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Chair: Mr. George Chalal



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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 105 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on November 29, 2022, the committee is resuming its study of Canada's electricity grid and network.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. All witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting, except for Mr. Sylvestre.

I would like to remind participants of the following points:

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be address through the chair.

Members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak, whether participating in person or via Zoom. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

Now I would like to welcome our witnesses, who are appearing via video conference.

With us today from the Canadian Labour Congress, we have Alex Callahan, national director, health and safety environment. From Electricity Human Resources Canada, we have Mark Chapeskie, vice-president of programs; and from Indigenous Clean Energy, we have James Jenkins, executive director.

Up to five minutes will be given for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

I use these cards. A yellow card means a 30-second warning; red means that your time is up. I will try not to cut you off mid-sentence so that you can finish your thought.

I will now begin with five minutes of opening remarks from Alex Callahan, national director of the Canadian Labour Congress.

You have the floor, sir.

Mr. Alex Callahan (National Director, Health Safety and Environment, Canadian Labour Congress): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Alex Callahan. I'm the national director of health, safety and environment at the Canadian Labour Congress.

The CLC represents more than three million workers. Workers with affiliated unions work in virtually every sector of the economy, in all occupations and in all parts of Canada.

CLC affiliates also represent workers throughout the electricity system in every province and territory. We appreciate the importance of this study being conducted by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and we look forward to responding to any questions. I appreciate the invitation to speak to you today.

The mandate of the committee is to study Canada's electricity grid and network, to understand interprovincial tie-ins and gaps, opportunities, and the challenges to improve electrical production and distribution across the country.

This means that the committee must consider workers. While the role of workers in improving the grid is obvious, because they build, maintain, and operate generation, transmission, and distribution assets, workers more broadly are counting on electrification to power new industries, decarbonize existing industries, and reliably power already electrified industries.

Your work will be essential to building a strong economy of the future and creating a sustainable economy. Please consider that union density in the sector has made electricity jobs good and safe across the country.

Additionally, in June 2024, the Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act was given royal assent, committing Canada to creating economic growth and sustainable jobs. These jobs are part of the net-zero trajectory, and by and large are good, safe and well-paid unionized jobs. We always need to be lifting those standards.

Electrifying jobs across the country is an important part of industrial decarbonization, which is a key way to make already good jobs in emissions-intensive sectors into sustainable jobs.

Where are we now? There is a general consensus amongst demand forecasters that there's going to be roughly a doubling of generation to meet demand between now and 2050. Meeting this demand will require significant capital investments in new and refurbished generation, transmission and distribution.

It also means everything from building new generating stations, transmission lines and substations to installing transformers and smart meters and to replacing wooden utility poles with cement and steel to withstand extreme weather. Investments in this capital infrastructure will require significant investments in skilled labour to build, operate and maintain a good state of repair across the grid.

However, despite this acknowledged and existing need, Canada is facing a shortage of electricians. I don't have StatsCan data on related national occupation classifications, or NOCs, but I think it is fair to say that in the absence of information to the contrary, it's probably similar.

In this context, we also note that many other countries have announced, or are pursuing, significant electrification strategies. The IEA lists more than 244 in-force electrification strategies around the globe. This means there will be an increased demand for workers around the world. This also means there is a challenge in finding yourself in a seller's market.

We're facing a shortage, and we cannot assume that skills gaps can be resolved through immigration. This means that you need to be recommending significant investment in training, supporting strong paycheques and investing in education, health care, and public services so that we can attract and retain skilled workers.

We're asking for a sectoral workforce strategy to ensure that we can meet electrification goals and deliver electricity reliably and affordably. That means you should have four key priorities that underpin a workforce strategy: social dialogue; the principles of decent work; accredited training delivered by not-for-profits, such as union training centres; and a commitment to transitioning, with no involuntary layoffs.

What does that mean?

Social dialogue means getting employers and governments to the table with workers.

A commitment to decent work means fair pay, job security, social dialogue and a strong social safety net.

Training means accredited training so that public dollars go into training and not to a middleman.

Finally, a low-carbon grid means a changing generation mix, which means committing to a transition and no involuntary layoffs for the workers who keep the lights on today.

Canada's unions are also asking you to recommend that the government take steps to ensure domestic production of transformers and smart transformers, steel that goes into transmission towers, cement for dams and various products in the supply chain.

A strong domestic manufacturing sector that produces goods will be essential to grid expansion and to the transformation that's essential to ensuring Canada's able to weather supply chain disruptions or spikes in global demand for particular goods related to electrification. Recall my comment earlier about the global demand for electrification.

In respect of these supply chains and the work that needs to be done, Canada's unions believe that the committee should recom-

mend the federal government use a combination of federal procurement and investment tax credits with labour standards. The committee should recommend considering production tax credits with accompanying labour standards to build and ensure viability within the sector while meeting job quality standards in the Sustainable Jobs Act's definition of sustainable jobs.

Finally, in addition to creating a workforce plan—credibly built, with labour at the table—the committee should recommend a focus on affordability and reliability. Workers across the sector are ratepayers. Support for electrification will be contingent on affordable and reliable electricity.

As you're doing all of this work, the committee should recommend the application of labour conditions to projects that receive public funding.

• (1105)

Examples could include mirroring the conditions on the clean economy ITCs for things like prevailing wages and apprenticeship ratios, etc.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Callahan, for your opening remarks.

Before going to the next speaker, I will remind all of our witnesses to speak a little bit slower for interpretation. It's a reminder that I normally put at the beginning of the meeting. It's just so the interpreters can stay caught up to the interpretation and not fall behind, because it is a great job that they do.

Now we'll go to Indigenous Clean Energy.

Mr. Jenkins, you have five minutes.

Mr. James Jenkins (Executive Director, Indigenous Clean Energy): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to speak on this topic.

As mentioned, I'm the executive director of Indigenous Clean Energy. We represent over 1,000 program alumni, mentors and team members who are clean-energy leaders and professionals in indigenous communities and businesses. We've been providing capacity building and training programs over the past eight years. We've been expanding to now include youth programs, efficiency, transportation and an energy and climate team with a national and global focus.

We've been a central partner of Natural Resources Canada's indigenous off-diesel initiative. Our educational and global programs began as initiatives under the clean energy for rural and remote communities program. We've had other successful partnerships, including zero-emission vehicle programs in the science and technology internship program, which we deliver to indigenous youth.

