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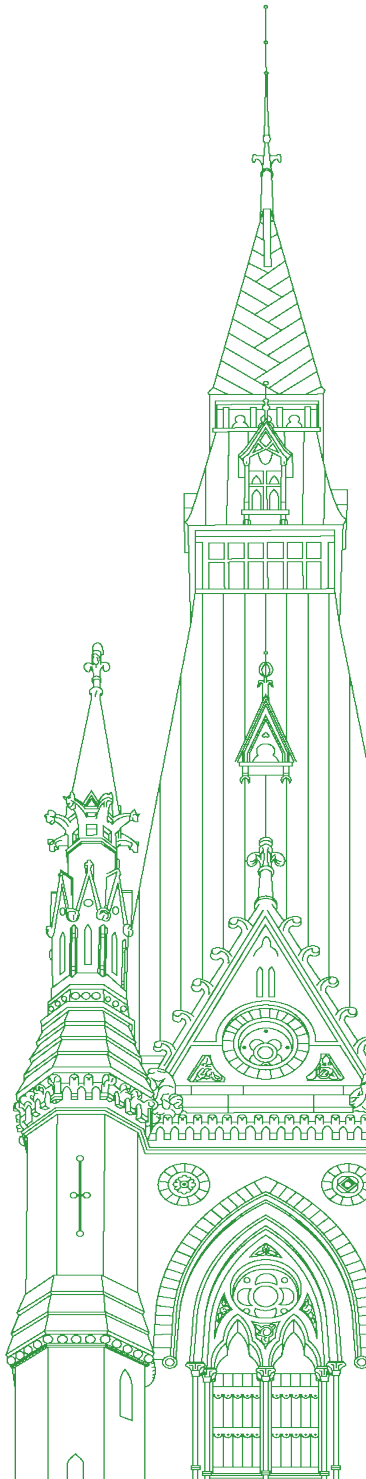

Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Thursday, November 2, 2023

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to the 82th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I wish to inform the committee that all online witnesses have been tested for the sound and the interpretation, and have passed the test.

I'd like to point out that Ms. Idlout is with us today, replacing Mr. Bachrach, who in turn was replacing Ms. Collins.I'd also like to welcome Mr. Kelloway, who is attending the meeting on behalf of Ms. Taylor Roy.

We have two groups of witnesses with us today, for approximately an hour each.

In our first group, we have Mr. Carl Yates, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Atlantic First Nations Water Authority Inc.; Ms. Theresa McClenaghan, Executive Director, and Ms. Laura Tanguay, Water Policy Coordinator, Canadian Environmental Law Association; and Mr. George Peslari, Reeve of Rural Municipality Number 157 of South Qu'Appelle.

Each witness will have five minutes for their opening statement.

Mr. Yates, we'll begin with you. Welcome to the committee. You have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Carl Yates (Interim Chief Executive Officer, Atlantic First Nations Water Authority Inc.): Good morning, Chair Scarpaleggia and members of the standing committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

My name is Carl Yates and I bring greetings from the Wabanaki territory, where we do our utmost to live out the treaties of peace and friendship for all our relations. I am appearing on behalf of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, where I recently completed my tenure as chief executive officer.

We have prepared a brief for the standing committee's benefit. My understanding is that it's in for translation. My opening remarks today will be excerpts from that statement.

We are pleased the federal government is reviewing its role in the protection and management of freshwater resources in Canada. It is a particularly good opportunity for the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority to express its views on the stewardship of water resources now that it is fully operational and providing water and waste-water services to first nations communities in Atlantic Canada.

AFNWA is the first of its kind in Canada, a full-service water and waste-water utility owned and operated by first nations. Many of the topics to be studied by the standing committee are central to the sustainability of AFNWA. These themes are also embedded in the 10-year business plan developed and approved by AFNWA in 2022 with the vison of strengthening programs and the approach to service delivery, all in the spirit of self-determination and reconciliation. It is in this context that we provide recommendations to the standing committee for consideration.

I always want to start with governance, because many good things stem from good governance. You all know that. I don't have to tell you that.

The foundation of AFNWA's success to date has been connected to governance. AFNWA is a not-for-profit organization, led by first nations with a board composed primarily of first nations representatives who have carefully developed incorporation documents, a governance manual and bylaws to guide their decision-making. The AFNWA board of directors is also supported by an elders advisory lodge and three standing committees. The delegative policy, decision-making and monitoring roles are clearly described in the terms of reference for the lodge and each standing committee. Much of this governance work was carried out with the support of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, with funding from the federal government.

We encourage the federal government to build on the relationships established between first nations and Indigenous Services Canada in their collective vision to have first nations exert more direct control of freshwater resources for the betterment of the communities they serve, all in accordance, of course, with paragraph 7(b) of the Department of Indigenous Services Act.

Speaking of acts, as the standing committee is aware, legislation is proposed to be introduced this fall to strengthen first nations access to sustainable water and waste-water services. Of course, what we see before us is a proposal for an act respecting drinking water, waste-water and related infrastructure on first nations lands. AFNWA has provided comments directly on the legislation to ISC Minister Hajdu, but it bears reinforcement through the standing committee. AFNWA is encouraged to see that the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality have been identified as the minimum standards for drinking water. We're also encouraged to note that these standards will apply to both private and public water and waste-water systems.

To improve the legislation, AFNWA proposes that future regulations concerning waste water include effluent discharge objectives related to environmental risk assessments rather than national performance standards required by the waste-water systems effluent regulations. The requirement to conduct an ERA is consistent with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's municipal waste-water effluent strategy, which was adopted in 2009 and offers increased environmental protection for receiving water bodies. Often, this is necessary to protect sensitive receiving waters by ensuring proper waste-water treatment, or to create efficiencies to reduce the environmental footprint and help protect public health.

It is also the view of AFNWA that future regulations must be met with adequate funding for implementation. With the standards identified within the legislation, it will be necessary for Indigenous Services Canada to develop, in partnership with first nations, a funding framework within the first year of the act receiving royal assent. This framework must address the years of chronic underfunding and help facilitate community growth and economic development.

● (1110)

The AFNWA looks forward to further engagement with the Government of Canada when the legislation is introduced to the House of Commons.

On the topic of private wells and septic systems, many first nations communities are serviced by individual wells and septic systems. Current ISC policy does not fund their installation, repair and upgrade. In our view, underfunded individual wells and septic systems have the potential to be a significant public health and environmental concern.

The AFNWA is currently conducting a survey to catalogue all individual wells and septic systems in its member communities. Once identified, the AFNWA will seek funding to conduct a condition assessment to understand the resources required to manage an ongoing program to ensure these systems are in a state of good repair. We request your support to fund these studies and subsequent programs to remediate deficiencies.

I'd like to speak to climate change, which I know is also an important topic to this committee. Similar to colonial municipalities across Canada, much of the water and waste water infrastructure within first nations communities is being impacted by climate change. AFNWA is pursuing technologies and best practices to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. AFNWA encourages the standing committee to recognize these needs when developing programs and allocating funding to first nations.

Last, but not least, I have a comment on research needs. Like any progressive utility, AFNWA is pursuing research partnerships to advance its understanding of the water cycle from source to tap and back to the source again. We encourage the federal government to support programs that promote two-eyed seeing with dedicated funding for indigenous communities.

AFNWA embraces two-eyed seeing, which is a process that recognizes traditional indigenous knowledge and western science as complementary to service delivery. In that regard, the standing committee should recognize the importance of partnering with leading research institutions to ensure we are on the cutting edge of technology and best practices to deliver more energy efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-effective water and waste-water services.

On behalf of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, we thank you for the opportunity to appear before the standing committee and we look forward to a clarification of roles and responsibilities through your continued studies.

Respectfully submitted for all our relations, *nujo'tme'k samqwan*.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Yates.

I allowed a little more time because we only have three witnesses on this panel, and I thought the content was valuable. I'll give seven minutes to the other two who will be delivering opening statements.

We'll go now to Ms. Laura Tanguay, water policy coordinator with the Canadian Environmental Law Association, who is online, I believe.

Ms. Tanguay.

Ms. Laura Tanguay (Water Policy Coordinator, Canadian Environmental Law Association): Hello, and thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for inviting us to speak here today.

With me is CELA's executive director and counsel, Theresa McClenaghan, who will join me for the Q and A period.

CELA has made written submissions to this committee regarding the freshwater study as well as a supplementary brief that will be provided later today.

Today I will be bringing three issues to your attention for your consideration. One is the inequity surrounding who has access to consistent, safe drinking water. Two is the state of contaminants of concern in Canada, including PFAS and radionuclides. Three is the processes for determining the role of the Canada water agency.

First, all of us deserve access to clean, reliable drinking water, but in Canada that's not the case. Particularly vulnerable are first nations reserves. Bill C-226 and the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act, of which we await an update, are steps toward Canada's righting this wrong.

