. William Amos: If anything, I think what we're really trying to do is to satisfy, to the best of our abilities, desires from the opposition, from Mr. Cullen, to get more focus on climate.

The Chair: Agreed.

Mr. William Amos: Really, I think now we're just quibbling around a meeting here or a meeting there.

The Chair: I actually believe that we are all on the same page. We're just fighting over details.

I think we are on the same page. Climate change is the biggest issue facing the world and we do not want to leave it.... If we can build improvements along the way, then we want to do that. We did agree that we would do CEPA. We did agree that we would do federally protected areas in tandem.

This opportunity was to be third, but it has come forward early, with the minister's ask of us to give comments. I would like to suggest that on April 12 and 14 we focus on trying to very quickly get to the point where we can comment on the strategy and get the strategy, and that anything we might want to put forward on that gets done on the act, picking up on what happened today, and that we try

to get that into drafting instructions so that our great analysts here have a chance to start working on a report.

We will do that in the two meetings of April 12 and 14, as best we can, okay? On April 19 and 21, we can start on the federally protected areas review. I am hopeful.... I want to leave the door open so that if we find on the 19th that we need one more meeting on the 19th to do whatever we haven't been able to do in those two sessions.... I am hoping we can get it all done, but if we find that we can't, I don't want us to lock the door and then be stuck. We have the 12th and the 14th, with a question mark on the 19th, depending on how well we've moved through getting to resolution on what might need to be put in a report.

The 19th and the 21st will be the beginning of our federally protected areas review. If the 19th isn't required or if it just moves one meeting, and we do that for.... I had put in quite a few weeks. I had put in the 3rd, the 5th, and the 10th, so this would be the 21st, the 3rd, the 5th, the 10th, and the 12th.

Where's the witness list for this? We were trying to work through this yesterday. We have quite a lot of witnesses who want to come forward on the federally protected areas. We're probably going to need at least four meetings to listen to all the witnesses who are being brought forward.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Chair, may I...?

The Chair: A clarification? Go ahead.

•(1340)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Do you think that we wouldn't have time on the 14th to have it in and do the review in the afternoon portion of the 14th?

The Chair: I am saying that I think we'll put for sure the 12th and the 14th for the federal sustainability development strategy and act. I don't know about whether we can get it all done, but we will try to have it in a condition that will be drafting instructions for the analysts to move forward with on a report.

We will attempt to do that on the 12th and the 14th, but I don't want to make it so tight that if we don't, we're stuck and we haven't given ourselves room. I want to leave a little room on the 19th as a question-mark date that either will be wrapping up on the FSDDS and act or, if we're good and we're ready to roll, we'll roll right into the federally protected areas review.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: You're talking about then—

The Chair: I'm talking about at least four sessions for all of the witnesses. It could be the 19th, 21st, 3rd and 5th, but it might roll to the 10th if the 19th is required for the federal sustainability development strategy.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I thought you just mentioned the 19th, 21st, 3rd, 5th, 10th, and 12th.

The Chair: Because it isn't just.... I mean, we'll hear witnesses, but there is probably going to be some time that we're going to need for discussion as well.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Yes.

The Chair: It's not just going to be asking witnesses.... There's going to be some work of the committee, probably, as far as I know.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: At this time we're up to the 12th, roughly, for federal protection.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Okay.

The Chair: That's what I had.... I thought that if we went for the 19th and the 21st on the FSDS, then we would need those for the 19th.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'm confused. Are we writing a report on the protected areas?

The Chair: We are going to be making recommendations.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Are we?

The Chair: Aren't we?

Mr. William Amos: That's to be determined.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: When you're setting out on a voyage—

The Chair: You need to know where you're going.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Exactly.

The Chair: I'm expecting that we will do a report for sure.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I'd say less than half of committee studies produce reports. The engagement of a report means you hear the witnesses. Then a draft comes from the analysts as to what those reports might be. The committee looks at that and then sends comments back through that conversation or online. Then you come back and you go line by line through the report. A report for each of the things we're talking about—

• (1345)

The Chair: That would take time.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Well, of course it would.

