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Chair: Ms. Yasmin Ratansi



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• (1600)

[*English*]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number five of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The committee is meeting today to consider the main estimates.

The committee meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of September 23, 2020. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. You all know the rules for muting your mikes, addressing everything to the chair, etc.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses. We have with us today the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister Wilkinson. We also have Madam Martine Dubuc, associate deputy minister, Department of the Environment; Mr. David McGovern, president, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada; and Ron Hallman, president and chief executive officer, Parks Canada Agency.

Minister, I believe you have five minutes for your opening remarks. You will be with us for one hour, after which I guess your department officials will be taking over and answering any additional questions.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

I'm certainly happy to be here with you to discuss the 2020-21 main estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Parks Canada Agency and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. I am joined by my officials, as the chair has noted. They will certainly be happy to take questions from you in the second hour.

I would like to start by recognizing that this meeting is taking place on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, although I am situated on the traditional territory of the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam and Squamish first nations.

Without question, the world has changed significantly since we last met. COVID-19 has created tremendous loss and uncertainty here in Canada and all around the world. What has become increasingly clear is that we cannot choose between COVID-19 recovery efforts, climate action and the protection of nature. We must ad-

dress COVID-19, but we must address the looming crises on the horizon of climate change and rapid biodiversity loss. The work before us, supported by the 2020-21 main estimates, is essential to ensuring that we can move forward effectively. The work we are discussing today is focused on continuing to deliver real and effective results.

The total funding in the 2020-21 main estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada is approximately \$2 billion. This represents an increase of about \$154.8 million from the previous year's total estimates.

At home, the department is continuing to implement the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. With over 50 measures, this framework supports everything from electric vehicles and public transit to energy efficiency and renewable energy. At the same time, the department is leading government-wide work to develop further plans to ensure that we exceed Canada's 2030 emissions reduction goal and firmly put the country on a path to net zero by 2050.

In addition to the new measures, in the months ahead we will seek advice from experts and consult with Canadians about pathways to achieve our goal of a net-zero economy by 2050 while growing the economy and making life more affordable for all Canadians.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

These pathways must also integrate nature protection, which is vital to our efforts to combat climate change and a significant priority.

Moving forward, we plan to conserve 25% of Canada's land and 25% of Canada's oceans by 2025, and we are working to reach 30% of each of those goals by 2030.

[*English*]

The Chair: Minister, the translation is not working. The French is not being translated into English.

When you're speaking French, do you have it on the French channel or the English channel?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'm pretty sure it was on the French channel.

Let me try it again.

[Translation]

Can you understand me now?

[English]

The Chair: Yes. Please proceed.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Okay.

[Translation]

The department is also continuing its work to protect biodiversity and species at risk.

Collaboration in that is also essential to all of our work, including our goal to achieve zero plastic waste by 2030, and ban harmful single-use plastics by 2021.

[English]

Another vital service, Madam Chair, is the weather and environmental prediction services the department provides to Canadians 24 hours a day.

The department is also developing further protections and taking steps to clean up the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Simcoe and other large lakes.

In addition, we are working to modernize and strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

[Translation]

Let us now turn to Parks Canada.

After a brief suspension of visitor services, Parks Canada adapted its delivery to respond to the challenge of COVID-19 and reopen national parks, historic sites and marine conservation areas on June 1.

[English]

From June through September, over 13.4 million Canadians were able to safely spend their recreational and vacation time in Parks Canada-administered places. Through the fall and winter, operations will continue in a number of parks and sites.

The main estimates for 2020-21 for Parks Canada are \$1.1 billion. Parks Canada will continue protecting nationally significant examples of natural and cultural heritage in Canada and sharing the stories of these treasured places with Canadians. Parks Canada is also working on a proposal to develop a legislative framework that would strengthen the protection of cultural heritage in Canada.

As for the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, Madam Chair, its main estimates total \$76.5 million.

Madam Chair, I hope this summary provides committee members with the insight on the 2020-21 main estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada, Parks Canada and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada that they are seeking.

I am very happy to engage in conversation and to try to respond to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Thank you for keeping within your time.

We have the first round of questions for six minutes with Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you for the work you do and for your commitment to our country.

Minister, your party committed to plant two billion trees over 10 years. We now know that none have been planted because there is no budget and there is no plan.

As trees take time to grow, have any trees been ordered for planting next year?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

Certainly our government remains committed to planting two billion trees to help fight climate change and to address biodiversity issues. During this period, of course, there has not been a federal budget during the pandemic, but we have provided \$30 million to the forest sector so that businesses could safely continue tree-planting operations during COVID-19. This has helped to ensure the scheduled planting of 600 million trees.

We certainly remain committed to the two billion trees. I think you will see that we have been developing a plan, and you will see that coming forward in the near term.

Mr. Dan Albas: Well, Minister, the estimates process and the supplementary estimates allow for you to be able to put something into a budget. As you know, in our province of British Columbia, 314 million trees were planted this year.

This initiative was raised again as a commitment in your throne speech. Why the discrepancy? Why are you simply saying that we are going to get to it some day without actually having a plan?

● (1610)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: With respect, I think the fact that it was in the throne speech is a measure of the commitment this government has to moving forward with that commitment. We certainly do intend to move forward with it.

In the interim, during the COVID period, we worked very closely with the forestry sector to ensure that they would be able to get the tree-planting done that they had planned to do, but obviously that planting was impacted by COVID-19. That was 600 million trees, and we certainly intend to move forward with the two-billion-tree commitment in the near term.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, this was in your election platform. This was a major announcement by your predecessor and by the Prime Minister himself. To say that it was simply raised again in the throne speech and is a priority is not giving sufficient indication that you're serious about it. Have you identified locations to facilitate the planting of two billion trees?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes. Certainly, the development of the plan involves looking at locations. It obviously looks at the partnerships we would be utilizing in the context of developing those locations. It looks at urban and rural planting of trees. Those considerations all go into the development of a plan.

Again I would say, with due respect, that it certainly was a commitment during the campaign. As all of us are aware, COVID-19 came upon us in March just in advance of the budget. We do intend to move forward with it in the near term, and I think this is the appropriate time to do that, in the same way that we are moving forward with a commitment to developing and bringing forward a plan to exceed our climate target.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, as I said earlier in my comments, it takes time for trees to be ordered and then to be grown. By not having a budget right now for this allocation for these trees, you won't see anything planted next year, so is the plan to do this in year three? Isn't that hundreds of millions of trees behind schedule?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As I say, we will be coming forward with visibility in terms of what the planting looks like over the coming number of years.

I think you have to take a step back and look at why we're planting trees. The reason we're planting trees is that it has to be part of an ongoing climate plan. It's part of the nature-based solutions elements of the climate plan, but it's also a key element in trying to prevent further biodiversity loss in this country, such as protecting species like caribou, which are in steep decline in pretty much every province and territory in this country. That is a critical piece. As I say, it remains a critical part of this government's agenda, and we intend to move forward in the near term.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, another commitment you've made is to double Canada's protected areas by 2025 to 25% of our land base. How will you equal over 150 years of planned protection in only 50 months? It takes years to create protected lands. There are many steps with local and provincial and first nations consultation. Have you identified all the areas that will need to be protected to meet the 25% promise? If not, there's no possible way to get there.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I will tell you a couple of things. I mean, it's a good question, but I would start by saying that when our government came to office in 2015, less than 1% of marine areas were protected in this country. Right now it's just a little bit less than 15%, so in four years we made an enormous amount of progress relative to what had been done before.

