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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia



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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

It is 3:47 p.m., so unless there are objections, I intend to end this meeting at about 5:47 p.m.

This is our last meeting on Mr. Albas's plastics study, which has been very interesting. We have with us some familiar faces—Mr. D'Iorio, Ms. Ryan, Dany Drouin and Jacqueline Gonçalves, all from Environment and Climate Change Canada. We have an hour with the witnesses. Then we go in camera for some committee business.

How many people will be speaking for five minutes?

Ms. Helen Ryan (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Just one, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. That leaves more time for questions.

Who will be speaking?

Ms. Helen Ryan: It will be me, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Ms. Ryan.

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you.

Good afternoon. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you to discuss single-use plastics and our comprehensive approach to managing plastics pollution. I am pleased to be here as part of your study on the government's proposed ban on single-use plastic items and designating plastics under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. We appreciate the committee's interest in this issue.

Today I am accompanied by Marc D'Iorio, assistant deputy minister of the science and technology branch, and Dany Drouin, director general of the plastics and waste management directorate.

We all agree that we need to do better at managing plastics and keeping the value of plastics in the economy and out of our environment. Approximately 86% of Canada's plastic waste is land-filled, representing a lost value of up to \$8 billion. Plastic pollutes the water and harms wildlife when it enters the environment.

Canadians expect action. In recent surveys, 86% of Canadians have indicated their support for a ban on harmful single-use plastics. Industry recognizes the need for improvements across the value chain.

The government has developed a comprehensive plan to achieve zero plastic waste by 2030. All environment ministers under the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment have endorsed the goal of keeping plastics in the economy and out of the environment. We are working together to achieve this goal under the Canada-wide strategy and action plan on zero plastic waste.

We need to take action to eliminate plastic pollution and reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in landfills or the environment. This can be achieved through greater prevention, collection, innovation and value recovery, and by transitioning to a more circular economy for plastics. This transition involves new forms of plastics, new technologies that incentivize and support improved recovery of resources from products and packaging, and a shift in how we design and manage plastic products. Moving to a circular economy will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pressures on the environment while capturing the economic benefits.

Achieving reductions in plastic waste requires a national approach in order to address market issues, create the conditions necessary for investment in recycling and recovery, and support actions at all stages of the plastics life cycle. This means investing in research through Canada's plastics science agenda, innovation through the Canadian Plastics Innovation Challenges, and community action, for instance. Partnerships are critical to developing solutions to increase the recovery of plastics and ensure that producers are responsible for their plastic waste.

In October, Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada published a report entitled "Science Assessment of Plastic Pollution". The report summarized the state of the science and confirmed that plastic pollution is ubiquitous in the environment and that microplastic pollution poses an ecological hazard, including physical harm to animals and their habitat. The science assessment recommends taking action to reduce plastics, both macro and micro, that end up in the environment.

To support this broad agenda, ECCC will use the authorities under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, CEPA, to regulate certain plastic manufactured items. This will allow the government to enact regulations to change behaviours at key stages in the life cycle of plastic products, such as in design, manufacture, use, disposal and recovery, in order to reduce pollution and create the conditions to achieve a circular plastics economy.

The department also issued a discussion document that laid out an integrated management approach for plastic products to prevent waste and pollution. It includes regulatory and non-regulatory actions, such as restrictions or bans on selected harmful single-use plastic items; performance requirements for recycled content; and actions to improve, expand and make extended producer responsibility policies more consistent across Canada. The items identified as candidates for a proposed ban are prevalent in the environment and are suspected to cause environmental harm, have a low or no recycling rate, and have readily available alternatives.

The transition to a circular economy for plastics represents a significant environmental and economic opportunity. Improving Canada's approach to managing plastics could reduce carbon pollution by 1.8 megatonnes a year, generate billions of dollars in revenue, and create around 42,000 jobs.

I would like to close by thanking all of you for your work to understand the serious issue that plastic pollution presents. I look forward to the committee's recommendations on how to keep plastics in the economy and out of our environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

When we have just one witness giving a presentation, it certainly makes things easier. We can move right into questions, so we will begin the first round. Each questioner will have six minutes, starting with Mr. Albas.

Mr. Albas, you may go ahead. You have six minutes.

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

[*English*]

I'd like to welcome all of our guests here today and thank you for the work you do for Canadians.

I would like to start, Mr. Chair, by talking about a little bit of what we've heard from the disability community. I've spoken with some of my constituents; we've heard from the disability community as well as several witnesses here in the study that exemptions should exist in the bans for people who need these items for accessibility reasons. The reference is specifically to plastic straws.

What do you have to say in terms of the government's positions on exemptions for plastic straws for persons with disabilities?

• (1555)

Ms. Helen Ryan: Our discussion document laid out the proposed approach with respect to limiting or restricting uses for problematic single-use plastics, including straws, and noted the impor-

tance of being able to ensure that we can address and meet the requirements from an accessibility perspective.

That's one of the important considerations that's being taken into account in the approach for banning or restricting the use of straws.

Mr. Dan Albas: When I questioned witnesses in regard to this, none of them had any clue how this would work. If that's the case, then how does the government imagine people who need these products for accessibility will access them? This ban will shut down all production in Canada and presumably ban imports. How will restaurants get the stock to have on hand for persons with disability or accessibility issues?

Ms. Helen Ryan: In terms of how the regulatory approach will be designed for advancing the bans and restrictions on single-use plastics items, it's exactly these types of considerations that are taken into account in how the regulations get put forward. Considerations around how you ensure that people with certain disabilities are able to access the material they need are taken into account, and through the feedback that we've heard on our discussion document, we are engaging with those individuals to ensure that a proposed approach will address their needs and take their considerations into account.

Mr. Dan Albas: Again, I would ask: If there is a problem with supply, because domestically, it sounds like the government has said to industry that they will not produce these straws. Are you planning on implementing some sort of system to allow products from outside of Canada to be brought in? Wouldn't that create some questions about the management of that process? Would people have to apply for an exemption to bring in a substance from outside the country?