CELA recommends that Canada co-develop appropriate reforms with indigenous communities to better accommodate, integrate and assist source protection planning for drinking water systems that serve their communities and also to follow the Green Budget Coalition's 2024 preliminary budget recommendations, and specifically, the provisions for investment and long-term funding for an office of environmental justice for the development of a tracking and mapping program similar to the United States' EJScreen, which identifies and monitors areas of environmental injustice concerns, and also to strengthen environmental enforcement and compliance through ECCC's branch designated to do so for areas of environmental injustice.

On contaminants of concern, PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals with approximately 12,000 substances in the class. They're used extensively worldwide in various industries for their properties to repel water, oil and grease. They're persistent and very mobile in the environment, and they have been detected extensively in the water, including in the Great Lakes basin. Evidence shows that they have impacts on human health and disproportionately affect women and other vulnerable groups, including children.

CELA recommends that Canada list PFAS as a class of toxic chemicals under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act; that the federal government develop a strategy to eliminate the class and address the full life cycle of PFAS; that PFAS' releases and contamination be tracked and reported through the national pollutant release inventory; and that the data be made public.

On radionuclides, CELA and colleagues drafted an alternative policy for Canada on radioactive waste management and decommissioning in March 2022. It's linked in our supplemental brief. It advocates for a framework that makes the nuclear industry more accountable to protect human and environmental health.

In May 2023, Canada released its long-overdue policy, which we found deeply disappointing. CELA strongly recommends, particularly given the large increase of federal funding toward new nuclear projects, that Canada revisit the national radioactive waste policy and integrate CELA's recommendations to protect freshwater sources for all from tritium and other harmful radionuclides.

Last, CELA is supportive of the creation of the Canada water agency to streamline water governance across the country. As the office is now established, CELA recommends that Canada, per the Assembly of First Nations' July 2023 resolution, centre indigenous water stewards, guardians and decision-makers in Canada water agency's decisions, advance reconciliation and apply the UNDRIP Act to Canadian water policies.

We also recommend that Canada clarify what the role of the Canada water agency will be and develop a process of how to determine that role. We advocate for a centralized data system for water governance to reduce duplication, promote knowledge sharing and improve baseline datasets and ecological and climatic predictions.

We encourage watershed collaborations at a national scale with a focus on freshwater ecosystem restoration and opportunities for indigenous conservation areas, and we recommend that the Canada water agency's mandate include language on Great Lakes and vulnerable communities.

To reiterate, the three priorities we are bringing to your attention today are the inequities surrounding who has access to consistent, safe drinking water, the state of contaminants of concern in Canada, including PFAS and and radionuclides, and, last, the processes for determining the role of the Canada water agency.

Thank you so much for your time today.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tanguay.

Mr. Peslari, Reeve of Rural Municipality Number 157 of South Qu'Appelle, you now have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. George Peslari (Reeve, Rural Municipality of South Qu'Appelle No. 157): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for the invitation. I am George Peslari, reeve of the Rural Municipality of South Qu'Appelle No. 157, Saskatchewan.

Before we begin, I would like to comment briefly on the importance of rural municipalities and the positions of reeve and council members and their contributions to each of their respective communities.

This level of government has the most personal interaction with the voting public. I personally talk to constituents daily. Investments in municipalities affect people on a personal level. They impact their lives closer to home. As groups, we need to work more interdependently toward fresh water sustainability and get things done by influencing and coordinating with others.

To get to my point today, and the reason I am addressing this committee, I need to voice the fact that a sustainable community does not dump waste water into nearby waterways like creeks and coulees, which ends up in our lakes and rivers. The treated water released from a nearby town flows through a coulee onto private land and stays in ponds along the route to Echo Lake near Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. This lake system is under the care of the federal government; thus, it is the government's responsibility to address concerns.

As of present, there are no set limits for dissolved solids and other contaminants in the water. See the link provided from the Government of Saskatchewan.

One of the published studies by T. Bjornson & Associates Consulting Inc, which has been provided to the committee, mentions:

> "The most prevalent water quality challenge globally is eutrophication". Eutrophication is driven by nutrients being added to freshwater systems which, over time, can lead to changes in the structure and functioning of these systems, and ultimately, biodiversity loss. This process usually takes many thousands of years, but since the 1950's, this has been accelerated by nutrient pollution resulting from human activity and climate change. The complete deterioration of a lake's ecological structure resulting in fatal loss of biodiversity and ecosystem function can now occur within a matter of only a few years....

There may also be a need for limits to be set as to how many contaminants can be released into the waterways, hopefully none.

As I make this statement about a town near me, it is not the only town that does this. Even the City of Regina drains its treated water into this lake system. During flood events, the City of Regina has come under scrutiny for being allowed, on an emergency basis, to release untreated water. We all know this is happening all over Canada.

As the reeve of a rural municipality, I know the tax base cannot support a solution for this problem. Talking to people in my community, there have been offers to accept this water for irrigation of hay land, thus leaving capacity in lagoons for rain events and normal operations, but the funding to complete these projects is not available. My hopes are that the federal government may see this as a viable part of the solution and look into funding these projects along with the provinces and local municipalities. I have concerns, though, from past experience that the federal government may not be too interested in these smaller projects in our communities.

While making an application to fund a potable water system, the McLean, Qu'Appelle, Edgeley regional potable water system, through the investing in Canada infrastructure program, we were advised by our engineering company that larger regional water projects are more likely to be approved. MPE advised against each time making its own application. I feel this added to the overall cost of the project, with the addition of approximately 34 kilometres of pipeline to take water from a central location and distribute it to one other town and one hamlet.

In conclusion, I am here to speak to protecting the fresh water in Saskatchewan and in Canada. I hope what I've heard from the public can be taken from here and heard at the federal level.

Thank you.

● (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Peslari, for the very interesting commentary.

That brings us to our first six-minute round. We will be starting today with Mr. Kram.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for joining us today. You will have to excuse me. I have a bit of a scratchy throat today. Hopefully I will be feeling and sounding better in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Peslari, I would be very interested if you could elaborate on some of the comments you made in your opening statement. You are a reeve of a rural municipality. Is that correct?

● (1125)

Mr. George Peslari: That's correct.

Mr. Michael Kram: You're an elected politician just like those of us sitting around the table.

Can you tell us what you have done regarding the issue of waste water in your community and maybe some of the challenges that you have encountered in doing so?

Mr. George Peslari: I have only been reeve for three years now. I am just focusing on bringing to light what is happening in my community. This is a good place to start, and I will move forward trying to see what we can do to correct it.

Mr. Michael Kram: You said that the dumping of waste water has been a problem in your community. When you have talked with other levels of government, how far have you gotten in addressing this issue?

Mr. George Peslari: I have been dealing with the EPA of Saskatchewan on this issue and other issues of compost being dumped in the RM as well, and specifically one being pushed into a waterway, with not a lot of success so far.

Mr. Michael Kram: What would you like to see from this study in terms of steps that could be taken to correct the problems that you've been dealing with?

Mr. George Peslari: I thing if there were guidelines in place there might be some clout for the EPA to do a few things to help mitigate some of these issues.

Mr. Michael Kram: In your opening statement you said that there have been offers to accept this water for irrigation of hay land. Can you elaborate on how that would be beneficial?

Mr. George Peslari: It would create a better hay crop for the farmers, a more consistent hay crop. There could be two harvests a year, and it would reduce the amount of water, maybe to zero, that needs to be released into the waterway.

Mr. Michael Kram: In terms of making this happen from an implementation perspective, how big a project would it take? Would it take a facility to treat the water? How much money would something like that cost?

Mr. George Peslari: I don't have that information right now, but I can provide it. There are some fairly small irrigation systems that are pretty cost-effective. I could get you that in writing.

Mr. Michael Kram: If you could follow up with a written answer to that question, that would be very helpful.

I would like to circle back to the project you mentioned in your statement that was through the investing in Canada program, and that required an extra 34 kilometres of pipeline. Can you explain how that all came about?

Mr. George Peslari: The Town of McLean has water issues. It escapes me right now which contaminants are in the water. They made an application with MPE engineering to rectify the issue. When they were going through the processes, they approached the two other communities that needed some of the work done, one of which was in control of the RM itself, because they were worried that they wouldn't be approved if they weren't there as part of a regional water system and each town instead was there about its own treatment system. The cost of adding piping I don't have with me right now, but it was quite a big part of the project.

Mr. Michael Kram: Mr. Peslari, I would be curious to know why you wouldn't just go with a smaller project for each town instead of pooling resources and having one big project.

Mr. George Peslari: We were told that we would not likely be approved.

Mr. Michael Kram: You were told this by whom?

Mr. George Peslari: It was MPE engineering.

● (1130)

Mr. Michael Kram: It was the engineering firm that was going to do the project.

Mr. George Peslari: Yes. With their past experience they have learned that if it was not a large project, it would not likely be approved.