We've also made progress with respect to terrestrial protection, although obviously terrestrial is more complicated. You have to involve provinces and territories in those conversations. We have active work going on to achieve the 17% number, which was the initial Aichi target. We have identified a number of different areas that will allow us to move forward to the 25% across this country. We feel very confident that we will be able to achieve that number.

Mr. Dan Albas: Can you give us an example of where this would be located?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I can tell you that there are areas in every province and territory in this country. Those are things that we have been discussing with provinces and territories and with indigenous communities. They have been the leaders on many of

these issues, whether that's first nations in the south or Inuit in the north.

As I say, we feel confident that we will be able to meet that number. Obviously, we need to work through a range of issues with our partners.

Mr. Dan Albas: When do you plan on telling Canadians where these will be? Do you have a detailed plan?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Well, as I say, we have a very detailed plan with respect to the 17% number. We have a range of areas that are identified with our partners. This is something we will be discussing with a range of stakeholders, and of course that information will be public.

Mr. Dan Albas: Minister, you've given me zero visibility, so perhaps we can move to something where perhaps you might be able to.

As part of the electric vehicle subsidy, why doesn't the Canadian government collect data on user—

The Chair: Mr. Albas, your time is up. I am sorry. I thought I gave you a 30-second warning, but I was on mute.

At any rate, thank you. You can come to that in the next round.

Mr. Longfield, you have six minutes.

• (1615)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Saini.

I want to continue on the tree topic. On page 102 of the main estimates, there's a line item for conserving nature, under "operating", of \$174 million, with revenues and transfers to the provinces as well. I'm looking at how in Guelph we have a tree canopy goal of reaching 40% of tree canopy, but the municipality hasn't been able to move that forward in the last few years. I know that Minister McKenna previously announced some tree-planting in Ottawa, which was recovering a cancelled program from the Province of Ontario, where they eliminated tree-planting as part of their focus.

Minister, could you comment on how the federal government is supporting our communities in combatting climate change with programs like natural climate solutions?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure are important. They're important in a whole range of ways, but certainly they're important from a sequestration perspective in helping us to meet goals. They're important from a resilience and climate adaptation perspective. They can be very important in terms of the protection of biodiversity. These are certainly part of how we need to go about addressing the two crises we face, one of which is climate and the other biodiversity loss.

We have taken significant steps to empower communities like Guelph to implement nature-based solutions in locally significant ways. One example is our government's EcoAction community funding program, which provides funding to protect, rehabilitate, enhance and sustain the natural environment in communities across the country. Of course, communities will be involved as we begin to roll out the issue we were talking about earlier, which is the commitment to two billion trees and the restoration of wetlands. On this project, we will be partnering not only with provinces and territories but also with communities across this country.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Great. Thank you, Minister.

I have another question on zero plastic waste. That has drawn a lot of very positive attention in Guelph, but I've had calls—quite a few calls, actually—about the plastic waste coming from water bottles. Nestlé Waters has a bottling plant just south of Guelph, which draws a lot of local attention in terms of environmental protection of water and also on the zero plastic stream.

When we're looking at achieving zero plastic waste by 2030, I wonder how these concerns fit into the plans that you're announcing on eliminating plastic waste.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's a good question. I've had that question a few times myself.

What we announced was a comprehensive approach to achieving zero plastic waste by 2030. That focus is on keeping plastics in the economy, out of the environment and out of our landfills.

Plastic water bottles certainly are found at times as litter, but they do actually have high recycling rates, and they're relatively simple to recycle. Given the deposit system, they are one of the items with a generally higher recycling rate.

Our plan is very much founded on working collaboratively with provinces and territories to strengthen recycling programs to increase our capacity to reuse and recover plastics using tools under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. We are proposing to develop regulations to establish higher standards for plastic products and packaging to make them more recyclable. We could include recycled content requirements and greater responsibilities for producers, as they are now doing in Ontario and have been doing in British Columbia.

The ban we brought into place that a lot of people focus on is focused on three things. The first is that they're harmful in the environment. The second is that they're very difficult or costly to recycle, and they gum up the recycling system. The third is that there are readily available alternatives. This plan is a comprehensive plan focused on ensuring that we keep the value of plastics in our economy but we deal with the really problematic ones through a ban.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, Minister.

I will give the floor to Mr. Saini.

The Chair: You have two minutes. Unmute yourself.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much for coming today, Minister, and for bringing your officials along. It's been a great discussion so far.

I'm going to change tack a bit, because the riding I'm from is a leader in innovation. It's a global leader. It's Kitchener Centre. We have one of the world's fastest-growing tech sectors and the highest number of new start-ups after Silicon Valley. This sort of culture of innovation is going to be very crucial for us in our fight against climate change.

How do you see the government working to leverage this innovative potential of Canadian businesses and incentivizing them to develop the sort of technology we're going to need to meet our future climate goals?

• (1620)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Climate change is an environmental threat. It's a very significant one, but it's also a huge economic opportunity with respect to the markets that are going to be created for technologies and for a range of services associated with reducing emissions.

I spent over 15 years as a CEO and senior executive in the clean-tech space, and certainly this is an issue that I find very important and that is definitely worth discussing.

Our government has tried to develop a very comprehensive plan for addressing and growing the clean-tech sector. We've invested over \$3 billion since 2016 in that, and it's showing fruit. Canada had 12 out of the top 100 clean-tech companies in the world in 2020, and we were named by the Global Cleantech Innovation index as the number one country for innovation in the sector.

This is something that we need to do. It has to be a thoughtful strategy that goes all the way from research and development through to commercialization. We have been spending time on it and we will be spending more time on it.

Mr. Raj Saini: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Raj Saini: That's okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauzé, go ahead for six minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Minister, thank you for joining us.

In your document, you talk about oceans and protecting biodiversity. Yet you have carried out major offshore drilling projects of the project assessment process.

For instance, last March, 735,000 square kilometres of drilled wells were exempted. That rule applies even to drilling projects carried out in marine refuges created by the federal government to protect those marine environments. We are being told that those regions will be critical over the next few years, especially for species at risk.

In July, it was the same thing for drilling projects in eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. It is said that international standards are clear and that they reject any type of industrial activity in protected areas and those subject to other conservation measures. Even the developer recognizes that the zone overlaps with parts of a marine refuge and an important area in terms of ecology and biology. There are apparently 36 species listed as at risk or of special concern in terms of conservation.

Minister, isn't there a contradiction in the current narrative where the government is favouring oil drilling in protected areas?

[English]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'm sorry, but I just want to make sure of this. I don't use the translation, but some of the other members were shaking their heads, and I'm wondering if the translation was functioning properly for them.

The Chair: For me it was, but I'm going to ask the rest of the members.

Was it working for everyone? Could you tell me, Alexandre, if anybody was complaining?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: I think it's a thumbs-up, Madam Chair.

The Chair: It's a thumbs-up, yes. The only thing is that we couldn't see Madam Pausé.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): We don't see Ms. Pausé. We just see an empty chair.

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

Is there a problem with the video for Madam Pausé? She's in the committee room, isn't she?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Roger): Yes, but we're having technical difficulties right now. They're looking into it. We're going to try to have the camera on her when she speaks. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: Okay. Let her know that I've stopped the clock for her.

Minister, can you can respond, please? Thank you.

[Translation]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

Of course, biodiversity issues, especially those related to right whales and southern resident killer whales, in western Canada, are

very important. I was minister of Fisheries and Oceans in the past, and I worked a lot on those issues.

As for your question, we have always said that environmental processes should guarantee very strong environmental protections, but they should also be very effective. That is what the published ministerial regulations do. They establish a clear and effective process for assessing offshore exploration drilling projects in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area.

