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Chair: Mr. John Aldag



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• (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting 56 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Pursuant to the order of reference made Wednesday, February 15, 2023, the committee is meeting on Bill S-222, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood).

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022.

Now that we're in session, screenshots are not allowed.

I'd like to make a few comments.

Charlie, do you have a point of order, or can I get through my opening comments? Is translation not working?

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Yes, do your opening comments, and then I have a point of order.

The Chair: Thanks, Charlie.

For those who are new to our panels, welcome. I think many of you have been to committee before, so it's good to see you back.

For those participating remotely, if you want to say anything, use the "raise hand" function. You can choose a language preference of floor, English or French audio. For anybody online, you have to mute and unmute yourself.

In accordance with our routine motion, I am informing the committee that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

We have a slight issue with Mr. Blois that we're getting sorted out. We have one of our witnesses who was on a meeting until 8:45. He hasn't arrived yet, so when he does get here, we'll have to either suspend or take a brief pause to do his sound check before he does his opening statement.

We have the first hour set aside for witnesses, and I'll introduce them shortly.

With that, I'll turn to Charlie for his point of order, and then we'll continue with the meeting.

I'd also like to welcome Mr. Doherty to our session today.

Mr. Angus, it's over to you.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you so much, Chair. I won't take much time from my colleagues.

I just want to let my colleagues know that I brought forward a motion that we can debate in future regarding the corporate structure of Paper Excellence, a company that now controls the largest batch of forest lands in Canada as a pulp and paper giant. Serious questions are being raised about its corporate structure, about its ties to Chinese state banks and about its ties to the Asia Pulp & Paper company.

I think it would be incumbent upon our committee to look into this company a little more. I want to let my colleagues know that the motion is being brought forward this morning, and we can discuss it as people get up to speed on the issue.

The Chair: Thanks for the heads-up.

The clerk hasn't received it yet, but when we get it, we'll have it translated and circulated.

Go ahead, Mario.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): I've been working on that since November. I think Mr. Angus has a great idea, but I wouldn't want us to spend any time today on a bill introduced by one of his colleagues. We can come back to it a little later.

For now, I'd like us to hear from the witnesses and get through what we have to do today.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's all I have on that, so we're ready to get to the witnesses.

We have the Quebec Forest Industry Council. Our witness, Mr. Samray, has now arrived. I think we'll go through everybody else's opening statements, and we'll come back to do a quick sound check and then move right into his opening statement.

We have Mr. Bromley from United Steelworkers Union joining us online this morning.

Good morning.

We have the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and Keven Lefebvre, fire chief, Leduc County; and Tina...

Tina, I don't want to butcher your last name too badly.

Dr. Tina Saryeddine (Executive Director, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs): My last name is Saryeddine. Any way you say it is fine.

The Chair: Thank you. Good morning and welcome.

Dr. Tina Saryeddine: Good morning.

The Chair: From the International Association of Fire Fighters, we have Carmen Santoro, senior executive for eastern Canada.

Good morning.

If we're ready with Mr. Bromley, let's move to you. I'll give you five minutes.

For those who may be new, I give a yellow card for 30 seconds left on the clock, and a red card when your time is up. Don't stop mid-sentence; just wind up your thought, and then we'll move on to the next thing.

With that, Mr. Bromley, if you're ready to take the floor, the mike is yours.

• (0855)

Mr. Jeff Bromley (Chair, Wood Council, United Steelworkers Union): Thank you, Chair, and through you, thank you to the clerk and all members of the committee for the opportunity to join here today.

My name is Jeff Bromley. I'm the chair of the United Steelworkers Wood Council. I'm speaking to you today on the unceded and traditional territory of the Ktunaxa-speaking people in southeastern British Columbia—Cranbrook, B.C.

United Steelworkers is the largest private-sector union in North America. The USW represents 225,000 member workers and retirees in nearly every economic sector across Canada. Of those members, 15,000 work in Canada's forest industry, including logging and harvesting, manufacturing, value-added—which includes mass timber, finger-joint lumber and laminated veneer lumber, among others—chip production and hauling.

The United Steelworkers Wood Council is made up of local unions across Canada. Six of them are in British Columbia. There is one local in each of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and there are two locals in Ontario. Approximately 1,500 of our members in the forestry industry reside in Quebec.

As for me, I've spent 29 years working in the forestry industry, including 18 directly in the operation I came from, which is about 45 minutes east of here, and the last 11 years servicing our members with the United Steelworkers.

Let me start with a basic point that I think we can all agree on. Ensuring that Canadian forestry workers are supported as much as possible by Canadian procurement policy and Canadian public dollars is a good thing. For that reason alone, I encourage you strongly to pass this bill quickly, but I will elaborate further.

Our forestry industry provides good, family-supporting and community-supporting jobs, which are often in rural communities and areas where local economies rely entirely on forestry.

Wood is the only resilient, carbon-storing and renewable building material. By expanding wood use and substituting traditional building materials with wood products, including mass timber, we can significantly cut the carbon footprint of infrastructure products.

Mr. Chair, we're falling behind. The Americans are already taking action. Since the U.S. procurement market is 10 times the size of the Canadian procurement market, maintaining access to the U.S. is important.

The Biden administration has made it clear that its infrastructure plans tie together infrastructure spending, fighting climate change and the creation of good union jobs. In Canada, we need to do the same. The more we are set up to meet the goals of a buy clean strategy, the better chance we have of getting and maintaining an exemption to buy American policies. The fact is, along with steel, aluminum and cement, wood products produced in Canada represent an opportunity for a reduced carbon footprint.

Canada's forest products are a net carbon sink. Our softwood products have been produced for housing both here and abroad for decades. Across this country, you cannot go into a rink or arena that was built over the last 70 years without seeing the distinctive blue-laminated beams supporting the roof, proving that the value-added or cross-laminated timber products that are the flavour of the day in terms of mass timber have been around for decades.

Things are changing in how larger buildings are constructed. New building codes are allowing for up to 12 storeys. They have better fire-resistant qualities and an aesthetically appealing look, and they effectively store carbon. These all point to positive uses in Canada's forest industry. Why wouldn't we root this industry in Canada's procurement policies? It just makes sense.

While I have the floor, I'd like to make two more quick points.

First, because the mass timber and new mass timber markets are growing, with new demand and products, I would urge parliamentarians and the government to take steps to make sure the industry is developed alongside our existing manufacturing sector. It already has the infrastructure and the established good, family-supporting, unionized jobs. Integration will be the best way forward, but our employers will need a little more nudging.

Second, while working on our own procurement policies in seeking an exemption to buy America, we can't stop fighting for a long-term deal that addresses the softwood lumber dispute once and for all. Such an obvious point may go without saying, but after all the damage this dispute has caused, I think it has to be said whenever possible.

With that, I thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.