Mr. Michael Kram: You mentioned that this was through the investing in Canada program and there seemed to be some thresholds that would make small projects not qualify for the program.

Is that a pretty accurate summary of the issue with the engineering firm?

Mr. George Peslari: I think so, yes.

Mr. Michael Kram: Mr. Chair, how am I doing for time?

The Chair: You're pretty much out of time.

Mr. Michael Kram: Okay. I'll leave it there then.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses who have joined us, both virtually and in person. It's a real privilege to hear from you and to hear about all of the great work that you're doing in your communities and across our country.

Today, I'm going to use my time to highlight a program that I've been familiar with for a couple of years that works with indigenous communities. I've also had the opportunity to meet with some of the leadership on Parliament Hill on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe. It's called the Indigenous Leadership Initiative. They run a program called Land Needs Guardians.

If anybody who is watching or listening would like more information, I would encourage them to go to landneedsguardians.ca. That's the website that I'm on.

I was really struck by the engagement and efficacy of the Land Needs Guardians program, which I heard quite a lot about yesterday. Its raison d'être states:

> We are the “moccasins and mukluks” on the ground for our communities. We manage protected areas, restore animals and plants, test water quality, and monitor development projects...we welcome visitors to traditional territories and maintain cultural sites.
>
> Guardians’ work is guided by science—both Indigenous and western. We are trained in data collection and water quality analysis, and we learn from our Elders about relationships with animals and changes on the land.

Yesterday, we heard from two such guardians who work in ecological restoration and environmental stewardship in their communities. I was thrilled to see that the Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission has hired its first intern this past summer to put some indigenous and ecological knowledge to work in nature conservation in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Yates, I'm curious to know if you've become familiar with the Land Needs Guardians program or if you've worked with the Indigenous Leadership Initiative.

My friend Valérie Courtois is one of the leaders in that group. Yesterday, I committed to her that I would be a more vocal spokesperson for their extraordinary work. I thought today's meeting was a great opportunity for that.

Given that the Land Needs Guardians program is active in Nova Scotia now with the Eskasoni First Nation of the Mi'kmaq nation, do you have any familiarity with the organization?

Could you speak a bit about your experience and about how the over 1,000 indigenous guardians across the country are contributing to ecological restoration and environmental stewardship, particularly on the topic of today's meeting with respect to water quality?

Mr. Carl Yates: I'm pleased to say that I have some familiarity with the organization. I expect that we'll interface with them in the future.

I'm also pleased to know that the Eskasoni have a person on the ground. I can confirm that Eskasoni actually is one of our member communities of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority and very central, of course, to Unama'ki.

We will continue to interface with the organization and the stewardship of Eskasoni's leadership because they actually have formed a watershed committee, which we are part of. One of the residents of Eskasoni is actually part of our team as well. She will continue to be part of that watershed committee.

We are very connected to Eskasoni and expect that we will interface nicely together because we have the same values and we're looking for the same outcomes.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you very much, Mr. Yates.

I note here from the article that Ellen Dennis is a member of the Eskasoni First Nation and the intern that the Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission was able to hire this past year. They got funding through the Nova Scotia-based Clean Foundation. The Land Needs Guardians program continues to be supported by our government.

Is there anybody else who is on virtually who would like to comment on the Land Needs Guardians program or the importance of indigenous leadership in ecological restoration and environmental stewardship?

Ms. McClenaghan.

● (1135)

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan (Executive Director, Canadian Environmental Law Association): In terms of indigenous leadership and fresh water, as you heard from Ms. Tanguay earlier, that is a very strong submission by CELA in our work on fresh water not just with the hope for the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act, but also in source water management across the country. We definitely advocated for strong inclusion of first nations in Ontario, for example, within the provincial Clean Water Act, which deals with protecting sources of drinking water, and we're hoping for a very strong source water focus as part of future first nation federal legislation as well.

This does have to happen on a watershed basis. We know from experience this needs the inclusion of a great many sectors, and indigenous leadership is absolutely key. We also did a tool kit with one of our lawyers a few years ago with extensive involvement with some Ontario first nations on the general concept of stewardship and guardian programs. We have source water tool kits for first nations in particular also available on our website.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thanks very much, Ms. McClenaghan.

Ms. Tanguay, do you have anything to add, any experience or familiarity with the Land Needs Guardians program?

Ms. Laura Tanguay: I will second what Ms. McClenaghan has to say about that.

I think it's really important to centre indigenous decision-making with any type of land use proposition, and particularly when it comes to protecting freshwater sources, point source pollution and non-point source pollution as well. I will point to the resources that were already mentioned there by Ms. McClenaghan as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you very much for being here, Mr. Yates.

I'd also like to thank the witnesses who are attending the meeting virtually.

Mr. Yates, your organization's website says that it represents a change in a system that has been in place for more than 150 years,and that it reflects the desire of first nations for self-determination and control of a resource that is critical for public health, and protection of the environment.

Are the processes whose goal is the adoption legislative measures on water and access to it by indigenous communities prioritizing your perspective?

[*English*]

Mr. Carl Yates: Certainly any regulations with regard to drinking water and first nations will be central to the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority's desire to have a sustainable approach. As I mentioned in my remarks and as contained in our brief, we are keen to see both the Canadian drinking water quality guideline standards adopted as the minimum for service to first nations, be that either central systems or individual wells and septic systems.

I also mentioned very clearly that we would like to see wastewater effluent discharge tied very closely to environmental risk assessments to ensure that the receiving waters are well protected. It was interesting enough to hear from our friend from the Rural Municipality of South Qu'Appelle that it appears to be a common theme. What we speak about there, of course, is going beyond the national performance standards, which focus on carbonaceous biological oxygen demand, to total suspended solids and residual chlorine. When you start to look at environmental risk assessments, you take into account in particular nutrient removal, so things like phosphates and nitrates. That is a very important part of what we want to do.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay.

We know that the government has to be guided by sustainable development goals. The sixth, in particular, says that the federal government must work together with all stakeholders, including municipalities, to achieve these goals.

I'm returning to some degree to the same question: for water, is the government listening to you enough? I'm asking, because we've conducted other studies in which first nations peoples told us that they had not been consulted enough, or that if they had been consulted, they weren't listened to.

[*English*]

Mr. Carl Yates: In the case of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, I can affirm that the government has been listening and collaborating well. This was a journey that was started quite some time ago. I can even say it started since 2005, but, in particular, it reached momentum in 2020 when we signed the framework agreement with Indigenous Services Canada, which, at the time, was under the auspices of Minister Marc Miller. I can say that the collaboration has continued through Minister Hajdu and the staff of Indigenous Services Canada.

We did, indeed, collaborate quite well based on the framework agreement that we signed in 2020. I actually think the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority is a good model for how the government can continue to collaborate. To use the water term in this regard, I believe, quite frankly, that this model could be a case of rinse and repeat, that we could do this in other areas of Canada, this collaboration approach.

I can say that we've had very good reception certainly with senior staff at Indigenous Services Canada, who continue to work with us, because we are still on a journey. This journey is not finished, and we hope that we will, indeed, be in a better place over time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: My other question is for the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

Ms. McClenaghan, we know that in 2021, your organization submitted a brief to this committee summarizing your concerns about fresh water, particularly in connection with the legislative framework for this issue. I recall that the priority had to be the introduction of measures that would advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples. But there are many different authorities dealing with fresh water, and it's rather fragmented.

There was an act, but it was abrogated. In your opinion, as lawyers, why instead was the existing legislative framework not kept and amended? Right now, there's a legislative vacuum.

[*English*]

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: You're speaking, I presume, about the federal Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act, which was repealed last year. We did support its repeal. We opposed its adoption in the first place. We felt it was extremely poorly framed. It took governance and leadership away from first nations.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: One moment, Ms. McClenaghan.

Ms. Pauzé, are you rising on a point of order?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I lost the interpretation briefly, Mr. Chair, but the sound is back now.

The Chair: All right.

[*English*]

Please go ahead, Ms. McClenaghan.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Do you need me to say anything again?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes, that would be best.

[*English*]

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Yes, we did support the repeal of the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. We opposed its adoption in the first place, because we felt it was very ill-suited to the needs of first nations communities. It took governance and leadership away from first nations and provided the potential, for example, for third parties to take over systems without their consent and with very little participation by them in those decisions. For many other reasons, we actually attended at the standing committee multiple times over the various iterations of that legislation that was introduced before it had been adopted.

● (1145)

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We'll go to Ms. Idlout, please, for six minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik*, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to sit here with you in this committee on this important issue.

I will be asking my questions of Laura from the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

Could you very briefly describe what the water infrastructure challenges are for first nations communities as they currently stand?

Ms. Laura Tanguay: There are a lot of issues with pollution and contamination of the source water, and with getting access to clean drinking water on reserves due to contamination of groundwater, source water or wells. It's not having sufficient infrastructures in place to provide, through service lines or well regulations, drinking water to communities. There are some communities, for example, in northern Ontario, that have had well-water advisories for over 27 years. This isn't something we find acceptable. I think there are regulations that could be put in place to mitigate some of these issues.