The regulations will guarantee that all drilling projects are consistent with high environmental protection standards by establishing clear rules and using existing scientific knowledge. We can protect the environment and provide certainty for industry.

• (1625)

Ms. Monique Pausé: Of course, I am not satisfied with that answer, especially since international standards are telling us the opposite, but let's move on.

Your document talks about strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The Speech from the Throne talked about modernization. Eighty-seven of the commissioner's recommendations come from the old committee. I would like to know how far along the department is in its work to review the act based on those 87 recommendations.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

We have already begun this work. The recommendations of the environment committee, which worked very hard on this issue, are very important to us. I am very pleased to have those recommendations, and we will consider them in our work.

Ms. Monique Pausé: Last, I have seen a lot of announcements of money provided to oil and gas companies to improve their production. I find it difficult to justify public money being given to those companies, which, after all, are not really on the street. They are still making large profits.

I understand wanting to help them produce less greenhouse gas, but it seems to me that the speech should rather talk about reducing fossil fuel development. That is what all the ITCC stakeholders and other stakeholders globally are saying.

Instead of helping those businesses with public money, why not head toward decreasing fossil fuel development in order to slowly wean ourselves off fossil fuels?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

There are two things to be said on this. On the one hand, subsidies are given to the fossil fuel industry, and on the other hand, we have to see how we can work with that industry on reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

Regarding subsidies given to the fossil fuel industry, our government has committed to eliminate them by 2025. We are currently doing that. We have already eliminated eight of them. We are in contact with Argentina to compare our respective work in that area. We have made the commitment, through the G20, to eliminate those subsidies.

When it comes to greenhouse gas reduction, it is important to work with industry. That is part of the solution to reduce the impact of climate change.

[English]

The Chair: Minister, her time is up, actually.

[Translation]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That is part of a plan to reduce climate change.

[English]

The Chair: We go now to Madam Collins for six minutes.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We are not on track to meet our Paris climate targets. The committee recently heard that Canada is currently not even close to being on track to meeting our targets for selling 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2040. The government committed to plant two billion trees by 2030. Then we learned there wasn't a single dollar allocated to plant these trees.

I could go on with a list of other Liberal commitments and environmental targets that this government has missed or is on track to missing, but on trees, to many points by Mr. Albas, the minister responded that with all due respect, we put it in our throne speech, or we were facing a pandemic. My response is that, with all due respect, repeating promises with no action is in no way reassuring.

As was mentioned, the B.C. government managed to plant millions of trees during the pandemic. Planting trees is actually a very feasible activity while physically distancing, and could have given students or people who were laid off a job.

Has Environment and Climate Change Canada requested any funds in these main estimates to support that work?

• (1630)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I would probably take issue with a couple of things you said. The first is that planting trees during a pandemic is simple and easy. It is not. There was certainly a lot of work done to try to enable the forestry industry and the tree-planting industry to be able to do this in a thoughtful way that protected workers. We were part of that. We committed money to doing that. We worked actively with British Columbia and with other provinces to ensure that it took place.

As I say, the government remains fully committed to the two billion trees. As you will know, most of the tree-planting activity, being a natural resources-related function, typically falls to provinces and territories. We will be working with them and with other stakeholders as well to ensure that we implement that promise. Planting trees is important from a climate perspective, but perhaps even more so from a biodiversity perspective. We will be moving forward with it.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you. Just to clarify, I did not say it was “easy” during a pandemic; I said “feasible”.

We learn in the estimates that funding for the youth employment strategy has decreased. Looking at the departmental plan for 2020-21, the target for the number of green jobs created under the youth internship program is down to just 179 from the target last year of 969. In 2018-19 the actual results were 887 jobs.

Can you explain why there's this large reduction in green jobs for youth? As well, given that we could be investing in a tree-planting program that could be done with physical distancing, why haven't we been providing this kind of employment opportunity to students over the summer?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Let me start with the first. I'll ask my associate deputy minister to respond to the second.

We will be ensuring that as we move forward with the commitment to plant two billion trees, obviously it will create employment for a range of different folks, whether those are indigenous communities, young people or many people who live in rural areas. That certainly is an important part of ensuring that we're building back in the recovery from the pandemic.

With respect to the specifics around youth employment within the department, maybe I can ask Martine to make a response.

[Translation]

Dr. Martine Dubuc (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): In supplementary estimates (B), an \$11-million investment is planned for youth engagement. That covers the innovation and nature aspect. So a very good investment will support youth employment across the country.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: In terms of the target, does it remain at 179 for this year? Is that correct?

[Translation]

Dr. Martine Dubuc: Regarding the target established for this year, I could provide you with figures at a later date. That said, this target is comparable to last year's target.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay, because that doesn't appear to be correct. I would love a follow-up, if you could send information to the committee.

[Translation]

Dr. Martine Dubuc: Yes, we will do that.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have one and a half minutes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Great. Thank you.

We are not on track to meet our climate targets. In the fall 2019 report, the commissioner of the environment found that there was no support for the government's statement that we're "on track" to meet our climate targets of reducing emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. We also know that these targets are not adequate and that we need to increase our ambition.

Can the minister account for the discrepancy in the statement from this government that we are "on track" when the evidence shows that we're not actually on track?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I would say a couple of things.

The first is that, as you know, the pan-Canadian framework contained about 50 different initiatives that identified about 223 megatonnes in reductions to 2030. That is most of the way there, but we've always said that there was a gap to getting to the actual target that was 77 megatonnes.

During the campaign, we committed not only to meet but to exceed, and one of the things that I am working on every day is the plan we will be bringing forward to ensure that we actually not only meet but do exceed—as you indicate—the target as part of our response to the international community.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Minister—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Collins. Your time is up.

We now go to a five-minute round. The first questioner is Mr. Redekopp.

• (1635)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Thank you, and thank you, Minister, for coming to us today.

Under vote 5, "Payments to the New Parks and Historic Sites Account", there was just under \$10 million set aside. That's down from last year's estimates, which were around \$26 million, so it's a significant reduction.

In the throne speech, your government promised that the "Government will work with municipalities as part of a new commitment to expand urban parks". I've raised Saskatoon's Meewasin Valley with you and your officials on multiple occasions, formally and informally. As you are aware, there is an appetite at the provincial, regional and municipal levels to explore expanding and improving the Meewasin Valley as part of the federal government's plan to expand urban parks.

On October 21, I sent you a letter, along with correspondence from the Meewasin, asking for a formal meeting with you. To date, I'm not aware of a response. How do you intend on keeping the throne speech promise of new urban parks with a reduction in estimates under "new parks"? Why don't you start with low-hanging fruit like Meewasin in Saskatoon?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Well, first of all, let me say a couple of things. I'm very familiar with Meewasin.

As you know, I grew up in Saskatoon, and I think the idea of an urban park in the Meewasin area is a very interesting one. I would tell you that there are many urban municipalities that have reached out to us in the aftermath of the commitment to say that they are interested in similar kinds of things. I would be more than happy to meet with you and with the Meewasin people in the context of the discussion about how we move forward.

Maybe I can ask Ron Hallman, the CEO of Parks Canada, to speak a bit about the broader issue.

Mr. Ron Hallman (President and Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Chair.

First of all, to the member's question, I can confirm that Parks Canada met with the individuals locally. Today, in fact, the executive director for the Prairies did that.