● (0900)

The Chair: That's great. Thank you so much for your comments.

We will now come to the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs.

Mr. Lefebvre, if you'd like to take your five minutes for opening statements, the floor is yours when you're ready.

Mr. Keven Lefebvre (Fire Chief, Leduc County, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs): Good morning. Thank you for inviting the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs here today.

My name is Keven Lefebvre. I'm the fire chief for Leduc County in Alberta. I'm an elected CAFC board member and co-chair of the CAFC's building codes committee.

I am also a member of the advisory council of Canada's harmonized building codes board and of the Alberta Safety Codes Council's Building Sub-Council. I'm a master electrician, and I start my 42nd year in the fire service later this month.

I'm joined today by CAFC's executive director, Dr. Tina Saryedine.

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs represents the country's 3,200 fire departments through their fire chiefs and through a national advisory council of provincial, territorial and national affiliate organizations like the Department of National Defence, one of the largest owners of federal buildings.

Fire departments vary from small, rural volunteer to large, unionized metro departments. Despite our diversity, we are united in our calling to protect the lives of Canadians.

Bill S-222, in the context of federal properties and public works, is commendable. However, my colleagues and I are fire chiefs, so, as is our proclivity, we prepare for what could happen on the worst day.

First, wood has a special meaning to many of us as Canadians, but we must use it selectively. Outcomes could be disastrous in combustible parking garages containing lithium-ion charging systems, such as electric vehicle or solar storage. Well-intentioned environmental efforts, like using wood shingles in wildland urban interfaces, can contribute to wildfire damage. Buildings in these areas need to follow FireSmart principles and include sprinklers and other detection and prevention methodologies.

Secondly, take the necessary measures to ensure that federal buildings are fully operational post-disaster. Canadians require our government to be operational during and after disasters. The buildings need to be part of the solution, not an additional problem. Specific areas of government are currently looking to enhance and toughen building construction in light of the increasing impact of

weather-driven disasters. CAFC's 2022 census showed that of the two million emergency events responded to annually, nearly 10% of these are new environmental emergencies.

If encouraging the use of products through government procurement, ensure that the end use is fully understood. Please ensure this bill doesn't contradict or duplicate already adopted codes and standards. Some buildings, by code, are required to be specifically non-combustible. Understand that additives, treatments and unintended consequences of construction products could actually prevent the carbon reductions you anticipate or even become toxic in a fire.

In this vein, we would like to thank all MPs for their unanimous vote on Wednesday regarding Bill C-224, an act to establish a framework for firefighter cancers.

Our next ask will be to please support an increase in the volunteer firefighters tax credit. Eighty per cent of the country's fire service is volunteer, and no matter what building material you choose, we need every incentive to help protect response capacity in this country.

Thirdly, in Vancouver the successful introduction of tall wood buildings was accompanied by many resources from public safety engineering, many variances to specific code requirements, and much training. Unless we are considering such resources and training wherever we introduce innovation, we fail in its responsible introduction. As you pass this bill, consider that a firefighter safety objective be placed in the regulations under this act and support the same in the national building code of Canada, as required recently in ministerial mandate letters.

Related to this are the tenability times for firefighters to work within structures in the event of fire and the need to include floor performance standards within the national building code. Firefighters can and have fallen through floors during a fire. Canadians need the same floor performance assurances as are provided for in the U.S. and elsewhere.

As you move forward, please ensure that first responders are made aware of and trained to handle construction fires with the materials and methodologies chosen. This is necessary for appropriate entry, evacuation and response measures.

In preparing for today, my colleagues at Ottawa Fire Services reminded us that replacing existing building components with wood, for example, can impact load, fire spread and other safety calculations negatively.

• (0905)

In closing, we have always believed the same building code should apply to everyone, everywhere. It should be enforced and enforceable. It should have a firefighter safety objective. Firefighter readiness, training and equipment must be considered in preparation for what might happen on a building's worst day. The work you are doing today can help to mitigate future problems.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move right over to Mr. Santoro. If you're ready, the floor is yours for your five-minute opening statement.

Mr. Carmen Santoro (Senior Executive for Eastern Canada, International Association of Fire Fighters): Good morning and thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members, for this opportunity to share our views on Bill S-222 and the expanded use of wood in federal government buildings.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

To briefly introduce our organization, the International Association of Fire Fighters, or the IAFF, represents more than 330,000 members in North America, including over 26,000 in Canada. Across this country, our members are on scene in minutes in any kind of an emergency, including structure fires, medical emergencies, water and ice rescues, hazardous materials incidents, and much more.

The IAFF supports a vibrant economy and a successful sustainable wood and wood products industry, including the expansion of the forestry sector and the opportunity for those workers. We ask this committee to consider that the increased use of combustible materials should come with increased considerations for fire safety, fire protection resources and firefighter safety. The last thing anyone wants is for a preventable tragedy to occur because of the unintended consequences of using combustible building materials for the wrong building in the wrong location, or in a place where the risk exceeds the capabilities of the local fire departments.

Expanded use of wood products in the construction of federal government buildings should not migrate into certain type 1 buildings as defined in the national building code, such as detention facilities, art facilities or industrial sites, or into such structures as parking garages, structures with major electrical installations or structures that are critical to government operations in the event of a major disaster.

Existing building code and safety-related considerations, such as sprinklers, smoke alarms, egress and floor performance, should be adhered to and enforced.

Building locations should be carefully assessed to ensure that they are not positioned to contribute to or be victim to wildfire, which is a threat that is becoming more and more prevalent in

Canada. The design and safety of structures in so-called interface areas should be approached with the greatest amount of caution as the Government of Canada works slowly toward its commitment to train 1,000 firefighters in wildland response in the face of this growing threat.

Currently, the national building code doesn't link building uses to the available fire protection resources or training. We recommend a fire protection assessment in concert with local authorities any time a building with significant wood content is proposed. Local firefighters should be made aware of exactly what kinds of materials are present in a higher-risk structure and must be able to preplan the emergency response operations with training specific to the materials and the risks present. Training and awareness should include reference to any toxic chemicals that are present in building materials, such as wood treatments.

Adequate fire protection resources should be available in such a manner as to arrive on the scene quickly and with an adequate amount of personnel and the equipment necessary to safely and effectively protect lives, protect the structure and protect nearby exposed structures. All of these concerns from a fire protection and firefighter safety point of view are amplified when it comes to proposals for tall wood structures, meaning six- to 12-storey structures that are now permitted in the building code.

Bill S-222 and the rise of innovation in construction support our long-standing call for firefighter safety objectives in a national building code.

On behalf of our members across Canada and the IAFF, we appreciate this opportunity.