I would also like to defer to our executive director, Theresa McClenaghan, for anything she'd like to add.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Resourcing is key for nations to meet these challenges. That has been an issue in the past. It has been an issue addressed little by little over many years by many governments. We see the number of boil water and drinking water advisories decreasing, absolutely. Certainly, the approach, especially for Ontario.... We're most familiar with the 121 first nations systems here. They took the approach of doing the low-hanging fruit first. This means the systems that remain a challenge now are the ones with the biggest watershed or source-water issues that have to be addressed.

Most recently, in northwestern Ontario, we started to see some very long-standing issues and inequities addressed, but we need a sustainable system going forward that includes first nations governance, leadership and capacity. It's about not only building the systems but also making sure there's strong, ongoing support for operating those systems.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik.*

You answered what my follow-up question was going to be in regard to what improvements could be made.

I wonder whether you could explain why the boil water advisory in northern Ontario has been in place for about 27 years.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: It depends on different nations.

In one case, it's because of the issue concerning the intersection between disinfecting drinking water and organic material in the source of the fresh water. It's very difficult to find a different source. I can think of a couple of communities, in particular. You can't just boil it in those cases. The issue is that you must disinfect the water if it's from surface water. You must have some system of disinfection. Then it becomes a question of whether we find a different method for disinfection instead of, for example, chlorination. Perhaps there can be different technologies. Perhaps it's time to think about a filtration system.

I can't speak to the specifics because I'm not an engineer, and I'm not acting for communities. I'll just say that, in principle, when you find you have a long-standing, intractable problem, you need to start to look for other solutions.

If I may, I'll quickly add that it's also a question of where the first nations' own infrastructure is. It may be that they need senior governments to think about helping them relocate. For example, the location of their lagoon, waste-water system outflow, intake or landfill site.... Some of those source-water plans we did with first nations, with grant funding, noted those issues. For example, in some communities in northern Ontario, it costs big capital dollars to change that around so you don't have the outflow from the waste-water plant ahead of the intake or a landfill site.

● (1150)

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik.*

The Liberals have been saying for years that they're going to end boil water advisories, specifically in indigenous communities.

Do you believe the government has the capacity to end these boil water advisories?

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: Yes, I think so, and I think, as I mentioned, progress is being made. The further down that road we go, of course, there are more and more difficult situations to deal with.

We also know that dealing with systems in the north and in rural communities is, by definition, more expensive. You have to sometimes fly in a lot of the equipment and people. You have to deal perhaps with ground that doesn't thaw as soon as it does down here in balmy Paris, Ontario, where I live. There are all kinds of challenges, but that doesn't mean we don't need to address them.

What I would say, and I don't know whether this is true right now, is that some of the past infrastructure funding programs, as a previous witness noted, did not provide adequate support for the small and rural and northern communities. Sometimes they applied a population per capita benefit test, or sometimes they looked at the overall expenditure in relation to the size of the system. We really need to take a different approach so that the smaller systems would be helped as well.

The Chair: That's very interesting.

Thank you for those questions and answers.

We got started a little late. We have time for a reduced second round, so instead of five minutes, I'm reducing the time for the second round by 40%. That's three minutes each, and Madam Pauzé and Madam Idlout will have 1.5 minutes each, so we'll be able to get in a second round.

Mr. Leslie, go ahead for three minutes.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start with Mr. Peslari.

I've met with many rural municipalities, towns and city councils since being elected, and water is often the key issue, water and waste-water infrastructure, and storing water for overland flooding and irrigation purposes. Infrastructure funding for those projects has seen a lack of federal support in many of their eyes, as you mentioned, not only due to a forced need for collaboration between rural municipalities that might be at odds in their needs, but also due to the onerous nature of a lot of the project applications and the timelines in which these applications are approved. Often, the project's total cost is up 30% or more by the time the federal government actually comes through with the money.

Are there any recommendations that you have for the federal government? How can we go about getting those projects completed with less work for municipalities that don't necessarily have the same levels of capacity? How can we fund them appropriately as well so that by the time shovels are in the ground to upgrade water and waste-water systems, it doesn't put undue burden on a level of government that doesn't have the same deficit capacities as the federal government?

Mr. George Peslari: I can collaborate with the people who made the application, but I can say that it was at least eight months of work with the engineer to provide the paperwork, and it took over a year to hear about the funding. By then, there were major changes in the cost of the project. It's going to be passed on to the people involved, as each person needs to contribute the difference in the cost of water being supplied to their houses.

I like what Theresa said, that things cannot be tied to the number of people in the community. It needs to just be fair for all.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Thank you.

I tend to agree with that. We've seen a lot of projects that run into this particular challenge. It's not unique to water, but the federal government's programs on housing, for example, are putting 10,000-person communities up against a million people in a community. I think we need to do a better job and make sure that rural municipalities have access to the same program dollars because, in speaking with the RMs that I represent, aging water and waste-water infrastructure is a real concern. I think we need to find ways to alleviate that.

Maybe I'll just quickly—

The Chair: That's a good point to end on. It's a good comment. I mean that sincerely.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chatel, you have the floor for three minutes.

● (1155)

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question about water quality consultations with our indigenous communities.

Ms. Tanguay, you told us about contaminants and radionuclides present in water. You also mentioned five principles that were to be followed by our government. As you know, the Anishinabe community in my riding intervened in connection with Chalk River nuclear waste management.

Could you tell us about these five important recommendations?

[*English*]

Ms. Laura Tanguay: Thank you so much for that question.

Yes, I am familiar with the site at Chalk River, where there have been many Algonquin interventions against the siting of a near-surface disposal facility where experts have said there's likely contamination of the Ottawa River watershed with radionuclides including tritium and cobalt-60. There have been recommendations for a siting relocation to minimize the likelihood of the impacts to freshwater sources for many people in Ottawa, Montreal, the surrounding rural areas, municipalities, including Algonquin first nations that rely on the watershed for fresh drinking water.

We have made a number of recommendations that are linked in our initial brief about more responsible policies for radioactive waste management and decommissioning.

Ms. McClenaghan, I don't know if you'd like to speak to what those are.

I can go through them for you as well, if that's what you're looking for, Ms. Chatel.

The Chair: We only have 30 seconds, unfortunately.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you.

One of the main recommendations made by members of my community was that if the Chalk River project were to go forward, it would be essential for the management and removal of radioactive waste to be carried out and supervised independently. Canada would accordingly need an independent organization to oversee the management process. Moreover, you adopted a policy prohibiting the importation of radioactive waste from other countries.

If you could send us your comments in writing, we would be very grateful.

The Chair: Of course. Witnesses can always submit comments in writing.

Ms. Pauzé, you have time to ask a question.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I really like the questions Ms. Chatel just asked.

Here are some other instances in which indigenous nations were not heard. Only 10 km from Edmonton, there is an indigenous community that doesn't even have access to drinking water. At the Kearl mine in Alberta, there was a spill of contaminated water and gasoline. There were also the nuclear accidents at Chalk River that Ms. Chatel just mentioned. I also took note of Mr. Yates' replies to my questions.

My question is for the Canadian Environmental Law Association. Do you think the scheduling and conduct of consultations with indigenous nations allows them to be heard properly?

The Chair: Who would like to take this question?

[*English*]

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: I'm sorry. What was the exact question?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I was asking whether the scheduling and conduct of consultations with indigenous nations allows them to be heard properly, given the numerous examples I gave of instances where they were not heard.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have time for a very brief answer. Who would like to take that?

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: I can speak with respect to that if the question was pertaining to the nuclear facilities. It's something that historically was very poor. There are more efforts by industry, but I think many indigenous communities are feeling that they're still not being heard in that sector.

The Chair: Thanks.

Ms. Idlout, you have time for one brief question.

● (1200)

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik.*

I have a quick follow-up for the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

You alluded to the fact that the current system to end boil water advisories is not working. Could you provide some recommendations as to how to make it work?

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: We're really anxiously looking forward to seeing the introduction of a new Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. We would like to see that come with a lot of flexibility about how first nations decide to exercise governance over their own water systems, and with adequate resourcing for doing so. We would like to see that very much situated within a multi-barrier approach to protecting drinking water, just like the inquiries in both Saskatchewan and Ontario found were necessary for municipal water.

The Chair: There isn't time for an answer, really, but perhaps you have a comment you would like to put on the record.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik* for your testimony.

The Chair: Mr. Kram.

Mr. Michael Kram: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In three minutes, I'll just do a bit of housekeeping with a few items that have come up.

Ms. Tanguay, a couple of times you mentioned radionuclides. I wasn't quite clear. Are you of the belief that radionuclides and radioactive waste are getting into our drinking water?

If you could clarify your views on that, I would find that very helpful.