I want to challenge you on one thing, Chair. You talked about there being lots of witnesses. There are and there aren't. Obviously each party's favourite element will show in the preponderance of witnesses they have. On our proposed climate change study, I think the government has put forward a total of one witness, while we have more than three dozen.

The Chair: Hold on a minute.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: My point is that I assume that the government will have a lot more people, and that the Conservatives, who have about five or six, will have more. I wouldn't look at the pages in front of us today and say there are a lot of witnesses on topic X or topic Y. It depends how engaged each party is in the pursuit of those things.

Mr. William Amos: I would add that it's great that the official opposition has listed somewhere in the neighbourhood of 15 or 20 potential witnesses on the parks issue. That's fabulous. Those are great organizations. We obviously won't hear from the vast majority of them. We'll hear from a few selected ones, and we'll get there.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: We can have a meeting like this and discuss which ones.

The Chair: I think the intent is to go through the witnesses on the topics. I'm trying to get to a schedule because I know everybody is very anxious about it. I wanted to do that. We do have quite a number of people whose names have been brought forward to talk,

and I'm sure others will pop up as they suddenly realize what we're working on. We do need to go through the witnesses and prepare ourselves for the meetings. That is part of the work of the subcommittee. At the moment, I am trying to get some sense of how we're going to move forward in the next couple of months. Then the work of the subcommittee will be to go through the witnesses before —

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That was my distracted point. My primary point was about whether you're writing a report on each of these things.

The Chair: My expectation is that we will. What's the point of doing the work if we don't make recommendations?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That would be to suggest that studies committees have undertaken without a report to government weren't worth the time.

The Chair: No.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We do it all the time. The writing of reports sometimes matters and sometimes doesn't at all. It depends on the topic.

The Chair: Okay, well why don't I hear from the rest of the committee on that point? I know what I feel, but....

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: Being new, I don't know what it looks like to do a study without a report. My assumption coming into this was that the things we chose would have some sort of report to go with them. Frankly I didn't know that dismissing studies was even an option and I don't know what that would look like. For the three that we had said here, and when we get into the climate change one, my assumption was that there would be a report on each of them and that we would need to allow time for the drafting of the report and we would review who the report would be sent to.

I don't know.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There you go.

Mr. John Aldag: That was my assumption.

The Chair: Mr. Amos, I'm mindful of the time and I know we have to get into the House by 2 p.m. I'm not cutting you off, but I just want you to be mindful.

Mr. William Amos: I'm good at brevity, as you saw today.

The Chair: Go ahead quickly.

Mr. William Amos: I've seen reports come and be ignored. I think our intention is to have our reports reviewed carefully not just by Parliament but by the general public. I will be promoting this as far as possible and bringing it to caucus as well. I think we're going to be looking at using these.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: I think an assumption has been made that everything we are doing is to be reported on. Keep in mind, my friends in government, that when we do issue that report to Parliament, the committee then expects responses to each of the recommendations, legislative or otherwise.

Mr. William Amos: Absolutely.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: There may be times when you don't want a report.

Mr. William Amos: I think for all these topics we've chosen, we want reports. We want to ensure the accountability of government.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's why I didn't want it to go through as assumed.

The Chair: Okay, looking at the clock, I'm going to make a proposal and I'm trying to do that. My intent is that we will have a report and that we will have to have that process. But my intent is not to have this all done by the summer. We're not going to have reports on every one of these by the summer.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Okay.

The Chair: These are going to be ongoing. I think maybe that's what we needed to get on the table here, that it's not all going to be done by the end of June. We'll hopefully have a report back by June 24 on the FSDS and, I think, improvements to the act. Other than that, it will be ongoing in terms of the work we're trying to do on the other three elements, or at least two of the elements. I'm going to see if I can get the climate change one on.

I'm also working with other committees, such as the innovation and technology group, to see if we can find a way for them to put an environment lens on the work they're doing, and how we may be able to do that. We're exploring ways that committees can work together on initiatives that we may have brought forward but they are actually working on as well, and how we can do that. I think the fisheries committee also has that work. We're going to see how we can make committees work together on common goals.