One topic I want to touch on is that indigenous communities over the past 10 years have become major asset holders in clean energy in Canada. Today almost 20% of the total generation infrastructure in Canada has some economic participation from indigenous communities and businesses. We've seen a large shift since the year 2000, when almost all medium to large indigenous clean-energy projects were hydroelectric. Today, only 12% of those are hydroelectric, and we see a mix across renewables. It varies by province. For example, in Ontario it's fairly even between solar, wind and hydro, with some bioenergy and storage emerging. In other provinces, indigenous participation is prominent in dominant clean-energy industries.

As we see the demand for energy increase—a need to double or, by some estimates, triple energy generation over the next 15 years—we'll see the number of projects that have indigenous participation increase as well. This really speaks to a need for continuing to invest in the capacity-building programs like those under Natural Resources Canada.

We're also seeing that the work in rural and remote communities has the potential to create a critical knowledge exchange and the skilled labour that will be needed in the modernization of the grid at large. Readiness is an issue, and we've seen some success through capacity-building programs, some of which we've delivered with Natural Resources Canada.

As we've supported remote grids, the off-diesel initiative and similar programs, there is an opportunity to learn from these microgrids and to apply that to the larger modernization that's needed. As we race to attract technology investment from across the world, modernization of the grid will become a larger and larger issue, as we've seen in other jurisdictions, like China.

Some key challenges are that the regulatory and utility processes haven't changed much since the 1950s, and those remote communities are facing inflexibility of rate structures and other factors that are placing greater risk and demands on those local initiatives.

We are calling upon federal investment in crosscutting programs, including CERRC, IODI and the strategic partnerships initiative under Indigenous Services to evolve and respond to these needs.

We also see some challenges in grid penetration by renewables within many of these projects, with diesel continuing to be the generation technology of choice. There is an opportunity to take what we've learned from microgrids and off-grid projects and apply them to the need for smart grid technology as we look at modernization and investment for the grid.

In addition, the indigenous population is the fastest-growing youth population in Canada, and as we see more indigenous people upskilling and becoming part of the clean-energy labour pool, we could be well positioned to unlock a competitive advantage in the energy transition, both domestically and globally.

Finally, in terms of the larger grid expansion, indigenous nations are increasingly becoming leaders. There are supply chain opportunities in places like the Ring of Fire, where first nations are in a position to lead control centres, transfer stations and other key infrastructure points. We see the Wataynikaneyap Power project in northern Ontario, with 17 remote communities leading that transmission project, and Hydro One announcing 50% equity in all transmission lines.

• (1110)

Other jurisdictions, such as Quebec and many parts of Canada, are going along on the same policy trajectory. We will continue to see indigenous leadership in the transmission infrastructure at large.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening remarks.

We will now go to Mark Chapeskie from Electricity Human Resources Canada. You have five minutes.

Mr. Mark Chapeskie (Vice President of Programs, Electricity Human Resources Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, for the opportunity to speak with you today about a critical aspect of our nation's energy future: the resilience of our electricity grid.

As we navigate the complexities of reliability, affordability, adverse weather impacts, technological advancements and increased electrification, it's imperative that we recognize the pivotal role of the workforce in maintaining and enhancing grid resiliency.

Our vision at EHRC is to build the world's leading electricity workforce, one that will power our nation's grid, ensure reliability and support a clean economy for future generations. We deliver critical business intelligence to inform labour market decision-making and lead the industry in creating and sustaining a safe, skilled and inclusive workforce.

The electricity sector is undergoing a significant transformation. Over the past five years, we've seen a 12% increase in total employment within the sector—almost twice that of the broader Canadian economy at 7%—to a workforce of 110,000 strong. However, EHRC's labour market modelling suggests that by 2028, in a net-zero scenario, we're looking at 28,000 total new openings. Nearly half of the sector's core occupations are expected to face labour shortages: engineering, the skilled trades and, especially, information and communication technology.

To address these challenges, we must focus on three key areas: attracting and retaining talent, upskilling and re-skilling our workforce and fostering a culture of inclusion.

First, we need targeted recruitment campaigns to draw talent into the sector. Offering competitive compensation and benefits packages will help retain the skilled workers we already have, and attraction starts early. EHRC is currently engaging middle school youth with projects like our series of great Canadian electricity maps that are 8 metres by 11 metres in size. They chart the generation facilities, transmission infrastructure, indigenous treaty territories and language groups, as well as the history of electricity in Canada.

The map has over 70 QR codes that trigger videos on a standard smart phone of people working in the industry, like Cherise, the boilermaker at Ontario Power Generation's Darlington nuclear facility, who's talking about her career in the industry and why it's important to her—and fun. It comes with six units for teachers, aligning with middle school curricula in science, social studies and geography. By engaging with more young people, we can ensure that our workforce remains robust and capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly evolving industry: 8,100 students walked across that map last year.

Second, expanding training programs and upskilling and re-skilling are crucial. Technological advancements necessitate updated and new training program delivery. Developing partnerships between industry and educational institutions and expanding those partnerships to create such programs is vital.

It's clear that as technology is changing, our training programs need to become more agile to respond to this need. While baseline skills like electricity fundamentals are absolutely still necessary and critical, established partnerships between industry and education on work-integrated learning and research and development will be critical to respond to emergent skills needs.

Furthermore, creating the conditions for continuous professional development opportunities will ensure that our workers have the necessary skills to adapt to technological changes over time. This includes paid leave to pursue professional development and incentives for employers to either share costs or pay in full for employee upskilling. This approach will not only enhance workforce capabilities but also boost employee confidence and job satisfaction over the long term.

Third, fostering diversity and inclusion is a strategic imperative. The face of the Canadian workforce has changed, but we have seen only incremental improvements in representation in our industry. Enhancing workforce diversity is essential for fostering innovation

and addressing labour shortages. There's plenty of research demonstrating this. We must implement strategies to attract and retain more under-represented groups, including women, indigenous peoples, Black and racialized people, people with disabilities and newcomers to Canada. A diverse workforce brings a variety of perspectives and ideas, driving both innovation and efficiency.

To achieve these goals, we need strategic workforce initiatives. Collaborating with industry stakeholders, government and educational institutions will align workforce development with sector needs. Establishing mentorship and apprenticeship programs will facilitate knowledge transfer and skills development. These partnerships will create a supportive ecosystem that nurtures talent and prepares our workforce for the future.

In conclusion, the workforce is a cornerstone of the electricity sector's ability to maintain and enhance grid resiliency. By addressing labour market challenges through strategic initiatives, we can ensure that the sector meets its reliability, affordability and decarbonization objectives. Focusing on attracting, retaining and developing a skilled and diverse workforce will enable Canada to build a resilient electricity grid capable of supporting a sustainable future.

Thank you for your time today.

• (1115)

I look forward to further discussion of the importance of the workforce to powering Canadian homes, businesses and other critical infrastructure.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening remarks, Mr. Chapeskie.