On the broader issue of urban parks, we are very much interested in working with willing partners across the country to identify those areas that might be identified as urban parks, recognizing that not all of them would necessarily be like the Rouge. They might not all need to be owned and operated by Parks Canada even, but we're at the early stages of understanding what such a network of urban parks might look like. We're interested in having the discussion such as the member raises right now, in addition to a whole bunch of other ones that would provide us a network across the country.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Yes, well, Meewasin is a great example of the Prairie ethic. The park was funded by local governments and private donors, so their needs are fairly modest. I think it encourages exactly what we want, which is governments and individuals putting their money together to build great projects for our communities. I really don't understand why the government doesn't jump all over that.

Let's switch over and talk about the trucking industry. Page 8 of the departmental plan talks about the heavy vehicle sector. It says, "The Department will also implement regulations amending the Heavy-duty Vehicle and Engine GHG Emission Regulations".

In my discussions with them, the trucking industry has indicated a strong desire for a working group, which includes government, truck manufacturers, engine manufacturers, the fuel industry, etc., to work together to develop a road map for decarbonization in the trucking industry. It's a very complicated issue, with significant greenhouse gas impacts.

We've asked several of your officials about this idea. They don't seem to be aware that consultations are even a thing to pursue. Why are you not creating a trucking industry working group? Do you plan to impose carbon targets on the trucking sector and just wash your hands of the economic consequences?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'm not sure who you've been talking to in the department. I'm certainly happy to learn the names, but obviously there is a need for consultation when we're looking at how we enhance the efficiency and/or the technology used in a range of sectors. That's true of light-duty vehicle standards and it's true of heavy-duty vehicle standards. That relates to short-term issues around enhancing energy efficiency. It also relates, as I said, to long-term technologies like hydrogen and fuel cells that may be a replacement for the internal combustion engine or the diesel engines that are typically used.

I know my officials have already been having some of those conversations, but if there are specific folks who have not been reached out to who you think should be reached out to, I'm happy to do that.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Are there working groups that have been created on the heavy-truck industry class 8 engine situation?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: There are all kinds of consultations that have been going on at the officials' level, whether that's with associations or individual companies. That's true on the light-duty side, it's true with coal regulations, it's true with natural gas. It's true with everything.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

We now go to Mr. Saini for five minutes.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Do you mean Mr. Baker?

The Chair: I have Raj Saini here. Is it Mr. Baker?

Mr. Raj Saini: No, it's Mr. Baker, yes.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Baker, for five minutes.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, thank you very much for being here and for answering our questions.

Minister, in my community of Etobicoke Centre, my constituents talk to me about climate change regularly. They talk to me about it all the time, and I think many of them consider it to be the existential issue of our time, which we need to act on to save our planet for this generation and our future ones.

To save our planet, we all know that Canada and countries around the world need to reduce their emissions. Could you share with me and for the benefit of my constituents what emission reduction targets our government has committed to, and to what degree these targets will reduce our emissions?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: There is no doubt that it is the existential issue of our time, and it is something that we must take action on in the short term if we want to leave a livable planet for our kids and our grandkids.

When this government took office in 2015, we developed a plan, the pan-Canadian framework, which was really the first real climate

plan that had begun to be implemented that Canada has ever had. It identified 223 megatonnes in reductions on a pathway to achieving 30% lower greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 than existed in 2005. Subsequent to that, of course, we have committed to exceeding those targets. Part of the work we are doing is to identify the remaining megatonnes that we must find in order to hit the target and to go beyond. That is something we are working on every day.

We've also committed to net zero by 2050, and we will be bringing in binding legislation with five-year targets to ensure that this is the case.

Climate change is an enormous priority for this government, and we are doing the work to ensure that we are moving forward in a manner whereby Canada can look our children in the eyes and also be part of the international conversation.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thanks, Minister.

You alluded a little bit to it in your answer, but maybe I'll ask you to expand on it. It's one thing to say we have targets we want to hit and it's another thing to have the mechanisms to make sure we're bound, and future governments are bound, to deliver on them. Can you talk a little about the legislative measures or any other measures that will be put forward and passed to ensure that this government and future ones actually live up to those commitments that we've made?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes. In terms of legislation, we committed to legislating Canada's goal of net zero by 2050. We are not alone in this regard. There are a number of countries around the world, including the United Kingdom, that have done this. We will be setting legally binding five-year milestones that will be informed by advice from experts. We will be ensuring that we are putting in place transparency mechanisms that will be enforcing functions for all future governments with respect to the work that needs to be done to achieve the net zero target, which science tells us we need to do. That is something we do intend to move forward with and we certainly intend to do that in the near term.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay.

Just to recap, we've committed to meet certain emission reduction targets, and you described in your prior answer the mechanism to bind us to get there. The big question, and the question I imagine you wrestle with, the question I hear from my constituents, is how do we actually do that? How do we actually reduce our emissions? Can you share with us how we're going to do that? What are the most important actions we're going to take to achieve those emission reduction commitments?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think the focus, obviously, has to be on all the areas in the economy where there are significant sources of emissions, and eventually on all sectors of the economy where there are any emissions. That means looking at transportation, buildings, industry, the oil and gas sector and waste, and ensuring that we have plans that allow us to have visibility about how we're going to take big chunks out of those emissions by 2030 to ensure we are not only meeting but also exceeding our target, and also that we're thinking forward to 2050 so that we're not going down blind alleys that may help us to get to 2030 but are dead ends to getting to net zero.

That is part of the work we are doing right now. Again, I hope to be in a position to speak a little more generally about exactly how we're going to do that in the relatively near term.

The Chair: Mr. Baker, you have 30 seconds, if you have a quick question.

Mr. Yvan Baker: No.

Minister, I don't know if you wanted to add anything to that answer in the remaining 30 seconds or if there's anything you weren't able to respond to with the prior members.

• (1645)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The only way you could do this, and meet these kinds of targets, is if you take a comprehensive view. That means you need to think about a whole range of issues—regulatory mechanisms, investments, tax mechanisms—and it means pricing pollution.

In the absence of a comprehensive plan that utilizes all the available tools, it's very difficult to see how to have a plan that has any credibility in hitting those targets.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

I understand that Madame Paupé has left the room, so there will be a replacement. Who is it?

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Mr. Savard-Tremblay is replacing her.

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

[*English*]

The Clerk: He does not seem to be in front of his camera at the moment.

The Chair: I'll have to stop his time.

Does he have technical difficulties?

The Clerk: He's just not in front of his camera at the current moment.

The Chair: Where is he?

The Clerk: I don't know where he is.

The Chair: Then I suggest that Ms. Collins take the next round. It is two and a half minutes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In his response to Mr. Baker, the minister mentioned that his government would be bringing forward climate accountability legislation in the near term. I find this language concerning, especially since, in the throne speech, the word used was "immediately". That was back in September. It's now November. I'm curious about the timeline for enacting climate legislation and bringing forward this very important, much-needed and long-delayed plan to exceed our climate targets.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: First of all, the word "immediately" in the throne speech referred to the 2030 plan, not to the legislation for 2050, but certainly I am in agreement with the member that we do need to ensure we are moving swiftly. The year 2030 is not very far away, and while people think that 2050 is a long way away, if we do not start to take action soon, it will certainly be problematic.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Minister, is there a timeline?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The focus for us is essentially moving forward in the very near term. You will see some action on these fronts soon.

Ms. Laurel Collins: In terms of the plan for exceeding our climate targets and having a plan for 2030, the word "immediately" was used. Will that be coming in the next few weeks, the next few months...?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think you should stay tuned. I anticipate we will be bringing forward some things to talk to Canadians about soon.

Ms. Laurel Collins: That is not really an answer, but....