Ms. Theresa McClenaghan: I can speak to that, and the answer is yes. There is testing at certain drinking water systems downstream from some of Canada's nuclear power plants, and there's been a long-standing debate about what the drinking water standard should be, but if it were reduced to the level advised by experts, they would be very close to reaching that limit frequently.

Mr. Michael Kram: Okay.

Mr. Yates, in your opening statement, you talked about climate change mitigation and adaptation. Climate adaptation is something that we don't talk about as much as we probably should. Could you give some examples of projects that you have implemented with respect to climate adaptation to make infrastructure more durable and more long-lasting?

Mr. Carl Yates: Certainly in the Wabanaki territory, areas around the ocean are extremely vulnerable to erosion and also to intrusion of salt water into groundwater aquifers. In particular, we pay attention to those things, and when we do any upgrades to waste-water treatment plants, we have to take into consideration the increasing rise of sea level, but also increasing problems with regard to ocean surge as well. There's a lot more happening besides the rising of the sea level.

When we build, we must make sure, if we can, to build a little higher, but if not, we have to be very careful that our discharge pipes are going to be well above the highest level we anticipate, hopefully, for the next 100 years. As the evidence, I guess, is showing, that could see an increase in the ocean rising anywhere from one to two metres.

Mr. Michael Kram: Maybe I'll finish with Mr. Yates.

I've never met anyone who enjoys filling out federal government forms and applying for federal government programs, but you seem to have had more success than most. Can you offer the committee some advice about what we can do to streamline processes and eliminate barriers to make the application process more efficient?

The Chair: Make it a 15-second crash course, please.

Mr. Carl Yates: Okay. Certainly the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority has, I guess, done well, and perhaps there's a case history on that. I encourage folks to read our 10-year business plan, which is on our website. You can get a lot of good information there.

In essence, we took a long-term view. That's what's very different. Also, I can say that we had good governance to start, so once we put our governance in place, we were in a good place.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you.

Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): For how long, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Three minutes.

● (1205)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

I'll focus my questions, then, on Mr. Peslari.

It is very interesting to see how we can reach municipalities to support them. We used to have a program where we partnered with the federal government and municipalities called the PFRA, which was dissolved under the previous government in 2013 and turned back to the provinces.

We have some partnerships through the ag partnership agreements. We're talking about tree planting to take phosphorus, nitrogen and potassium out of the water that's going towards holding ponds, lakes, rivers or streams. That might help with the problem that you're indicating, where you have some contaminated ponds, if we were to look at something like we used to do at the PFRA.

I wonder whether there's an opportunity in this report that we're doing to reconsider having a partnership with Ag Canada that can address rural municipalities with water supply, tree plantings and that sort of thing, to help with the irrigation and keeping water clean in rural areas.

Mr. George Peslari: That sounds like it would be a good start for sure, yes.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Our difficulty is that, going into a provincial jurisdiction, you have to have a partnership agreement in some form or another.

I also think of rural broadband. We've had some successful agreements on rural broadband, and that's not unlike the infrastructure costs that we have with water. You have to dig ditches. You have to put in lines. Could you comment on rural broadband and whether you've seen some successful partnerships there?

Mr. George Peslari: I can't comment on that. I'm sorry. I don't know of anything right now.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Okay.

I've worked with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, and they've done some interesting setting up of not-for-profits to help with this type of programming.

Mr. George Peslari: I will look into that.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: It's a matter of how we tie the rural municipalities together for best practices. These meetings are good, but we don't have much time to go into it.

Mr. George Peslari: That's right.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I guess—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I was just speaking to Madam Chatel about the speaking order.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): On a point of order, I am wondering about the relevance of rural broadband to a water study.

The Chair: He's making a parallel, trying to find out whether the same model can be used.

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I think I have 30 seconds left.

I'm looking at partnering on infrastructure projects, as we do with rural broadband. We've had good success there. There might be an opportunity to run similar programs for water.

The Chair: That's what I thought.

Mr. George Peslari: That sounds good.

The Chair: Okay.

[*Translation*]

That' s the end of our productive discussion with our first group of witnesses. I' d like to thank them, because they provided a lot of information for our report. I also thank them for coming.

We're going to suspend the meeting for a few moments so that we can welcome our next group of witnesses.

● (1208)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1214)

● (1210)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

I'd like to welcome the four witnesses for the second half of today's meeting. Those attending virtually successfully completed the required sound test. I would ask that each witness not exceed five minutes for their opening address.

Professor Barbeau, appearing virtually, you have the floor.

Mr. Benoit Barbeau (Full Professor, Polytechnique Montréal, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To briefly introduce myself, I've been a professor at the Polytechnique since 2004, co-chairing a drinking water research chair, and the director of CREDEAU, the Centre for research, development and validation of water technologies. Given my background, I would like to share with the committee my views on major water processing concerns in Canada.

When I was studying in the 1990s at the Polytechnique Montréal, water treatment projects consisted of attempting to meet the standards and coming up with projects that cost as little as possible. Today, we have new performance criteria for projects, which must not only be resilient, but also sustainable.

What do we mean by resilience? It's the capacity of infrastructure to continue to perform under unexpected conditions, whether in terms of the quality or flow of water.

Sustainability requires solutions that go beyond cost to factor in other aspects, like social acceptability and permanence. It also needs to take pollution into account, because one of the great paradoxes of my work is that in order to remove pollution from water, I have to pollute it, consume energy, use chemicals, and factor in all the side effects of my solutions.

These days, it's particularly difficult to achieve all these goals, because the system has too many limitations.

Among other things, I'd like to speak to you briefly about the challenges of climate change, and the challenges of emerging contaminants.

Climate change is, of course, a subject that you have heard about. Extreme climate events are becoming increasingly frequent. What you may not know is that historically, when there are extreme events, the risks of an epidemic caused by drinking water are higher.

Historically, we've seen what has happened in the past when water-related infrastructures have been designed without enough consideration given to the future. In Canada, we need to start reviewing our design criteria, with due regard not only for past information, but also by preparing for the future, which is admittedly difficult.

Canada is experiencing droughts and water shortages. Even in Quebec, which has 500,000 lakes, I am working on projects for municipalities that are having trouble getting access to water.

This summer, there were major forest fires that will have an impact on surface water quality by affecting the flows of nutrients and requiring cleaning up all the ash that will ultimately make its way into our waterways.

We heard about another issue this morning, the huge challenge of emerging micro-pollutants of concern. I would focus particularly on perfluorinated compounds, which have been getting a lot of attention in the media. The industry has been overwhelmed as a result of the new recommended thresholds for the concentration of perfluorinated compounds in drinking water, because it it involves a major change in the paradigm. Unfortunately, eliminating these compounds from drinking water or wastewater is not easy. The existing infrastructures for treating drinking water and wastewater can't effectively eliminate perfluorinated compounds.

The important question for us is whether we should address this problem by improving wastewater treatment, enhancing drinking water treatment, or both at the same time, with due regard, of course, to the costs involved. The bad news for you this morning, unfortunately, is that the major investments currently set aside in Canada to enhance wastewater treatment does not address the challenges of emerging micro-pollutants of concern, including perfluorinated compounds.

Canada is lagging so far behind that there is still a lot to do in other areas, such as eliminating nutrients. We have not yet got…

● (1215)

The Chair: thank you, Professor Barbeau, for your interesting testimony.

[*English*]

Mr. Haller, from the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

● (1220)

Mr. Robert Haller (Executive Director, Canadian Water and Wastewater Association): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members.

Thank you for inviting us here today.

My name is Robert Haller. I'm the executive director of the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association. We are the national voice of the municipal water sector.

With me here today is Mr. Hiran Sandanayake, the chair of our climate change committee. He's a perfect example of my membership. He is a professional utility water leader who has dedicated his career to ensuring safe drinking water for his customers and then collecting that water back and releasing it to the environment to ensure that we protect the health and economy of every community.

Water and waste water is the most critical service we provide to every community. You can't have hospitals, grocery stores, factories or homes without that water.

Traditionally, our realm has been within an engineering circle. We pipe water from the river or lake, get it to a treatment plant, make sure it's safe to drink and get it to your home safely. We collect it when you're done and you flush it. We take it back to a plant, take out the biosolids, treat the liquids and put it back into the environment.

More and more we're looking at a larger picture here. We have to look outside of our cycle at our source water, for both quantity as far as drought, and for quality, which includes things like algal blooms, which are concerning to all of us.

Legislatively, water and waste water is typically provincially run. That's handed off to the municipal level. That's us. We are also regulated and created by the provincial level, but the federal government's playing a larger role in our sector.

In 2021, we made a submission to this committee that clearly outlined all the work we're doing with every single department of the federal government that we work with. My report listed some 18-plus federal departments and agencies working on water.

We work most closely with Health Canada on the development of the drinking water guidelines for things like lead, manganese and now PFAS. We work with Public Safety Canada on flood risk and cybersecurity. We're working with Environment and Climate Change Canada on things like the waste-water effluent regulations, microplastics and so forth.