We'll now proceed to our first round of questions, beginning with Mrs. Stubbs from the CPC.

Mrs. Stubbs, the floor is yours for six minutes.

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

Just before we proceed with our questioning and the rest of this meeting, I would like to move that we quickly resume debate on the motion I put forward in committee on September 18 regarding inviting the ministers to committee.

I urge all committee members to vote to support this motion so that all Canadians can hear from the ministers about these crucial issues that underline our economic development and our collective prosperity in the future as Canadians.

My motion is as follows:

That the committee invite the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to appear before the committee, separately, for no less than two hours each, within 15 days of the adoption of this motion, in relation to their priorities for the return of Parliament and their mandates.

Thanks, Chair.

• (1120)

The Chair: Colleagues, because Mrs. Stubbs is resuming debate on a previous motion and it's a dilatory motion, we do have to proceed to a vote. We can't have debate to allow it to....

Give me one moment.

If committee passes resuming debate on the motion that she's presented, as it's a motion from a previous day, we can resume debate on this.

We will first go a vote, then, so that we can resume debate on the motion.

One moment.

Mrs. Stubbs, if there's unanimous consent, because it is resuming debate on a previous motion, we can proceed with the motion being placed and go from there.

The clerk has just told me that we should vote right away, because it is a dilatory....

I do have folks on the list.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): I'm just seeking clarification on this, Chair.

The Chair: Clerk, it seems they're unclear, so go ahead.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Vassiliev): MP Stubbs moved her motion last Wednesday. The debate on the motion was adjourned. Therefore, she needs to move to resume debate on the motion. It's a dilatory motion. We'll go into a vote. If the committee agrees to resume debate on the motion, then debate will resume. If not, we'll go back to the business of the day.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): On a point of clarification, if we do this, can that be adjourned to debate later? I'm just confused as to what we're voting on.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: All right. I think I understand.

Thank you.

Mr. Charlie Angus: That's my question. I'm not trying to interrupt. We do have two hours. I don't mind debating, but I also don't want to lose our witnesses again. I'm inclined not to vote, but I don't want to say that I'm not voting to kill the motion. I want to hear our witnesses.

Is it possible that we agree to debate it in the second hour?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Really briefly, we would like to vote on the motion and get it done right now so that we can get back to the witnesses. We just want to get on with it.

If it's the will of the committee to vote on the motion right now, we can get it done.

The Chair: I think everybody is clear now on what's happening here. I'll ask if we have unanimous consent to allow the motion to proceed. If so, and there's no disagreement, we can go to a vote on the motion—or the motion can be amended or changed by the will of the committee, which I'll leave up to committee members.

Do we have unanimous consent to have this motion placed on the floor?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: If we don't have unanimous consent, we'll have to go to a roll call vote.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Can I ask for clarification?

We had to have unanimous consent on whether it could come back, and we didn't have unanimous consent. How can we go to a vote now? It's still on the table.

• (1125)

The Chair: That's my bad.

As it was a dilatory motion, I did allow points of clarification. Normally, we should go right to a vote, but it was unclear for members what was going on.

We will go right to a vote. I should not have brought that forward on allowing the motion to resume debate. Once the committee says, "Yes", if there's a vote among committee members to allow debate, we'll go to debate the motion at hand.

Is that clear for everyone? Do you know what you're voting on?

I'm going to go to a point of order by Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Let's be clear. At first you said that if we wanted to resume debate on the motion, we needed unanimous consent. My friend Ms. Dabrusin said she wasn't going to consent to it. So we're not resuming debate. We're not voting on whether or not to resume debate on the motion because we didn't have unanimous consent.

It seems to me that's the end of it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Once again, that was an option I had. The clerk has told me that we should have gone right to a vote. I did allow members points of clarification because there was a misunderstanding on what we were voting on, and why.

I want to be clear once again, colleagues, that what we're voting on is that the motion be allowed to be placed first. We're going to go to a vote on that, and if that passes, we will go to the motion itself. It can be amended, changed, or voted upon to pass or not.

I do want to go to a vote to allow this to occur, because I think it is clear now. Let's just get it over with. There's an understanding, it seems to me, with committee members, so let's go to that vote first.

Mr. Falk, is it a point of clarification? I do want to go to a vote.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): To help the committee understand, if we can get unanimous consent to bring the motion back on the floor, the intent is not to further debate it but to actually have a vote on the motion. We can bring it back on the floor, and then have a vote.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: The challenge is that there may be amendments.

The Chair: Colleagues, we need to vote, because there's a vote on the floor. We need to vote, and it depends on how the vote goes. If you guys need a few minutes, we will see how to proceed after that.

Let's begin the vote, please.

The Clerk: If you vote yes, you vote to resume debate on the motion. If you vote no, you vote against resuming debate on the motion of MP Stubbs that was presented last Wednesday.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Clerk, more importantly, we're voting on whether or not to bring ministers to committee.

(Motion negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: The motion is defeated

I will suspend for a few minutes.

• (1125)

(Pause)

• (1135)

The Chair: We are back, and I will go back to Mr. Patzer for about five minutes.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

I'm going to start with the Indigenous Clean Energy witness. Toward the end of your remarks, you referenced how there were some regulations that had been unchanged since the 1950s.

We're quite focused on updating regulations—in some cases eliminating barriers and maybe eliminating regulations, or at least just trying to make a regulatory environment that better suits the labour force, the workforce and particularly natural resource development.

Could you elaborate on what you were referring to when you talked about some regulations that hadn't been updated since the 1950s?

Mr. James Jenkins: Yes, I'll be happy to do that.

I was primarily referring to the regulations from both the utility and the regulator at the provincial or territorial level, and with respect to smaller, off-grid, rural and remote projects. In many cases, it concerns rate and rate inflexibility. What we found in many cases was that the proponent at the local level—a municipal government, in some cases, or a first nation—takes on the bulk of the risk if there is an issue with overall cost. We have seen some flexibility with rates in other kinds of technologies, but for renewables, we found this to be a challenge in many of our projects.

Basically, what I was referring to is this: In most cases, the regulator and the utility are still very much providing oversight on these projects, so the ability to have a viable project has to fit within

those regulations. In other sectors, we've seen more flexibility that allows projects to proceed. I think there's some more work that needs to be done—primarily at the provincial and territorial levels—when it comes to regulators and utilities for rural and remote projects.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Thank you.

This is for Electricity Human Resources Canada.

We have clean electricity regulations that are going to require that all power be generated from non-emitting sources by 2035. Today and in previous committee meetings, we've heard a doubling of electrical capacity alluded to. Given where we are right now and where this government has us headed, do we have the labour force to double electrical capacity today? Where are we today? Can we hit that target?