Ms. Helen Ryan: The details on how the bans or restrictions on the single-use plastic items have not yet been put forward, so the government has not indicated that it will put those types of restrictions in place and is in fact considering the feedback and comments that have come in from stakeholders with respect to these very important issues. The design of the regulation will take them into account.

In addition, when the proposed regulations are put forward, there will be a summary of comments that have come in, and there will be an indication of how those comments have been addressed so that stakeholders will have a clear understanding of how the proposed measure takes these issues into account.

Mr. Dan Albas: With all due respect, as a parliamentarian, I represent 105,000 people, and many of them have questioned the policy. For you just to say that you know that there's a problem, but we have no answers....

Look, if persons with a disability, some of the most economically vulnerable people in our society, have to absorb the costs of importing plastic straws while others get free ones in restaurants, wouldn't that be a scenario in which we would be punishing people with a disability?

Ms. Helen Ryan: It's not clear to me, though, why that would be the consideration that you feel is being put forward. As I mentioned, the discussion document laid out the important considerations that they would be taking into account in terms of having a design, a ban or a restriction with respect to single-use plastic items, including straws, so those very considerations about how to ensure that people with disabilities have the appropriate access to what they need to manage their disability is an important consideration. Those issues will be taken into account in the specifics of how the regulation is designed and where the point of application of the regulation is and how those flexibility measures are put into account.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm more confused. I'm happy to hear you have considerations, but is a ban no longer a ban? These are important questions and ones I hear about from constituents.

If several witnesses have suggested there should be accessibility exemptions, there need to be clear plans in place to make those happen. We need to be removing barriers to accessibility, not piling more on, and you have no answers on this. "The dog ate my homework" excuse I don't think will fly, particularly with the people who have told me that they already feel overburdened and say, "Am I going to have to carry around plastic straws on my person or on my wheelchair?"

It's incredibly disappointing that you don't have a basic answer to whether this is really even a ban.

• (1600)

The Chair: That's more of a comment than a question, because we've run out of time, but there will be opportunities to answer if the witnesses wish to in regard to questions from other members.

We will go to Ms. Saks for six minutes, please.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of our witnesses today. It's great to see all of you. Thank you for the hard work that you do on behalf of Canadians.

Ms. Ryan, in your opening remarks you spoke about our needing an integrated national approach to reducing plastic pollution with regulatory and non-regulatory actions. I'd ask if you could expand on the work the government is doing toward this and what is happening at the federal level. Basically, how is the government working with the provinces and territories to achieve this national approach?

Ms. Helen Ryan: The Government of Canada does have a comprehensive approach to managing plastic waste. As I mentioned, the discussion document that was issued in October 2020 laid out that comprehensive approach, including the approach to how we would look to restrict or ban single-use plastic items. It also talked about the work that we're doing with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment under the zero plastic waste strategy and the action plan, the work that's being done in support of innovation.

We're advancing in the development of standards of work with respect to product design, remanufacturing work, work necessary in terms of how you manage the recycling and what's needed to enhance the capabilities of the recovery system, in addition to work

being done to advance standards that are needed for compostability or with respect to recycled content, for instance.

In addition, we have a comprehensive science agenda. We've put out innovation challenges and have been supporting industry in the innovative work that they've been doing to create solutions and find new approaches. I believe you've heard from a number of those companies in the course of your study.

In addition, the department has been advancing work, along with Health Canada, with respect to personal protective equipment and innovative approaches to new alternatives for that as well, as that's creating a new pressure for the system.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you so much. I can see that quite a robust and comprehensive consultation process has been undertaken and will be undertaken as we move forward.

On that note, I'd like to ask a follow-up question, if I may.

Can you explain the regulatory process behind listing something on schedule 1 of CEPA? Does it happen out of the blue, or is there evidence and an explanation provided and a comment period for us to get feedback?

Ms. Helen Ryan: The way the regulatory process works is that in order for us to access our authorities under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, we must first add an item to schedule 1 of CEPA.

We put forward a proposal to add plastic manufactured items to schedule 1 of CEPA in the fall of 2020. There's a mandatory public comment period that's required under the legislation, and we seek public comments and feedback with respect to that.

In addition, under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, there is an opportunity for stakeholders to issue a notice of objection and to call for a board of review. In the case of our proposed listing of plastic manufactured items, we did get a number of notices of objections and calls for a board of review from stakeholders.

The minister has to have due regard for those notices of objections and the call for a board of review. A comprehensive review is undertaken to determine whether there is any new science that would change the findings that were used to support the decision to put forward a proposal to add plastic manufactured items to schedule 1 of CEPA.

In the case of the proposed order, the minister has come to the conclusion that there was no new science or information that would change the conclusion in his outcome in terms of his recommendation to add plastic manufactured items to schedule 1 of CEPA due to the concern I mentioned with respect to the danger they pose to the environment and to wildlife. Therefore, the minister has denied those calls in the notices of objection.

The next stage of the process is to finalize the order. Then the order goes through cabinet. If it's approved, it receives Governor in Council approval and becomes final.

From there, we now have access to our authorities under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and can put forward targeted measures to respond to specific issues. These can include some of the items I've already mentioned.

A proposal to put forward a regulation requires us to go forward with a draft regulation that, if approved, goes to cabinet and then is posted in the Canada Gazette, again for a mandatory 60-day public comment period. If there are trade issues, this period is longer. We then have regard for those comments and look to see whether further adjustments are needed.

A regulatory impact assessment statement accompanies a proposed regulation. It looks at the costs, benefits and impacts with respect to the regulatory proposal, and puts forward that information as well for public consideration.

