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• (1645)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 17 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

We're meeting today, pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), to consider the supplementary estimates (C), 2020-21, referred to the committee on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

Everyone knows the rules, but I'll mention them anyway.

Members may speak in either official language. There's interpretation. You may choose the language you wish to listen to before speaking. Please unmute your microphone. To the witnesses and members, please address all your comments and questions through the chair.

Welcome, Minister. We also have deputy minister Christine Hogan, and Stuart Parley, director general, financial management directorate and deputy chief financial officer.

From Parks Canada, we have the president and chief executive officer, Ron Hallman, and the vice-president, finance directorate, Catherine Blanchard.

Minister, you have five minutes for your opening comments.

[Translation]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I'm happy to meet with you for the fourth time as Minister of Environment and Climate Change to discuss the 2020-21 supplementary estimates (C) for Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Parks Canada Agency.

• (1650)

[English]

I am joining you today from North Vancouver, which is on the traditional ancestral and unceded territories of the Squamish, the Tsleil-Waututh and the Musqueam first nations.

As the chair noted, I am joined by a number of officials.

It was about one year ago tomorrow that I first appeared at this committee as Minister of Environment and Climate Change on the supplementary estimates (B), a day before Parliament shut down due to the pandemic.

It has certainly been a difficult year for all Canadians. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, I have appreciated our ongoing engagement even if only through virtual means.

Since we last met in December, the focus of the government has remained primarily on supporting Canadian families and Canadian businesses to get through the COVID crisis.

Taking action on climate change, addressing biodiversity loss and the scourge of the pollution in our national environment are clearly critical issues. Our response to them will define the future that we will bequeath to our children and grandchildren.

The strengthened climate plan, introduced by Prime Minister Trudeau and me on December 11, includes new and strengthened federal measures to not only meet but to exceed our Paris Agreement target.

[Translation]

The supplementary estimates (C) for 2020-21 reflect an important part of this work. For Environment and Climate Change Canada, it amounts to a net increase of \$70.7 million that would bring the department's total authorities to \$2.1 billion.

[English]

The largest request for \$55.1 million supports habitat protection measures and direct recovery actions to stabilize populations of the central group of southern mountain caribou in British Columbia, while supporting the livelihoods of workers and their communities.

Another request to access \$9.2 million in operating funds allows us to continue delivering on the 2019-20 pollution pricing proceeds through the climate action incentive fund.

There is support for the continuous operation of the Dr. Neil Trivett Global Atmosphere Watch Observatory in Alert, Nunavut, and a \$2.4-million increase will help the department to modernize the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations. There is also \$1.3 million to maintain shared assets on hydrometric monitoring sites. These advances will be offset by provincial and territorial partners.

Finally, there are transfers from the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food for the greening growth in the agriculture and agri-food sector, and to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to support the national climate education proposal from Ocean Wise.

[*Translation*]

And now, Mr. Chair, let's turn to Parks Canada.

Last spring, Parks Canada took measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 by temporarily suspending visitor access and services at national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas across the country. Between June and December, Parks Canada gradually reopened sites, allowing over 13.4 million visitors to benefit from being outdoors and in nature in a safe and responsible way.

[*English*]

Through the 2020-21 supplementary estimates (C) the Parks Canada Agency is seeking to increase its reference levels to the amount of approximately \$54.2 million. Up to \$54 million of this amount will cover the potential shortfall in revenue over the last six months of the fiscal year from visitation and areas such as the sale of permits and services. There is also a transfer from Fisheries and Oceans Canada to support work related to the federal contaminated sites action plan.

Finally, there are other adjustments, which do not change the agency's reference level: a \$9.3-million internal vote transfer to the new parks and historic sites account and a \$10-million internal grant transfer to implement the impact benefit agreements for the Nahanni National Park Reserve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, I'm going to stop here.

I hope this summary provides members with an overview of the 2020-21 supplementary estimates (C).

I'm happy to take questions now from members of this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you again for being with us this afternoon.

We will begin the first round with Mr. McLean.

Welcome, Mr. McLean. I hope you enjoy your time with the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

You have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair and distinguished colleagues.

[*English*]

As well, welcome, Minister. Thank you very much. I understand that you take these hearings very seriously. I appreciate that you're here, and I'm glad that I get a chance to ask you some questions. I'm going to get right into it.

In the 2019 election, your party, your government, pledged to plant two billion trees as part of its \$3-billion effort to deploy natu-

ral climate solutions. At the committee I'm on, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources, department officials and others indicated that there were no plans at that point in time, a year later, to actually facilitate that. As a matter of fact, after delving into it somewhat, we found out that they didn't know how they would do that, where they would do that, when they would do that or even, after much probing, why they would do that.

You may not be aware, but the forest industry itself plants about 600 million trees a year—three for every tree it cuts down—so about 400 million, if you say are going to be planted.... Your government's plan doesn't seem to be more than five years' worth of that. It's going to do this over 10 years.

Our forest stock in Canada is about 380 billion trees. Your plan for natural environmental solutions amounts to one half of one per cent of our carbon storage through trees over the next 10 years. As a further fact, most of these trees don't start absorbing significant carbon until they're at least 10 years old, so you're not accomplishing anything by 2030.

Can you square this for any of us, please, about how this contributes to our country's decarbonization efforts?

● (1655)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Well, sure, and thank you for the question.

First of all, I think you probably just need to make sure you're differentiating things. If in fact you're talking about the forestry industry, you're talking about planting trees for the purpose of regeneration and then effectively cutting them down. The program we have in place, the two billion trees, is really about planting trees in areas where they essentially will continue to exist for the purpose of carbon sequestration, but also for biodiversity enhancement.

We committed to two billion trees. You would have seen that there was money in the fall economic statement, \$3.6 billion starting in 2021-22, to plant those trees. There is an expression of interest already out there for the early stage in terms of planting this year and for later stages in terms of ramping that up over time.

I would tell you that certainly you are correct that the number of megatonnes in the short term from the trees is not enormous, but by 2050, it is quite significant, and there is an enormous co-benefit from a biodiversity perspective in terms of planting trees along seismic lines to protect boreal caribou. In fact, that's part of the work we're doing with the Government of Alberta to protect boreal caribou. Absolutely, it's an important part. Canadians want to see nature-based solutions as part of the way in which we fight climate change.

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you. I didn't quite follow all that.

It was \$3.16 billion that was actually your budget for this, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer came out immediately thereafter and said that the minimum this is going to cost is \$5.94 billion, and that's if you're planting on level farmland, as if there are not hills or valleys.

Also, then your government comes out and says, effectively, that it wants to start in the cities. For the baseline we're talking about here, when you're talking about it, what would that be, about \$160 per tree? The Parliamentary Budget Officer came out with a base that is about twice as high per tree as it is on level land, on farmland.

In fact, when you talk to Trees Canada, which plants trees in urban centres, where your government says it's going to initiate this, the minimum it's going to cost is \$25 per potted tree. If you think about that, if one-fifth of the trees you're talking about planting are actually in urban areas, you're already way over budget.

Square this for me on how you guys are actually coming up with numbers about how this is going to impact Canadians.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'd be happy to do that, although I would correct things that you said.

Planting some of these trees in urban areas is important. It's important in the context of creating shade and helping to further nature and opportunities for nature within urban environments, in the same way that the development of urban parks will be. The vast majority of the trees, however, are not being planted in urban areas and nobody has ever said that they were.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer did a review of this program. I would just say to you that the Parliamentary Budget Officer chose certain types of trees that would not normally be those you would plant in the particular ecosystem you're looking at. We remain confident that the number and amount we've allocated is sufficient to be able to plant the two billion trees.

It was \$3.12 billion, but it was overall \$3.6 billion for nature-based solutions, because there's money in there for wetlands and grasslands restoration as well.

Mr. Greg McLean: The Parliamentary Budget Officer's numbers were at the low end of where industry was as far as what it costs to plant trees, so I'm not getting that. However, let's move on. Let's talk about another matter.

In the last week, your government has moved forward and has finally become engaged with the provincial governments to pursue carbon capture utilization and sequestration, something that I and my party have been pushing as a strong solution to our decarbonization efforts in the economy. As everyone acknowledges, it represents the most effective way to decarbonize our economy. In contrast to planting trees, the environmental results from this approach will manifest very quickly, not just starting 10 years from now.

Given the overwhelming evidence in support of this environmental solution, my question is, what took you so long?

[Translation]

The Chair: You have 25 seconds, Mr. Minister.

[English]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: First of all, carbon capture and sequestration is a tool. It is not a climate plan. A climate plan is a comprehensive approach to figuring out how you're going to reduce emissions in every sector of the economy. It includes technologies, but it's not solely technologies. Carbon capture is useful, and that has been clear for some time in specific applications, but it is not a climate plan. To be honest with you, the Conservative Party's riding on this under Stephen Harper and under Andrew Scheer, I mean, people in Canada recognize that this is not a plan. It is just not a plan.

• (1700)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Minister, you may continue your response shortly.

Mr. Baker will be sharing his six minutes with Ms. Saks.

Mr. Baker, you have the floor.

