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• (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): Good morning everyone, whether you are in the room or joining us remotely.

This morning, we have the great honour of welcoming the Minister of Environment, the Hon. Steven Guilbeault.

I think this is the first time you have appeared before the committee, Minister. We hope you will come to see us often to update us on the policies you will be applying.

I think that everyone here, both members of Parliament and officials, is familiar with how these hybrid meetings work, so I won't take too much time to repeat the instructions. Briefly, if you are moving around the room, you must wear your mask and maintain physical distancing. For those taking part virtually, please put your mic on mute while you are waiting to speak.

For the information of people following our meeting, I would note that today we are considering the 2021-22 supplementary estimates (C). We have a lot of speakers, in addition to the Minister, so unfortunately I won't be able to take the time to introduce everyone. We do know them very well and we very much appreciate their joining us.

Before I turn the floor over to the Minister, do you want to say something, Ms. Pauzé?

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): I would just like to remind everyone to take their mask off when they are speaking, because it makes the interpreters' work much easier.

The Chair: Yes, please take your mask off before speaking, because otherwise, as Ms. Pauzé has said, it is very difficult for the interpreters to understand clearly what you are saying.

You have the floor, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you for the kind introduction, Mr. Chair. It will be my pleasure to come as often as possible.

Thank you for inviting me to appear today.

[*English*]

I am joined by a number of officials from the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Christine Hogan is deputy minister, and Paul Halucha is associate deputy minister. Linda Drainville is assistant deputy minister, corporate services and finance branch.

Terence Hubbard is president of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

From Parks Canada, Andrew Campbell is senior vice-president of operations, and Catherine Blanchard is CFO.

I would like to recognize that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[*Translation*]

As you said, Mr. Chair, this is my first meeting with you as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I have been looking forward to having this conversation with all of you on the amounts requested for Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Parks Canada Agency and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada in the 2021-22 supplementary estimates (C). As many of you know, the supplementary estimates (C) is the last opportunity for departments and agencies to adjust their 2021-22 main estimates.

Like you, I view the responsibilities under my portfolio as amongst the most critical. We understand that the health and well-being of Canadians depends on a healthy environment and economy. Ambitious commitments have never been more timely and more critical than now.

[*English*]

For this reason, my mandate commits me to ensuring delivery of Canada's strengthened climate plan; implementing the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act; bringing forward an emissions reduction plan to achieve our 2030 targets by reducing emissions to 40% to 45% below 2005 levels; and further accelerating climate action to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and limit the increase in global average temperatures to 1.5°C.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Since 2016, the Government has committed more than \$100 billion to climate action and environmental protection, including \$60 billion under the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Investing in Canada Plan and more; \$15 billion under the Strengthened Climate Plan; \$15 billion under Budget 2021; and \$20 billion via other initiatives, like the Covid-19 Economic Response Plan, permanent transit funding and more.

We're not just mitigating emissions. We are working towards a whole of society approach to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

We are also protecting and conserving the natural habitats essential to biodiversity. The goal is to conserve one quarter of Canada's lands and inland waters and one quarter of Canada's oceans by 2025 and to raise that to 30 per cent by 2030.

[*English*]

My department is also working hard to address pollution, ensure that our water remains clean and healthy and continue to provide reliable weather forecasts. The agencies in my portfolio are also conducting impact assessments and helping to ensure Canadians have access to nature and historic sites.

All of this work, and more, is foundational to creating the conditions to ensure a more resilient, equitable and prosperous Canada.

In addition, it is supported by the 2021-22 supplementary estimates (C) that are before us today.

[*Translation*]

For Environment and Climate Change Canada, the department's submission amounts to a net increase of \$48.6 million. This would bring the department's total authorities to \$2 billion.

[*English*]

The major funding request includes \$9.8 million to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation and waste sectors. This funding will go toward strengthening and implementing greenhouse gas emissions regulations and zero-emission requirements. It will also help us to develop, implement and enforce federal landfill methane regulations, as well as additional steps to support food diversion and energy recovery from biodegradable waste.

There is a request for \$7.3 million to help return proceeds from the output-based pricing system to the originating jurisdictions, as required by the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. These funds would go toward operating a program to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions and support clean electricity projects.