Before I close, while I have the floor, I want to say that I've been a firefighter for 37 years. For most of it, I was a supervisor or a captain. What a lot of people don't realize is that we are one of the few professions that do not have the right to refuse unsafe work. Every emergency scene is unsafe work, and we rely on all of you to include safety measures in building codes and fire codes to reduce the dangers that we face every day.

• (0910)

With that, I'll close. Thank you very much.

I am open to questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your opening statements.

Thank you to both of you and your organizations for all of the service you provide to the country. We look forward to having some good discussion with you today.

I want to take just a minute here. We're going to suspend so that we can quickly do the sound check. Mr. Samray has the approved headset, so we think this should take just a second. Because we're being televised, it gets messy if we do it all live, so we'll suspend. If you need to grab a coffee, do that, but don't go too far. I expect to be back in session momentarily.

We are temporarily suspended.

• (0910) _____ (Pause) _____

• (0910)

The Chair: All right, Mr. Samray. You have five minutes for your opening comments.

Welcome. The floor is yours.

Mr. Jean-François Samray (President and Chief Executive Officer, Quebec Forest Industry Council): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen, the Quebec Forest Industry Council (QFIC) would first like to commend the intent of Bill S-222, which is to ensure that wood is more systematically considered as a material in federal government infrastructure, thus contributing to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Until now, strategies and measures to reduce the government's GHG emissions have primarily targeted building operating energy.

The means advocated to reduce these emissions focus mainly on improving energy efficiency and conserving energy sources for heating through the use of greener energy, such as hydroelectricity.

However, a growing number of studies show that emissions from the manufacture of building construction materials are a significant source of GHG emissions.

The QFIC shares these views and believes that material selection has a major impact on the carbon footprint of buildings, which is why we support the passage of Bill S-222.

As a local resource from sustainably managed Canadian forests, wood could contribute substantially to decarbonizing construction. It helps fight climate change in three ways: forests store carbon; wood products store carbon; and wood products are a good substitute for GHG-intensive products.

The QFIC believes that action is needed in all three of those areas if we want more wood used in federal government infrastructure.

First, we must recognize the impact of materials on the carbon footprint of buildings. If we hope to accelerate the decarbonization of the Canadian economy and achieve net zero in the construction sector, one way to get there would be to replace carbon-intensive materials with low-carbon substitutes like wood and other bio-based materials.

Bill S-222 is very much in line with that way of thinking, and while the QFIC supports the bill, we recommend that more meaningful action be put forward to accelerate the decarbonization of the Canadian economy and achieve net zero in the construction sector.

The QFIC recommends that legislators put in place a requirement to produce a construction material GHG emissions analysis for all construction, maintenance and repair of public works and federal government buildings.

Public policy adopted by government also plays a crucial role, in our view. These policies contribute to the use of wood in building construction and, in turn, to the development of expertise and innovation throughout the wood construction industry.

However, despite the potential for reducing GHG emissions and fostering long-term carbon storage in wood, the policies in place are mostly guidelines and they need to be strengthened, through regulations among other things.

That's why we believe that considering the use of low-carbon materials should go beyond voluntary or incentive measures. Perhaps we might take a cue from some countries that have already gone down this path by including emissions associated with construction materials in buildings' GHG limits.

Third, we believe that informed decision-making must include life cycle analysis.

In the construction industry, life cycle analysis has led to a better understanding of the sources of emissions associated with the building sector and it's also helped assess the relative importance of the emissions produced in manufacturing materials.

The introduction of carbon footprint calculation tools, such as Gestimat in Quebec, supports informed decision-making throughout the design and construction process. It also makes it easier to set reduction targets and measure the achievement of those targets.

We would welcome meaningful measures such as mandatory pre-project life cycle analysis and pilot initiatives that foster systematic consideration of emissions associated with construction materials.

Specifically, the QFIC urges Canadian legislators to introduce a requirement in their legislation for pre-project life cycle analysis, therefore in the pre-design stage.

Fostering and bringing about a change in practices will make it possible to accelerate decarbonization and reap the positive benefits of using wood materials. This will not only help decarbonize construction, it will also help Canada meet its ambitious net zero goals, while also creating jobs and vibrant indigenous and non-indigenous communities across the country.

• (0915)

Thank you for your attention. I am now ready to answer your questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's perfect.

That was excellent timing for the opening statements. Thank you so much, everyone, for sticking within the timelines.

We now have time to go through one six-minute round of questioning by each party.

First up is Mr. Dreeshen, for six minutes.

Mr. Dreeshen, the floor is yours.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses who are here today.

I think one of the most important things is the point that was just made by Mr. Samray, which is informed decision-making and a life-cycle analysis of the products we are using. I think that's really a critical aspect of it. Wood structures do not last forever. Sadly, some of them can succumb, as many structures can, to such things as fire and so on. I think that's important to recognize. They still have to be disposed of at a certain time. It's good to know that there is this full life-cycle analysis of the products being used for construction.

I would like to turn to you, Mr. Lefebvre. It wasn't that long ago that I had an opportunity to present a number of Queen's Platinum Jubilee medals to a bunch of brave firefighters in Alberta. It was an honour to do that. You really recognize the commitment that they have and what they go through on a day-to-day basis.

I would like to get some information from you, Mr. Lefebvre, and perhaps Mr. Santoro can also chime in, with regard to building codes. You talked about the fact that you majored in electrical. I think that's really a critical part, because as we see in new buildings, we anticipate that there will be much more of a case for electrical charging—i.e., battery packs being left in basements. Of course, you've mentioned in past testimony the concerns you have regarding fires taking place with electrical vehicles.

Can you give us a bit of an idea of what type of codes there could be? If a fire happens to be taking place, what would you need to have in order to put it out before the whole structure gets in a state that can't be controlled?

• (0920)

Mr. Keven Lefebvre: Certainly.

As you rightly say, I've been a master electrician for nearly 40 years as well. I've seen code change over the years. Years ago, batteries of any type were meant to be stored in such a way that if they became a problem, they didn't interact with the living space. Now we're allowing living walls—I'm not sure of the correct name—where the batteries are allowed to be in the attached garage, a combustible attached garage. Lithium-ion batteries explode. They don't necessarily off-gas the way batteries used to, but they explode when they overcharge. Seventy per cent of all residential garage

fires are detected by a bystander or neighbour, not by the occupant. There's still not a code in an attached garage requiring detection, which would give early detection to an occupant as soon as the battery started smoking.

There is a bit of a code conflict happening right now between the electrical code and the building code that's going to allow additional battery storage capacity in the attached residential garage. We have some concerns about the way in which these are stored, the location in terms of egress paths, and just the general protection from creating the building to its being on fire.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Santoro, can you add to this?

Mr. Carmen Santoro: Sure. Thanks for the opportunity.