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

[English]

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

Minister, I have three minutes, but I don't know if you want to finish what you were—

The Chair: I seem to have lost Mr. Baker, but the question was whether you wanted to continue your answer, Minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Am I not waiting for his question?

The Chair: Mr. Baker is having some problems. His connection is frozen.

Basically, he was inviting you to continue your answer.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Certainly.

I was with Premier Kenney and other ministers in the Alberta government yesterday to talk about the creation of a carbon capture and sequestration working group as part of federal-provincial co-operation.

Minister Nixon and I have been talking about this for a long time as part of an approach that also looks at other areas in which the Alberta government is certainly interested in working—hydrogen, biofuels and a range of other things.

Clearly, we have to have solutions that are solutions in all regions of this country. I would just say that for folks who understand the climate issue in depth, carbon capture and sequestration can be a useful tool; it is not a climate plan.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister. I hope you can still hear me. I apologize for the Internet issues.

Minister, we spend a lot of time in Parliament discussing laws that should be passed to protect our environment, but of course, so much of protecting our environment depends on enforcing the laws that are already in place. In the supplementary estimates there is a request for funding to modernize the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations in the amount of approximately \$2.4 million.

Could you tell us which laws this funding will allow us to enforce and how it will allow us to better protect our environment?

I believe I have a minute left in my time before I turn it over to Ms. Saks.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: For the enforcement part of it, obviously you have to have good laws. Also, you have to be able to ensure that you're enforcing those laws. This money is to enhance our ability to ensure that we are effectively enforcing a range of laws, including the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and the Fisheries Act. It is the beginning of a \$50-million enhancement of our capacity to ensure that we have not only the tools internally, but also the boots on the ground to do the work that needs to be done.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister.

I pass the rest of my time to Madam Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Baker, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Wilkinson, this is the first time we're actually able to meet, albeit virtually. It's an honour to be on this committee, and it's a pleasure to meet with you today.

Many of my constituents are benefiting from the climate action incentive and support the price we put on carbon pollution. Unfortunately, there are still quite a few misconceptions about how the price on carbon pollution and the climate action incentive actually work to reduce emissions.

I notice a line related to climate action incentive in the supplementary estimates. Can you explain how the program works in provinces that do not have a price on carbon and the environmental and financial benefits Canadian families will receive from it?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's a great question. Thank you very much.

Let me start by being clear about what putting a price on pollution is for. Pricing carbon pollution isn't about raising revenues. It's about recognizing that pollution has a cost, empowering Canadians and encouraging cleaner growth and a more sustainable future. It is a price signal.

It is widely seen to be the most economically efficient way of a market-based mechanism to reduce carbon emissions. The vast majority of Canadian economists and other economists would tell you exactly that.

Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, all of the proceeds collected under the fuel charge on fossil fuels must be returned to the jurisdiction that they were collected in.

The majority of Canadian families are actually better off. They get more money back than they pay in the price on pollution. Also, we use some of the money to help businesses and schools to actually enhance their energy efficiency, reduce their energy costs and cut their greenhouse gas emissions.

Canadians know that putting a price on pollution will help reduce emissions and protect the environment for future generations. Returning proceeds from carbon pricing pollution addresses affordability. It is an important part of a really thoughtful and comprehensive climate policy.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you so much, Minister.

As a mother I'm concerned about the future of my kids. My constituents are concerned as well. The importance of fighting climate change is paramount to them. Having Canada and the federal government be a leader and an enthusiastic fighter in the fight against climate change is a priority.

The estimates outline a number of climate-oriented programs to reduce GHG emissions. Can you provide your department's targets and the steps being taken to really get us there?

● (1705)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Sure. As you know, we developed in 2015-16 the pan-Canadian framework, which was the first thoughtful and comprehensive climate plan that Canada had. It identified an enormous number of reductions, but there was still work to do. In December, the Government of Canada brought forward a strengthened climate plan that showed how we will not only meet but will exceed our current Paris Agreement targets.

We did that through regulations, through an escalation on the price of pollution and through significant investments with respect to accelerating climate action.

We're now working with the provinces and territories and others on increasing ambitions to achieve even greater emission reductions by 2030 to align with the goals of the Paris Agreement. We've indicated that we will be bringing a new target to the earth summit in the United States in April.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you so much.

Mr. Chair, I'm just keeping a check on the time.

The Chair: You have about 35 or 40 seconds.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have one more question, Minister Wilkinson.

I live in a riding in north Toronto, and we like to describe ourselves as the city within the park. It's become even more true during the pandemic as we seek out green spaces, like Toronto's incredible ravine system. I actually live next door to one of them. It's a wonderful escape from the city, but it's also essential for wildlife conservation, air quality and storm water management.

The estimates show additional funding for nature conservation programs. Can you describe the government's goals to preserve and conserve our natural heritage and the steps being taken to achieve that?

The Chair: It will have to be a very brief description, Minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Nature conservation and expanding natural spaces has been incredibly important. We've done a lot of work, and we have a long way to go to the 25 by 25.

Certainly urban parks, ecological corridors and things like the ravines are areas we really want to focus on with respect to ensuring there are opportunities for people who live in urban areas to experience nature.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I turn to Ms. Pauzé, I'd like to point out that we will be closing the meeting at 6:45 p.m. So we will have two hours.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Minister and the other guests for being with us today.

Please keep in mind that the configuration gives me a limited amount of time in the second round of questions. I would appreciate it if you would formulate your responses with the understanding that I have very little time available.

Mr. Minister, your department's programs have nice names: the climate action incentive fund, the clean growth program, and the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. Those are great program names.

Today, under the climate action incentive fund, the amount you are seeking is \$9.1 million. Recently, in February, the International Institute for Sustainable Development released a report on federal subsidies to the fossil fuel sector. It contained program names like the strategic innovation fund, the energy innovation program and sustainable development technology Canada, among others.

These programs allocated their funds, to the tune of \$55 million for 2020 alone, to commercializing clean technology for the oil and gas sector. In actual fact, they allocated them to funding four oil and gas projects in 2019 and 2020. They provide assistance for greenhouse gas reduction initiatives in the fossil fuel sector.

Let me go back to the report, which emphasizes the lack of transparency with respect to public funds that still find their way to the oil and gas sector, as well as government program names that are sometimes misleading and that create confusion about where those funds are going.

I understand that we cannot put any questions to the Bank of Canada, to Export and Development Canada or to the Department of Natural Resources.

However, Mr. Minister, in terms of the programs in your purview, can you confirm to me that the climate action incentive fund does not support projects related to the fossil fuel industry?

If I have the Chair's permission to make this request, I would like to receive details on the projects that benefit from the climate action incentive fund.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for the question.

Of course, our government has committed to eliminating ineffective subsidies by 2025, and we will.

However, the climate action incentive fund you are talking about provides grants to small businesses to improve their energy efficiency. Full details are provided in a transparent manner and, if you want them, they are totally available, of course.

• (1710)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I would indeed like to receive details of the projects since 2015, because I have been in office since then.

I would also like to talk to you about the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. In the supplementary estimates (C), votes 1c and 5c, under funding to modernize the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, total almost \$2.4 million. The word "modernize" bothers me because we often see it used indiscriminately. Also, the commitment is not particularly clear.

On the other hand, in the Throne Speech, we saw plans to modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. You know, I very much regretted that the committee did not meet for basically half of 2020, and I am sure the feeling is shared by the members of this committee. I suspect that department officials have been working hard and I wonder if that commitment has kept your teams busy.

Is at least some of the nearly \$2.4 million allocated to planning your commitment to modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes, of course. We promised Parliament that we would modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and we have been working on it over the course of this year.

We want to enact the legislation perhaps in April or May. However, the Act has not been amended since 1999, and it has a lot in it. Also, in the chemicals management plan, under which we set out how they are used in this country, we still have a lot of work to do to make sure we include the environmental protections that Canadians want.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Last month, I spoke with people who have worked to study the 87 recommendations for modernizing the Act, such as Breast Cancer Action Quebec. I have also sensed concern at Mothers Step In, an organization that has grown across Canada. I would like to focus on this key commitment to people's health.

Could you tell us if any groundwork has been laid?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes. I can tell you that we have done some work. We have also been thinking about the recommendations that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development made in 2017. I know that we will be able to discuss some things when the bill comes before Parliament in the next couple of months.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will continue with Ms. Collins for six minutes.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here today.

You spoke in your opening statement about the importance of exceeding our climate targets, but the reality is that we are not on track to meet our climate targets. We're the only G7 country whose emissions have increased instead of decreased.

Climate accountability needs to be paired with climate action, and I don't see a sign of the kind of bold climate action that we need in these estimates. It's the kind of investments that would provide us with a just and sustainable recovery that other countries like Germany and France are making. Even President Biden has a \$2-trillion economic stimulus plan that is heavily focused on climate-related investments.

Small investments aren't going to cut it. We're missing this huge opportunity here in Canada to be a leader in the clean economy and to create good jobs that will help us fight the climate crisis. It feels like Canada is being left behind.

Why isn't this government providing investments that match the scale of the crisis?