The committee, as I mentioned, has heard that we're not on track to meet our target of selling 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2040. According to Transport Canada, we're on track to get to 4% to 6% by 2025, well short of the 10% target. It's about half. We're on track to get to 5% to 10% by 2030, again well short of the 2030 target, which is 30%. That's a third to a sixth of the targets.

I'm curious to know the minister's response on how we're going to get back on track with these targets for zero-emission vehicles.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: You're correct in the sense that the sales of zero-emission vehicles across the country are probably not as rapid as we would like to see. We need to think about measures that we will put in place to accelerate those sales.

That's not true everywhere. Certainly in British Columbia, your home province and my home province, almost 10% of the new cars being sold are zero-emission electric vehicles.

Part of that is a function of the fact that the infrastructure for electric and hydrogen vehicles in British Columbia is far better developed than it is in many parts of this country. Part of it is—

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. I have to use your time wisely.

[*Translation*]

Are you there, Mr. Savard-Tremblay?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Good afternoon.

The Chair: You have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, Minister. Thank you for your presentation. I would like to hear you on the Trans Mountain issue. We know that is a financial disaster that could have an environmental impact.

What is the level of political will to carry out this project? As you know, we are not especially attached to it.

• (1650)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for your question.

This project will create thousands of good jobs for the middle class and will open up new paths to indigenous economic prosperity. That is part of our green and fair transition to a zero net emission economy. We are convinced that the project is still a responsible investment and that it will generate a positive outcome for Canadians of today and tomorrow. Every dollar earned through this project will be invested in building a cleaner economy that will create jobs, attract investments and fuel our homes and businesses in the years to come.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I understand that it is always a matter of following a logic whereby we don't really want to get rid of oil. That is somewhat in line with what we were being told a year and a half ago, during the election campaign—not to worry about the pipeline because trees would be planted.

We will need to have a real will to transition. I understand that we are talking about transition, and not about stopping oil development overnight. That is not the issue. We want to know when a real transition plan will be presented to aspire to true electrification and true carbon neutrality.

In other words, as the saying goes, when will the government walk the talk?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you.

I agree with my colleague's last sentence. It is essential for us to have a transition plan to reach our objectives by 2030, but also to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. In the short term, we will come up with a plan to reach those objectives by 2030 and present a piece of legislation related to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Of course, we have to have a plan, and we do have one.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Okay, but what is that plan?

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Okay. I will save it for later.

[English]

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Jeneroux.

You're sharing your time with Mr. Godin, yes?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): I am.

Minister, it's good to see you again.

Has your government conducted an analysis on job losses or job growth due to the clean fuel standards?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think it's important to think about what the clean fuel standard is. It's about reducing the carbon content of our fuels, creating opportunities for farmers and companies to produce renewable fuels and encouraging investment in energy efficiency to save Canadians money.

To your question, as we bring forward the clean fuel standard to CGI, Canada Gazette part I, we certainly will be providing a detailed cost-benefit analysis.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You haven't done it up to this date, though. Am I correct in saying that?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As I say, as we move forward to CGI—and we said that will happen this fall—we will be providing a detailed cost-benefit analysis.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: In your announcement on September 11, 2020, you said, "It will create jobs in farming, clean tech and zero-emissions vehicles."

Can you not tell us right now how the clean fuel standards will do that?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: It's going to drive demand for biofuels, just like the renewable fuel standard does. It's going to incent investments in energy efficiency, in carbon capture and in sequestration in a whole range of different technologies. It's going to boost the clean technology sector. It will incent deployment of electric vehicles, and you will see that when it's out for public comment.

It absolutely is the key driver for economic development and green economic development going forward.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I hear that, Minister, and you can say that. However, how come you can't give us the exact number of job projections that this will create, either job growth or job losses?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As I say, we are going to be bringing this forward to CGI in the near term, and you will see a detailed cost-benefit analysis. Stay tuned.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: What would the added costs be for farmers to dry their grain, heat their barns, ship their goods by truck or rail and for any other fuel use?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As I say, the focus is on decarbonizing our fuels. It's a critical part of the climate plan. It's 30 megatonnes in reductions.

I would hazard a guess that if you take out a price on pollution and take out a clean fuel standard, both of which your party opposes, you are going to have a very interesting time trying to meet your commitments to the Paris targets.

It will be done in a cost-effective way. In the same way that alarmists said that taking lead out of gasoline or banning chlorofluorocarbons to save the ozone layer was going to cause economic catastrophe, this measure will drive innovation and it will be implemented in a manner that is fully cost-effective.

• (1655)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Minister, you've had five years to tell us, though, how many jobs this is going to—in my opinion—lose, particularly in my province of Alberta. I look forward to your detailed analysis and I hope it comes soon, because there are many, many Canadians, particularly Albertans, who are very worried about what the clean fuel standard means.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Alberta has a lot to gain economically through this, as does Saskatchewan—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I will share my time with Mr. Godin. Thank you.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: —which was the province in which I grew up.

Biofuels can be produced very easily on the Prairies. It's a great place to do that. A lot of the technology that we're talking about will be driven through the Prairies and through British Columbia. There are enormous economic opportunities for Alberta in this, and I look forward to working with companies, entrepreneurs and with the Province of Alberta to ensure that this happens.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you have one and a half minutes.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I will hurry up then.

Minister, thank you for participating in this exercise. I also thank you for speaking French and congratulate you on that.

You know that I respect you as an individual. However, some of your comments are problematic for me.

You said the following in your opening remarks:

However, let me make it clear from the outset: the work we are discussing today is continuing to deliver real and effective results.

Last week, the environment and sustainable development commissioner tabled a report titled “Report 2—Progress in Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies—Safe and Healthy Communities”. Yet he says the following in his report:

...the organizations [and departments] reporting was at times unclear or incomplete, making it difficult for parliamentarians and Canadians to gain a clear sense of overall progress against the goal.

Minister, I just want to remind you that you have five objectives and five plans to implement in order to achieve those targets. As all the experts have said, the Paris agreement targets are currently unachievable. As my colleague Mr. Albas said, none of the two billion trees to be planted have been planted so far. The Department of

Transportation has confirmed that it will be impossible to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Minister, given the current situation, the objective in terms of zero-emission vehicles by 2040 will be practically impossible to reach. I think this is smoke and mirrors.

What is your response to that?

[*English*]

The Chair: Minister, I'm going to give Mr. Godin 30 more seconds for your response.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you.

Of course, I respect you and everyone else here today. We are having a good discussion.

It goes without saying that we must have a plan to achieve the 2030 and 2050 targets. That is not a political issue; it is a scientific one. We all want a future where our children and our grandchildren will have a good life. I am certain that we will have a plan to deal with climate change.

You also talked about things we said we wanted to do....

[*English*]

The Chair: Minister, I have to stop you. I've been too generous.

This is the last question for the minister. His hour is up.

Mr. Scarpaleggia, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Climate change must be fought across the globe. So it is important for Canada to help developing countries limit their greenhouse gas emissions.

To what extent will those projects funded by Canada internationally play into our commitments made under the Paris agreement?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Climate change is still a global security issue that knows no borders and requires a global solution. That is why Canada is playing a key role internationally in protecting the environment.

To support the Paris agreement, since 2015, our government has provided \$2.65 billion in international climate financing to help developing countries transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

Earlier this year, Global Affairs Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada launched a series of consultations with our partners to find the best ways to enable our country to continue to make strategic, targeted and significant investments.

We will continue to support that important work, as the global fight against climate change has concrete benefits for all Canadians.

• (1700)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Madam Chair, do I have enough time to ask one or two other questions? I hope so.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, you do. You have about three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's great.