I think the stairwells need to be sprinklered to allow us more opportunity in high-risk structures. We need proper training and awareness for firefighters to be able to preplan for those structures, and more egress points when there are high-risk situations in those structures as well.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Just as an added point as far as safety is concerned, of course we've seen wildfires come into communities. It's really nice to have your buildings really close to the forest, because they look great, but there certainly should be some thought municipally. Even though you live out on a farm, just make sure you have a buffer in case fires come through.

Is that something you've been able to get to the attention of municipalities, to try to make sure we can prevent some of these fires, Mr. Santoro?

Mr. Carmen Santoro: Yes. Thank you for bringing that up.

I mentioned that in my earlier testimony. It is a serious concern. The International Association of Fire Fighters has worked with this government and has had approval for training for 1,000 firefighters for wildland fires. Unfortunately, it's moving rather slowly, but that training would certainly help mitigate any risk with buildings close to forestry.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Dreeshen.

We will now go to Mr. Sorbara.

We're good on the clock, so, Mr. Sorbara, the floor is yours.

• (0925)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Good morning to everyone. Happy Friday.

I'd first like to go to the Quebec Forestry Council.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, Mr. Samray.

[English]

Jean-François, you mentioned three things that you thought were important with regard to the usage of wood and how we look at the utilization of mass timber in construction. Can you just quickly point those three items out? I think it's important that they be noted again.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Sorbara; we have just lost Mr. Samray.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Okay, I will—

The Chair: He's dropped off. We'll try to find him and bring him back. My apologies. He was here, and now he's gone.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: That's no problem. I'll go over to the gentleman from Cranbrook in British Columbia.

Jeff, in terms of the United Steelworkers Union, I agree with a lot of your comments about rural areas, especially in British Columbia, where you have sawmills and pulp mills and pulp and paper mills, which I worked on when I was younger, in a much younger time period of my life. Can you comment on how important it is that we look at wood and its different usage now?

Mr. Jeff Bromley: The point about obtaining more value out of our timber and our forest resources across the country, not only in British Columbia but in all of our boreal forests across the country, is that it goes without saying that if we can extract more value out of the renewable resource, it pays off in spades in terms of more jobs, more communities that they support, and things of that nature. I think it's a bit of a misnomer in our industry. Many times the industry is tagged with our producing two-by-fours, and that's about it.

It's unfortunate, because the products that we make across the industry from the resource are multi-faceted. Even more, the recent mass timber and CLT focus is a product that is gaining momentum but has been around for quite a few years. As I mentioned in my opening, there are many structures that were built in the 1950s where you can see these beautiful, blue laminated beams that are a value-added product that was made by our industry, so it's extremely important.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Jeff. I want to quickly pivot to the fire chiefs who are here, and the representatives from IAFF.

Thank you to you and all your members for what you do on a daily basis as first responders in the country and really all over the world. My hat's off to them, and I want to give a quick shout-out to the Vaughan Professional Fire Fighters Association here, who we have a great working relationship with.

I'm glad we mentioned Bill C-224, which was passed in the House of Commons. I think that's another great step to recognize the efforts of firefighters.

With regard to your comments, I just want to clarify. With regard to mass timber and any concerns there versus concerns with existing building codes in Canada to make sure that firefighters are kept safe when they are called, it was exactly commented by Mr. Santoro that this is one occupation in which you can't just shy away from a dangerous work situation. Could I get some clarification there, please?

Mr. Keven Lefebvre: Mass timber and its code adoption has happened fairly quickly, and I've said a few times over the last number of years that innovation is moving faster than the fire service can adapt to the innovation. We're not comfortable with six-storey buildings right now, and we're already at 12 and higher. Innovation is happening way more quickly.... There's not the money in place for training. There's not the awareness of how to deal with some of these buildings on their worst day. We're not against innovation. We just need help with being prepared for it.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Santoro.

Mr. Carmen Santoro: I think through the building code and the fire codes, as I said, through the stairwells, we need a higher rating for those types of wood structures, to help get people out. Just as importantly, firefighters are going in. We just need the opportunity to get out, get out alive and slow down that burn rate. We're relying on all of you to ensure that you give us that opportunity.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, sir.

Back to you, Mr. Chair.

• (0930)

The Chair: You still have a minute left. Do you want to pass the time to anybody else, or...?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Oh, no, I can finish up. I didn't realize.

I'll go back to Mr. Bromley, if we haven't gotten back the gentleman from the Quebec Forest Industry Council. I see the clerk saying no.

Okay, I'll go back to you, Mr. Bromley. Have you seen some of the benefits of the use of mass timber in terms of employment growth within the wood products sector in B.C.? You're correct that the connotation of just sending out logs to Japan, or two-by-fours or two-by-sixes, is far from what the actual industry does.

Mr. Jeff Bromley: There's no question. You've seen examples of that right here in my neck of the woods, for lack of a better term, in southeastern British Columbia and in southern British Columbia, too. One of our operations in Penticton, Structurlam, employs over 200 of our members, producing mass timber and CLT products. A bit closer to me, over in West Kootenay, in Thrums, just north of Castlegar, B.C., there is the Kalesnikoff facility, which is really brand new—built over the last three or four years—employing about 100 members. There is certainly that.... It's growing. It needs to.... As I said in my comments, using the existing infrastructure and the manufacturing production facilities we have to encourage employers to shift is the way to go.

The Chair: Okay. We're out of time there.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Chair, may I seek unanimous consent to suspend the meeting for two minutes so that Mr. Samray can reconnect?

[English]

The Chair: I was going to see if we want to change the order. If Charlie also wants to direct questions to Mr. Samray, we can suspend while we try to get him back on. If Charlie's question is going to be for someone else, I'm happy to put Charlie next, which gives us an extra six minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay.

[English]

The Chair: Charlie, would you like to go now, or do you want us to—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes, I'm willing to go in order for Mr. Samray to come on so that Mr. Simard can get his questions in. I think that would be fair.

The Chair: Here, let me restart the clock.

We go over to you, Mr. Angus, for six minutes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Bromley, I was really interested in your discussion about the role of the IRA and the work that Joe Biden is doing in terms of a major economic transformation in the United States. It doesn't look like something we'd see in Canada, with a bunch of tax credits spread around here and there. What we're looking at is a hugely comprehensive plan that's tied to sustainability, resources and good-paying union jobs. Can you elaborate a bit on the perspective of the steelworkers in terms of what Canada needs to do to stay competitive with the Biden administration's IRA?

Mr. Jeff Bromley: I can use an example from our own organization down south. I was at an international executive board meeting, where I report on our activities from a Canadian perspective. The Biden administration's program, buy America, and the IRA are, in fact, utilizing and trying to reinvigorate different...in terms of the steel industry and using our members there, specifically in the Gary, Indiana, works and in that area, where a lot of our membership works.