• (1715)

The Chair: Minister, before you answer, could you move your mike up a little bit?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Is that better?

The Chair: Probably. I'll see if I get an email and I'll tell you.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Okay.

Thank you for the question, Ms. Collins.

I hear you and I agree with you in terms of the urgency of the crisis. However, I would have to disagree with you in terms of the urgency of government action.

We are on track to meet and exceed our 2030 targets. Canada, if you look at the climate plan that was released in December, has perhaps the most detailed climate plan that exists in the world. It is fully modelled, fully costed, and it only takes into account things that have been funded to date.

We have invested \$100 billion since 2016 in the climate crisis. We are actively working with President Biden. In fact, there's a new high-level dialogue, which I and John Kerry lead, focusing on how we can help to accelerate, in both countries, the climate action that we so desperately need.

Ms. Laurel Collins: You'll excuse me if I'm skeptical and I think Canadians are skeptical. We have missed every single climate target that we've set and this Liberal government has said before that we're on track to meeting. We are not on track to meeting our Paris commitments, and those Paris commitments are inadequate.

Perhaps you could talk about the specific additional actions through the pan-Canadian framework on climate change that are enough to close that gap and achieve our targets, because right now, it appears they're not.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Again, with due respect, they are, and they're laid out very clearly in the climate plan that was released in December. Those go all the way from the escalation on the price on pollution; enhanced regulations, including in areas like transportation; investments in working with large emitters to significantly reduce their emissions; building investments and transportation investments.

As I said, Canada now has probably the most detailed climate action plan in the world. It is actually very transparent in terms of being able to track progress, far more so than many of our European colleagues, and certainly far more than the Americans.

If you go through that and you look at the modelling that's in there, Canada is on track, and it is probably one of the only countries that can legitimately say that, because it is such a detailed plan.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Minister, in your opening statement, you talked about a net increase of \$70 million to Environment and Climate Change Canada. We are in a climate emergency. People are done waiting for action from the government that often says the things you're saying, the right things, but doesn't actually follow through.

The time for action is now. We are spending billions on a pipeline we do not need, that is not necessarily going to be profitable and is going to make it harder to meet our climate targets. We're continuing to subsidize the fossil fuel industry.

A report just came out: \$1.9 billion in fossil fuel subsidies in 2020. The Liberal government actually increased subsidies by a staggering 200%. Why are we not taking that \$1.9 billion this year and putting it directly into the kind of investments in a just and sustainable recovery and the sustainable jobs that we need right now?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Let me just clarify. The \$70 million is supplementary (C) and is backward looking. If you actually look at the climate plan that was released in December, there's \$15 billion in new investments, another \$14 billion in public transit and another \$10 billion in the infrastructure bank. That's \$40 billion in new investments.

With respect to your question regarding fossil fuel subsidies, we remain committed to phasing those out, but the number you cite is actually the money that was included for the clean-up of orphan wells and for diesel for indigenous communities, both of which your party supported.

Ms. Laurel Collins: When I talk about the billions of dollars this government intends to spend on the Trans Mountain expansion project and the billions of dollars being handed out to Imperial Oil and to other companies that took advantage of fossil fuel subsidies, those are not included in the examples you just gave.

However, I want to switch over to nature and nature-based solutions. One of the things we've been hearing from Nature Canada is that, through their green budget coalition, we actually require an additional \$4.8 billion over five years to fulfill Canada's commitment on protected areas.

Part of the government's conservation commitments are 25% by 2025, 30% by 2030. The government has talked a lot about nature-based solutions to the climate crisis. We're facing this biodiversity crisis, and these things are very closely linked. You've known that we're not close to meeting our climate targets or our commitments to conservation. Are we seeing actual adequate funding for these kinds of programs to help us conserve nature?

• (1720)

The Chair: We are at six minutes, so it will have to be a very brief answer.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I think that's a very important question, and certainly nature conservation is extremely important.

We've made enormous progress and we have a line on getting beyond the 17%, but you are right that there will be a need for initial investments to get to 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030. I fully expect we will be able to ensure that happens over the coming couple of years.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

We'll go to the second round now, starting with Mr. Jeneroux for five minutes.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for joining us.

Can you confirm that you're adding plastics to the toxic substance list?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As you are aware, a scientific exercise was done with respect to plastics. The finding was that plastics are harmful in the environment.

We have moved forward with a comprehensive approach to addressing those, including a ban on specific items, single-use plastic items, but more generally around a focus on keeping plastics in the economy. That is the focus of the work we are doing. I think Canadians are very much ahead of us on this in terms of ensuring that plastics are managed in a thoughtful way.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Simply put, do you believe plastics are toxic?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Well, plastics are not toxic in the normal sense of the word that people use pejoratively, and I don't think anybody says they are.

There is a range of plastics, the vast majority of which we need to ensure that we are keeping in the economy and that they don't leak out into the environment. That means higher recycling rates, better use of recycling content and working with people who produce plastic packaging to ensure they're doing it in a way that enhances recyclability. That's exactly what we're doing. We're working very closely with the provinces and territories on that work.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: If these aren't toxic, why are we adding them to the toxic substances list?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: We're not adding them—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, is this on the estimates?

The Chair: I imagine there's some money being spent on this initiative to reduce plastics—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Maybe that's the question.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I imagine Mr. Longfield is a little uneasy with the questions, but that's fine. The minister's doing okay. He can handle himself. He's been at committee lots of times before.

Back to the question, Minister, then why are we adding them to the toxic substances list?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I'm saying that the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is the tool we use, as a government, and as all governments in Canada, to ensure we are appropriately managing the way we deal with environmental issues. Certainly we found through the scientific research that was conducted that plastics are harmful in the environment and we need a plan to ensure that doesn't continue to happen.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Minister, on what date did you contact your counterpart in the U.S. to advise them that it would be a poor decision to cancel one of the most environmentally friendly pipelines in the world, Keystone XL?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: As you know, the Government of Canada advocated significantly to the new U.S. administration that we believe the Keystone pipeline should proceed, and certainly those discussions took place at a whole range of levels.

I have a hard time understanding how that relates to the supplementary (C) for Environment Canada, but certainly that was the conversation that took place.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Minister, what was the date, though? That's what I'm curious about.

What we have on record is that the first time you spoke with the special envoy to the president, John Kerry, was February 25, 2021. That's well over a month after the cancellation of Keystone XL.

Regarding one of the most environmentally friendly pipelines that exist between two countries that have a friendly relationship, you would think the Minister of the Environment would have made a call earlier than that to advocate on behalf of the Keystone XL pipeline. Can you clarify that's what you did?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, can Mr. Jeneroux in his question perhaps point to the supplementary estimates to share how this relates to the supplementary estimates? I fail to see how this relates to the supplementary estimates.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, it's a fair comment. You're talking about decisions being made in the United States flowing from an election platform in that country. I have to say that Mr. Schiefke has a point.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Schiefke, who I will also add to Mr. Longfield as feeling uncomfortable about the questions.

However, Mr. Wilkinson is doing well. He's answering his questions. He has come here before. He has been asked these tough questions and he has handled them before. I would point to some of the other questions by the other members that also weren't in relation to the supplementary estimates (C), such as in regard to downtown parks in Toronto.

It's a fair point. If the minister does not want to answer the question when it comes to when his first conversation was with the special envoy to the president, Mr. John Kerry, then it's up to him whether he wants to do that.

• (1725)

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, do you have a follow-up question?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Chair, I'm just looking for the date when he first advocated for the Keystone pipeline.

The Chair: Minister Wilkinson, the floor is yours.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: I would just say that I'm here to talk about the supplementary estimates (C). I don't know how this has any relation to the supplementary estimates (C), but as I say, the Government of Canada has advocated to a range of different folks within the Government of the United States, and certainly about this issue. At the end of the day, it was an election platform commitment that the President of the United States made, and he acted upon it against the advice that we were providing him.

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux, I've tried to take into account the points of order, and so on. I think your time is up.

We'll go to Mr. Longfield for five minutes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Welcome back, Minister. It's always great to have you at our committee where we can talk about the estimates.

Guelph is home to Canada's food university, focusing on a one health approach with healthy people, a healthy planet and healthy animals, to feed the planet with healthy plants and animals.

Vote 10c shows us a transfer to the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Agriculture is a committee that I also sat on last term, so it's interesting to see \$375,000 going towards agriculture.

Could you comment on how this funding is being used to promote sustainable agriculture practices?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's obviously a very important question.

Let me start by saying that the University of Guelph, which I know you are very fond of, is a terrific institution and has been a very valued scientific partner. In fact, I think over \$1 million in grants and contributions has gone to the University of Guelph since 2015 to look at things like phosphorus loads in Lake Simcoe.

The funding you referenced will support the cost of incremental analytical work done by the Smart Prosperity Institute and the University of Ottawa. It will explore avenues to decarbonize the agriculture sector and how non-regulatory policy instruments can be developed and used in the Canadian context to identify additional options for policies and programs to further promote clean growth and innovation in the ag and the agri-food sectors. These are important areas of emissions within the economy. They're also very important from an economic perspective in terms of a driver of growth, and we want to ensure that we're working with the agriculture community to move forward.