This is where I put in a plug for what I call product stewardship over treatment. We can't keep allowing products that are full of plastics and chemicals to enter our sewer systems. Companies unilaterally label their products as flushable, but they ruin our pipes and systems. They cause fatbergs that cause dangerous overflows into our communities, and they add more microplastics to our biosolids and the river. We need federal support to create an enforceable standard in Canada for what is legally labelled as “flushable”.

As for those 20-plus departments and agencies, we've been advocating for many years, asking that the federal government work closely together. I understand that is one of the goals of this committee and I commend you for that effort.

It's also our greatest hope for the Canada water agency. As we were developing that agency, I was one of the advisers who just kept saying, “Let's get started.” We can't wait until it's perfect. We can't wait until everyone is happy. Let's get it started.

First, start with the federal government. Job one is to get all of those departments and agencies working more closely towards common goals.

Job two is to create a central repository where we can collect all of the information they have and share it across Canada. The provinces and other partners can come in as they please.

One of our strongest jobs is advocating to Infrastructure Canada to tell them how critical our need for financial support is to address aging infrastructure and to implement what all the other federal departments need of us. Our major point of concern is the massive cost of maintaining and replacing our infrastructure. You all know that we own most of the infrastructure in Canada, but we get less than 10% of the access to the tax revenues we need.

We're told to be self-sufficient through our rates, but then we're told that access to safe water is a human right. What does that mean?

We're called upon to replace our infrastructure, expand for population growth and plan for climate change, but then we have to keep everything affordable to the consumer.

We need sustainable and reliable funding to do what we need to do. We're looking forward to a renewed Canada infrastructure plan. We support new regulations, but they always come at a huge cost to us. We need Environment Canada talking to Infrastructure Canada when they introduce costly new regulations to us.

● (1225)

Regardless of the cost, we have concerns with the narrow focus of the effluent regulations and the lack of flexibility available to the minister and the ministry to look at local situations to maybe look at a bigger picture and figure out how we could have a larger impact with the same investment—

The Chair: I'm going to have to stop you there, Mr. Haller. I'm sure there will be many questions.

We'll go now to Ms. Woodhouse, program manager, freshwater and Great Lakes protections at Environmental Defence Canada, for five minutes, please.

Ms. Michelle Woodhouse (Program Manager, Freshwater and Great Lakes Protections, Environmental Defence Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me to speak today.

I am Michelle Woodhouse, water program manager at Environmental Defence.

Environmental Defence is a leading Canadian environmental advocacy organization that works with government, civil society groups and our supporters to defend clean water, a safe climate and healthy communities.

I am of Métis nation and British Canadian ancestry and a longtime Great Lakes advocate and water protector.

I also hold a master's degree from Toronto Metropolitan University, where I focused my studies on freshwater protection and governance.

Today I will be focusing my comments on two of the biggest threats facing the Great Lakes: harmful algal blooms, which are caused by nutrient pollution, threaten both environmental and human health and have become an annual occurrence in Lake Erie; as well as the ongoing operation of Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline, which crosses the Great Lakes at the Straits of Mackinac and runs through the broader watershed.

Let's start with harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie.

Agricultural activities are the most significant source of nutrient pollution in Lake Erie. Fertilizers, nutrient-rich waste water or animal waste end up on the land and get washed into the lake, where they feed algae instead of crops. While there are farm-level interventions available to reduce nutrient runoff, voluntary uptake is fragmented and inadequate. There is also a conflict of interest whereby privately hired crop advisers, who work for fertilizer companies and have an incentive to sell more fertilizer, are farmers' main source of information on how much fertilizer needs to be applied.

To address the threat posed by algal blooms in Lake Erie and other freshwater bodies across the country, we are recommending that the federal government work with provinces to fund independent, certified agronomists and soil testing experts to reduce overapplication of fertilizers on agricultural lands.

Second, we recommend that the federal government conduct publicly available studies on fertilizer use and disposal within large greenhouse operations and for commodity crops, such as corn, soy and winter wheat.

Third is that they fund direct subsidies and crop insurance to support farmers as they transition to new, lower-input growing practices, which may require some trial and error to get right.

Fourth is increase funding to farms for cost-sharing programs that support the implementation of best management practices.

This combination of research and federally funded programming has the potential to significantly reduce nutrient pollution and help restore our fresh waters.

Now I'll go on to another threat to Canada's fresh waters, Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline. Line 5 is a dangerous, 70-year-old pipeline that has already spilled at least 4.5 million litres of oil in its lifetime. As I already mentioned, the pipeline crosses through the heart of the Great Lakes at the Straits of Mackinac, where Lake Michigan and Lake Huron meet, a place that, due to its location further upstream in the Great Lakes and the speed and flow of waters, is said to be one of the worst possible places in the world for an oil spill to occur.

It is also at the heart of several legal battles between states, indigenous tribes and Enbridge. Canada has intervened in all of these cases, using a questionable interpretation of a dormant and outdated pipeline treaty that fails to include indigenous rights and title holders. I would hope that such a treaty would never be drafted today without the inclusion of indigenous nations.

Models have shown that a Line 5 pipeline rupture into the Great Lakes would be devastating. It would have far-reaching ecological, social and economic impacts on U.S. and Canadian waters and people and existentially devastating impacts on the indigenous nations of the Great Lakes. The risk of a spill is not imagined. The pipeline has already spilled 29 times. A spill could engulf 1,100 kilometres or more of shoreline, causing billions in economic damage, priceless losses in ecological devastation and would see Canadian shorelines such as Manitoulin Island and Bruce Peninsula offered up as sacrifice zones.

Numerous safety violations have already occurred, including anchor incidents, one of which was a strike in the busy shipping corridor of the Straits of Mackinac. Just this past spring, alarming levels of erosion brought the pipeline close to a fast-moving river on the territory of the Bad River band of the Lake Superior Chippewa tribe in Wisconsin.

Several economic and logistical analyses have demonstrated that we do not need this pipeline to meet our energy needs in the region. This includes a report released just last week by PLG Consulting, an industry leader in oil and gas logistics and supply chains. Its report confirmed what others have said before, that existing infrastructure can accommodate the majority of a Line 5 closure without causing major price spikes at the pumps or job losses.

In order to address the threat posed by the Line 5 pipeline, Canada needs to revoke its use of the 1977 pipeline treaty and work with the United States, other states, tribes, Michigan and Enbridge to implement a smooth and permanent pipeline closure.

● (1230)

The Great Lakes account for 21% of the world's available surface fresh water and 84% of North America's. In this region we have extreme freshwater privilege and we have an important responsibility to protect these water bodies.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to have to stop you there.

We'll go to Mr. Ryckman from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

Mr. Mark Ryckman (Manager of Policy, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters): Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Mark Ryckman. I'm the manager of policy with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.

The OFAH is the largest non-profit conservation-based fish and wildlife organization in Ontario. We have 100,000 members, supporters and subscribers, and 725 member clubs. We strive to ensure the protection of our hunting and fishing heritage, encourage safe and responsible participation, and champion the conservation of Ontario's fish and wildlife resources.

Of particular relevance is our interest in the management of freshwater fisheries, conservation of aquatic habitats, aquatic species at risk and aquatic invasive species, or AIS. Our team of biologists conducts technical analysis and responds to environmental and fisheries-related legislation, and we coordinate several programs that benefit fish conservation.

For example, for more than 30 years Ontario's invading species awareness program has been a leader in engaging with Ontarians on aquatic invasive species, addressing key pathways contributing to introductions and spread and facilitating monitoring and early detection initiatives. For the last decade, ISAP has partnered with the DFO's Asian carp program and aquatic invasive species prevention fund to deliver a comprehensive outreach campaign for grass carp, high-risk AIS and coordinated AIS messaging.

We are also leading the Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon restoration program. The Lake Ontario population of Atlantic salmon disappeared in the late 1800s due to overfishing, habitat destruction and ecological changes in Lake Ontario. Since 2006, the OFAH and the Ontario government, along with 40 partner organizations, have been working to correct this historic wrong.

The program has four components: fish production and stocking, water quality and habitat enhancement, outreach and education, and research and monitoring. In the past, the program has received funding through DFO's recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program.

We also coordinate the community hatchery program, which supports volunteer-run fish hatcheries that raise and stock fish in public waters. In 2022, over 1,000 volunteers at 35 community-based hatcheries contributed over 73,000 volunteer hours and stocked eight million fish in Ontario waters.

Ontario is home to over 250,000 lakes, countless rivers and streams, and four of the five Laurentian Great Lakes. These water bodies are home to an incredible diversity of fish species, which provide food and support the social, cultural and economic well-being of individuals and communities.