It's certainly incentivizing industry to bid on U.S. procurement projects in terms of infrastructure—bridges and what have you—using U.S.-made steel and unionized U.S.... I'm sorry. It's not just U.S. Steel, as in the company, but United States steel in terms of the products to make that. They're tying the tax dollars.... It's billions of tax dollars—with a “b”—in the United States that they're offering, and they're tying it, obviously, and restricting it to American companies and American workers and unionized workers.

It's a direction that I would hope our country would follow suit on in terms of the procurement—although not quite as large—and it certainly would benefit both taxpayers and workers in Canada.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Over the last decades we've seen policies by the federal government that turn a blind eye to offshoring of good union jobs and show an unwillingness to stand up for our sectors because of this myth of globalization, yet what we're seeing with Biden is this really serious commitment about transforming the economy, not just for the jobs but also for the sustainability of the planet.

How important do you think it is that the federal government use procurement methods to promote resource work in the forestry sec-

tor, mass timber products, and being able to develop the huge beneficial resources that we have, to the benefit of our communities and our workers?

• (0935)

Mr. Jeff Bromley: It's obviously a no-brainer. Any tax dollars that stay in our communities and benefit our communities in Canada obviously provide that multiplier effect in terms of the economic benefit in supporting those workers in those communities. Again, a lot of those communities in my industry are rural. With respect to Ottawa's being a historic lumber town, it's not so much anymore as it was maybe a hundred years ago, but a lot of our operations are in the rural areas of Canada, and we need to support those communities.

It's important for the procurement to support those workers, and I think a policy such as this one to institute that goes a long way. I certainly respect my counterparts from the firefighters associations and the need to ensure the safety of their members. We need to do this right. We need to make sure we don't overlook anything that could possibly put any workers at risk, because workers are workers, whether you're running into a burning building or just getting up and going to work in the morning. We mustn't overlook that aspect. We have to make sure we put in those stringent protections, so that those members are also protected, but I think, at the end of the day, taxpayers' money being spent on supporting products within our industry and within our country is a good thing.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The steelworkers would support changes to the national building code to ensure that if we are using mass timber products in buildings, we have in place very stringent conditions to protect in terms of fire, so that, again, those who are going into extreme situations when a fire happens are safe. Is this something the steelworkers would support—the procurement, but also making sure the building codes are modified wherever necessary to ensure we put safety front and centre?

Mr. Jeff Bromley: Absolutely. It's unequivocal and it's not up for debate, in my opinion. I fight every day for members within our industry. Mills, pulp mills and sawmills, are not, obviously, safe places all the time, but we fight every day to make sure our members are safe in the workplace, and it would be hypocritical of me not to expect the same for my counterparts in firefighting.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Finally, to close up, Mr. Santoro, could I ask you to wade in on this? You gave a very clear and passionate statement on the need for safety for your members.

Do you believe it's possible that we can work with the expansion of mass timber products, developing more sustainable buildings? Would it be that we have to actually focus on the building codes to know where and how it's done to keep safety front and centre?

Mr. Carmen Santoro: Thank you.

Of course, we would support that. We'd support the expansion of wood use in structures, as I said earlier, as long as there are protections in place not only for firefighters, but for the general public, and an awareness level so that firefighters can preplan for the dangers presented by those particular structures, including the chemicals and toxins that will be impregnated in some of those mass wood structures and the materials that go in there. They're all toxins that are cancer-causing, and we need to take the necessary precautions to ensure our members and the public are safe.

The Chair: Thank you. We're out of time there. We have Mr. Samray back. We need to suspend just for a minute to do another quick test. We'll hopefully be right back in.

● (0935)

(Pause)

● (0945)

The Chair: We're back in session.

Mr. Simard, you have six minutes. Let's get going before we lose our guest, Mr. Samray.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're finally out of the woods.

Mr. Samray, I'd like you to help me clear up some misconceptions.

Earlier, I heard my colleague Mr. Dreesen talk about life cycles, and I believe he may not have understood how it's calculated in the forestry sector. A tree captures carbon throughout its life and after 70 years it starts to release it, by being eaten by insects, burning or rotting. My colleague Mr. Dreesen seemed to be saying that it's dangerous to use wood in building construction because the carbon would be released if the buildings burn down. We know very well that the carbon will be released in nature anyway.

Could you go back over what you said about life cycle analysis, just to make it clear for everyone?

Mr. Jean-François Samray: Yes.

Life cycle analysis takes into account all the carbon emitted and stored over the life of a product. So from the time you plant a tree until you harvest it, the tree is going to store carbon. Diesel-powered or hybrid machinery is used to harvest it, so its carbon emissions are calculated at that stage, during transportation, and so on, until the tree is transformed and used in building construction. All this is done according to extremely strict, internationally recognized protocols. Continuous analysis shows the amount of carbon inside the material. So this material will store carbon in buildings for decades, even centuries.

Some bridges in Quebec were built in the 1840s or 1850s, and they're still standing. Montebello's wooden-structure hotel is still

there, as are many churches and buildings made of wood. So carbon has been stored in those buildings for decades, and as we see in Europe, it's been stored for centuries.

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

So, to paraphrase what you said, wood is the most beneficial material from a carbon cycle perspective.

I like to go back to one other thing. I understand the legitimate concerns that firefighters have about building with wood, but I know that studies have shown that, due to their density, glulam or cross-laminated timber beams are more fire-resistant than structural elements made of concrete or steel. I've talked about this with people from Chantiers Chibougamau.

Are you aware of any studies like that?

Mr. Jean-François Samray: A number of studies have been done on that around the world, and the National Research Council of Canada (NRCC) is doing others right now. There was a demonstration fire, and various firefighters' associations were on site. They placed sensors at various depths in the wood, and the fire got up to about 1300 degrees Celsius. Because there were no sprinklers used in the test, everything burned up within about 20 minutes. At one centimetre into the beam, the temperature had only risen one degree Celsius. The beam is therefore oversized to ensure that the burning part protects the load-bearing part. Calculations show that if the building had been made of steel, the beams would have buckled and the building would have collapsed.

So don't confuse the new wood use technologies—they are building up to 23 stories nowadays—with light-frame construction like 2 x 6 or 2 x 4 houses, for example. That's something else entirely.

● (0950)

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Samray.

You probably read the bill. In your presentation, you said it's going to take more than voluntary action. It's a worthwhile bill, that's for sure, but I believe you suggested that it should go a little further and include a mandatory, even restrictive aspect in terms of construction.

Am I misrepresenting your thinking?

Mr. Jean-François Samray: Look, the bill says the government can authorize the use of wood. We don't need a law to say it can do that, because it can already do it. In our view, the bill should require consideration of a wood use scenario. In Quebec, it's now required for government buildings. An analysis with a wood use scenario must be done, and now they're starting to require carbon footprint calculation as well.

Therefore, in our view, to meet GHG reduction targets while also addressing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) imperative and complying with Canadian law, the only way to change the status quo is to require a carbon footprint analysis. In construction, it's the only way to reduce the carbon intensity of buildings.