The Chair: Minister, I'm told that your mike still needs—

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Okay, but first I will ask the Minister to lift up his mic.

Go ahead, Ms. Pauzé.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I don't know if that solved the problem, but the interpreter was saying that she could not hear the Minister well.

The Chair: Maybe that was the reason. I advise everyone to speak more slowly, for the benefit of the interpreters.

Thank you, Ms. Pauzé.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I have a follow-up question.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you for pointing out the investments in riparian zones that filter water coming from fields and perform carbon sink action, some things that farmers have been doing thanks to the University of Guelph's developments.

On vote 1c, Madam Saks also mentioned the climate action incentive fund of \$9,180,037. Could you comment on the in-and-out nature of this? This afternoon, we had an announcement that St. James Catholic High School in Guelph was getting \$230,000 to replace their heating and ventilation system to become even more energy efficient. With investments in schools, as you mentioned, there's 10% going to schools and businesses, and 90% going to Canadians. What's the in-and-out nature of that? We see the expenses in the supplementary estimates, but what about revenue that's collected and then returned?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's a good question.

Certainly we put a price on pollution because our view is that it should not be free to pollute anywhere in this country. In the provinces that have chosen not to put their own price on pollution, our plan provides a rebate to Canadians every year at tax time through the climate action incentive and funds good projects that are helping Canadian businesses and schools, as you say, to cut pollution and energy costs.

As was noted in last year's greenhouse gas supplementary pricing pollution report, any difference between the rebate and the actual return is carried forward the following year, and we are obligated by law to return all of the proceeds to the jurisdiction from which they come. Certainly, that is important. We have also said in the strengthened climate plan that we will start to return the incentives to families on a quarterly basis rather than on an annual basis.

• (1730)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: As things escalate, the revenue going back also escalates—

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Exactly.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: —so that they can cover their expenses.

Thank you, Minister.

I have one final question. A few years back, I was able to go to Eureka to look at an Environment Canada weather station that also has a research facility built into it, on Ellesmere Island. It's headed by a Guelph scientist, Pierre Fogal, who is doing his research through the University of Toronto. I see in the funding “to safeguard the continuous operation of the Dr. Neil Trivett Global Atmosphere Watch Observatory in Alert”, just a little north of Ellesmere Island, \$750,000 in vote 5c.

Could you comment on the importance of Arctic research with regard to climate change?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Sure. This observatory, which operates continuously in Alert, plays a critical role in our understanding of the impacts of climate change. The observatory is the northernmost research facility of its kind and is globally important in terms of long-term measurement of greenhouse gases, short-lived climate pollutants, atmospheric mercury, persistent organic pollutants and ozone. We know that Canada is warming at a rate twice that of the global average, and the northern communities are bearing the brunt of that change and the impacts on biodiversity. A warmer—

The Chair: Thanks.

We're going to Madam Pauzé, Minister.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, Minister.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Minister, in your response to my NDP colleague, Ms. Collins, you said that some organizations supported your position and thought that the government had excellent environmental policies. Seriously, I would like to know which organizations you are referring to. Just this past Monday we welcomed Corinne Le Quééré from the World Meteorological Organization, who is also on France's High Council on Climate. She told us that Canada is the only G7 nation where greenhouse gas emissions were not declining, and she cited the United Kingdom as an example. So we have people telling us the exact opposite.

Which organizations support you?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: If you listened when we announced our climate plan in December 2020, you know that a lot of environmental organizations said it was a very good, comprehensive plan. Environmental groups, businesses, academics and almost everyone in the country except the premiers of Ontario and Saskatchewan said it was a step forward for Canada.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: All right. However, the plan has not yet been set in motion.

I will move on to another question.

At the beginning of this meeting, Mr. McLean addressed the issue of tree planting. It takes 15 to 35 months to produce seedlings, depending on the species. So you have to wonder if any could be planted this summer. Then, we need to think about the future, and that certain tree species are required to fight climate change.

How is this all planned out?

[English]

The Chair: Answer briefly, please.

[Translation]

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: You are right, Ms. Pauzé. We need to choose the trees based on the soil we want to plant them in. Of course, we have to have the trees too and they need time to grow.

• (1735)

We have a proposal for businesses. They can obtain a few trees we can plant this year. A request for information on that specifically is currently under way. The deadline is March 25. I can't give you a figure right now, but I will be able to at the end of the month.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Collins, you have the floor.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I'm going to follow up on Mr. Jeneroux's questions, but maybe from a different angle.

I read a recent National Observer article about the industry's opposition to the plastic manufacturing items being listed in CEPA as CEPA toxic. This is despite there being a very strong and legitimate basis for that listing. The article talks about how, to a layperson, the word "toxic" is associated with something poisonous or harmful, but under CEPA it has a bit of a broader definition. A substance can be legally designated as toxic if it harms the environment, biodiversity and health, or a combination of those things.

I'm acutely aware that your government has made some promises around banning harmful single-use plastics by the end of the year. Can you provide an update on the timeline for the listing, the ban and other essential regulations to address Canada's plastics crisis?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you for the comment.

Yes, you have it right in terms of the different ways in which the word is used. To a certain extent it's unfortunate because we end up getting into this debate, which is a debate about different things.

We continue to work very hard on the overall plastic plan. In fact, I met with my provincial and territorial counterparts just a few weeks ago to talk about an update with respect to the work on plastics. As you will appreciate, many of the tools are provincial, but plastic regulation is going to have to be consistent across the country for things like extended producer responsibility and those kinds of things, so that industry can actually ensure that they're doing things that have a big enough scale in terms of market.

We continue to focus on that. The status of that will be a key focus of the meeting of the environment ministers this summer. We

certainly are working very hard to make as much progress as we can over the course of the coming months.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Can I just get a confirmation that you are committed to the listing of this as toxic under CEPA? Do you have an update on timelines or timing?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: We went through the scientific process. That's the first step. We've gone through a public consultation process. I have not had all of that come back to me yet. Then I have to make a determination, but we certainly saw in the science that plastics are harmful in the environment. That would meet the bar for listing in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Redekopp now for five minutes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for being here.

I want to read from the proposed offset credit regulations that were released last week. It says, "Several provincial governments...are in the process of establishing...offset systems to support their carbon pollution pricing programs.... The federal offset system is intended to complement these systems." It gives the example of Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan, agriculture is obviously foundational to our province. It seems like the regulations establish time periods of 30 years for forestry products, 20 years for other biological projects and eight years for other projects. Under this framework a crop has to be in the ground for 20 years to claim a carbon credit. Of course, that's impossible if a crop has a four- to six-month turnaround time.

How do you say, on one hand, that this is part of the pan-Canadian framework and recognize the offset system that Saskatchewan is putting place, and on the other hand not recognize agricultural crops?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: This is the beginning of the conversation on offsets. What we published was an initial framework. Obviously, there will be comment on the initial framework. They're not actually the specific offset protocols. Those come next. One of them certainly is agriculture-related. The other one is forestry-related. There are four and there probably will be more going forward.

The idea is, obviously, to enable the creation of credits associated with sequestration options and to be able to monetize those for farmers or for others in the context of the industrial output-based pricing system.

In terms of the specifics around the years, maybe I can ask Christine Hogan, my deputy, to respond specifically.

• (1740)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: No, that's fine. I think I understand that part of it.

If Saskatchewan decides to recognize agricultural crops in its offset system, does it make sense that you will recognize them in terms of what your regulations will say?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's certainly the intent.

Obviously, the offset system in any province would need to have the kind of integrity with respect to the offset itself, as the federal system does, but the idea is to not duplicate things that some of the provinces may already be doing. The idea would be to align, yes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: If Saskatchewan decides that a six-month crop is part of its offsets, that will then be qualified to receive federal carbon credits, right?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Again, as I said, this initial framework was only published a week ago. Part of the work that's ongoing is to have these conversations with provinces and territories to ensure that we actually have a common understanding about how they will work together.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Okay.

Of course, as you know, Saskatchewan farmers are very innovative and actually are world leaders in the soil sequestration of greenhouse gases, so this is really critical to my province. In fact, what I find surprising is that farmers created solutions to these problems before anyone even knew these were problems. It's really important that the hard work that's gone into this over the last decades will be credited to them.

For example, in Saskatchewan, there are nine megatonnes of carbon that are captured annually by farmers. Will they be able to get their credits for that?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The carbon that is sequestered has to be additional. You can't go back to 1930 and recognize something that somebody did in 1930 to sequester carbon or we will never make the targets and we will never make the progress that we need to make.

Certainly, the additional.... I believe the date that we've been talking about is 2017, so anything that has been done since 2017 could potentially qualify. Again, this is an initial framework. The idea is to have conversations going forward.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I can tell you that in Saskatchewan there is going to be a lot more push for the nine megatonnes of carbon that are sequestered through agriculture to be credited towards this program, because farmers have done a lot of work on this over the years. How do you look them in the eye and tell them—

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Redekopp, the unfortunate thing is that we are where we are in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, and every different group in every different province and territory would make a similar claim. Manitoba makes the same claim for the investments it's made in hydroelectric power, as would British Columbia.