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I'm probably not the one to comment on clean electricity regulations specifically.

Do we have the workforce today? I would say no. One thing you probably noted in my comments is that we're going to have to start working on growing our capacity to train that workforce.

I was speaking with one of your colleagues over here. We mentioned that it takes four to five years for any of the technical roles in this industry to come to full competence, whether it's skilled trades training, engineering or information communications technology. Those are engineering programs, skilled trades programs and technician-technologist programs. We need big investment, really, if we're going to do that for the youth.

There are interim pathways we could look at, such as foreign credential recognition for folks who are not working in the domain of expertise they worked in overseas, for example. We could be drawing them in faster with appropriate programming to ensure they meet the requirements of the Canadian standards for those occupations. We would have to spend some time building out pathways to help those folks enter the industry. That would be my suggestion.

The last piece is that “workers in transition” piece—folks exiting other industries who could join our industry and who have similar skill sets. With some upskilling, you don't have that four-year or five-year talent block on new entrants who have never worked in a technical role before.

• (1140)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: I'm going to jump back to Indigenous Clean Energy quickly.

In Saskatchewan, particularly northern Saskatchewan—though it's true in southern Saskatchewan, as well—natural resources are some of the biggest drivers. Well, they are probably the biggest drivers of our economy, and I would suggest more. It would be on par with agriculture, particularly in the north, where 50% of Cameco's workforce are indigenous.

I'm wondering if you can talk about the importance of natural resources to indigenous communities and their employment.

Mr. James Jenkins: Absolutely.

Natural resources make up a large portion of many economies in indigenous communities, particularly in the northern parts of provinces and in the territories.

In Saskatchewan in particular—I mentioned different energy mixes—about 50% of projects with indigenous ownership or co-ownership are solar, but we are seeing quite a few projects that combine heat and power, hybrid projects and some biofuel projects coming online that are fully indigenous-owned.

You're absolutely right in terms of the importance of the indigenous workforce in the natural resources sector. As we see energy demand increasing, it's going to put further strain on that workforce. I agree with you there.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now proceed to the next speaker.

Go ahead, Ms. Lapointe, for six minutes.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Chapeskie.

Can you elaborate on the strategies that are needed to create stronger collaboration among provincial governments, industry and educational institutions to ensure that we have that alignment between workforce development programs and sector-specific needs?

Of course, I'm speaking here specifically about the electricity sector and about post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: We've spent a fair bit of time on that particular question.

Obviously, one of the first things for us as an organization that specializes in the labour market is work-integrated learning. When I talk about work-integrated learning, I'm referring to co-op, internship and apprenticeship programs across the board, but expanding them.

Right now, as we look at our current workforce, about 5% are under the age of 25—new entrants—but about 15% to 17%, depending on which province you're looking at, are over the age of 55. Basically, we're looking at a number of exits. We need to invest in youth, but that's also putting pressure on the middle management positions. We're bringing people up faster than perhaps historically they have been. There's less time to focus on supervisory, management and leadership skills and those competency developments. We have to put more time into that as well. I've heard some people refer to getting to 2050. Everything's on the table, all generation mixes.

I think of the workforce in a similar way. We have to do a little bit of everything to get us to where we need to go—for example, collaborating with our labour partners and ensuring that collective agreements meet the new technologies that are being introduced into the workforce.

I talked a little bit about iterative training. That's going to be done by both the post-secondary institutions and employers as new technologies enter the workforce as well. New technologies bring not just renewable or non-carbon emitting sources of electricity; there are a lot of productivity gains or efficiencies to be had in the deployment of new technologies and better grid management over time.

It's deployment of new technology and upscaling and training across the board. Also, as I mentioned to your colleague across the floor with regard to foreign credential recognition, we need to do a better job of pathing folks into this industry, because we don't currently do it well in Canada.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: In your opening statement, you mentioned an interactive map in classrooms. Can you elaborate on this program?

Can you perhaps provide some other examples of effective programs that currently exist for recruitment efforts to attract young talent and under-represented groups, from elementary school all the way to post-secondary levels?

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I love the map. That's one of my favourite programs that we run at EHRC. It was actually funded through NRCan's SREPS funding.

The initiative fundamentally... When we started out with it, as a sector we were looking at our own talent pipeline and we realized that very few Canadians think about electricity. The reason is that we do a very good job, most of the time, of keeping it on. One of the things that we did was realize that people start to choose a career path as young as grade 6 or grade 8, and we targeted the map at that particular demographic group.

It comes with a series of teaching resources for teachers. They can teach to the map. On the map, as I mentioned, you've got all of the transmission lines highlighted. Obviously, it's a map of Canada. You've got all of the major generation infrastructure, whether it's a hydro dam, a small solar farm or a wind or nuclear facility. We even have our coal mines and coal production facilities, as well as lithium mines, mapped on the map as well.

The last piece of it, of course, is the careers, with 70 people talking about what they do in the electricity industry and inspiring that next generation. One of the things that we found really interesting is that while we didn't specifically target what I'm going to call a "hope message", a lot of the kids who are really feeling desperate and have poor mental health associated with all of the messaging around climate change see hope in the map. They see an opportunity to participate. They see that their parents and our industry are working on something, and that gives them the message of hope. That's the map.

We've done a number of youth camps across Canada to inspire youth in STEM specifically to stick through beyond grade 10, because we know you don't always have to complete grade 12 math and science in order to graduate from high school, but we do need folks to finish those credits in order to get into many of our industry programs.

We need more work-integrated learning, as I mentioned, or learning-integrated work, so that students are exposed to the sector early and are retained over the longer term.

• (1145)

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: We've talked about recruiting. Can we talk about now making sure that we are paying fair wages? In your opinion, what type of system would be required in order to have good, competitive compensation strategies across the sector, particularly in regions with differing economic conditions?

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: That's a complicated question to answer in under 30 seconds, but I'm going to do my best.

Obviously this is a highly unionized industry, for the most part. As you get into the independent power producers and the electrical contractors, those are not always all unionized.

It's actually a sector that pays pretty well today. We have pretty good retention today. We took a bit of a backslide after the pandemic, as most industries did. They saw people job-hopping from one industry to another or just retiring early. This is a sector that actually does have good compensation for the most part, and because the independent power producers and the electrical contractors compete with their utility peers, you tend to see better compensation than perhaps in other industries as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Monsieur Simard for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you very much.

I hope you can hear me, Mr. Callahan and Mr. Chapeskie.

In your presentation, you talked about the challenges related to jobs in the electrification sector. I'd like to make a connection here to what was done in Bill C-50 with sustainable jobs. It includes an agreement between Quebec and the federal government on workforce training, but unfortunately we weren't able to draw on that agreement to ensure that the funds go to existing institutions devoted to training the workforce in Quebec.