Mr. Mario Simard: Lastly, I'd like to quickly discuss your calculation software, which is called Gestimat, if I'm not mistaken.

The software makes it clear that in terms of the carbon footprint, wood infrastructure provides significant gains over steel or concrete infrastructure.

Mr. Jean-François Samray: Yes, absolutely. On pages 4 and 5 of the brief we submitted, we talk about Vauquelin School, which has a hybrid wood and concrete structure. That reduced GHG emissions by 35%, the equivalent of 428 tonnes of carbon dioxide. That's quite a significant gain. In addition, the structure stores 861 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. So that's being done today, and it's being measured and quantified.

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. We're out of time there.

Colleagues, we have the clause-by-clause to get into. I have had a request from the Conservatives for one fast question.

I'm going to turn to the committee. We will need to suspend after this panel to bring in the new one. I've been told that it's a very fast question. Do I have agreement from the committee to put that out there, or would we like to move into the clause-by-clause?

A voice: I see thumbs up.

The Chair: Okay. In the spirit of Earl's not having used his full time, I will give the floor to you, Todd, for your one quick question, and then we'll move on.

• (0955)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, colleagues, for giving us this.

I want to say thank you to all who are here for your service to our country and to our communities.

I have a simple question for our firefighters who are here today. Is the national building code enforceable on first nations land? Does it apply to first nations communities?

Mr. Keven Lefebvre: The enforceability of the national building code is increasing.

It's not about the enforceability of the code. It's about the capacity. First nations are becoming more independent and doing more enforcing on their own, to some extent. The resources typically haven't been there historically, but they're improving.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Go ahead, Mr. Santoro.

Mr. Carmen Santoro: I can't answer that definitively.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Are there concerns?

Mr. Carmen Santoro: Through you, Chair, there are definite concerns—absolutely. We've included some of those comments in

our testimony in terms of the first nations. There are definitely concerns there as well, especially, as I've said, with the wildland fires that encroach on those properties, and the risks they have in those areas. We certainly need to address that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, folks, I would like to thank all the witnesses for being here.

You are released to go and to continue with your day. We really appreciate the time you've spent with us.

We're now going to suspend and do a quick swap of panels. We'll resume for the clause-by-clause in just a moment. For now, we're suspended.

• (0955)

(Pause)

• (1000)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We're now back in session, and we're going to be moving into clause-by-clause. For this part of the meeting, we're going to go through a few reminders first for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill S-222.

One amendment has been submitted for this bill. Should members wish to submit further amendments during today's meeting, those amendments must be submitted in writing to the clerk of the committee. There's no need for a seconder to move an amendment. Once moved, you will need unanimous consent to withdraw it.

During debate on an amendment, members are permitted to move subamendments. These subamendments must also be submitted in writing. They do not require the approval of the mover of the amendment.

Once every clause has been voted on, the committee will vote on the title and on the bill as a whole.

Finally, the committee will have to order the chair to report the bill to the House. That report will contain only the text of any adopted amendments, as well as an indication of any deleted clauses.

We'll now move into the clause-by-clause portion.

(On clause 1)

The Chair: We'll call the first clause. We have Mr. Simard's amendment.

Mr. Simard, if you'd like to speak to your amendment, we'll have the discussion on that.

It's over to you.

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay.

You heard Mr. Samray testify earlier that he had some concerns about the impact of Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood).

I support this bill as written. I want to see more wood used, but I seriously doubt that the bill will have any effect on wood use when it comes into force. Will it have any real impact?

There is a fairly simple legal principle called presumption of effectiveness. People say that the legislator doesn't speak for the sake of speaking.

However, Bill S-222 provides that the minister can “allow the use of wood” and “consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions”.

In my opinion, as it stands, the minister can already allow the use of wood and consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. No bill is needed to do that.

So my amendment goes along those lines.

I move the following:

That Bill S-222, in Clause 1, be amended by replacing line 12 on page 1 with the following:

“shall maximize the use of wood. The Minister may also allow the use of any other thing — including”.

I'm adding the idea of maximizing the use of wood. Using “maximize” rather than “can allow” would, at the very least, ensure that more wood is used as a building material.

If the purpose of Bill S-222 is to give our buildings a smaller carbon footprint, it sounds like wishful thinking in its current form.

As I said earlier, there is a primary legal principle called presumption of effectiveness; the legislator doesn't speak for the sake of speaking. I get the impression that the current bill has the legislator speaking for the sake of speaking.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I wanted to point out to all members that online, we have Mr. Hamilton, director general of the technical service and real property services with the Department of Public Works and Government Services.

Welcome, Mr. Hamilton, and thank you for being here.

Mr. Hamilton is here as our technical witness, so if anybody has any questions they'd like to direct on amendments or the clause, see Mr. Hamilton. He's available to take those.

Mr. Angus, you have your hand up, so I'll turn the floor over to you. I assume you want to speak to Mr. Simard's amendment.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Chair.

I fully share the spirit of Mr. Simard's amendment. I think it captures the spirit of what we are doing in the committee. However, I would warn against trying to be perfect when we can be good.

I know Mr. Cannings did a lot of work trying to get this bill supported by all players. There were a lot of negotiations on this. I'm very wary about changing the wording or adding to it without having done that consultation, so I will not be supporting this amendment.

I believe the bill is good as it stands, and we've had a lot of support for it as it stands, so I'll be voting against the amendment.

• (1010)

The Chair: Okay.

Next on my list I have Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I'd simply like to remind Mr. Angus that, in 2017, his colleague Mr. Cannings introduced Bill C-354, which used much the same language. I don't know if that would make him support this amendment, but I assume his colleague wanted the same thing that's being proposed today.

If it worked in 2017, I don't see why it wouldn't work today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on my speakers list I have Ms. Dabrusin.

Julie, over to you.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you.

I think the point Mario Simard is raising is really important, and I appreciate his advocacy for the use of mass timber.

I am curious as to whether Mr. Hamilton would be able to help us understand what the impact of this amendment would be on government decisions.

The Chair: Mr. Hamilton, over to you if you're able to share your thoughts on that question.

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with everyone this morning.

Real property services would not recommend supporting the proposed change, as it is contrary to the position paper that our minister signed.

Selection and management of materials in real property is based on the recognized assessment tools we have in place, and we're working with the National Research Council in our continued process of innovation. If wood is, in fact, the best material for greenhouse gas reduction and environmental benefits, the analysis that we currently do at the commencement of projects will identify wood as the best solution to implement.

There also is no clear definition of “maximize”, which means using that word and implementing and tracking it would be extremely difficult. Because of that, Public Services and Procurement Canada would not be in support of the change.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Dabrusin, do you have a follow-up question? Otherwise I have Mr. Simard on my speakers list. Okay.