At the end of the day, if all you're doing is recognizing things that were done 20 years ago, you will never make the progress on climate action that the world needs to make.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Saskatchewan's goals are to develop and implement an offset system that creates additional value for actions that result in carbon sequestration or reduced emissions—

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Yes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: —so would you agree that if Saskatchewan's goals are in line with the proposed federal regulations, then you would recognize the equivalency of the Saskatchewan rules?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Again, that's a conversation that we will have, but certainly the intention is to align those things. We obviously have to get to a point where they are aligned. That's certainly the objective, yes.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Excellent.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We have enough time for a comment.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: That's fine. I'll end it there.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Saini, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, and officials, for coming here and spending this time with us. I find this very informative, and I offer a warm welcome to you and your officials.

I want to concentrate on the supplementary (C)s.

I see that in the supplementary (C)s there is an internal reallocation in Parks Canada for the creation and expansion of new national parks. Where I live in southwestern Ontario, we have the highest level of biodiversity in the country but also, unfortunately, the most species at risk.

What are the key opportunities that you see for expanding protected lands in southern Ontario?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That's a great question.

People often think about protected spaces in the north, in Tallurutiup Imanga or the Nahanni National Park Reserve.

Certainly, what we've seen through COVID-19 is how important natural spaces are to people who live in urban environments, so we need to think a lot about how we can actually ensure that everybody can have access to these kinds of spaces.

We've developed a three-part strategy. One part of it is really focused on the southern part of Canada, which is the area where most of us live. It really is around enhancing the natural spaces that exist—ecological corridors, things like the ravines in Toronto—and establishing urban national parks in conjunction with municipalities. We talked about Rouge National Urban Park in Toronto. Mr. Redekopp will be familiar with the conversations that we've been having around Wanuskewin.

We're trying to ensure that we're actually providing those opportunities but also providing space, particularly for areas that are of great ecological value.

• (1745)

Mr. Raj Saini: I want to touch a little on the agriculture sector.

When it comes to greening growth in the agriculture sector, what is the government going to do to make sure the sector is thriving in a sustainable way? What do you see about tackling food waste as a key part in helping our agriculture industry be both sustainable and competitive?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: The food waste issue is a really important one. I think there is a growing consensus that we need to take action to address the issue of food loss and waste and try to think more about those resources in the context of things we do.

A project was recently announced in the town of Petawawa about taking food waste and converting it into biogas, into renewable energy, for the purpose of carbon reduction, but also for the purpose of using what has been waste as a resource. I think those kinds of projects are going to be increasingly important. It's part of this broader conversation around the circular economy. We need to get to the point where we stop thinking about waste and we start thinking about everything as a resource. We started with plastics. We're starting the work on food waste, and we need to move our way through a whole range of other things in our economy.

Mr. Raj Saini: You mentioned the Arctic. I was pleased to see we're still maintaining our funding for scientific capacity in Alert. As you know, as climate change advances, the Arctic is rapidly becoming a centre of international interest.

How do you think this investment helps us understand and counteract the effects of climate change in the Arctic and protects our Arctic sovereignty in the world? The Arctic is opening up.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: It is opening up.

A whole lot of things are happening in the Arctic. I think this observatory will help us get a handle on how fast things are moving, perhaps better forecasting for some of the changes around climate adaptation, potentially around the melting of the permafrost and a whole range of those things that affect infrastructure, that affect shipping lanes. That part of the science is really important.

We are strengthening Canada's physical presence in the north through the renewal of the Canadian Coast Guard fleet and the ice-breakers in the coast guard fleet, and we are thinking a lot more about some of the emerging infrastructure issues that the north is going to face as climate change continues its inexorable march forward.

Mr. Raj Saini: I'm also pleased to see the funding for the protection of caribou and other endangered species here in the supplementary (C)s. I know that here in Canada, many of our species at risk live along our southern border with the U.S. Now that our neighbours in the U.S. are newly engaged on the climate change file, what opportunities do we have to work with them to help protect those species at risk?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: That is an area where I think great co-operation is possible. We've committed to 30 by 30 protection. With the Americans we've committed to species at risk protection. We've already seen them starting to move on the incidental take issue with the migratory birds treaty. We are working on the porcupine caribou herd in the north. We're also talking about ecological corridors, some of the ones where biodiversity moves back and forth across the border, like Yellowstone to Yukon, in the Appalachians, trying to ensure that we are providing protection that moves across the border in line with the movement of biodiversity rather than simply pretending that animals understand where the border exists.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

That brings our second round to a close. I know you had planned to be with us for one hour, and it's one hour and one minute. We thank you for making yourself available to answer a variety of questions from many members.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you again, Minister.

Now we're going to go to a second hour with many new witnesses. As a matter of fact, there are so many new witnesses from—

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: He's welcome to stay, Mr. Chair, if he'd like.

The Chair: I think he knows that. He knows we're a very welcoming committee. He had only slotted one hour because no doubt he had other matters waiting for him.

We have so many new witnesses. What do we do now, Madam Clerk?

Is everybody already on for the second hour, or do they need to join?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Isabelle Duford): Everyone who is here is tested. They can turn on their cameras. We can continue with the meeting.

The Chair: That's perfect.

I won't mention all the new witnesses who are here for the second hour, because if I did, we'd have little time for questions.

Thank you for being here, everyone from Environment Canada and Parks Canada.

We're going to start with Ms. McLeod for six minutes.

• (1750)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I'm actually going to pick up where the conversation left off. I think it's unfortunate that the minister did have to leave, because I think this is really some of the nuts and bolts of the supplementary estimates.

This is near and dear to my heart, but the biggest request in these supplementary (C)s was the \$55.1 million for the conservation of the central group of southern mountain caribou in British Columbia.

The population is estimated to be about 230 caribou, so that's \$55 million for the protection of about 230 caribou. Given the \$55 million, can someone tell me what you project those herds to be over the next 10 years? By year 10, what do you anticipate this herd level to be?

The Chair: I don't know who—

Ms. Christine Hogan (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): Hello, Mr. Chair. It's Christine Hogan here. I'm the deputy minister. I'm happy to help direct some of these questions as they come to us.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you.

Ms. Christine Hogan: I want to thank you very much for posing the question on the southern mountain caribou in British Columbia. It's an important area of focus for Environment and Climate Change Canada, and of course we made some important strides with a new agreement with British Columbia and first nations over the course of last year.

I'll direct this question to Niall O'Dea, who is our assistant deputy minister for the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Mr. Niall O'Dea (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment): Thank you, deputy, and thank you, Chair.

In respect of the question posed, specific projections on the growth and population over the coming 10 years are difficult to make, but I can speak to some of the very specific measures that are being undertaken with these investments to support the recovery of this particular herd. In—

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I'm sorry. I know my time is short. With so many officials and one introducing, it takes more time.

You don't have a projection for 10 years in terms of herd size. We have about 230 animals. We all agree that the southern caribou are important, so my next question is, within this agreement, how much of the money has been disbursed? Do you have a detailed plan that you can share with this committee in terms of the \$55 million and where every dollar of that \$55 million is going to go?

Mr. Niall O'Dea: I'm happy to speak to that.

We do have a specific plan in place. In respect of the allocations within these supplementary estimates, it's part of a total of \$75.4 million over four years that will go into this agreement. Of that, \$46.5 million is new funding from a recently approved TB submission that's reflected here, and \$28.9 million is in existing ECCC funds, some from our nature legacy funding from 2018 and a further \$1.6 million from permanent A-base funding.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Can you provide a line-by-line expenditure in terms of where those dollars are going? How much is going to a certain project? Is that available and can you share that with this committee?

Mr. Niall O'Dea: I'm happy to detail that. Forty-six million of that amount will go to the Province of B.C. to support land purchases, which represents a combination of the new funds identified in the supplementary estimates and existing nature legacy funding. Ten million will go to a community support trust to mitigate impacts to workers and communities, and B.C. will be responsible for appointing a trustee for that particular aspect. Five million will go to habitat restoration efforts, and a further \$2.6 million to first nations for recovery measures.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

The vast majority is going to land purchases. It sounds like you are looking at purchasing tenure from our forestry companies.

One of my concerns is that the province and the federal government had someone who was engaging, and I would say that government frequently engages, but they forget very critical players when they actually go into communities. I look at the Wet'suwet'en, where they forgot about talking to the hereditary chiefs. They look at the mountain caribou and neglect talking to mayors and forestry.

Yes, I recognize the importance of a nation-to-nation conversation, but on the neglect of the third party, do we have the mayors and the communities all on board with the plan?

• (1755)

Mr. Niall O'Dea: Yes, the framework of the partnership agreement that was arrived at between Canada, B.C. and the first nations provides for opportunities to discuss aspects of the implementation of the agreement with the broader stakeholder groups, including mayors and others.

As the planning work is advanced, with respect to both the direct conservation measures and efforts to secure critical habitat for the southern mountain caribou's recovery, there will be further opportunities for engagement with local communities, which are recognized to be important players in this particular conservation challenge.

[*Translation*]

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

We now go to Mr. Schiefke.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being with us this evening.