We then publish a summary of comments and determine whether the regulation is going forward with changes or without changes. It then goes back to cabinet for consideration. If it's approved, it again is published in Canada Gazette part II as a final regulation, and will take effect on the coming-into-effect date that's put forward in the regulation.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go on to Madame Pauzé, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

Ms. Ryan, you mentioned the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment in your presentation, but if I look at what the council does, there is nothing about reducing plastic production. It's as though the council doesn't really work on the circular economy.

Phases 1 and 2 of the Canada-wide action plan on zero plastic waste attest to great ambition, but despite all the goals, action seems to be lacking. I'll explain what I mean. According to the timetable for phase 1, the completion date for developing extended producer responsibility guidance is December 2020. I want to point out that the plan pertaining to extended producer responsibility was adopted in 2009. Eleven years is a long time to wait for results, let alone a strategy. You, yourself, said that plastics pollution was a serious problem, that it posed ecological hazards. As I see it, an urgent issue should be dealt with accordingly.

Here are my questions. How many meetings took place with the various levels of government?

How do you move the work on extended producer responsibility forward?

Is there a timetable to move things along and start implementing actions?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you for your question, Ms. Pauzé.

I don't have the information on the number of meetings that were held, but we can get back to you with that. Many meetings took place, including with the team dedicated to the issue. Meetings also

took place at the assistant deputy minister, deputy minister and minister levels to discuss the strategy and the action plan.

• (1610)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I am going to stop you there, because we are talking about an action plan, one we have been waiting 11 years for.

I'd like to bring a recent Greenpeace report to your attention. According to the report, the Canada-wide strategy on zero plastic waste is doomed to fail. The action plan cites a 2019 Deloitte study indicating that up to \$8.2 billion would have to be invested to divert 90% of discarded plastic waste from landfill.

Do you make recommendations as to funding and programs to address Canada's plastics problem? Is that part of the work you do?

Clearly, support is desperately needed, but the sector receives a pittance compared with virgin plastics resin producers and the members of the petroleum ecosystem, which supplies the feedstock. They receive a whole lot of money, but little goes towards recycling or zero plastic waste efforts.

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you for your question.

We do have a work plan for the single-use plastics program.

You mentioned producer responsibility and the targets established in 2009, but they did not specifically address plastics. Now we have targets for plastics as well. As part of our work plan, we are developing program guidance, which should be released by the end of the year.

You also asked about funding. That's another dimension of the work plan. Before the end of the year, an infrastructure assessment will be conducted to identify the improvements that need to be made throughout the plastics life cycle. We are also working on an initiative for funding access. That's one of the specific components of the action plan. We are working closely with our provincial and territorial counterparts to that end. It is part of phase 1 of the Canada-wide action plan on zero plastic waste.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: If I understand correctly, then, part of your role is to make funding-related recommendations.

I want to ask about something that was raised at the committee's first meeting on single-use plastics. An expert on marine biology and the biological effects of plastics, Ms. Rochman, told us that the quantity of microplastics emitted into the Great Lakes could triple by 2030—that's not that far away.

Of the \$2.2 million for research under the strategy, how much is going to microplastics, with the Great Lakes in mind?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you for your question.

I'm going to ask Marc D'Iorio to answer that.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: All right.

The Chair: You have about 25 seconds, Mr. D'Iorio.

Dr. Marc D'Iorio (Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Technology Branch, Department of the Environment): Okay.

The request for proposals was based on different themes. I don't know off the top of my head how much was allocated to microplastics research and how much was allocated to research on the rest of the plastics life cycle, but we can get back to the committee with the information once we have it.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes, please. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bachrach, you may go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to Ms. Ryan and her team for being with us today and answering our questions.

My first question, Ms. Ryan, relates to the timeline. I believe the government has stated that the regulations are going to be in place by the end of 2021. Could you inform us as to whether things are on track and what might be the expected date for the regulations to be finalized and come into force?

The Chair: Was that for Ms. Ryan?

• (1615)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Yes, that's correct.

I think she's looking for something.

Ms. Helen Ryan: I am. I'm looking to make sure I don't mislead you with my answers. I apologize for that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It's not a problem.

Ms. Helen Ryan: With respect to the work to advance the regulations, as I mentioned in my earlier comments, we issued the discussion document, which laid out the proposal in terms of how we would approach it for public comments. We received a number of notices of objection and calls for boards of review. We have responded. The minister made his decision, recently published on the CEPA registry. His response was to deny the board of review. He did so after careful consideration of information that was put before him that the objectors hadn't raised sufficient uncertainty or doubt in the scientific consideration underlying the proposed order.

We're currently going through the considerable number of comments we've received on the discussion document as well. Specifically with respect to the approach on banning or restricting certain problematic single-use plastics items, along with other comments on the discussion document, we're targeting publishing the proposed regulations for public comments later on in 2021. In addition, as I mentioned, we're undertaking those follow-ups with the accessibility community to ensure that the design of that regulation will take into account their needs as well as others.

The government is on track to publish draft regulations in the Canada Gazette later on in 2021 for consultation, and then, following a period of transition, looking to implement the regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

Next, the six single-use plastic items that are proposed to be covered under the ban were selected in part on the basis of the existence of readily available alternatives. What does your department consider the readily available alternatives for the six items that are proposed for the ban?

Ms. Helen Ryan: In terms of readily available alternatives, those issues were laid out in the discussion document. We do look to see that there are available alternatives that fulfill the same purpose and are on the market. For each of the items, that assessment is undertaken.

For instance, with respect to stir sticks, an assessment was undertaken to determine if there are alternatives to a single-use plastic stir stick that can fulfill the same function. With respect to six-ring carriers—we call them that, but they aren't really six-ring carriers—we assessed whether there are alternatives that can fulfill the same purpose as that product, and so on.

Those considerations are assessed, and were assessed, with regard to the proposed items that were put forward in the discussion document in October 2020.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: In fulfilling the same purpose, how does your department consider reusable items? Is the definition of "same purpose" essentially another single-use item that isn't plastic? Does a readily available alternative include a durable, reusable item that serves that purpose?