I believe Mr. Callahan stated that we wouldn't be able to address the shortage of skilled labour through immigration alone, and we would therefore need our own strategies. I know that's a tall order and that we have existing structures. I'm thinking, for example, of the Institut de recherche d'Hydro-Québec, or IREQ, which provides training and does research.

However, I'd like you to tell us whether you feel the government's approach is flexible enough to meet our future labour needs as we move to further electrify our economy.

Mr. Chapeskie can answer first, then Mr. Callahan.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I'm perhaps not the best-qualified person to speak specifically to the Quebec-federal government agreement on funding to institutions. What I can say is that across the country, we are facing a financial challenge with our post-secondary institutions' ability to develop new programs or even to expand existing programs.

There are a number of underlying reasons, but fundamentally, inflation over the past number of years has driven delivery costs up for post-secondary institutions, and funding mechanisms have not kept pace, whether those are federal or provincial, in order to meet the requirements of what happens. Also, in some provinces, there are tuition caps on domestic students who are coming in, essentially.

All of those are downward pressure mechanisms that are not allowing the expansion of existing programs or the development of new programs beyond that.

Does that get to the crux of what you're asking?

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Yes, thank you.

Perhaps Mr. Callahan can give a brief answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Callahan: Thank you very much. I will thank the interpreters, because I'm guessing the chair was referring to me about speaking too quickly.

Again, I know that Quebec has a fundamentally different arrangement, especially in the construction sector, in terms of its unionization. In skills development, fundamentally these things have to be tripartite projects for which you have employers, workers and governments at the table determining the outcomes.

I'm not going to engage much more than that, because I'm not an expert in Quebec's competencies development boards, but that's certainly something that I think would be.... It's unfortunate that our colleague from CUPE wasn't able to participate this morning, because I know he has some expertise, as does the FTQ.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

I would point out that this tripartite table exists in Quebec. It's called the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail, and it's been there for many years.

I have a question for all the witnesses. It's related to the study I mentioned to everyone. If we want to double electricity production by 2050, we have to get through the energy transition. To achieve that, according to most experts on the transition issue, we need to put a price on carbon. So I'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

Do you agree with carbon pricing?

I would ask that you keep your answer fairly short, please.

[English]

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I can start. I'm probably not the best qualified to respond as to whether a price on carbon is the appropriate mechanism, but what we are looking to do is something that we haven't done in a long time in Canada with regard to building out infrastructure. It's literally taken us 100 years to date, and so it is a big job and will require significant investment.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: What do you think, Mr. Callahan?

[English]

Mr. Alex Callahan: I think our focus needs to be on ensuring that we meet our Paris targets, that we have an industrial strategy to make sure that our economy is producing the goods and electrifying at the rate we need to meet the targets, and that we have a regulatory package that supports meeting our targets.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Finally, I'd like to hear from Mr. Jenkins.

[English]

Mr. James Jenkins: In terms of bringing investment to Canada and ensuring that we're able to bring the talent, capital and everything else we need to have a successful energy transition, we need mechanisms like a price on carbon, and if not that, then certainly carrots that are going to accelerate the transition are very important.

Stability is also very important, so being able to signal to the global market that we can move forward on one mechanism, whether that's a carbon price or something else, is very important as well. In terms of having a carrot that's going to accelerate that transition, yes, we do need those mechanisms.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Angus for six minutes. Mr. Angus, the floor is yours.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you to all of our witnesses.

I start with you, Mr. Callahan, because you spoke of the investment tax credits.

We know that Minister Freeland announced investment tax credits in the fall of 2022, and then I heard a lot of talk coming up to the next budget. Have we actually seen any of these investment tax credits that can kick-start a clean economy?

• (1155)

Mr. Alex Callahan: My understanding is that they're still working their way through all the processes.

What's important about the tax credits are the labour conditions that have been attached to them. It is fairly new that we have wage standards. Basically, we have the equivalent of a prevailing wage standard that's attached to these tax credits, along with apprenticeship ratios.

There was an interesting report out of the Department of Energy in the United States. Obviously, the IRA, the Inflation Reduction

Act, did a lot of work on prevailing wage, investment tax credits and things like that. The U.S. DOE has an employment and energy report, and basically the conclusion is that the ITCs in clean energy in the States are starting to pay dividends insofar as they're seeing unionization rates that are higher now in that sector than in the broader sector and that unionized firms—and this is perhaps not that surprising—are dealing with skills shortages better. As well, there's greater equity in the firms that have union contracts and are abiding by the labour standards that are attached to the ITCs, so we want to see these in place ASAP.

Mr. Charlie Angus: The reason I ask is that it's a no-brainer. We see what the Biden administration did within a year with the ITCs. We saw billions of investments, thousands of new jobs created, and good union jobs, yet this government is still working through the process two years after they were promised.

Now, if it were Suncor and TMX—boy, oh boy, they'd be going all out. I mean, they put \$34 billion on the table and built a pipeline, yet investment tax credits to kick-start a clean-energy economy and pull back some of the investments that went to the States are nowhere to be seen.

In terms of the struggle that's before us, we've seen, just in the last six months, incredible transformations in battery technology and solar power in Texas and California: The investments are moving there in a big way. Is Canada facing being left behind, based on the fact that we are not serious about making the investments that our competitors are?

Mr. Alex Callahan: Yes, I think there is a risk that we are standing on the sidelines while other industrialized countries are jumping with both feet into building a clean-energy future, a broader net-zero future. It's the United States with the IRA. It's Europe with the European Green Deal.

Yes, you're absolutely right, Mr. Angus. We're seeing investments go other places, and Canada needs its place there. We need to be part of those supply chains. We need to be building the kinds of things that are going to be part of a net-zero economy. We need to be decarbonizing existing good jobs in the areas of certain strengths that we have. I'm thinking, for example, of steelmaking. We have some of the best steelworkers in the entire world, and we can produce low-carbon steels. This committee is not only studying electricity; there needs to be a reliable low-carbon electricity supply so that we can decarbonize steelmaking.

To go back to where you began, though, I'll ask this: Are we dealing with this with the urgency that's needed? No. This is something that we've been calling for for a long time. Workers have been calling for it for a long time because we're seeing the impacts of climate change, and workers want to know what the future looks like. They want to know that there is a future in their work, that their communities have the kinds of good jobs that are going to keep them there in the long term. They want to know that there's a future for their kids. Having a job in a low-carbon sector with the protection of a union card in their pocket—that's how we start to build that security.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I want to follow up on that because, when I meet with the IBEW workers in Edmonton and go to their training facilities, they're training their workers up, and they say that they're ready for the new economy and want to be part of it. Then they ask where the federal government is.