My first question is for the Parks Canada officials.

Nature conservation is one of the most important issues for people in my constituency of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. I see several items in the estimates along those lines, including Vote 1c, which provides \$9.3 million for national park expansion and more.

Conservation not only helps to protect our ecosystems and halt the loss of biodiversity, it also brings people closer to nature, something that has become increasingly important since the pandemic began.

What role has Parks Canada played in achieving Canada's conservation targets of 17% for terrestrial species and 10% for marine environments by 2020?

Similarly, does Parks Canada play a significant role in achieving the ambitious targets of 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030?

[*English*]

Mr. Ron Hallman (President and Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chair.

I'm Ron Hallman, the president and CEO of Parks Canada.

If I may, I'd like to introduce our vice-president of protected areas establishment and conservation, Darlene Upton, who could respond to the member's question.

Ms. Darlene Upton (Vice-President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada Agency): Thanks, Ron.

Parks Canada has made significant contributions to protected areas. In fact, we protect 3.53% of the 12.1% protected for terrestrial. That's the largest federal contribution—we make up 75% of the federal contribution—and the largest contribution of any organization. Similarly, on the marine side, we protect 2.12%, which is the second-largest contributor of marine protected areas. These are important contributions.

We have a number of projects under way that are new. They include two national parks, five national marine conservation areas and other expressed interests in future projects.

In addition, in terms of the species at risk, which was mentioned, we've made some significant gains. We protect 220 species at risk at Parks Canada. We've now developed 22 multi-species action plans, and we're on target for delivering our percentages related to

actions. We invest about \$2.5 million a year in specific projects for species at risk, and we have targets that we are on track to meet.

Thanks.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you for that answer.

Along the same range of ideas, in addition to contributing to the percentage of areas that are protected, could you tell us what Parks Canada is doing in terms of improving ecological integrity and the connectivity of national parks to the larger ecosystem?

Ms. Darlene Upton: Sure, I can continue.

There are three other things that are really important in terms of protected areas and they have to do with their management.

We have a program investing about \$15 million a year in projects for conservation and restoration. We're targeting 92% of our places as having ecological integrity maintained or restored. And we're currently at 86%, and on target for our 2023 targets.

In addition, I've mentioned the species at risk multi-species action plans. We're targeting 50% of all those recovery actions to be done, and we're currently at 31%.

Finally, as it relates to ecological connectivity, national parks are important places for species protection. They can also be important locations for connecting corridors. We have about 30 conservation initiatives that are currently ongoing. We are working with partners and indigenous and local residents to improve connectivity of our national parks.

Thanks.

• (1800)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Wonderful.

I have one last quick one, if the chair will permit.

A lot of work was done over the last year to ensure that Canadians could still, to some extent, appreciate our parks and take advantage of them during the pandemic. I'm wondering, with the upcoming summer season and spring season, if parks and historic sites will be open, and what measures are being put in place to allow Canadians to continue to enjoy them and to keep them safe at the same time.

Mr. Ron Hallman: Chair, that is such a great question. I'm going to pass it to a couple of colleagues in a moment, Michael Nadler and Andrew Campbell, perhaps.

I would like to take this opportunity, if I may, to express my immense pride in the dedication and the work of our 5,800 employees, who managed to go from complete shutdown in March to opening our protected areas on June 1 to welcome more than 13 million Canadians over the summer to have access to wide open places, mental wellness, physical wellness, while keeping all of our staff, and all Canadians, safe in those visits.

I wonder, through you, Chair, if I may turn to Michael Nadler, our vice-president of external relations and visitor experience, who is working with Andrew Campbell, our senior VP of operations, on key principles that will continue to guide us in preparing for the upcoming season.

The Chair: Mr. Nadler, you have about 35 seconds.

Mr. Michael Nadler (Vice-President, External Relations and Visitor Experience, Parks Canada Agency): I'll be very brief. Thank you, Ron, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

We will absolutely be opening our sites, and we're looking forward to a resumption of our operations come spring.

Across the country, visitors should expect a number of adjustments, just as they experienced last year, in terms of the operation of our places. Our focus has to be the safety of our visitors and their health but also our employees and all Canadians.

We're adjacent to hundreds of communities across the country, and we take very seriously our obligation to make sure we're implementing measures that respect regional, provincial and national guidance on health and safety and that we're also managing the choices made by visitors so that they're practising safe visitation at our locations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses who are giving us their time today to help us better understand what's going on.

I'd like to come back to tree planting. With regard to the promise to plant 2 billion trees, when the Minister appeared before us on December 2, in response to a question from Mr. Albas, he confirmed that no subsidies would be given to forestry companies.

Can you confirm that industries will not receive subsidies as part of this planting operation?

Ms. Christine Hogan: Thank you for your question, Ms. Pauzé.

[English]

As you know, this is a program that is led out of the Canadian forest service at Natural Resources Canada, and as a consequence, I would much prefer to defer to those colleagues. Of course, they're not here with us today, but it's a very important initiative and I know they would be happy to respond to this question at a future date.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

Under this program, we often hear that the right trees must be planted in the right place. Yet I met with people this week about that. They wonder which species will be planted, whether the trees will adapt to climate change, and whether, in 75 years they will indeed be in the right place.

The problem is that nurseries need guarantees before they invest. Yet no one in the federal government has met with the people from

the Office des producteurs de plants forestiers du Québec. So nothing is going to happen in the spring, even if conditions are good. It's impossible. Based on our calculations, you would need to add 40 million trees a year to keep this election promise. I don't know if anyone would like to comment on that.

I would like specific information to be sent to us on the planning of this government commitment.

Can a Parks Canada official respond?

• (1805)

Mr. Niall O'Dea: I can add a few words. I am the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Canadian Wildlife Service.

For this initiative, we are working very closely with our colleagues at Natural Resources Canada. It includes tree planting as well as wetland and farmland interventions. In terms of tree planting, I can tell you that the trees to be planted will be able to survive climate change.

Regarding the availability of the trees, we launched an expression of interest initiative a few weeks ago that will close at the end of March. We spoke to producers and nurseries across Canada to ensure that they will be able to handle this first phase of the program, which will last 10 years.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: You are indeed right about greenhouses. As I was saying, though, people need predictability, guarantees, before they invest. Nobody has met with them so far. So I conclude that nothing will be planted in the spring.

I'd like to ask Parks Canada Agency officials a question. Vote 1c contains a transfer of \$9.3 million for reallocating resources internally to fund the expansion and creation of new national parks, national historic sites and national marine retention.

Since Canada isn't meeting its biodiversity target, I'd like to know whether the agency will use the creation of these new national parks and marine areas to achieve its protection objectives.

The Chair: Who wants to answer that question?

[English]

Mr. Ron Hallman: Chair, I wonder if we might have our CFO speak to what that amount actually is, and what that account actually is, just for greater clarity.

The Chair: Would that be Ms. Blanchard?

Ms. Catherine Blanchard (Vice-President, Finance Directorate, Parks Canada Agency): Yes.

That account is a special account where we put money aside for the protection and establishment of protected areas. Right now what we're doing in these estimates is depositing \$9.3 million into that account. Currently, we have \$98.4 million deposited and set aside for the establishment of new parks and national historic sites. This is a key mechanism that we use in order to make sure we have funds available for all of our commitments around establishing new parks and historic sites across the country. This \$9.3 million is dedicated to nine specific areas that are in progress right now.

That's really the approach to how this account works and that's the purpose of the account.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you for that.

We'll go to Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a few follow-up questions.

First, to follow up on Ms. McLeod's question, I'm curious about the timing of the requested \$55.1 million in additional funding for conservation for the central group of southern mountain caribou in B.C. In February 2020 the federal government, the B.C. government and the West Moberly and Sauteau first nations concluded two conservation agreements for the southern mountain caribou under the Species at Risk Act. This is the first time we're seeing a request for funding for those agreements that were signed over a year ago. In 2020 the government reported the group of caribou had declined, as Ms. McLeod mentioned, to 230 animals. I'm curious to know why we were waiting over a year for funding.

Ms. Christine Hogan: I'll ask Niall O'Dea to comment on what the last year has looked like. As you know, shortly after the agreement was signed, we went into the COVID-19 situation. It's not that it's any type of excuse, but it probably did have an impact in terms of how quickly we were able to move forward. This remains a very, very big priority. We're looking to disburse these resources as quickly as we can.

Niall, did you want to comment?

• (1810)

Mr. Niall O'Dea: Thank you, deputy. I'm happy to put the spending into historic context.

Since 2009-10 we have disbursed \$3.8 million to support the recovery of the central group of southern mountain caribou in B.C. This past fiscal year and following the conclusion of the agreement last February, a further \$8.5 million from the Canada nature fund has been invested to support recovery efforts for this herd. The additional amounts that are identified in these supplementary estimates support us in the further ramping up of that action. In coming years, as identified for Ms. McLeod, things like the tenure buyouts, maternal penning and other conservation activities will be undertaken to support the conservation and recovery of this particular herd.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thanks.