Ontario's 1.4 million licensed anglers contribute $2.2 billion to the provincial economy every year. Across the country, three million people fish, and in 2018, $10 billion was spent on fishing alone. This spending contributed $7 billion to the total GDP, supported an estimated 58,000 jobs across the country and generated $3.5 billion in labour income.

As impressive as those numbers are, they pale in comparison to the intangible values. Recreational fishing is deeply rooted in Canadian culture and tradition. It enhances quality of life, creates a connection to nature and is associated with multiple mental, physical and nutritional health benefits. Healthy fisheries also play a key role in the culture and food security for indigenous peoples across the country.

However, these values are under threat. Healthy and sustainable recreational fisheries are dependent on healthy and sustainable freshwater resources. Development is destroying fish habitat; pollutants like phosphorus are causing harmful algal blooms and massive fish die-offs; contaminants are driving warnings about consuming fish; aquatic invasive species are displacing native species and altering ecosystem function; and microplastics are being increasingly found in fresh water and the fish that rely on it. That is not to mention that climate change is threatening to reorganize entire fish communities across Canada.

Our broad mandate means we interact with all levels of government. At the federal level we interact with DFO and Parks Canada, as well as ECCC and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

Some recent examples include our involvement in the modernization of the Fisheries Act and the ongoing consultations related to the fish and fish habitat protection program, as well as our engagement with Parks Canada on proposals for national marine conservation areas.

We look forward to working with the federal government and the Canada water agency to find the best ways to keep our water safe, clean and well managed.

Thank you.

● (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ryckman.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone, and a special welcome to Professor Barbeau of the Polytechnique in Montreal. Welcome to Canada's Parliament.

[*English*]

I will start by asking Mr. Haller some questions.

Thank you so much for your testimony.

I want to address the issue of more efficiency. You raised that in your comments.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to quote the French version of what you have told us. Your French was very good, by the way I'd like to congratulate you on it. In your address, you said that "Job One should be to get all of the 20 plus federal agencies working more closely together toward common goals."

Without wishing to make any stupid puns, the mere fact that there are 20 such organizations no doubt dilutes their effectiveness. What should be done to reduce the number of government organizations dealing with water in order to provide more effective protection?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Haller: We're dealing with Health Canada on the regulations, on setting the guidelines for the drinking water. Then we're dealing with Environment Canada on what we release, with part of Public Safety Canada on cybersecurity, with another agency on the flood risk. We're dealing with Agriculture Canada. We're dealing with biosolids with CCME, and there are so many others.

We deal with international boundaries and borders and what we're putting into that. We deal with the joint commission group. It's endless how many we really deal with. Now we've been dealing with the Competition Bureau on flushable wipes, and the industry ministry.

We work with trade commissioners on trying to promote Canadian innovation around the world. We work with SDTC in the development of those. We have an idea for turning the Canada Infrastructure Bank...and using some of that as what I call an innovation insurance that could back up municipalities, help us solve our problems, while also promoting Canadian innovation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: To what extent does your interaction with so many federal agencies delay the measures you would like to take to protect our waters in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Haller: We work very closely with each of them. We have relationships with all of them. They know to go to us as the municipal partners, but sometimes it seems they're not talking to each other, as we say.

In the effluent regulations or the lead guidelines, they come at great costs. There was nothing in the budget, no infrastructure money, no priority setting for the effluent regulations. While the infrastructure plan did identify water, and we were very pleased with how much was set aside for water in the Canadian infrastructure plan, there was nothing specific to say that if you're trying to meet those federal regulations, you can go to this funding and you move to the front of the line. When we introduced lead, that came at a cost, and we were trying to work with Health Canada and Infrastructure Canada on the funding. There are so many other things that the federal government could have done.

We've been asking for a parliamentary secretary for water—or some other body. We're hoping to see that come out of the Canada water agency. We hope to get those groups all talking together through a federal body.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: To be more efficient...?

Mr. Robert Haller: Yes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Is it less paperwork, less red tape, less gatekeeper...?

Mr. Robert Haller: It's not about the paperwork as much as the impact that one has, and the other has, and the other has. If they're not talking to each other, they don't know the cumulative impact on a community, and at the end of the day, there's no financing set aside to help us implement that. I've been to so many meetings and round tables with experts from the federal government, provincial government and academics deciding what municipalities should do, but rarely is the municipality there to say how much this is going to cost.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Haller, at the very least, we can say that there can really be savings and increased effectiveness if we communicate. In addition, there should be far fewer bodies and levels to deal with so that everyone can basically exchange information.

In your opening address, right before ending, you mentioned, “the lack of flexibility available to the Minister to consider local situations”. Can you give us an example of the minister being unable to act because there were too many leverage points?

● (1240)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Haller: I think sometimes there's not enough flexibility written into some of the legislation.

I'll take the effluent regulations. Mr. Carl Yates just left the meeting, but for 30 years he led Halifax Water. They have a situation where they need to meet regulations by 2030, with an outlet pipe of what they're releasing into the harbour. The many millions they're going to spend will only have a small impact, versus if they spent that same amount of money on combined sewer overflows or agricultural flows. They could have a far bigger impact in Halifax, but right now it's one-size-fits-all. Everyone meets the same criteria. No matter what the cost and no matter what the impact, we have to hit that target, and the impact for that investment could be very small versus working with the conservation authorities or the public works departments to have a far bigger impact with the same investment.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have time for a brief comment, Mr. Deltell.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'd just like to say that a lot of work is really needed if we are to become more effective when the time comes to protect our water. It's all very well to make pompous speeches, but what's needed is action. If we have 20 different groups to consult, it's definitely difficult to move forward very quickly.

The other essential step would be to make the legislation more flexible so that the minister can take action. Right now, we have a single policy from coast to coast, as if Canada was the same everywhere, but what makes Canada special is its wealth, its beauty and its distinctive regional features.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deltell.

I am now giving the floor, virtually, to Mr. Kelloway.

[*English*]

Is Mr. Kelloway there? No?

We'll come back to Mr. Kelloway.

We'll go to Madam Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Sorry. I wasn't ready.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to go back to him.

I'm sorry. I don't have time to waste here, because we're running a bit late.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay.

The Chair: It would appear that Mr. Kelloway is here now. So I'll go back to him.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelloway, you have six minutes.

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): I'm going to pass my question on to one of my colleagues, if that's possible.

The Chair: Okay.

I have Madam Chatel.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

Mr. Barbeau, you mentioned that it was important to build additional resiliency and sustainability criteria into infrastructure projects. Under the investing in Canada infrastructure program, we are injecting over $33 billion in infrastructure projects across the country. We signed an agreement with the Quebec government and are investing in its municipal water infrastructure fund. This program will involve major municipal drinking water and waste-water infrastructure repairs, expansion and construction projects. There are also going to be some new tender calls.

Under our agreements, there will be much more of an emphasis on building climate-smart sustainable infrastructures everywhere in Canada to help combat climate change and reduce energy costs.

Do you think we are on the right track?

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: Thank you for the question.

I do in fact believe that we've reached a point at which we have to build various financial requirements into grant applications in order to address other types of challenges. For example, for about 15 years now, the Quebec government has been requiring reduced water use and tying funding for new drinking water infrastructures to reduced water use targets. That's a way of clearly sending a message to the community, and of course, to engineers, so that they can alter their designs in ways that meet these new criteria.

To more specifically address the part of the question on introducing new climate-related criteria, I must say that they still need to be spelled out. It would be useful for Canada to identify regional criteria, as the climate varies from one part of the country to another, which include climate considerations.

I'll give you a very concrete example. In designing a sewer system, it used to be acceptable for a small suburb to have an overflow once every 10 years. Now, however, these overflows are more frequent. This means that new criteria that factor in heavier rainfall are required so that the sewers do not overflow any more frequently than before, despite the climate changes.

● (1245)

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you.

I know that my Conservative colleagues are not particularly fond of numerous entities working together. And yet, if I've understood correctly, you believe that it's important to collaborate and to consult several key organizations and groups, such as the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec, to establish new criteria that would ensure that in Quebec and Canada, new parameters for water infrastructures will allow them to cope with climate change challenges. In your opening address, you mentioned several, including drought, water shortages and the impact of forest fires on water quality.

How might it be possible, together, to develop these criteria? Which stakeholders have to be involved.

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: As part of our research, we develop technological solutions. From now on, we are systematically doing a life-cycle analysis, meaning an analysis that addresses more than simply cost and performance targets.

The difficult part is that there is currently no clear consensus on which new performance indicators should be used to evaluate solutions. To what extent are municipalities ready to pay for these new indicators? What we're talking about are new requirements. If you were to ask me to develop a new solution that doesn't use more energy, you've added a requirement to the system, and it will no doubt add some costs.

We need to weigh these new obligations against their added costs, and that's a rather difficult exercise.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you. I'd like to ask you a final question.

You talked about the flow of nutrients and the growing presence of algae in rivers and lakes owing to climate change. Can you tell us just how serious this problem is in terms of water management?