Earlier, we were talking about targets regarding which, I hope, Parliament will legislate through a bill that will be submitted.

What is the provinces' role in the setting of those targets? Are you holding consultations with industrial sectors and the provinces to define those targets? What kind of progress has been made in that process?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Of course, we have to hold consultations with provinces and territories, but also with industry, environmental groups, aboriginals and other Canadians interested in those issues. We have also promised to create an organization that would advise us on achieving the zero net emission target by 2050. That is something we will be doing over the short term. That organization will have to have discussions with industry and all other stakeholders. It goes without saying that a lot of discussions and consultations will be required. We have to all work on it together in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Minister, we've been looking into zero-emission vehicles. I was wondering if you could tell us how you see the clean fuel standard contributing to the expansion of the fleet of zero-emission vehicles in Canada. I know that the clean fuel standard in California has been quite effective in advancing the objective of having more ZEVs on the road.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The clean fuel standard is a very important part of Canada's climate plan. It achieves 30 megatonnes, which is almost 10% of the reductions Canada needs to achieve in order to meet and exceed our 2030 climate goals. It is a measure that focuses on how we reduce the carbon content of the fuels we use.

We're not the first to do it. It's been done in British Columbia and it's been done in California. It's been done in a number of different places around the world.

There are different ways in which to satisfy that reduction in carbon content. Some are energy efficiency measures. Some are a blending of ethanol and other biofuels. The third is accelerating the

deployment of zero-emission vehicles, which essentially lowers the overall carbon content of the vehicle fleet.

We believe that the clean fuel standard is going to accelerate work in all of those areas. It will accelerate employment. It's going to accelerate technology. It's going to be something that's very good from an economic perspective for very many Canadians.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

Is my time almost up, Madam Chair?

How are the consultations on the Canada water agency coming along? As you know, this is one of my—

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. I had muted myself. Your time is up.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay. That's too bad.

The Chair: Minister, I guess you've given us your hour. If you'd like to take your leave, you can go and we'll keep the officials here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

[*English*]

It was going to be for an hour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Yes, of course, but, since all the parties, aside from the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, have been able to ask three sets of questions, could the minister be with us for another five minutes, so that we can each ask questions for a minute and a half?

[*English*]

The Chair: It is going against the order in which we pose questions, and this is a routine proceeding that has been adopted. Unless I have unanimous consent on it, and the minister has time, I cannot change the routine proceedings.

• (1705)

Mr. Dan Albas: We are okay with adding an extra five minutes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Unfortunately, I am actually late for my next meeting.

The Chair: Sorry, we don't have unanimous consent, so I will have to then let the minister go. You can ask the questions of the departmental officials.

Monsieur Albas, you are—

Mr. Dan Albas: I was just waving good-bye.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you, everybody. I appreciate your time and the conversation.

Certainly with respect to Mr. Rasmussen, follow up with me again. We'll set that meeting up with Wanuskewin.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have the departmental officials. The first round of five minutes goes to Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would like to start by thanking our witnesses today. I know they're very committed to this country, and I hope that they can answer the questions.

I will start by asking in regard to Parks Canada. The Parks Canada budget is declining significantly this year. I know there were budgetary impacts from free admission to parks as part of the Canada 150 initiative, as well as the increased demand this year due to COVID.

How do those realities reconcile with the significant decline?

Mr. Andrew Campbell (Senior Vice-President, Operations, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you, Mr. Albas. I will ask my colleague, who is the vice-president of finance, if she is on. Catherine, are you there?

Ms. Catherine Blanchard (Vice-President, Finance Directorate, Parks Canada Agency): Yes, I'm here. Thank you very much for the question.

Yes, you're right. There is a decrease in authorities for Parks Canada this year. It's primarily related to our infrastructure funding, and it's more of a timing issue. We will be accessing additional infrastructure funding in our supplementary estimates B and through other vehicles. It shows as a decrease a main estimates to main estimates comparison, but it isn't really a true decrease. It is more about timing.

We will, as I said, be accessing funding in supplementary estimates A for capital, at \$141 million. We're also carrying forward some funding from 2019, about \$130 million, into 2020-21. Again, it's more of a timing issue and a function of how the estimates process works.

I will add, though, that our capital funding does sunset later on, at the end of March—March 31, 2022—but for this year, it is not a real decrease; it's more of a timing issue.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay.

I have been hearing serious concerns from across Canada about the planned decommissioning of Weatheradio broadcast towers. I know the government is consulting and believes they are only looking at towers in areas with adequate cell service, but let me tell you that in areas of my riding as well as others, such as Kelowna—Lake Country, there is zero cell service in certain parts, and we are served by a tower that is up for decommissioning.

What is the status of this consultation, and will you proceed with removing these towers?

Madam Chair, I do hope that—

The Chair: Yes, I'm stopping your time. Who is answering?

Ms. Diane Campbell (Assistant Deputy Minister, Meteorological Service of Canada, Department of the Environment): Madam Chair, my name is Diane Campbell—

The Chair: Okay. Madame Campbell, could you please answer the question?

Ms. Diane Campbell: I will proceed. Thank you so much.

I'm the assistant deputy minister of the Meteorological Service of Canada. Thank you very much for that question.

We offer a range of services to Canadians over a multitude of dissemination channels. Weatheradio has been one of the lesser known channels to many Canadians. We have used it for many years, and its origins were very much using VHF radio frequencies.

We embarked on this consultation so that we could understand how Canadians are currently using that service. We sent out letters. We also put broadcasts on Weatheradio channels in order to generate that feedback.

This is part of an active consultation. The information and the feedback we're getting are being looked at right now. For those communities and those individuals who have raised concerns, we will be pursuing their use actively with them so that we understand the nature of their needs, and then we will be reassessing, based on that information.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Well, I would just say, first of all, that many areas on the water in my riding have no cell service. I've heard from boaters. I know this is true right across Canada. In Manning Park, we recently had a Vancouverite lost. Even the Prime Minister mentioned his case. The weather in Manning Park can change quite quickly.

When will you announce which towers will be removed, and can people still try to stop this?

● (1710)

Ms. Diane Campbell: We will be looking at a second round of consultations. Right now we haven't finished getting the first round through. Our intention is to engage directly with some of the communities themselves.

We want to do two things. First, we want to see whether there are other mechanisms to be able to meet their needs. You've given a good example. Some of the examples from other communities raise different issues and perhaps different service options. At this point, there will be no plans to announce any closures of stations until that round has been fully looked at and we've had the chance to connect with the users themselves who have raised the issues.

Mr. Dan Albas: My suggestion is, again... Saying that the fact that there's cell service means that you don't need this...when cell service is clearly not in many parts of my riding and quite honestly across this country. My suggestion would be to really look at those two, because they are not as you've said in the consultation website.

Regarding aquatic invasive species, what is the amount budgeted for addressing this issue in British Columbia?

The Chair: Are people having technical difficulties? I have to stop Mr. Albas's time.

Who's responding, Mr. Albas? Did you have a particular person to respond?

Mr. Dan Albas: Well, we have so many wonderful public servants here, I'm sure there's someone who knows exactly what I'm speaking about.

Mr. Niall O'Dea (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Services, Department of the Environment): The reason we may have been struggling to find you an answer, sir, is that aquatic invasive species are under the responsibility of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. As such, we don't have an identified line item for them within our own main estimates.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. So I take it there's no budget for this.

Mr. Niall O'Dea: Not within Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The Chair: With all my time-stopping, Mr. Albas, your time is up.