Let's just go back to the proposal. I'm looking at the 12th and 14th for sure, and potentially the 19th, to finish our deliberations for drafting instructions on the federal sustainability development strategy and act. On the 21st, 3rd, 5th, and 10th for sure, we will have witnesses on the federally protected areas review. That leaves us the 12th, the 17th, and the 19th.

That gives us four sessions for witnesses on the protected areas. All right? Do we feel comfortable on that?

The 12th, the 17th, and the 19th, we are still.... We only had one day that we listened to the CEPA review. We need to move the CEPA review along, so I was looking at that, potentially, with CEPA moving along, so they're all moving along together.

Yes, Mr. Eglinski.

• (1350)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Chair, I'd like to leave the 12th for federal protection, because all the rest of the meetings have been dragging on and taking more time than we thought. I really think we should leave those four sessions in the first part of May for federal protection, and then move on the 17th.

The Chair: Remember, we are doing the 21st of April—

Mr. Jim Eglinski: No, I realize that, but we might do part on the 19th. If we do that, then we can move ahead. If we don't....

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I'd just like it to be fair.

The Chair: I'm open to that. Does anybody have an issue with that? Okay.

So we go the 21st, 3rd, 5th, 10th, and 12th for the protected areas. Then we move back to CEPA for the 17th and the 19th.

I know that on the 31st we have the report of the commissioner coming back to us. That's May 31, right?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: The report from the commissioner...?

The Chair: She said the last week of May, so I believe it'll be there.

June 2, we need to then go line by line through our review that's coming. We're going to have a report back from our analysts that will need to be reviewed before we send it on, obviously. We'll have to work at that. That will be on June 2.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: That's on FSDS.

The Chair: On FSDS and FSDA. Okay?

Then we have the 7th, the 9th, the 14th, and the 16th of June. This is where I felt we could bring forward climate change. That isn't the way we had planned to go. We had planned to finish the others and then move on to the fourth one. But I'm open, for the 7th, the 9th, and the 14th, to either moving forward with a report approach for the federal protected areas or CEPA, or to opening ourselves up to looking at that fourth item.

I am completely open to the committee on how you want to move forward on this.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: We're running out of time. Can we leave that for another meeting to give us time for a little more thought?

The Chair: I can.

So we'll move up to June and I'll get that settled. Then we'll bring that forward for committee. Will we leave that open?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Yes. I think that would be fair.

The Chair: I think that's probably not a bad idea.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: It's a long ways away.

The Chair: Okay, so for the meetings—

Yes, Mr. Cullen.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Sorry, I don't understand the proposal.

The Chair: What he's saying is that we're running out of time and he wants to think about it. We'll get back and discuss the June approach—other than the June 2 one—on what we're going to do.

I don't think we need to do it now, but we could probably do it in early April. I think at our next subcommittee meeting I'd like to go through our witnesses and get it hammered down what we're going to do for the next two months in witnesses. Then, I think, based on that, we could probably open up what we're going to do in June. We don't want to leave it too late because we need to know.

Can I get agreement on that? For the meetings on the 12th and the 14th, can the chair select the witnesses? Can I work with the staff here? I think we've done okay so far in getting the right people. Would it be okay with you if we go through the list that everybody brought forward and pick some people for those? We need to invite those witnesses before we get back and have another meeting.

Are you all right with that?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. I'm being given a lot of advice here on who the good people are. We will make sure that we get people from all of the suggestions around the table.

We'll have our next subcommittee meeting on the 12th, and we can get back to discussing what we're going to do in June.

• (1355)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: I'd like to leave May 19 open, so we can put our recommendations in for our—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: We have to pass this agenda at some point, this calendar, right?

The Chair: Yes.

Sorry, the 19th is to do what?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: It's to kind of wrap up the federal protection... maybe with the recommendations and stuff like that, and then get them working on their report so we can review it earlier in June.

The Chair: Hold on. We said that we would do the 21st, the 3rd, the 5th, the 10th, and the 12th, for federally protected areas. We said we would do the 17th and 19th for the CEPA, but we can get into it in June.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: We have to give them some time.

The Chair: Exactly. I don't believe we can intend to have the reports done by June. It's not going to work.

If that's agreed, thank you very much for everyone's patience and understanding. We have to hoof it over to the House.

The meeting is adjourned.

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