Monsieur Simard, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Hamilton, if I understood what one of your colleagues testified earlier this week, you already consider the carbon footprint when you study your projects. My understanding from that discussion is that you are already doing it.

Currently, the minister can allow the use of wood without the measures in Bill S-222. That's what I understood from one of your colleagues who appeared earlier this week.

Did I understand correctly? Is what I'm saying consistent with your practices?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Hamilton, are you able to respond?

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: At the commencement of a project, we do what is called the “greenhouse gas options analysis methodology”. That methodology considers all the materials that will be used, and each of them has what is called an “environmental product declaration”, which identifies both the amount of embedded carbon and the carbon that will be sequestered or emitted by the product. I believe one of my colleagues, earlier in the week, also spoke about the price of carbon at \$300 a tonne.

All of these things are taken into consideration at the commencement of a project. The total price of a project takes into account many contributing factors. Ultimately we are trying to do construction with all the materials that, at the end of the day, produce the lowest GHG emissions possible for Canada.

If wood is that product, the options analysis will clearly identify it.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I understand.

You say that, at present, you are already doing what is proposed in Bill S-222. The minister can authorize the use of wood, and you're already calculating the gains in terms of GHG reductions in your buildings. This bill has no effect because you're already implementing what is in it, which is why I think it is important to add a component for optimizing the use of wood.

Whether the bill is passed or not, there will be no difference in what you are currently doing in the assessment of federal buildings and infrastructure. There is no gain.

Did I understand you correctly?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Hamilton, could you provide a response? Then I have Ms. Lapointe next on my list.

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: The National Research Council is continuing to develop its database. It's called a life cycle assessment database, and it includes all of the materials that are currently available for construction. That database will be the baseline that will be used starting in 2025 as we request a 20% reduction or a 10% reduction that would go to a 30% reduction of GHG in construction materials.

Currently, wood is not in that database. The only materials currently in that database, to my knowledge, are cement and concrete. Various materials in construction are continuing to be added, and as those materials are added it will benefit the reduction of GHG in construction. That's the innovation that's happening as part of the greening government strategy.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to go over to Madam Lapointe, and then Mr. Simard has a follow-up question.

Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I have a question for Mr. Hamilton.

You talked about how the decisions around selecting materials are based on some well-established assessment tools. Can you briefly highlight for us what that looks like? Is it a reasonable assumption that those tools would identify resources other than wood, such as low-carbon steel, or concrete, that may be more suitable for building materials?

The Chair: Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: The GHG options analysis methodology does just that. I listened in to some of the previous witnesses who were here, who spoke about both the emitted and the sequestered carbon in wood. This is a long and complex process with creating what is called an environmental product declaration for every type of material in construction.

It really depends on where that material is coming from. If a piece of steel or wood that's used in construction is coming from Quebec or coming from British Columbia, it will have a different environmental product declaration. Why? It's because transportation, and how it was sourced, all add to the carbon footprint.

The National Research Council plays an essential role in the creation of these environmental product declarations. This information is a critical component in the greenhouse gas options analysis methodology that is used, in addition to the \$300 price that we put on carbon. When we start out doing the analysis of the best option when we're doing new construction and major renovation, the outcome of that analysis provides us with what is the lowest carbon emitting solution to do that project.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go back to Monsieur Simard.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Hamilton, I'm going to ask you to give me a clear yes or no answer.

Right now, if you're analyzing a project, will you take into account the reduction of emissions?

Also, in the context of this analysis, can the minister authorize the use of wood?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: My understanding is that's a two-part question. The first part is whether we take emissions into account. For that, the answer is yes.

The second part, in regard to the minister's authorizing the use of wood, currently there is nothing in any of the regulations in PSPC that specifically annotates wood, to my knowledge.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: I just want things to be clear.

The use of wood is therefore forbidden at the moment. Wood cannot be used in projects at the moment.

Is that right, Mr. Hamilton?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: It's not forbidden. No specific material is identified. It doesn't say steel. It doesn't say wood. It doesn't say concrete.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: If no specific material is identified, then the minister can authorize the use of wood.

[English]

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: Mr. Chair, it's not clear to me what specifically is being asked by the member.

The Chair: Mr. Simard.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: You just told me, Mr. Hamilton.

I'm asking you if the use of wood is forbidden. You're telling me that it is not.

What I'm telling you is that, if the use of wood is not forbidden, the minister can authorize it. He can do it as it stands. If it is not forbidden, he can authorize it.

What is the benefit of the bill if you already consider emission reductions and can already authorize the use of wood?

[English]

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: We don't authorize any specific product in construction. The goal in construction is to minimize the emissions during construction. Through the GHG options analysis methodology, the end result is to use the materials during construction that reduce and have the smallest emissions footprint possible.

If through that analysis wood turns out to provide the smallest emissions footprint, wood will be the product that is chosen. That is the basis of using an options analysis methodology.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: So if wood is the product with the smallest carbon footprint, we can use it now. That is what I wanted to know.

I understand from your nod that you're saying yes.

I come back to my first question.

At the moment, if you analyze a project, you can consider emission reductions and use wood if it is the material with the lowest carbon footprint. You can do that today.

Is that what you're telling me?

• (1025)

[English]

The Chair: Be brief, and then I have Mr. Angus on my list.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you. This has been very interesting—

The Chair: Charlie, just before I go to you, I'm going to ask Mr. Hamilton for a quick response to Monsieur Simard's question.

Mr. Kelby Hamilton: Designers will put forward design solutions evaluating construction to establish the best solution possible. Again, it all comes back to what design solution is using the various tools we have available to provide the smallest GHG emission footprint. If wood ends up being that outcome, then wood would be the product that is selected.

This is not about one product over another. We have no preference. We use an agnostic tool that provides a response. If it's wood, we select wood.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

This has been very helpful. I'm really pleased that we've had our witness here, being that this is a bill we're hoping to get back today and that it is Mr. Cannings' bill, not Mr. Simard's. I think Mr. Simard should have brought in a bill like this. We would have had a much more fulsome debate with all of our witnesses, but that didn't happen.

I'm ready to vote.

The Chair: I have nobody else on my list, so I'm ready to call the vote on BQ-1.

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: I wanted to welcome Ms. Block and Mr. Lake, as well as our legislative clerk, to the table today.

We will now move to clause 1 as it was originally put forward.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you so much, everybody. That concludes the part of business related to Bill S-222.

We have two other items to deal with briefly before we conclude today.

The first is that we need approval of the travel budget related to the Inflation Reduction Act. That was distributed yesterday. Does anybody have any questions on it?

We included travel for seven members, plus a support team. The three locations that were costed out, as discussed on Tuesday, with field trips to be taken, are Houston, Denver and Sacramento.