I'd like to follow up on the questions from Madam Pausé and Mr. Schiefke about protected areas. It's been mentioned that Environment and Climate Change Canada set a goal of working towards conserving 17% of Canadian areas as protected areas. We haven't

met that goal. The actual result was 12.1% compared with the baseline of 10.6% in 2015. It doesn't look like we're actually on track to meet our conservation commitments.

In response to Mr. Schiefke, you spoke a bit about the steps to enhance conservation and to attempt to meet future targets. Does the department plan to set interim targets between 2020 and 2025 or between 2025 and 2030 for conserving Canadian lands? If so, when will these targets be published?

Mr. Niall O'Dea: I'd be happy to address that question.

Again, in terms of setting the context, budget 2018 provided historic resources to—

Ms. Laurel Collins: If you could, rather than doing context, just answer the question, because I have very limited time.

Mr. Niall O'Dea: Sure. So, 200,000 square kilometres of protection in the past two years, and there are 68 further projects currently funded that will see the establishment of new protected areas right across Canada. That is a historic change.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Sorry, in terms of looking at the future....

Mr. Niall O'Dea: Then in terms of the interim target question that you posed, the international target is for 2030, and the international target that we're working towards is 30 by 30. For Canada, 2025 is an interim target, which is actually unique globally.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay, so it sounds like there are no interim targets between those years of 2020 and 2025, or between 2025 and 2030.

Moving on to the enforcement pieces, Environment and Climate Change Canada is requesting funds to modernize the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations. I'm glad to hear it. The request is \$2.3 million for this purpose, and \$116,000 under capital expenditures.

Can you provide a bit more information about what that modernization will undertake? What practices, laws and regulations will this modernization affect? Really, are you drawing lessons learned from the Volkswagen defeat device case?

Ms. Christine Hogan: Thank you so much for that question.

I think, as Minister Wilkinson indicated in his comments, the amount that you see in supplementary estimates (C) is the first of an injection of resources into the enforcement branch and the enforcement work of Environment and Climate Change Canada so that we can move in this space towards more risk-based enforcement activity, and of course, have more boots on the ground, more enforcement officers in place.

I'm happy to turn it over to the chief enforcement officer, Anne-Marie Pelletier, who's with us today, to elaborate further.

Ms. Anne-Marie Pelletier (Chief Enforcement Officer, Enforcement Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you, deputy.

For supplementary estimates (C), what we're requesting in the vote is really to look at revamping our technology. We're going to be looking at developing a forensic lab that will provide us with even more modernization when it comes to investigation. We're also going to be looking at our database and how we can increase that so we can actually look at our risk assessment further down the road. It's an initial investment throughout the five years, but this is the foundational piece that we will need in order to do our modernization.

• (1815)

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We have time for one more round, but a slightly shortened round. We'll do four minutes and two minutes instead of the five and two and a half.

We'll start with Mr. McLean for four minutes.

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you very much.

I'd like to ask the deputy minister a question.

Supplementary estimates (C) ask for an extra \$70 million for your department, and the minister was kind enough to let us know that part of that is being sent once again to Smart Prosperity. These proxy organizations where all the money is being sent through your department include Smart Prosperity, International Institute for Sustainable Development, Institute for Sustainable Finance and Clean Energy Canada. At what point does the department realize that they are only a proxy for a bunch of organizations that are being funded by this government and that they are just a flow-through vehicle with no input to the government? How are the Canadian people going to feel about that?

Ms. Christine Hogan: Thank you very much for that question.

There is a very specific item in supplementary estimates (C) that is a flow-through to Agriculture Canada and then on to Smart Prosperity. That is a fact of the supplementary estimates. I would not necessarily agree with the premise of the question in terms of this being how we conduct business. I think at times there are external players out there who can contribute to advancing our work and we will use that tool, but the vast majority of the dollars coming into the supplementary estimates (C) that we're talking about today are investments directly into Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you.

Canadians will look at it and recognize it's a boondoggle. I have to call it here as straight as it is. It's a boondoggle. It's a funding boondoggle. I think I have to warn you that there comes a point in time here where that funding boondoggle is going to have to result in decreases in your department as far as the funding goes, but we'll cross that bridge when we get to it, obviously.

There are other issues here, and I want to follow on with the questions that were raised with the minister about the math around how we actually plant trees and pay for the planting of them. The

math is incredibly suspect, as even the Parliamentary Budget Officer has articulated very clearly. Industry has also said that the numbers are way too low. At what point in time here, between your department and the Department of Natural Resources, do we actually start to come to grips that we can't continue to just guess at these numbers? We actually have to put real plans on the table about where we're spending Canadians' money.

Ms. Christine Hogan: I would reiterate the very important leadership role of Natural Resources Canada on this particular piece of work contributing to the strengthened climate plan.

This is an area, particularly from Environment and Climate Change Canada's perspective, where we are very focused on the biodiversity impacts and the nature-based climate solutions orientation of these new investments related to tree planting. As my colleague Mr. O'Dea mentioned, that's a very important preoccupation for us in terms of how it contributes to the climate change mitigation story.

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you, but frankly, it's as clear as mud.

Let's look at your own department budget here. If you think about the clean fuel standard and the opacity around the financial modelling associated with the clean fuel standard, everybody is begging for the model. Finance Canada is asking for the financial model around the clean fuel standard. Industry is asking for it because, right now, it seems you're just guessing at what's going to happen as far as carbon dioxide reduction is concerned, which is our objective. We don't want to be spending money for the sake of spending money.

How do we cut the boondoggles and actually get some veracity around the numbers we need to get to here?

The Chair: Unfortunately, our time is up.

We will go to Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Really, the tone of our questions should be respectful of our witnesses and the time they've taken to be with us. I personally appreciate their time.

Mr. Campbell, it's great to see you again. I see your brother, Malcolm, at the University of Guelph, has a COVID thing going on that you don't, so I'll pass that on to him about family differences. However, thank you, all, for coming.

Guelph is drawing its water from a well. It's one of the only cities in Canada, especially our size, that relies on well water, so water conservation is as important to Guelph as energy conservation.

Ms. Hogan, when we're looking at the supplementaries, at what place does water come into the supplementaries? We have some general headings, but looking at the development of the Canada water agency, is that included anywhere in the supplementaries? What programs are we developing around water protection, water conservation and water treatment?

• (1820)

Ms. Christine Hogan: I appreciate the comments on the role the supplementary (C)s can play with regard to water. There is a fairly limited scope here in terms of the supplementary (C)s that are in front of us for the purposes of this committee appearance that relate directly to water.

As you know, though, we have been very actively engaging in consulting on the Canada water agency. It's a very important commitment for the government going forward. We look forward to working with the committee and seeing how this evolves in the months ahead as we work toward delivering on the government's commitment in this regard.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

I know you're working across departments. You've mentioned Natural Resources and the work they're doing on tree planting. I wonder about the development of clean technologies. We had some comments earlier about carbon capture and storage, a great opportunity for some Canadian businesses.

What steps is Environment and Climate Change Canada taking to advance our global position on clean technology?

Ms. Christine Hogan: That's a very important question and you're right to point out that this is something that is very much a priority across several federal departments. Of course, ISED has a very important role to play and has been managing some key programs in this area, and Natural Resources Canada, and of course, Environment Canada.

Members will have taken note that the strengthened climate plan outlined a number of new commitments in this area, including such significant programs as a new net zero accelerator and some new investments in the area around fuels. Environment Canada is very pleased to be engaged with our colleague departments on not just developing these programs, but also working with industry, the private sector and small and medium-sized businesses to bring these new programs and initiatives to life.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: You mentioned clean fuels, the clean fuel standard coming forward. Canada Gazette part I is there. The comment period is finished.

I spoke with the Canola Council of Canada last week and they had some really interesting opportunities around oilseeds and what that can do in terms of new fuel resources for Canada, clean technology solutions for farmers out west, as well as the soy farmers in eastern Canada.

Ms. Christine Hogan: One of the objectives of the clean fuel standard is to help to spur on innovation in this space. If there were time, I would invite my colleague, John Moffet, to elaborate a bit on that.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We're really at the end of the four minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, you have two minutes for a good question and a good answer.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I admit that I didn't understand the response to my question earlier about national parks and new national marine conservation areas. It was related to vote 1c, and I'd like the answer in writing if possible.

We've also talked a lot in committee about zero-emission vehicles. The 2017 performance of light-duty vehicles on greenhouse gas emissions, GHGs, improved by 17%, but the target was 21%.

Why hasn't this performance improved as much as expected? How many tons of GHGs have these vehicles emitted?

Ms. Christine Hogan: Thank you for your question. Ms. Ryan will answer it.

Ms. Helen Ryan (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Vehicles purchased by consumers had a larger carbon footprint than previous ones, reflecting people's preference for these larger vehicles, which emit more greenhouse gases.

Original estimates were based on a choice of smaller vehicles. In our modelling, the regulations called for a variety of vehicles. Our data reflect the vehicles that were produced during that period.

• (1825)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: But—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we've reached the end of the two minutes, Ms. Pauzé.

We'll now go to Ms. Collins for two minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Chair, I have a question for Parks Canada.