I'll now go to Mr. Schiefke for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here today.

When our government took office, less than 1% of our coastline was protected. Today, that number stands at nearly 15%—a tremendous improvement in very little time.

Thanks to a partnership between our government, Nature-Action Québec and the City of Rigaud, in my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, we recently announced an initiative to protect 63 hectares of Rigaud Mountain.

In the main estimates, Environment and Climate Change Canada is seeking \$319 million for nature conservation, an increase of around 7% over last year's main estimates.

Can you tell us how that additional money will help our government continue to advance nature conservation across the country and ensure a healthy future for generations to come?

Mr. Niall O'Dea: My name is Niall O'Dea, and I am the assistant deputy minister of the Canadian wildlife service.

The expenditure is certainly tied to our 2018 investment of \$1.3 billion and will help us make great strides in our efforts to protect biodiversity all over the country.

As far as species at risk go, we are seeing significant progress in the protection of priority species such as caribou. We have seven conservation agreements with our provincial counterparts and three with our first nations partners. We have agreements covering 11 priority places in the country, and we are seeing major progress thanks to collaborative planning to protect species at risk in urban interface zones.

We have also seen considerable improvement when it comes to protected areas. We are aiming to have 16.6% of our land mass protected by 2023, in co-operation with first nations, the provinces and territories, and other partners. That is equivalent to increasing protected areas by three Nova Scotias—

• (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. O'Dea, could you hold your microphone closer to your mouth, please? The interpreters are sending a note.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Niall O'Dea: My apologies.

Yes, I certainly will, but that was the end of my answer.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you.

[*English*]

The next question I have is for Parks Canada representatives.

The agency was to lead the Government of Canada's preparation for the 2020 International Union for Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress in Marseille, France, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the congress has been postponed, unfortunately, until an undetermined date. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected international co-operation on the conservation of nature?

Ms. Darlene Upton (Vice-President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada Agency): Thanks for the question. I'm the vice-president of protected areas establishment and conservation with Parks Canada. I can start, and perhaps my colleagues might have something to add as well.

A few things are happening now. A number of conferences have been postponed. The World Conservation Congress has been postponed twice, and we're waiting for rescheduling. Additionally, the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress has also been postponed until June 2022. However, a number of elements are going on online.

Recently, Canada voted on over 100 motions related to the World Conservation Congress. That coordination, both domestically and internationally, feeding into that process, along with conversations and a transition to a more virtual...are allowing a lot of international discussions to continue. Again, despite the pandemic, we have a number of agreements with other countries, such as Mexico and the U.S., and the work under those agreements continues.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you.

Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: Seconds.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: I guess I'll just use my time to thank the witnesses again for being here and for providing their responses and their expertise, and thank them for the incredible work they're doing on a multitude of very important files for Canadians.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you may go ahead. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Good afternoon.

Thank you for being here to answer our questions.

My first question is about numbers, since one of today's dominant issues is obviously greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions have been on the rise since 1990. Back then, we were at 602 megatonnes. In 2017, the last year for which calculations are available, emissions stood at 716 megatonnes. Do you have more recent numbers?

[*English*]

The Chair: May I make a request, please? Respond quickly because their time is very precious. I clock them off, but I've stopped the clock.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Jones (Assistant Deputy Minister, Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office, Department of the Environment): I will simply note that the greenhouse gas inventory that counts emissions has historically been produced and submitted to the United Nations every year and is made available on our website. Emissions projections based on federal, provincial and territorial measures are also conducted on an annual basis, and those emissions are projected to decrease significantly, but as the minister has noted, there is a remaining gap of about 77 megatonnes based on our most recent projections.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: One of the reasons why it seemed as though emissions were decreasing is that the base year was changed as time went on.

Nevertheless, I will move on to another topic, electrification. As you know, it is doubly important. It is important environmentally, and for Quebec, it is extremely important economically. In terms of the newly announced funding for electric vehicles, does the department plan to enhance what the transportation sector will be offering when it comes to purchase incentives?

● (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: Who is responding? I have to stop time again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Helen Ryan (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Sorry. Can you hear me? I was having an issue with my microphone.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you for your question about incentives for the purchase of low-emission vehicles.

As you saw, the government allocated funding in the previous budget for the purchase of these vehicles and for infrastructure. The funding is significant and supports much of our efforts to increase the number of low-emission vehicles.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: How much time do I have left?

[*English*]

The Chair: We now go to Madame Collins for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The departmental results report shows that the ECCC target of 21% improvement in emissions from light-duty vehicles wasn't met, and that there was only about a 16% improvement. The clean fuel standard that folks have been talking about is a key part of the pan-Canadian framework on climate change. It has been delayed and back-end-loaded in terms of the reduction standards.

How does ECCC or this government really expect to meet the emissions reduction targets without putting these strong standards in place in the near term?

Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Hi. I can respond to that.

There are a bunch of components to that question.

On the clean fuel standard, we did indeed delay the rollout. We have back-ended it. That's quite deliberate, in response to two issues. One, of course, is the reduced capital available for investments at the moment due to the pandemic. The other is just the reality that for some of the major decarbonization activities that we're hoping to promote, it will take a number of years for those investments to actually result in reductions. That's appropriate to phase in the reductions.

Nonetheless, we do anticipate that by 2030 the clean fuel standard will drive—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you so much. I'm just going to jump to my next question, which is about the actual spending on the low-carbon economy fund, which was 50.2% under budget. I'm just curious what the reasons for this underspending were. It was 2018-19 actual spending. How and to what extent have these kinds of underspending issues been addressed?

The Chair: Who is responding? I've stopped your time, Ms. Collins.

Mr. John Moffet: We have a small technical issue here. Matt Jones is getting his headset reapplied. He'll probably be appearing as Helen Ryan.

The Chair: Fair enough.

Mr. Ryan or Ms. Ryan, would you like to continue? You have 15 seconds.

Oh, I'll have to stop it again.

Mr. John Moffet: I would perhaps suggest that we get back to Ms. Collins with the answer so that we don't further delay the questions.

The Chair: Her time is up, but I don't want her to go without being answered. This is our last round.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I would love the 15- or 20-second answer. I would also love for them to follow up with some written material if there's more information beyond those 15 seconds.

The Chair: Ms. Collins, I'll be a little generous with you because otherwise it's not fair, given all these technical difficulties.

Who is responding now?

Can somebody else respond?

Ms. Carol Najm (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Finance Branch, Department of the Environment): I will, Madam Chair, if you'll permit me.

In answer to the original question, why the full monies were not spent on the LCEF, the high-level version is that due to COVID and the need for negotiations, the work didn't occur in time to use the money this fiscal year. That money has been reprofiled to the next fiscal year, when we will be able to continue the conversation and ensure that it is spent.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madame Collins, for your patience.

We will now go to Monsieur Godin, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the Environment and Climate Change Canada officials for making themselves available this evening. Now you, too, understand the technological reality of a hybrid Parliament and committee. I am actually here in person.

My question is about Environment and Climate Change Canada's estimates.

Under the 2019-20 main estimates, the total statutory vote is \$94,569,422, but under the estimates to date, the vote is \$206,017,525.

How do you explain the difference? What did you accomplish with the additional \$111 million?

Ms. Carol Najm: Thank you for your question.

[*English*]

I will tell you that we have a number of...time-limited funding, where we need to go back and renew certain programs. That explains, high-level, the difference in funding available from year to year. We would be happy to provide the committee with additional details more specific to the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: A comparison of 2019-20 and 2020-21 reveals something interesting. Under main estimates, the total statutory vote is \$206,017,525 for 2019-20, and \$204,984,083 for 2020-21. The total budgetary vote under main estimates is \$1,828,095,018, and the total budgetary vote under estimates to date is \$1,962,992,504. To that \$1,962,992,504, some \$40 million has been added.