Did anybody have any questions, or are we ready to vote on a proposal that we can then send off to the Liaison Committee?

Seeing no questions, shall we adopted the budget as presented?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The very last item I have is to welcome back to the table our analyst. One of our analysts is still back there. We've kept our legislative clerk.

Ross has been with the committee since before I started. He wanted a moment to address the committee.

With that, Ross, it's over to you.

Mr. Ross Linden-Fraser (Committee Researcher): Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's very kind of you.

I've had a chance to speak with some of the members. Sadly, for me, this is my last day on the committee, so I wanted to take a moment to thank the members for the opportunity to work with the committee. It's been a pleasure. It's a privilege to work with each of you.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the members of the committee and the other staff members, I have learned a lot.

So I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Geneviève Desjardins, the clerk of the committee, the chair and my colleague Dana Fan. I thank you all very much.

The committee will be in good hands.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ross, thank you so much for your service to the library and to Parliament.

For the members who are here, I have a card, if you'd like to stop by and sign it on the way out. I have a small gift in my bag, but I'll wait until we're not being televised before I pull that out to present it.

Congratulations on your new role outside of the House, and best of luck with your future endeavours. We'll miss you dearly here. We also know that we're left in good hands, so all the best to you.

With that, folks, we are adjourned. Have safe travels home, a great week in the constituency, and we'll see everybody back here in a week.

On the first day back, on Tuesday, March 21, we have the minister coming. Actually, no, we're not suspended yet. We have the minister coming with officials to go over supplementary estimates (C). The issue I want to flag for everybody is that the way the budget cycle works, the last supply day ends up being at a point when, because it works back from that, today is actually the last day we can report back to the House on supplementary estimates (C). However, it wasn't possible to get the minister here. We can still have him come with officials. It simply means we can't amend any of the votes that are put to us, but we can still report back to the House. It would just be without amendments.

The plan is to still have the minister and officials here on the Tuesday when we're back. Then, on Friday, we'll be continuing with the recommendations on the just transition report. We're not calling it "just transition", but the new title hasn't been adopted yet, so that will be the first week back and we'll see where we're at. The plan for the second week, then, is to move into the first panel of witnesses for the Inflation Reduction Act, just to get that one started. I'll share details after that for the rest of the work plan.

Now, that's it. Safe travels. Have a good week at home.

Mario, do you have a question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Are we not going to study the draft reports when we return?

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to do the minister and the supplementary estimates (C). Then we'll do the recommendations.

Hopefully, we'll see if we can conclude on the Friday for the just transition report. I thought we'd be further along in the report. We have invited a panel for the just transition, for the Tuesday. It's going to be, I think, a lot easier to have the IRA on Tuesday, because if we have anybody outside of this time zone on Fridays it becomes very early. I'm going to keep Fridays for continuing to move along on our reports, so we can get those concluded.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: If I remember correctly, our motion said that we would first conclude the consideration of reports. So we would do that before we go on to Mr. Angus' study.

[English]

The Chair: The wording—and we can get our clerk to give you the exact wording—I didn't take as an absolute, and I've heard from other members that there's some interest in and urgency on the Inflation Reduction Act, so I'm trying to do the dance of getting that one started, at least with one panel. We are going to be holding at least some of it until after the budget and then coming back to report, but I wanted to get at least the one panel of witnesses in this next week's session.

I'll get the wording from the clerk, because it's not an absolute. It's how I interpret it. If the committee wants to direct otherwise, it can—

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay, but—

[English]

The Chair: —but let me get the clerk to give the wording of the motion first, and then I'll go to you, Mr. Simard.

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Geneviève Desjardins): The part of the motion you're referring to is the following:

That, notwithstanding anything else in this motion, the Chair prioritize the consideration of draft reports.

Mr. Mario Simard: That's it. Unless we do this in subcommittee, I would prefer that we give precedence to the consideration of draft reports, as agreed, before starting a new study.

• (1035)

[English]

The Chair: I have Charlie now, and then Shannon.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I don't think we need to overthink this, Chair. If we're second-guessing, we're not going to get much done. I think this is a very reasonable position. I think we're all very interested in the IRA. It's going to be strange to be going to the United States if we haven't actually started the study, because we're going to be going in blind, so I think your attempt to balance this works, and I support it.

The Chair: Okay.

Next is Ms. Stubbs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I would just say that the Conservatives read and understood the motion in the same way that our Bloc colleague is articulating. We support his position that we should conclude the study report.

The Chair: Okay.

How about we have, in the first week, as I've said, the minister and officials on the supplementary (C)s, which was at the request of the committee? The Friday is set for continuation of the report—the recommendations we're on. Let me see where we are at that point, and we'll get a work plan the first week back. If we want to continue with reports, then we can continue with reports. There's some time to figure this out. We have the first week's work plan, which fully respects what we have laid out for the committee.

Go ahead, Mario.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: I don't wish to nitpick. However, before we decide on the work for the next few weeks, we should discuss it, at least in subcommittee.

Since we had a motion before us, it was pretty clear to me that we would be looking at the reports. I prepared myself accordingly.

Before we decide on that, we should at least discuss it in subcommittee.

[English]

The Chair: Charlie is next.

It's over to you, Mr. Angus. You're next on my speakers list.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thanks.

Yes. I don't want to be combative, but I think that if we wait for a subcommittee, that just delays things. It just means that our work in committee is going to be slowed down. I think you've offered a reasonable thing. There's no conspiracy behind it.

How about we put your suggestion to a vote? If the vote doesn't pass, we can take it to the subcommittee, but I would like to get this thing dealt with today so that our analysts have instructions and the clerk has instructions to draw the witnesses we need. I would say that we put it to a vote.

The Chair: Okay.

Mario?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: There is no conspiracy. We are setting an agenda for the committee.

Why would we vote on a proposal? It's up to all the participants to decide what our agenda will be. We cannot be presented with a fait accompli because it suits Mr. Angus, who wants to launch his study as quickly as possible.

We prepare ourselves before coming here. I, for one, prepare well in advance. I know that we have reports to study, which will not be fresh in our minds if we consider them in six weeks' time.

We already had a set agenda. We cannot play around with the agenda at will without consulting the committee. I do not think it is appropriate to do that. If we did, our agenda could change every week and we could move on.

Unless we discuss it in subcommittee and have time to do so, I don't see why we would vote on the proposal without everyone having had a chance to think about it. We're not going to vote five minutes before the end of the meeting.

[*English*]

The Chair: I've heard the considerations and the concerns of the committee. I'm willing to work with them.

As I said, we have the schedule for the first week. Let me come back with a proposed schedule for the rest of it. We can deal with it when we're back.

With that, folks, we now need to get on with the day. I'm going to adjourn the meeting. You'll get the notice once we're back, in a week.

Thank you. Have a good constituency week.

The meeting is adjourned.

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