It looks like these estimates do not include appropriations for capital expenditures. If we allow for spending included in the main estimates and the supplementary estimates (A), the spending carried over from 2019 to 2020, capital spending for Parks Canada in 2020-21 will be \$145 million lower, or 16% lower, than the last fiscal year.

At the same time, the risk assessment in Parks Canada's 2020-21 departmental plan notes that aging infrastructure, inadequate level of recapitalization and maintenance, climate change and inflationary impacts mean that Parks Canada may not be able to maintain a sustainable asset portfolio posing threats to public safety, cultural heritage and the agency's reputation. The plan further notes that Parks Canada is continuing its efforts to secure additional funding in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to address the forecasted decrease.

How will this forecasted decrease affect the agency, its assets and its capacity to meet its objectives? How much additional funding will Parks Canada be seeking in the 2021-22 year, and how will these funds be used?

Mr. Ron Hallman: Let's go back to our CFO, Ms. Blanchard.

Ms. Catherine Blanchard: The amount of money in 2020-21 has gone down for capital by \$144 million, but in terms of how it will affect us, we still have \$750 million to invest this fiscal year in our assets, and that's exactly what we're doing. It is a decrease, but we still have significant capacity to continue to make progress on improving the condition of our assets.

It's really important to keep in mind that this fund relates to \$4.2 billion that the government has invested in Parks Canada for us to invest in our assets over the past five years.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Is that additional funding for 2021-22?

The Chair: Please make it a yes or no.

Ms. Catherine Blanchard: The additional funding for 2021-22 is \$220 million.

The Chair: That's perfect.

Ms. Catherine Blanchard: We will have a reference level of about \$500 million next year as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to the Conservative Party. Would it be Mr. Jeneroux?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: You bet, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Good. Go ahead.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: How many minutes do I have? Did you say four?

The Chair: You have four minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: A point of order, Mr. Chair, before we start Mr. Jeneroux's turn.

The Chair: I'm listening.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I thought I had two and a half minutes, but you interrupted me after two.

The Chair: Since we don't have much time left, I reduced the each MPs time from five minutes to four, then from two and a half minutes to two.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I can take three and a half, after that exchange, if it helps.

For Parks Canada, we've seen a number of festivals—I'm thinking of the Point Pelee bird festival that was just in the news—being cancelled in the last little while due to COVID. Do we have a projection of how much revenue was lost because of these cancelled festivals?

Mr. Ron Hallman: Could we go to Michael Nadler?

Mr. Michael Nadler: Sure, I can give a general answer, and then Catherine Blanchard may add some financial detail.

As you might be aware, we ceased operations briefly in 2020 to prepare and adapt to the COVID-19 context. Then we opened a smaller number of places than we might otherwise have, and we also had to limit some of the activities that would normally be available to visitors, such as events and activities like the bird festival.

Overall, our visitation across Parks Canada places was roughly 66% of normal over the visitor season and even into the fall. We're probably going to reach about 15.4 million from March to March in terms of visitation, which is down. Our revenues were impacted as well. Because we had to limit the offerings for visitors in order to ensure their health and safety and because fewer places were available, our revenues were roughly 36% of normal.

• (1830)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: So, you're down 66% in terms of people coming to the parks and then 36%, essentially, in revenue.

Mr. Michael Nadler: We were not down 66%. Our visitation was 66% of normal, so we were down 34%.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Okay.

Here in Alberta, there's Jasper National Park, and they're working with the municipality in terms of allowing things like sidewalk seating, things that are different from what Parks Canada is used to. Is that something that could be done more broadly across the board, across the country, versus going municipality by municipality? Has there been any discussion about doing something like that?

Mr. Ron Hallman: In fact, we have national guidance and direction about local decision-making and innovations by local field unit staff working with the communities in which they operate. Of course Jasper and Banff have their own administration, whereas we also have five other Parks Canada administered townsites. But yes, through the operational staff and functional direction and headquarters, we are looking to be innovative and supportive of the tourism industry of the local communities and residents and to provide creative new ways through which our visitors can experience the park safely.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: That's good to hear.

Mr. Chair, I'm good to cede the rest of my time.

The Chair: That's great. Thanks so much.

Mr. Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini: Actually, Mr. Baker will be going.

The Chair: Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses for being here today.

I'm going to start with you, deputy minister. If you want to delegate it you may, but I think this question is for you.

In the supplementary estimates, you've requested \$9.2 million in additional funding to support the climate action incentive fund operations. Is the climate action incentive fund delivering on its objectives, and could you explain why you would say that?

Ms. Christine Hogan: I think it's fair to say to the honourable member that the climate action incentive fund is delivering on its mission and mandate as it was set out to do. As you know, it plays a key role in the government's objective to protect the environment and obviously as part of our climate plans. The dedicated funds that come through the climate action incentive fund are usually channelled to small and medium-sized businesses and to schools, areas in which it's very important that we see progress on climate emissions reduction technology adoption and other such initiatives.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair: You have about two and a half minutes.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay.

Thank you, Ms. Hogan.

I'll continue on this line of questioning. The funding that's requested in the supplementary estimates is to be used to return carbon pollution proceeds to jurisdictions of origin. That's the language that's used.

I want to keep in mind when I'm at these committees that my constituents in Etobicoke Centre, and the rest of Canadians, are watching. They may not be into the weeds on all the policies, but they're trying to understand what actions we're taking to fight climate change.

With that group of folks in mind, could you explain why these proceeds need to be returned and why this is important in that fight against climate change?

Ms. Christine Hogan: I'm going to refer the question to my colleague, Matt Jones, who is the assistant deputy minister responsible for the climate action incentive fund. I think he may be able to point to a couple of specific examples for you.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Matt Jones (Assistant Deputy Minister, Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office, Department of the Environment): I'm certainly happy to.

With regard to the climate action incentive fund, obviously the climate action incentive payments represent the bulk of the funds that move back to Canadians, and that's embedded in the legislation associated with the carbon pricing system.

A thin slice, about 10%, is moved back to small businesses and schools through this programming. We've made investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and improved heating and ventilation in schools, which had an unexpected but helpful co-benefit in

the COVID era by improving air quality within schools and reducing emissions at the same time, so we feel good about the investments that we have been making. I think we have over 400 agreements with small businesses through the program.

• (1835)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Yvan Baker: That's fine. I'll leave it there. Thank you very much.

The Chair: May I take your time? I have a very quick question.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Please do.

The Chair: I think it's for Ms. Blanchard.

I have a historic canal in my riding, Sainte-Anne's canal. I was approached by Mayor Paola Hawa regarding a renovation project to the jetty and to the canal that was begun in 2016. The project was going very well and then we had the flooding of 2017. Apparently, that caused some damage to the work that was being done, so extra money had to go into repairing damage from the flood.

As I understand it, the initial 2016 project has not been completed, but because supplementary work was required as a result of the flooding, as I understand it, the budget is exhausted. I am wondering if there are plans to finish the original project as planned in the near future.

I don't know if you can answer that for me, Ms. Blanchard.

Mr. Ron Hallman: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'd like to refer that to Andrew Campbell, our senior VP of operations.

The Chair: Of course. Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Andrew Campbell (Senior Vice-President, Operations, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Along those lines, we certainly have it as one of our continued priority projects to look at. As I'm sure you're well aware, we did complete the front section of the jetty work, and we have a beautiful picnic area there that people have been using during the pandemic to get outside into nature and into the fresh air.

We look forward, when future funds become available, to being able to do the second part of that project.

The Chair: That's great. The mayor has told me that she is very pleased with the work so far. Thank you for keeping it on your radar.

Thank you to the witnesses. We had a very interesting discussion today.

Committee members, we need about five minutes to vote on the supplementary (C)s.

Again, thank you to the witnesses. Of course, you're free to stay to watch the vote if you'd like.

We have four votes: vote 1c, vote 5c and vote 10c under the Department of the Environment and vote 1c under Parks Canada Agency.

Shall vote 1c under the Department of the Environment carry?

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: Mr. Chair, may I suggest that we group them all together and then just do them on division? We've done this in the past.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: That sounds like a plan.

The Chair: Yes.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$11,460,893

Vote 5c—Capital expenditures.....\$2,166,000

Vote 10c—Grants and contributions.....\$55,122,500

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

PARKS CANADA AGENCY

Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$54,100,000

(Vote 1c agreed to on division)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux, for that time-saving suggestion.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux: I'm a team player, Mr. Chair. What can I say?

The Chair: I can see that.

Thank you to the members.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I will bring this meeting to a close.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, I'd like to add something.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Pauzé?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'd like to move two motions that were sent some time ago. I'd like to read them quickly so we can discuss them next week.

● (1840)

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Here's the first motion:

That all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

Now here's the second motion:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advise the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform required technical tests.

I wanted to table these motions today because, tonight and in the past, there have been times when the interpreters have had to say that the sound quality was poor. So I think moving these motions is justified.

The Chair: Perfect. Noted.

I forgot to ask the committee if they wanted me to report tonight's vote to the House. If I understand correctly, the answer is yes.

Have a good evening, everyone. That concludes the meeting. Thank you, and I'll see you next week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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