You are dragging along this so-called temporary expenditure. You start with a budget and you add to it. Here is the problem. You have to come back to the main estimates, not the estimates to date. If, as you say, they are temporary expenditures, they shouldn't be pushed into next year.

[*English*]

Ms. Carol Najm: Many of these programs are multi-year and have varying profiles from year to year. Depending on where it is and where the money is needed, the amount of funding per year will vary. That's why there are some shifts in the numbers.

Overall, when we do get—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: I have to stop you there. I understand, but does that mean you did not budget properly when you determined that the total statutory vote for the 2019-20 main estimates was \$94,569,422? It went up to \$206,017,525. The same mistake is made year after year, with Canadian taxpayers' money. You have to be mindful of that.

Ms. Carol Najm: We are very mindful when it comes to our department's expenditures.

That said, I can tell you that we work with many partners and stakeholders to deliver our programs.

Mr. Joël Godin: Ms. Najm, I'm going to stop you there. I got the answers to my questions, even though I am not satisfied with them.

I'm not sure whether this next question is for you. It pertains to the goal of protecting 17% of Canada's land and freshwater by the end of 2020, and protecting 25% of these areas by 2025.

As I understand it, between 2005 and 2019, the proportion of protected land and freshwater went from 10.8% to 12.1%. That leaves 5% with a month and a half to go before the target deadline.

Is that realistic?

Ms. Carol Najm: I will ask my colleague Mr. O'Dea to answer that.

Mr. Joël Godin: Very well.

Mr. Niall O'Dea: Thank you, Ms. Najm.

Thank you for your question. As far as our projections to date are concerned, we are aiming to achieve the target by 2023. It's going to take a little longer than anticipated because of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19—

• (1730)

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you. That's fine.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, you are out of time. Thank you.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Chair, I had a great question lined up, but I understand we must respect the clock.

[English]

The Chair: I know. You could always send your question over to the witnesses later.

The last one goes to Mr. Longfield.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thanks, Madam Chair.

My first question is for Environment and Climate Change Canada. I'm looking at the main estimates. I've been seeing some significant changes over the last few years. One of them is on the line item with contributions in support of "Predicting Weather and Environmental Conditions" going from \$480,000 two years ago to \$3 million, and then this year to about \$2.9 million.

I'm also noticing on your department evaluation plan that you're planning an audit on environmental climate services in 2021-22. It looks like some significant things are happening there. Could you maybe clarify where those investments are happening and how things are changing?

I was up in the Arctic a couple of years ago and saw Environment Canada up there doing some tremendous work. I'm hoping that has something to do with predicting climate.

Ms. Carol Najm: In terms of the funding you see and the changes in the main estimates from year to year, it is a function of sunseting funds. Within that co-responsibility of predicting weather and weather conditions, we have a number of programs that are on various renewal cycles. For that reason, you will see the fluctuation in the dollars in our main estimates from year to year.

I will turn it over to Diane to respond to the second half of your question.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

Ms. Diane Campbell: Thank you very much.

Building on what my colleague Carol has said, the Meteorological Service of Canada does have a base budget that supports the basic monitoring infrastructure across Canada. You might have been up in Eureka, perhaps, when you saw that.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Exactly.

Ms. Diane Campbell: Yes. That's our weather station. We let weather balloons go and we do base climate monitoring of temperature, etc., there. It's one of the most unique places in the world to do so.

The base budget for those types of activities is ongoing. However, when we are able to acquire funds to upgrade infrastructure, let's say, or to clean up, to adjust programs or to do innovation programs, usually that is time-bound, and that is what my colleague Carol was talking about.

We are in the midstream of some programming right now. Others have wound down. Also, of course, we're thinking about what the needs would be for the future.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you. That station had been defunded under a previous government. It's good to see that we're making those investments. Even on the runway to get in and out, that was very important. I'm glad to see that reflected in the mains.

I have another question on a line item going up for the Impact Assessment Agency. The contributions have gone from \$800,000 two years ago to \$2.5 million last year. In the coming fiscal year, the mains have it at \$3,060,000. I also see that there are audits coming up.

I sit on the public accounts committee—can you tell? I'm looking at where your audits are heading. To me, that's a predictor of some investments that are probably changing some functions within the department. Could you maybe comment on where that money is going?

Mr. Terence Hubbard (Vice-President, Operations Sector, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): Actually, I'll ask my colleague Brent Parker to comment on the grant and contribution programs and where those dollars are going.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

Mr. Brent Parker (Acting Vice-President, Strategic Policy, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): Thank you for that question.

You're quite right. There are new dollars that are coming into the agency. Those grant and contribution dollars are flowing into four new programs. We have existing funding that goes into supporting projects, so that's our participant funding program. That goes out to the public and to indigenous groups to support their engagement in actual project reviews.

The new funding you're noting is going into three different streams. One is a research program. It's really aimed at building the capacity across Canada when it comes to expertise in impact assessment because, as you will know, the environmental assessment agency grew, in terms of its mandate, to look at the full spectrum of impacts from projects. That research program is supporting that.

Then there is the indigenous capacity program. That particular program is new. It's supporting activity with indigenous communities to support their development in being prepared and engaging in project reviews, and—

• (1735)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Terrific. Thank you.

We're out of time—

The Chair: Yes, we are out of time.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: —but my constituents want to know that there is impact, and I'm glad that you're investing in it.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

I thank all the witnesses.

Committee members, we're not adjourning until we vote.

If the witnesses would like to log off, please, the committee can vote. By the way, don't forget that the clerk will send you the requests made here from any of the members.

Committee members, we were studying the main estimates. We now have to do votes on different vote items. You can say "yea", "nay" or "on division". You can't lower the amount; you can agree to it.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$858,313,855

Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$89,793,534

Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....\$829,881,990

(Votes 1, 5 and 10 agreed to on division)

IMPACT ASSESSMENT AGENCY OF CANADA

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$51,710,081

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$18,939,140

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

PARKS CANADA AGENCY

Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$898,652,518

Vote 5—Payments to the New Parks and Historic Sites Account.....\$9,992,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall I report the votes on the main estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Perfect.

Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, you've been good. Have a wonderful weekend.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Chair, just before you move on, while I appreciate that we're all becoming acquainted with this hybrid format, I really have to say that we should be having recorded divisions, unless we agree. Perhaps we could have some discussion between parties.

If we had just done that, saying we oppose all of the estimates, we could have done it in a block vote, with one recorded division. I said "no". In some cases, I didn't hear anyone even say "on division".

Certainly I do think we can improve on the committee functioning when it comes to taking a recorded vote.

The Chair: This type of vote is yes or no, or you can say "on division". You're right; somebody did say "on division". Then the chair has to decide to do it on division, but it has to be taken individually. These are estimates. Main estimates votes have to be taken one by one, and it's not recorded. It's normal practice.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Chair, we do have the capacity to ask for a recorded vote, and that really should be how we do it. It should be either by unanimous consent or by a recorded vote. I'm just asking perhaps to talk with the clerk. Maybe we can have some consideration among all parties. I have to say that's not the way that I think we can conduct ourselves. I'm not saying this is any criticism of you or anyone else. I just think it should be either a recorded vote or unanimous. Clearly, I said "no" in every single case.

The Chair: I heard you.

With that, are there any other questions before I move to adjourn?

Thank you, everybody.

The meeting is adjourned.

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