Ms. Helen Ryan: In assessing whether an alternative is available, we consider a variety of factors, including whether there are durable and non-durable products and the ease of use and the purpose they serve. It's ensuring that the functionality that product was providing is still available to the users.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Ms. Ryan, if reusable products were considered as readily available alternatives, would there not be a greater list of items that would meet the criteria set out in the proposed ban?

Ms. Helen Ryan: With respect to the criteria for which we're assessing these problematic single-use plastic items, we're looking to see those items that are found in the environment and potentially causing harm. We're looking to see whether they're hindering or causing issues with the recovery or the recycling functionality of things. We're looking to see that there are readily available alternatives. The alternative has to suit the purpose. It's not necessary that a durable product will be able to serve the same purpose as a non-durable product. These items are all very different in their use and purpose.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to our second round now, a five-minute round. We'll start with Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Ryan, you were at this committee on March 17. I asked you about safety consultations with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It took a little bit, but you did confirm that you consulted Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the CFIA, and I also asked some witnesses about this.

On April 26, Philippe Cantin of the Retail Council of Canada spoke of the interaction between Environment and Climate Change Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. He said this:

They're not necessarily moving at the same pace when it comes to adjusting the requirements.

Most of the reason certain companies are going with plastic packaging is [because] it's the only cost...viable solution on the market to comply with the requirements from Agriculture Canada.

This was from a witness whose members include Loblaws, Safeway, Metro, Walmart, etc. They're concerned that you haven't actually done proper consultation.

If the food retailers do not have faith in your consultation process, why should consumers?

Ms. Helen Ryan: With respect to the consultation process that we've undertaken on the discussion document, it includes a 60-day public comment period and it includes outreach and engagement with specific communities, with the provinces and territories, with industry and with others.

With respect to the comment that you're hearing from committee witnesses, I think there's a distinction in the issue that they're referring to, which are plastics used for food conservation in grocery stores and so on. These are not the items in the proposed ban for single-use plastic items. The items that would relate to foodware are those that are used for take-out purposes, and they're specific ones with respect to what's being considered.

With respect to our work with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the CFIA, as well as with Health Canada, these issues are very important issues. Food safety and food security are extremely important, and we take them seriously and consider them in the design of any potential measure. Those factors are important, and the elements that have been put forward with respect to a proposed ban do not address those specific items.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Are Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the CFIA in 100% agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada on this proposal, or have they raised concerns as to how this may affect food security?

Ms. Helen Ryan: We have an integrated approach, and we work across government with respect to the approach on the zero plastic waste agenda. The Government of Canada's approach is one that is endorsed by the Government of Canada with respect to the proposals in terms of items that would be put forward for proposed bans. Those items are discussed and reviewed with our interdepartmental community, and we ensure that all of their issues and considerations are taken into account, because it is eventually a Government of Canada proposal that gets put forward. It's extremely important that issues of food security and other considerations are taken into account and addressed in the actions that are taken.

There are a number of measures that are advanced as issues of importance to them with regard to how we move to recycle content and with regard to other considerations. Those technical considerations are very live, and we engage with them on those to ensure that any potential measure is appropriately designed.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: On a different note, Madam Ryan, one of the justifications that Mr. Wilkinson used to ban plastics was a study by Deloitte that Environment and Climate Change Canada commissioned, called "Economic Study of the Canadian Plastic Industry, Markets and Waste".

Jim Goetz of the Canadian Beverage Association mentioned it, and when I went looking for it, wouldn't you know it? The ECCC had removed it from its website, and it's no longer archived under the open government initiative. I had to ask the Library of Parliament for a copy.

The report does talk about the benefits of plastics and the virtues of a circular recycling economy, but it barely mentions the ban and certainly makes no recommendation to ban plastics. Clearly the report your department is using to justify this policy doesn't match the policy outcome.

Why did Environment and Climate Change Canada remove this report from its website, and who gave the go-ahead to scrub it from the open government initiative, contrary to Treasury Board policy? Was it the minister's office?

• (1625)

Ms. Helen Ryan: I'm not aware of the Deloitte study's having been removed from the Government of Canada's website. I know that there was a shorter version of the report put forward because the actual report itself is extremely voluminous and a number of feet deep—sorry for my non-metric analysis—and that has been made available to those who've requested it. The full report was not put forward; it's too comprehensive.

I may ask my colleague, Dany Drouin, to provide further details with respect to that.

The Chair: Maybe he can do that in answer to another question.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Perhaps, Mr. Chair, they can provide a written report.

The Chair: Yes, a written answer would be.... You're asking for the full report or for a written answer?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: I want to know why it was removed from the website.

The Chair: Okay.

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

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ms. Ryan, for your testimony.

The primary purpose of CEPA is to "contribute to sustainable development through pollution prevention". The United Nations sustainable development goal 8 is to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment and decent work for all.

In your testimony, you mentioned a target savings of 1.8 megatonnes per year of GHG, and also 42,000 jobs. You've also talked about the integrated management approach. How are you going to be measuring these against sustainable development goal 8 on job growth and on sustainability?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Mr. Chair, I'm going to turn to Dany Drouin to answer that question.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

Mr. Dany Drouin (Director General, Plastics and Waste Management Directorate, Department of the Environment): The work to track the progress towards zero plastic waste, including the greenhouse gas emissions and the jobs, is under way.

We're working in particular with Statistics Canada. Currently we don't have these numbers tracked; we're developing the framework and looking at the data and data gap in co-operation with Statistics Canada.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

I'm imagining that municipalities or provincial governments might have to report this to Statistics Canada. When I was in business, I had to report to head office how many tonnes of plastics we were recycling as part of my annual report. There was a job in getting that data, but you're using Statistics Canada, correct?

Mr. Dany Drouin: Correct. It's through the materials flow studies that are published every second year, which you probably contributed to, as you pointed out.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I can also say it wasn't my most favourite part of the job, but I knew it was important.