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: To be perfectly clear, agriculture is a major source of pollution. It has always been that way, and it still is today. Farmers use fertilizers, and climate changes have been leading to extreme events that lead to an accelerated flow of these nutrients, which ultimately end up in our lakes and rivers.When that is combined with a warmer climate, the conditions are perfect for the growth of cyanobacteria and algae.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Barbeau.

That's already happening here, in Pointe-Claire. The water is warmer and there's blue algae. We have to put chlorine in the water, but people don't like the taste of it.

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

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

I'd also like to thank all the witnesses.

Mr. Barbeau, we invited you in order to hear a technical and scientific perspective on the subject of waste water. At the end of your address, you began to talk about perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl contaminants, PFAS, which threaten the cleanliness of fresh water.

In October 2020, the Government of Canada published an advisory on pollution prevention plans that focused at the time on triclosan. The prevention planning was left to industry. In his opening address, Mr. Haller said that manufacturers often unilaterally decided all kinds of things.

I have read that Minnesota, New York and New Jersey had implemented regulatory targets. Is water contamination in Canada, particularly with respect to PFAS, comparable to what is happening in the United States?

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: The good news, fortunately, is that the situation is much less serious in Canada than in the United States with respect to perfluorinated compounds. The main reason is that Canada has never produced these compounds.

In the United States, new regulations will affect 67 million Americans—I've never seen anything like it in my career. It will certainly cost a lot of money.

Does that mean everything is fine in Canada and we can ignore the problem? Unfortunately, the answer is no. The whole Great Lakes system is affected, as is the St. Lawrence River, where concentrations of PFAS are below what is permitted by the current proposed figures. And yet we know that these figures should be even lower and that they will eventually have to be reduced. At the moment, conditions in the St. Lawrence are not ideal compared to the proposed standards. If consideration ever had to be given to treating the water in the St. Lawrence, it must not be forgotten that 45% of Quebec's population gets its water from the river. It would have to be done all the way to the Great Lakes, because they are affected as well.

● (1250)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Should Canada adopt the regulations in effect in the United States?

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: That's a good question. The fact is that the American regulatory approach is very different from Canada's. In the United States, the regulatory approach has to be based on science, and excludes what we call the precautionary principle. If a standard is introduced in the United States, it's because a cost-benefit analysis has shown that it would benefit American society.

Recently, Health Canada suggested a different proposal, mainly based on a precautionary approach. As the science is evolving, it's difficult for now to say which of the two approaches is better. Health Canada is nonetheless holding up rather well. In Quebec, for example, six cities are affected by perfluorinated compound contamination. If the American regulations were applied in Canada, the same number of cities would be considered affected, but not necessarily the same ones. As you can see, the impact is similar.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: In the briefing note prepared for us by the Library of Parliament, the analysts take a multi-barrier approach, which appears to recommend both prevention and precautionary environmental measures.

This approach is said to be different from the control and compliance model, but aren't both rather complementary?

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: I agree with you. They do indeed complement one another.

In fact, the multi-barrier approach was developed in the 1990s. The current drinking water regulations recommend, among other things, that there be less than one parasite per 100,000 litres of water. Now today, in 2023, this is impossible to demonstrate in a laboratory. A different approach was accordingly adopted, one that consists of analyzing the risks and then measuring the water quality. Water quality risks are assessed when it enters the plants and then barriers, by which I mean treatments, are introduced to reduce these risks.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Are there any countries that harmonize the multi-barrier approach and the compliance approach?

Mr. Benoit Barbeau: Yes. The Netherlands and Australia. The multi-barrier approach was approved by the World Health Organization. In the water industry, there is currently consensus on it.

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

Mr. Haller, I have another question for you now. In your opening address, you said that the industry was unable to self-regulate because there was a lot of latitude, and that a standard was required. Can you tell us more about that, please?

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead very briefly, please, Mr. Haller.

Mr. Robert Haller: Thank you.

The one we've worked on the most is on flushable wipes and any products that are flushed and labelled “flushable”. Today, my phone is flushable. This plate is flushable. I could put that term on anything because there's no legal definition.

We made a charge, along with our friends at Friends of the Earth. We put a complaint in to the Competition Bureau that they were improperly labelled and that it was false advertising. Unfortunately, after two years it was rejected. They said there were just too many standards. There aren't. There are only two. There's one the industry made up itself, and there's one the waste-water professionals around the world created with the international water services flushability standard. We're trying to get that accepted.

● (1255)

The Chair: We'll have to stop there.

Ms. Idlout, go ahead.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, with apologies, I've returned to your esteemed committee.

The Chair: Then thank you for joining us, Ms. Idlout, and for your questions.

Mr. Bachrach, welcome back.

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

Thank you to our witnesses.

My apologies for interrupting the flow of questioning.

There is a motion that was put on notice, which I would like to take the opportunity at this time to move:

> That, given that:
>
> Canadians across the country are struggling with the cost of home heating;
>
> The oil to heat pump incentive was recently increased to up to $15,000 for low- and median-income families in Atlantic Canada;
>
> The federal heat pump rebate available to Canadians in the rest of the country is only $5,000, and involves a complex, bureaucratic application process; and,
>
> Uptake for the Greener Homes program has not been adequate to meet the government’s stated greenhouse gas emission reduction ambitions;
>
> The committee report to the House that it urges the government to increase and streamline heat pump incentives for all Canadians, eliminate GST on home heating across the country, and make big oil and gas companies pay for those measures with an excess profits tax.

The Chair: You're moving that. Okay.

I apologize to witnesses. Please stay with us just in case this is resolved rather quickly.

I must say to all of you that your testimony so far in the limited period has been very useful for this committee's study.

Mr. Bachrach, would you like to speak to the motion?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I think the motion is rather self-explanatory. I would add that this meeting is scheduled to end at one o'clock. I'm moving this at the end of the meeting so as to minimize the disruption to the committee. You're welcome.

This motion speaks to the debate that's going on in the chamber today. This is an issue that is of interest to so many Canadians who are struggling with the cost of home heating. Unfortunately, my Conservative colleagues have put forward a motion that helps parts of the country but not other parts.

We very much want to address the serious affordability crisis that's facing Canadians right across the country in every province and territory. That is why taking the GST off home heating, something we have long advocated for since the time of Jack Layton, we believe, is a solid policy offering that should be endorsed by all parties.

Also, the Liberal government's decision last Friday to significantly sweeten the program for heat pumps for those Canadians who heat with heating oil is something that all Canadians deserve. They deserve cash up front, and they deserve an incentive that is adequate to account for the cost of switching from fossil fuel heat to heat pumps.

This motion speaks to all those things. How do we pay to put a heat pump in every home in Canada that currently heats with fossil fuel? We pay for that by putting an excess profit tax on the big oil and gas companies that continue to profit off fuelling the climate crisis.

In 2022, the profits of oil and gas companies in Canada were astounding, in the tens of billions of dollars. Even a small portion of that money would go a long way toward ensuring that low-income Canadians and modest-income Canadians could afford the cost of putting those miraculous units in their homes, cutting their greenhouse gas emissions and cutting their home heating expenses very significantly.

I will leave it at that. Thank you for your forbearance, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for bearing with me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Thank you for waiting until the end of the meeting, because we are at the end of the meeting, and our resources only allow us to go to, basically, one o'clock.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, could I offer a motion to postpone until the next meeting of the environment committee? I see the clerk nodding that it's in order.

The Chair: Yes, but do we even need a motion? You can reintroduce it.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It's just to be specific and to give direction to you and the clerk that we intend to pick up this debate at the beginning of the next meeting.

The Chair: Yes. That's good enough. You have a right to move it at the next meeting.

We can't continue, so I would ask for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Longfield.

● (1300)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I'll move that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, if I may, on a point of order, a motion to postpone to a specific time is an interrupting motion and must be voted on immediately without debate.

The Chair: Let me double check on that. You seem to know the rules pretty well.

That's a dilatory motion. Let's vote on it. At the next meeting we will do Mr. Bachrach's....

In other words, we can adjourn now, but first we have to pass his motion or defeat his motion to take this up at the next meeting, but it's a bit moot, as I understand, because he can introduce it at the next meeting, period.

Anyway, let's vote on Mr. Bachrach's motion. Let's do a roll call vote.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, as I couldn't hear the interpreters, I can't be sure that I've understood what we are voting on. We're voting on a motion to postpone the discussion of the motion to the next meeting. Is that right?

The Chair: That's right. I don't think it's necessary, because Mr. Bachrach can present it at the start of the next meeting. However, we're going to vote on the motion because he suggested postponing the discussion.

[*English*]

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Is the minister coming to the next meeting or...?

The Chair: Regarding the minister, we're trying to organize it so that he comes for the estimates, which have not been tabled, but they will be shortly. That's what we're working on.

Thank you to the witnesses. It was very powerful in a brief period of time, and we got a lot of input for the study's report and recommendations.

The meeting is adjourned.