Here we are, how many years into this government's administration, with all kinds of promises at the international level, yet how do I go back to the IBEW and say that we're there for them when they're looking over the border and seeing huge projects coming on stream with good union jobs, good training and clean energy?

In Canada, we're still talking about it. How do we ensure that workers are going to actually be leaders in this new economy? They're ready for it.

Mr. Alex Callahan: Yes. I mean, I think this is a matter of the federal government coming to the table with money for real projects that are tangible, that are going to be there, and they're coming to them with labour conditions attached to them that say that this is going to create a good union job. It means that you have the kind of paycheque that you've been counting on your whole life or that you've been aspiring to. It's going to give you a pension that you can comfortably retire on. It's going to give you the benefits that mean that if your kid needs braces, you don't have to wonder where the mortgage payment is going to come from. It is about coming to the table with the chequebook.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will proceed to our second round of questions, and we'll start with Mr. Falk for five minutes.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for coming to the committee this morning. Your presentations have been informative.

Mr. Chapeskie, I'd like to start with you. You indicated the challenges of attracting and retaining people in your industry while recognizing that it's actually a very well-compensated industry. That has piqued my curiosity a little bit.

There are seven large, notable North American companies—Molson Coors, Ford Motor Company, John Deere, Lowe's, Harley-Davidson, Brown-Forman, and Tractor Supply Co.—that have abandoned DEI. As well, Google and Meta have said that they're significantly scaling back their DEI programs.

Can you tell me how DEI has affected the human resource aspect of the electricity industry in Canada?

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I think the way I would respond is to say that our electricity industry today reflects, from a visual or just-representation perspective, Canadian society 30 years ago. It does not reflect Canadian society today. It doesn't reflect the diversity of our cities and it doesn't reflect the diversity of our country, whether we're talking about folks from other countries or about more women's participation. Just to put a finer point on it, women's participation in this industry is 27%. Five years ago, it was 26%. At that rate, we're looking at 120 years to gender parity for the sector.

I think we can all agree that gender parity across the economy has almost been achieved from a total representation perspective. We're almost at 50%. I think it's 51% men to 49% women. We're very, very close. This sector is lagging, so there's some work to be done on that particular aspect of it. There is plenty of research from organizations like the Diversity Institute out of Toronto and others. They have done a great deal of work on what it means to be innovative through different thinking and different mechanisms of thinking and by coming from different societal and social backgrounds.

I think that if we don't diversify our industry, we're actually being left behind from an innovation perspective.

Mr. Ted Falk: Just to follow up on that a bit, I'm speaking more of mandated diversity. Has that excluded potential good new hires from actually obtaining employment in the industry?

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I think that's a fair question. The way I have typically responded to that in the past is that this is not a sector in decline; this is a growth sector. We're not losing opportunities for existing workers; we're literally growing the industry. Over the past five years, the Canadian economy grew by 7%. This sector grew by 12%. That means we are creating whole new opportunities. The opportunity to diversify the industry is obviously there, and we need to capitalize on it.

Mr. Ted Falk: Okay. It's not as though you're turning away people who are interested in the industry because they don't fit into a box.

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: No. There would be no reason for that.

Mr. Ted Falk: It's just that you're providing space for anybody who's interested.

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: That's right.

I think it's also important to reference that if you're going to work in one of our technical occupations, such as the skilled trades, engineers, technicians, technologists, information and communication technology—I mentioned the skills block earlier—we can't afford to not have folks who have the competencies, skills and training to work in this industry. In the absence of somebody not fitting a diversity box, for the sake of argument, we have to hire who's available.

When we talk about diversity and inclusion in this industry, we actually talk about it much earlier. We need to be attracting folks in high school and in middle school because, again, that's the fabric of Canadian society, so it's important—

Mr. Ted Falk: What you're saying is that you're making space available rather than excluding people.

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: I think it's important that we make space available and that we retain those folks we have.

Mr. Ted Falk: Can you tell me what the industry is doing from an educational perspective with community colleges that actually train up people in your industry? That's for both the practical aspect of the electricity generation industry and for management.

Are you funding research chairs in universities? Are you providing scholarships? Are people in your industry doing that? What are you doing to attract people and create awareness of the opportunities in electricity?

Mr. Mark Chapeskie: One of the examples I mentioned earlier is the map. Obviously, we've done a lot on the youth camps piece of it from an attraction perspective. We're working on a high school curriculum specific to the industry that would respond to the science needs in the sector. We've partnered with both post-secondary institutions and with industry on creating more work-integrated learning opportunities through the federal government's student work placement program, which is an excellent program.

Also, I think we're starting to see more industry collaboration with local colleges on industry-specific needs. One example would be Ontario Power Generation's partnership with Durham College, which created more boilermakers in order to respond to nuclear refurbishment requirements.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move to Mr. Schiefke for five minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Schiefke. The floor is yours.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm really glad, colleagues, that we are embarking on this study. It's important for all of us. I'm representing a riding, Vaudreuil—Soulanges, that is feeling the impacts of climate change. I've shared with this committee on numerous occasions how bad it actually is. We had record flooding in my riding in 2017 and again in 2019. We had an ice storm last year that saw tens of thousands in my community without power for days.

Just this past month, Mr. Chair, we had a record rainfall in my riding, when 153 millimetres fell in 24 hours. To give you an idea of how crazy that was, the previous record was 96 millimetres. Because of that, thousands of homes had basements flooded. The average cost is anywhere from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per basement. Also, right now our chamber of commerce is saying that this is going to cost us tens of millions of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses for these homeowners, but also in insurance costs, and the insurance rates are going to go up.

We need to be talking about this, right? We need to be talking about solutions. One of those solutions is building that modern, clean, affordable and resilient grid. Unfortunately, we don't have agreement from all members and all parties on this. The Conservative Party still to this day refuses to acknowledge that climate change is real and every year for the last nine years has blocked all of the initiatives we've put forward to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and create those incredible well-paid union jobs of the economy of tomorrow.

My question is for Mr. Callahan.

I want to begin here. I'm going to give you an opportunity, because the Conservatives have blocked debate and blocked bringing in witnesses to testify on this. I'm going to give you an opportunity to comment on Bill C-50, the Sustainable Jobs Act, and how you believe those measures to support sustainable jobs will impact workers—the workers you represent.

Mr. Alex Callahan: Thanks for the question.