Madam Ryan, we've had consistent feedback as we've had our witnesses speaking to us about how the recycling standards are confusing, or can be confusing, for Canadians when they vary across jurisdictions. We're looking at slightly different standards that some provinces, municipalities and territories are using. What's the federal government doing to help align standards so that stakeholders across government levels are sure that they have clear and concise regulations that follow for the users?

Ms. Helen Ryan: That's one of the elements that's actually being advanced through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. We are working to develop standards with respect to recycling, and not just recycling rates but recycling content.

I will turn to Dany Drouin to provide more details with respect to that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Drouin: Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

[*English*]

The work on recycled content and other standards is being implemented by the department, working closely with the provinces and territories.

On recycled content in particular, in the discussion paper that was published in October there were potential avenues and pathways to reach a 50% recycled content target by 2030, as per one of the goals of the Ocean Plastics Charter. As we are progressing to that analysis, we're working with the Standards Council of Canada

and other standards organizations to first scan the types of standards that exist and how are they used or not used and what lessons we can draw from that.

At that point we will be looking also to re-engage with stakeholders on the basis of the discussion paper to go into more details, and in between, as I should have probably mentioned, we've held significant stakeholder conversations on the—

• (1630)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Could I ask you this quickly? Are the provincial and territorial ministers also part of your stakeholder consultations?

The Chair: Answer very quickly, please.

Mr. Dany Drouin: Yes, correct. In the context of the CCME work, yes. For example, we had participants from PT—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll go to Madame Pauzé for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

Yes, I have two and a half minutes, but at least four questions. I'll start with the first.

In the course of our plastics study, the committee has heard from a number of innovative producers. They expressed concern over the fact that their packaging, which is compostable, biodegradable or made entirely of recycled materials, was subject to the ban.

Can you give producers some clarity on that?

Ms. Helen Ryan: I'd like to thank the member for her question, Mr. Chair.

As I think I mentioned, packaging is not one of the banned single-use items or substances. I know there can be confusion about that. Our goal is to develop standards on what is required to produce packaging, and that's also something we are working on with the provinces and territories under our action plan.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you for your answer.

As we all know, the use of plastics has skyrocketed since the pandemic began—doubling or even tripling in some cases.

How is Canada going to achieve the plastics reduction targets in the Ocean Plastics Charter, to which Canada is a signatory? The charter states that 55% of plastic packaging must be recycled or reused. Currently, only 9% of plastic packaging is recycled or reused, so the gap is very wide.

Does plastic waste shipped out of the country for recycling count towards the recycled plastics target?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the member for her question.

If I understand correctly, you are asking whether we include plastics recycled outside the country in the quantity of recycled plastics.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Precisely.

Ms. Helen Ryan: I'm going to ask Dany Drouin to answer that, as I don't know the answer.

The Chair: Please be quick.

Mr. Dany Drouin: The answer is no. The 9% comes from the Deloitte study, which does not include any figures for exported plastic waste.

The Chair: Could you raise your microphone, Mr. Drouin, so we can hear you better?

Thank you, Ms. Pauzé.

We now go to you, Mr. Bachrach.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to dive a little bit further into the criteria around the six items that have been proposed for the ban. I'm curious. I didn't feel that I understood your answer around reusable items. For things like plastic beverage cups and lids, which I understand aren't included in the list of items that are proposed to be banned, are there not viable and readily available alternatives for products like that?

• (1635)

Ms. Helen Ryan: The items that have been identified for a ban or a restriction relate specifically to items found in the environment or likely to be found in the environment and causing harm, where they're causing problems for recycling or recovery and for which there are known alternatives.

With respect to beverage containers, I think you're talking about plastic bottles—for instance, water bottles. Those items are able to be recycled and are recycled in high numbers. With respect to a target on banning or restricting, it's limited to those causing problems in the system of recycling and recovery, because the objective here, remember, is to move to a circular economy and to keep the value of the plastics in the economy but out of the environment.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Ms. Ryan, I'm curious about something like plastic lids. To consider disposable, single-use plastic lids as things that don't have a readily available alternative...I'm trying to get at the criteria that your government uses to determine readily available alternatives. I don't know; maybe I'm not asking the question clearly enough.

Would reusable items be considered readily available alternatives?

The Chair: Answer pretty briefly, please.

Ms. Helen Ryan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I mentioned, with respect to reusable items, it won't be just reusable items that will meet the criteria, because not everybody will have a reusable item and may need to acquire the good. We look to see that there's an alternative that will serve the same purpose as this single-use plastic item.

However, as part of our promotion, we actively encourage the “reduce” first, so use your own cup. You don't need one, but when you do, there will still be an alternative available.

The Chair: We'll now go to Mrs. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also want to talk about these six banned items from a number of different perspectives.

Was there an evaluation—I haven't seen it, and maybe I've just missed it—in terms of where all those products came from? In Canada, where did the straws come from? How much is domestically produced versus internationally produced and imported? Has that assessment been done?

Ms. Helen Ryan: In the work that's been done to date, we've put forward the framework for how decisions are made on selecting the items for a potential proposed ban or restriction. Now the work is going on with respect to the details on the specifications around those items. Those details, when they come out, will include the information that you specifically talked about, such as how much it is, what the economic value is, etc.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Right now, we don't know if the straws that are going to be banned are coming in from China or are internally produced.

Let's say that a ban moves forward and that we have a company in Canada that ships both within Canada and to the U.S. If the ban comes in place in Canada and it's not a legal product in Canada, will the ban extend to the company in terms of being able to export to the United States?

I know that has happened in other departments, so can you tell us definitively if that is going to happen with a producer of one of the banned products in Canada?

Ms. Helen Ryan: As I mentioned, the details of what will actually be in the regulations have not yet been put forward. When they are put forward, they will include considerations around the restrictions with respect to imports, exports, things in transit, what the point of application of the regulation is, considerations for exemptions or other assessments, and whether it is a restriction or a ban. All of those things will be put forward in the proposed regulations.