The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act is a very important step forward. I would encourage committee members to look at the definition of sustainable jobs, which talks not only about being on a track to a net-zero economy, but also about job quality measures. In particular, it talks about unionized jobs. This is setting a goal for creating unionized jobs in a net-zero sector. That's the two halves here—the two parts of the equation.

It does a couple of important things for unionized workers across the country. The most important thing is having workers' voices at the table. There's the partnership council, which will put workers' voices together with employers, with experts and with indigenous representatives to talk about how we build that economy. I think giving workers a voice in their future in terms of what's coming down the pike at them is incredibly important.

Of course, the other part of this that is going to be important and that I'm looking for all the members of this committee to be behind is the action plans.

For those who may not recall, there are three things that the legislation does. It sets up a secretariat. That's great. It sets up the partnership council that I just referred to, which is giving workers a voice. Then it creates these five-year action plans. It's going to be up to government to come to the table to fund the action plans.

This is exactly the question that I was talking about with Mr. Angus a moment ago, which is making sure that there is money with conditions to train workers to ensure that when they're working in whatever these projects are going to be, they're protected by a union card, their work is safe, their work is fairly compensated and that they have a voice in their work through bargaining, through social dialogue and that sort of thing.

As far as Bill C-50 is concerned, this is a very important piece of legislation in terms of setting what the future can look like. It is ultimately going to be up to the government to make sure that it comes to the table with the kinds of financial and policy supports that will be needed to actually see training and real investments in what that economy is going to look like.

• (1210)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you, Mr. Callahan.

I'm moving on to a somewhat related topic.

We know that carbon pricing, including industrial pricing, is responsible for huge amounts of investment in electricity transmission and industrial decarbonization. Can you clarify the Canadian Labour Congress's position on industrial pricing?

What message would you have for any parties or any MPs that would not support that?

Mr. Alex Callahan: I wish I had added this comment when your colleague from the Bloc asked earlier.

It is important that polluters pay for what they produce. That is a fundamental piece of this. However, I think the most important thing is making sure that all of the suite of policies are making sure that we meet our Paris targets. I cannot be more effusive, I suppose, that this end point has to be the key.

The policy tools we are using, including the principle of polluter pay, are ensuring that we meet our targets and that as we meet our targets we are making sure that our economy is supporting the kind of good work that's going to power middle-class families. It's going to keep communities intact and do all the things that I mentioned earlier, and make sure that if your kid needs braces, you won't have to figure out how you make the mortgage that month.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: I couldn't agree more, Mr. Callahan.

Thank you very much again for your appearance here today.

Mr. Alex Callahan: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Simard for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I listened to my colleague Mr. Schiefke's plea about the tough steps we will have to take to make the necessary energy transition. I am always a bit dumbfounded by the naïveté of my Liberal colleagues.

Between 2018 and 2024, the Liberal government invested \$34 billion, that's right, \$34 billion, in a single oil and gas project, a pipeline. As for the ambitious plan that's been tabled for electrification in general, it calls for an investment of \$40 billion by 2035. Let's imagine that an extraterrestrial has just landed here and is told that we support the energy transition, but that we invested \$34 billion over six years from 2018 to 2024 in a single oil and gas initiative, whereas the project that's being touted as ambitious calls for a \$40 billion investment by 2035. Moreover, this so-called ambitious project has money to fund carbon capture strategies in

the oil and gas sector. I don't want to be rude to Mr. Schiefke, but if I were him, I wouldn't be lecturing anybody.

I'll wrap up with a quick remark. In the short term, what can we do to strengthen and solidify our electrical grid?

I would ask each of you to give a brief answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Callahan: On short-term measures, I think I'd rather talk about some of the longer, more systemic issues that need to be dealt with. I'm just going back to when we submitted on the clean electricity regulations to the Canada Electricity Advisory Council. There's obviously a need for investment in generation and transmission. Many parts of our grid are aging. There's a lot of work needed to bring our grid up to a good state of repair, so that people can, in fact, electrify. Residents often need to upgrade the service in their homes to electrify parts of their homes. That means we need to have a grid that's in a good state of repair.

I'm reading your face here. I'm guessing you're looking for a couple of short-term things. I would say investments in the grid, making sure that workers are trained—as I talked about earlier, we do have a shortfall of electricians—and making sure we have a good state of repair across the system.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Callahan.

We'll now go to Mr. Angus for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you so much.

Mr. Jenkins, I'll focus my questions to you.

In another life, before I became a member of Parliament, I worked for the Algonquin Nation in northern Quebec. One of my main jobs was organizing blockades, because nobody ever came to the table. The hydro companies didn't come. The mining and forestry companies didn't come. The only way to get attention in those days was to stop a project.

I've seen an incredible transformation. I've seen amazing leadership emerging, especially in the young generations that are coming up. However, I'm also seeing that projects that should be moving ahead are not moving fast enough, because, particularly on clean-energy hydro projects, there's still a labyrinth of issues at the federal and provincial levels, and free trade deals impede the ability for local procurement.

How do you see the situation now for first nation involvement in clean energy, and being able to not just benefit to transform energy on the reserve, but also in the traditional territories, so that they could build into a larger grid and make sustainable wages and have jobs for community members?

• (1215)

Mr. James Jenkins: I would agree with you that when we see the number of indigenous-owned and co-owned projects across the country and how quickly they're growing today, we can see that there is some alignment when it comes to indigenous communities and businesses, and a desire to be involved in co-ownership of these large clean-energy projects.

We're tracking over 250 medium to large generation projects. Those are over one megawatt, and many of them are 100 megawatts and more. They're growing at a rate of almost 30% a year over the last three years, in addition to large transmission projects with ownership.

In terms of the possibilities, they are very high. Much of our programming has shifted to youth programming components, because youth are seeing this as a viable career opportunity. The very young in the communities see that indigenous-owned businesses and businesses owned by communities are investing heavily in these industries.

From where I sit, it's a major economic development opportunity that's available to indigenous communities in every jurisdiction in Canada, and one of the biggest that we've seen in a long time. I do see that the potential is very high.

Some of the challenges that have already been mentioned are things like stability over regulations. I'll just touch on one. Many indigenous partnerships are still waiting for the ITC rules to be released, which will help in terms of stability and security, because they're ready to move forward on these projects.

That's just one example where there is a real need to recognize the high level of indigenous investment that currently exists in the sector and the potential to bring a new skilled labour force, so we need to really prioritize the setting of those parameters.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now proceed to Mrs. Stubbs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Chair.

Again, so that we can get back to our witnesses and proceed with the meeting, I want to move the following motion. I did give notice of it on September 19. I move:

That the committee invite the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to appear before the committee, separately, for no less than two hours each, within 15 days of the adoption of this motion, in relation to their priorities for the return of Parliament and their mandates.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Can we just dismiss the witnesses now? They don't need to be here for this part of the meeting.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will pause there.

Do we have consent to release the witnesses?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We do. Very good.

Witnesses, thank you for your testimony today. You can also still provide a brief to the committee if there's anything you missed. I encourage you to do so. Thank you for spending time with us and providing us with insights. You are released from today's meeting as we move forward with the motion we have on the floor.

Colleagues, I will give us a moment. I will suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1215)

(Pause)

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you. We are back from our suspension.

Mrs. Stubbs, you had the floor, so I'm going to go back to you. You had just moved a motion, and if you're good with moving that motion, if there was anything else....

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Chair, since you've indulged me—thank you—I'll reiterate the motion that I've moved.

Again, I would just like to move the following motion that I gave notice of on September 19:

That the committee invite the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to appear before the committee, separately, for no less than two hours each, within 15 days of the adoption of this motion, in relation to their priorities for the return of Parliament and their mandates.

Of course, I urge all members on this committee to vote in favour of this motion so that those ministers can answer all these crucial questions that Canadians have about natural resources, which is the sector that underpins the entire Canadian economy.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Stubbs.

We have a motion on the floor, and I have a speaking order.

I'm going to you next, Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I actually agree that it's important to have both those ministers appear to answer questions on the topic as outlined in the motion. My only suggestion is that I'm going to seek to amend it. I'm moving to remove “within 15 days” and to replace it with “as soon as reasonably possible”.

The reason is that we have to work with the ministers' schedules as well as the schedule for this committee, so we would like to have them here just “as soon as reasonably possible” to speak to the issues as stated in the motion.

The Chair: Okay. We have an amendment on the floor, and I just want to make sure that it was captured. I think it was to remove “within 15 days” and replace that with “as soon as reasonably possible”.

I'm going to go to Mr. Patzer.

Go ahead.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Do you know what? These ministers have had literally all summer to get ready, hopefully, for whatever their strategic plans and visions are for their respective ministries. As we know, there's a lot of crossover between environment and natural resources, so that's why it's important to have those two ministers come. The motion's pretty clear about their priorities for the return of Parliament and their mandates. If we remove the 15-day piece, it could be next calendar year when they show up, because that could be "as soon as reasonably possible". It would be nice to have a pretty crystal-clear timeline in here.

Of course, when we say 15 days and they come in 17 days, I don't think that we have to be like, "Oh well, they'll have to change it because of that." To me, if we say 15 days but they're over by two days, I'm pretty sure no one's going to be upset that we're two days over the timeline, but if we eliminate the days, then I think that just leads to "Oh, this came up. Oh, this came up. Oh, this came up," and then they don't ever appear. We just don't want that to happen, so I think we can leave the days in there, knowing that if it takes, as I said, 17 days for the minister to come, we're not going to be upset that it was over by a couple of days, right? There's a little bit of latitude there, but I think we need to stay to a prescriptive timeline to make sure that happens and that it gets scheduled into the committee calendar. That way, it's very clear when they're coming and what they're doing. As I said, they've had all summer to get their ducks in a row in terms of what their priorities should be, so it's time for us to hear from them.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patzer.

Mr. Angus, I have you on the amendment.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, it is normal for a committee not to set a prescriptive timeline for the ministers because of the many other issues that they have to deal with, and that has been kind of a standard I've seen over the years, so I recognize Ms. Dabrusin's offer.

I do think that they should come as soon as possible, so I'm looking at it from two lenses. One is that the longer the TMX study hangs over this government, the more it's going to hurt, so if I were them, I'd get it over with as quickly as possible. However, if they want to drag it out, I'll drag it out forever.

I'm offering some political advice to my colleagues: Rip off that band-aid as quickly as you can. I would suggest that we turn it to the clerk to see what their availability is, and if we get blown off, I would bring back a motion calling them and insisting. I'm willing to do this in good faith and with the amendment, but I would like to get this dealt with.

I know this is not on the amendment, but I do want to ask this: On our witness list, we have Ms. Freeland. Is she still on our witness list?

The Chair: Are you asking me with regard to the TMX study, Mr. Angus?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

The Chair: I can go to the clerk, I believe, so....

Mr. Angus, we have invited them, and we're just waiting on a confirmation of when they might be able to attend.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. I'm wondering whether I need to amend the motion or work on trust that Ms. Freeland has been made aware so that she will come.

The Chair: We can get follow-up maybe by Wednesday and advise the committee accordingly.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm fine with that. If not, then I'll bring a separate motion, but she's on our witness list.

I think having the three ministers would be very helpful and it would answer the questions we have.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

On the amendment, we have "as soon as possible". That is the amendment. I heard from colleagues. You've presented your debate on that.

I don't see any other hands on the amendment, so we can put the amendment to a vote.

Ms. Dabrusin, go ahead.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I just wanted to be clear. I said "as soon as reasonably possible". I know you had that in there, but I just wanted to be clear that it's what I had proposed. I think that's what the clerk is having us vote on.

The Chair: Yes. It's "as soon as reasonably possible", just for clarification.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Yes.

The Chair: Let's go to the vote on the amendment, folks.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: The amendment has passed. Now we're back to the main motion as amended.

I will go to Mr. Angus.

You are next on the speakers list on the main motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I was going to put an amendment for Ms. Freeland, but I'll wait and make sure she is listed to come. I'll just vote on the motion as it stands now.

The Chair: Okay.

I know there were some other hands previously on the main motion.

Ms. Jones, I had you on, but do you still want to—

Ms. Yvonne Jones: I'm good.

The Chair: You're good? Okay.

I don't see any other hands, so now we'll go to the vote on the motion as amended that we have on the floor.

Mr. Clerk, can you call the roll, please?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Chair and Clerk, perhaps you could read it out again, just so we're all clear.

The Chair: Sure.

We'll just read it out again so everybody's clear on what the amended motion is.

The clerk will provide a readout of the amended motion, and then we'll go to a vote if there are no other questions.

Let's go to the readout.

Go ahead.

The Clerk: It would read:

That the committee invite the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to appear before the committee, separately, for no less than two hours each, as soon as reasonably possible, in relation to their priorities for the return of Parliament and their mandates.

• (1235)

The Chair: Is it clear, everybody?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Please call the roll.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: That motion passes.

Thank you, colleagues.

Colleagues, before we conclude today, we do have two supplementary budgets. I want to deal with this issue really quickly.

Is it the will of the committee that the proposed supplementary budget in the amount of \$3,500 for the study of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the proposed supplementary budget in the amount of \$2,000 for the study of Canada's electricity grid and network be adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

That's approved.

That concludes the meeting. The meeting is adjourned.

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