• (1640)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Right now we're banning six products. If I were a company that sold to the U.S. and employed 50-60 people, quite frankly, I would be terrified in terms of this unknown. One is a known, but the other is the unknown.

I know Canada's sovereignty is important, but we used to have a fairly robust regulatory co-operation council with the U.S. Is that process still in place, and are these conversations also happening within that format?

Ms. Helen Ryan: I would have to turn to my colleagues outside of the department with respect to the scope of the regulatory co-operation agenda. With respect to single-use plastic items, there have been some discussions with respect to the work that's being advanced with the U.S., but it doesn't form a specific regulatory co-operation item.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I understood that was the table where these conversations could be happening.

Basically, what I'm hearing is that we've committed to a ban. I understand we've committed to a ban with the regulatory rules to be in place by 2021, and there are many unknowns.

I think we all on this panel agree with the need to reduce plastic waste. We agree with the circular economy, but I also think there's a lack of t's being crossed and i's being dotted. Again, I look at a company in the riding I represent that all of a sudden is just told, "You can't export your product anymore," so he'll have to close down his business and lay off a significant number of employees.

Those elements are important, and I think our businesses deserve that kind of information and knowledge, rather than living with this horrific uncertainty.

Thank you.

The Chair: We have 30 seconds left. I don't know if there's an answer.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I would certainly appreciate if any documents, meetings or work that has been done with the Regulatory Cooperation Council and any trade compliance analysis that has been done could be tabled with this committee.

The Chair: Ms. Ryan, could you provide that to the committee in due course?

We'll go now to our final questioner before we break to go in camera. Go ahead, Mr. Saini.

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

Thank you to all the officials for all the work that you do on behalf of Canadians and for coming today and helping us with this study.

Ms. Ryan, I want to talk about the health side. One of the things we've heard from numerous witnesses is that plastics bioaccumulate in food chains and ecosystems.

Could you provide some insight into how you assess the potential for a substance to bioaccumulate in a food chain when adding a substance to schedule 1? How was this done for plastics?

Ms. Helen Ryan: I will turn to my colleague, Marc D'Iorio, to respond to this question.

Dr. Marc D'Iorio: Thank you very much.

The assessment considered what was published and was available in the literature. The assessment itself looked at over 450 publications.

With respect to human health, a conclusion was not presented. More research is required to understand exactly the impact of microplastics on human health and their bioavailabilities through the food chain. The conclusion had to do with microplastics and their impact on the environment.

Mr. Raj Saini: How is this going to influence the creation of new regulations around plastics?

Ms. Helen Ryan: Can I ask for clarification? I'm not certain what your question is.

Mr. Raj Saini: Basically, if there are substances that bioaccumulate and we know that they're dangerous for marine systems, avian birds or things like that, how are you going to create the regulations? How are you going to decide what...?

I want to have an understanding of the processes. How are you going to do the regulations?

Ms. Helen Ryan: With respect to the approach for regulatory and non-regulatory measures, we had laid out the approach in our discussion document. We are looking specifically at the ban targeting those items that are found in the environment and are known to cause or potentially cause problems, and we're not able to recover them or they're hindering the recovery system and they're not being recycled. That's how we're targeting those items.

With respect to other considerations on what other measures may be needed, we'll assess the information put forward. This includes the additional research that's been undertaken and that Marc D'Iorio and his team and colleagues elsewhere in the Government of Canada are doing. We'll be guided with respect to what their findings are.

On the other items, with respect to the life cycle, we're targeting actions to stop it from getting into the environment so that we don't have that problem. We're targeting actions to encourage circularity and keep the value of the plastics in the economy and out of the environment. We're looking at specific considerations on how we can do that with, for instance, recycling standards and compostability, etc.

When the actions and regulatory proposals are put forward, we do that jointly with Health Canada. We advance this work in co-operation with them.

• (1645)

Mr. Raj Saini: The other thing we heard from industry was that there's currently a patchwork of regulations across multiple jurisdictions. Sometimes this makes it difficult for businesses. There should be some unified regulatory framework that would create more certainty for business.

Can you comment on how consistent and unified regulations would help businesses?

Ms. Helen Ryan: We have heard from industry about the importance of this. We have heard it in particular with respect to things like extended producer responsibility. They want to have the same sort of rules apply across the country. Many businesses operate in multiple jurisdictions and need to have that consistency. We hear from them about the importance of being able to define what the criteria are for things like compostability so that in the design of their product they can make sure it can be composted by the facility that's going to be using it.

With respect to recycled content, it's understanding what types of plastics should be being handled. For instance, can the recovery and recycling facility manage it? There's some specificity with respect to that. All of this work is being advanced in co-operation with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and our provincial and territorial colleagues to look at how we can put those elements in place.

Some of these elements are being led by the Government of Canada. We expect to put forward, for instance, proposals with respect to some of those standards, as my colleague Dany Drouin mentioned, through our work with the Standards Council of Canada and the Bureau de normalisation du Québec.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've reached one hour exactly, to the minute. We'll stop here.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Sorry, Mr. Chair; I have a quick a point of order when you're done.

The Chair: I was actually going to suspend for a little while.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Very quickly, there was some confusion with respect to a publication that was it suggested was removed from the Government of Canada website. Though it's not on the ECCC website, it is on publications.gc.ca.

I'm more than happy to provide the link to the clerk, if that would help Mr. Redekopp with his question.

The Chair: Thank you. That's good information.

I want to thank the witnesses. I have a feeling that we'll be seeing you again at some point. I don't know when, but we've established a regular working relationship with our witnesses from the department. Thank you again.

Thank you to the members.

We're going to suspend and then go in camera for the second hour. We'll see everyone again shortly, I'm sure.

Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1705)

[Public proceedings resume]

The Chair: I would ask Mr. Saini to reread his amendment, and we'll start from there.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the sixth report of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be amended as follows:

In clause 4, replace “once” with “given”; replace “four” with “three”; replace “two” with “three”; and replace “and if necessary,” with “that all”; delete “on clause-by clause”; and replace the final part with “and up to three meetings be scheduled the week of May 17 and up to three meetings be scheduled the week of May 24”.

In clause 5, replace “Wednesday, May 26, 2021” with “Monday, May 17, 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter”.

In clause 6, replace “Sunday, May 16, 2021” with “Monday, May 10, 2021”.

Chair, I understand the clerk has properly distributed the amendment.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Raj Saini: Just for clarity purposes, I'd like to repeat clause 4. This is how it will read now: “That given Bill C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, has been referred to the committee, the committee hold six meetings regarding the bill, three with witnesses and three for clause-by-clause, that all the meetings be scheduled for three hours each, and that up to three meetings be scheduled the week of May 17 and up to three meetings be scheduled the week of May 24.”

The Chair: Mr. Saini, I see your hand is up—

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Just to make sure we're following process, did we have a motion to even get the subcommittee's report on deck?

The Chair: Okay, we're going to go right back to the very start. We're going to start like nothing happened before.

I'm suggesting that we adopt the sixth report.

Mr. Saini—

• (1710)

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm not asking him to repeat it again, Mr. Chair, but it's just important that we start with—

The Chair: We'll start with the sixth report.

We have Mr. Saini's amendment, and we now have Mr. Longfield, who would like to speak.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I think this amendment is based on the availability of the minister coming in on the 17th. Also, being able to move up the schedule with three-hour meetings will get it back to the House expeditiously so that we can continue the work there.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When we had the original meeting, there was consensus with everyone that we would have this process. Obviously the committee itself reserves the right to make a change from what the steering committee has proposed, and that is Mr. Saini's right, but to have this much of a change without checking in with other ones is unfortunate.

What I also would suggest, Mr. Chair, is that this really limits the amount of time we have to be able to send in witnesses. I know there are going to be some who really want to have this bill pass with flying colours—I'm sure there are those—but other parliamentarians want to make sure that we do not rush this job so fast that we don't have witnesses coming in. This abbreviated, expedited schedule, I think, puts that at risk.

I also would suggest, Mr. Chair, that there are also challenges with having three-hour meetings. I don't know if we checked in to see if these dates are available or whether or not we can go on that far. I've been reading stories, as I'm sure all of us have, about the difficulty of having translation available. We've also talked in this motion about allowing people to send in their briefs; there may not be enough time to be able to properly translate them.

I understand the desire of the Liberal government to jump forward, but really, they should have come to the table at the steering committee and had a good discussion around these things so that we wouldn't be taking up significant airtime and significant time for members of Parliament to relitigate what was originally a consensus report.

I'll stop there. Maybe there are some other points I might want to address or that maybe other members might want to address, Mr. Chair, but I really think that by jamming this up front, we are going to see fewer witnesses, have briefs that are not translated and not do our jobs as members of Parliament. I think that it does no one any service.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, go ahead.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

I don't have the wording for the new amendment proposed by Mr. Saini, but in the initial version, it was not stipulated that the meeting was three hours. I think it was in the second version. It's fine with me. In the first version, it said “up to three meetings”. If I understand correctly, the “up to” is gone. Now it's formally three meetings. If I got that right, I agree with the amendment. I think we need climate legislation. The climate emergency is serious. It's all we hear about. That's why I agree with Mr. Saini.

I think it's worth pointing out that the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development recommended that “the committee issue a press release inviting stakeholder to submit briefs to the committee”. I want you to know that a number of stakeholders are ready. I believe they have already written their briefs. Similar to motion M-34, which you put forward, Mr. Chair, we could instruct the analysts to put together a summary analysis of the briefs that come in. I think that might be a solution.

I have one last thing to say. With the break week coming up, I think we should be mindful of the staff who support us. We should think about how this will affect them and consider making changes as needed. I'm sure there are others with better ideas.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll keep it brief. My understanding, as Madame Pauzé mentioned, is that we're actually adding an hour of time to work on this bill, rather than losing any time. Canadians have made it very clear to us, as have stakeholders, that this is a vitally important bill that is both timely and very much needed.

I think the goodwill of the committee and the commitment that we all have towards moving forward on addressing these matters and having Canadians know that we are addressing these needs make this wholly appropriate at this time.

Thank you for making the motion, Mr. Saini.

● (1715)

The Chair: Mr. Redekopp is next.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think, for precisely that reason, that we don't want to ram this through. It is important. It's important that this be studied properly, that we have the correct witnesses who want to speak to it come, that we allow people the opportunity to speak to it, that we allow the documents to be translated properly into the French language or the English language, as the case may be. These are all considerations that take time.

We have to also consider that nine hours of committee meetings in one week is a very significant amount of time. The House resources are already stretched to the limit when it comes specifically to translation, but also many other things. I think this is going to be very difficult to fit and squeeze in. I think we need to go back and make sure, before we approve this, that the House can actually accommodate this request, because it's quite a change from where we are now. It also requires us to meet in a constituency week, which will require juggling of schedules and things like that.

As we said, this is a very important issue and we want to make sure we give it the due process, the due time and the due diligence that it needs. I've spoken to witnesses who want to speak to this matter. It's a little hard for me to understand because I don't have the whole motion in front of me, but my understanding is that we have just a few weeks to get those witnesses and get everything all ready and translated, which, to me, just isn't enough time.

I would really like to see that we consider sticking with the original schedule, just for pure practical reasons, because I'm not sure we can accomplish what Mr. Saini has proposed.

Those are my thoughts.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you.

I'd just like to ask the clerk to see if this can be accommodated. Are those times even available?

Also, is there any risk of overworking staff? I do know we've been having issues with making sure we have French translation and English translation so that we are able to do all this.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, would you comment?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): Yes, the House proposes a schedule for committee meetings during non-sitting weeks. It's on a first-come, first-served basis. They limit the number of committees that can meet. I've made some inquiries, obviously. We are on the priority list to be able to sit during that time in the break week for those days.

I can't speak to the other services, but as the clerk, I serve the committee. If the committee decides it wants to sit, then I will certainly be available to sit during that time. If the House has provided a schedule for committees to sit, they have approached services, I expect, to make sure they are able to provide the service as well.

The Chair: Okay, so—

Mr. Dan Albas: Just on that point, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Dan Albas: Wouldn't it be prudent for us to actually see if there's the technical capacity to be able to do what the government has asked?

Again, if those times are not available or if somebody else has already chosen those times, then to me it would make us all look bad to have to come back and then redo this whole schedule yet again. I'm not sure if we should just simply defer until the next meeting when we can continue this and understand whether we'd have the capacity to do it or not, Mr. Chair. I understand there are some members who are very devoted to having this go forward, but by the same token I think reasonable minds would agree we should actually be able to see if we can do a thing before we debate it.

The Chair: Even when we have our regular meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays, there are always imponderables.

Anyway, I don't see any other speakers.

The Clerk: Mr. Chair, just to allay Mr. Albas's concerns, there's only one other committee on the list to sit during that week, so we would definitely have priority. If the committee decided to sit, I'm pretty sure it could sit. It's up to the committee to decide.

• (1720)

The Chair: What do we do now? We have no more speakers. We have—

Mr. Dan Albas: Well, Mr. Chair, I just wanted to ask the clerk about this yet again here.

Are you saying those times are available? It is a break week.

The Clerk: Yes, to my knowledge they are available. I made a request to find out what the schedule was and was told that the schedule would be presented to the whips.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay.

The Clerk: At this point it's tentative, but it's the same as previous break weeks. I have no expectation that we wouldn't be granted permission.

Mr. Dan Albas: What would be the impacts, though, to the witnesses? As I've said earlier, this would tighten it up dramatically.

We had talked about suggesting to people to also send briefs that we could look at. What is the capacity on that, in terms of being able to translate?

The Chair: Obviously, it would be moving everything up one week.

The Clerk: If I might, obviously this has been on people's radar for a long time, so the committee has received a number of requests to appear. No one has been approached yet. I'm sure the analysts are working on a list of the people who wish to appear. We've already received a number of briefs, which have been translated and will be distributed to the committee, probably tomorrow. Obviously, more briefs will come in.

The Chair: Yes.

Remember, the first meeting would be basically the departmental officials. They're always ready, I guess.

Go ahead, Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Chair.

We are in an 11-week stretch right now with one week, so-called, in the ridings and available. I guess I just wonder. I do know the importance of moving this legislation forward, that people are keen on it, but could we not...? I've always been very protective of the constituency week. Obviously for emergencies and when we had significant challenges in terms of our ability to move about, it was one thing. We have 11 sitting weeks. We have one break week. I hope to be protective. I'm probably like everyone else here. I have a fully scheduled break week already.

Again, if it's not necessary, which I'm not sure it is... I haven't been convinced it is. I know the subcommittee indicated it was very comfortable with the previous plan. I guess my question is, why is it essential on a break week, the one week we have out of 11 weeks, to have this kind of scheduling?

The Chair: I don't have any other speakers—

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Dan Albas: If Liberal members are willing to say we're putting too much emphasis head-on, are they willing to look at a reduced number? Instead of having all those meetings up front, if the minister is the sticking point—and I would contend the minister should be making time for us, not the other way around, because this is his legislation and he would want to work with parliamentarians—could we then just pencil in that particular portion?

I want to remind members that the amount of time we have been putting many of our translators and staff through has been extreme. Again, as MP McLeod said, to be going 11 weeks straight is putting more time on that. I'm asking Liberal members, if they're willing, to perhaps reduce what they put forward.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I've been listening carefully to my colleagues. As I think everyone knows, I support dealing with this legislation in as timely a manner as possible. I don't think it's lost on any of us that we're rapidly approaching the end of the sitting. If we want to make significant headway, we need to expedite things. We spoke in the House from our frustration regarding the time it took to get to this point, but now that we find ourselves at this point, I would very much like to turn our focus, as a committee, to moving forward with hearing from the witnesses and looking at the legislation ourselves.

As I've stated before, I support an expedited approach, of course respecting the resources of the House. I believe it behooves us as MPs to focus on the important stuff before us and arrange our schedules accordingly. I'm certainly prepared to do that to meet the requirements of the schedule that has been proposed in Mr. Saini's amendment.

• (1725)

The Chair: There are no other speakers.

I guess we go to a vote, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Yes.

The vote is on the amendment of Mr. Saini.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Madam Clerk, do we now vote on the motion as amended?

The Clerk: Yes, on the report.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I would like to encourage all colleagues, when they come to future steering committee meetings, to come prepared to negotiate and for their representative to negotiate so that we can deal with those things. If they were simply going to be overruled by the committee, which is its right, then we should not use that forum.

I find those meetings can be very productive, but I also do believe, Mr. Chair, there also needs to be transparency on these

things, which is one of the reasons why we were in camera doing this. Whatever we do, I believe Canadians deserve to know what their elected officials are up to, within certain parameters. It's unfortunate that we ended up seeing a break of consensus today. I would hope that members would try better next time.

I will be voting against this motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to the vote, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: The vote is on the steering committee's report as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Okay, so—

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'd like to put a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: Okay. We'll vote on that now.

The Clerk: The vote is on a motion to adjourn.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

• (1730)

The Chair: Despite the late start, we are finishing at 5:30 on the dot.

On Monday, though, we really have to delve into the CEPA Volkswagen report. That will be in camera. It looks like a good report. It doesn't seem too long, so hopefully we can get through it in two hours and then go on to see the minister on the 12th, I believe it is.

Thank you, all our members, for your participation today.

[*Translation*]

Have a good evening, everyone. See you Wednesday at 3:30 p.m.

The meeting is adjourned.

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