A portion of this request would support co-development work with indigenous recipients to return a portion of proceeds from the regulatory charge on fossil fuels, known as the fuel charge, in jurisdictions where the federal backstop approach is in effect, namely Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. These funds will provide long-term, flexible support for indigenous-led climate initiatives.

There is also \$7.9 million to establish the Canada water agency transition office. I know you have heard of the Canada water agency. It will work with provinces and territories, indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists and other stakeholders to find the best ways to ensure that our water remains clean, healthy and well managed. The transition office will define the scope of the Canada water agency, prepare the agency and ensure its establishment.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

As members know, no nation can achieve the much needed transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and nature-friendly economy on its own. We all need to be engaged. The request for \$6.5 million to implement Canada's International Climate Finance Program aims to help developing countries achieve this transition.

I am sure all members are also well aware of the record breaking heatwaves and flooding out west this year. There is just over \$3.2 million to support wildfire and flood resilience. These funds would help produce floodplain data and maps for communities across Canada most at risk of flooding. They would also support flood prevention, mitigation and response, and planning activities.

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, you may have heard of the climate lens. It aims to help integrate climate, economic and social considerations into government decision-making. These estimates include \$1.9 million to establish and operate a climate lens centre of expertise and help a core group of departments pilot and implement the climate lens.

These are some of the highlights of the supplementary estimates (C) for Environment and Climate Change Canada. There are also several transfers in and out of the department, as well as reallocations and grants, which members can ask about today.

[*Translation*]

Let's now turn to the Parks Canada Agency.

Through the 2021-22 supplementary estimates (C), the Agency is seeking to increase its reference levels by \$14.8 million. This includes \$7.5 million to help strengthen operational capacity to prevent and respond to wildfires in Parks Canada administered protected areas, such as protecting the safety of visitors, built facilities, and natural and cultural assets.

[English]

Parks Canada is advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples in many ways.

There is \$2.1 million to increase resources and capacity for the wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* national historic site. This is a tremendous opportunity for Parks Canada and Inuit to work together on one of the largest, most complex archaeological initiatives in Canada's history.

There is also \$1.5 million to support a more proactive and timely approach to indigenous negotiations to implement rights, while reducing litigation risks, building partnerships and advancing mutual priorities.

There is a request for a grant of up to \$1.75 million to the Yellowknives Dene First Nation to fulfill the agency's commitment to establish the Thaidene Nene National Park Reserve. There's also \$400,000 to advance reconciliation with the Innu of Labrador and pursue the work of an impacts and benefits agreement for the co-operative management of the Akami-Uapishk^U-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve. Another \$250,000 will enable the ratification of an Inuit impacts and benefits agreement with the Kitikmeot Inuit Association for national historic sites in the Nunavut settlement area, including the wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* national historic site.

In addition, there is a request for \$1 million to promote the visitation to and protection of Parks Canada-administered heritage places and support safe and sustainable tourism recovery. There is also a request for transfers with other government departments that total about \$400,000.

[Translation]

I would now like to turn to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

The Agency is responsible for conducting impact assessments under the Impact Assessment Act, which came into force in August 2019. The Agency reviews major projects in Canada for sustainability by considering environmental, economic, social, and health impacts of proposed projects over the long term.

The Agency is also responsible for ongoing assessments initiated under the former Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which came into force in 2012.

[English]

If approved, the 2021-22 supplementary estimates (C) will raise the agency's total approved spending from almost \$82 million to about \$82.8 million. This includes a \$1-million transfer from Environment and Climate Change Canada, largely to support the agency's work to administer funding for the regional information and monitoring network, part of the Ottawa River watershed initiative

led by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. It also includes a transfer of \$155,000 to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council to contribute to grants that will ultimately support the new impact assessment system.

• (1115)

[Translation]

Before I end, I want to emphasize that I value your commitment and contribution to ensuring the health and well-being of our environment and economy and of all Canadians.

I am looking forward to working with you.

I am happy to take your questions now.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Before starting the rounds of questions, I would like to note that Lena Metlege Diab and Elizabeth May are with us this morning.

To begin the first round of questions, I will turn the floor over to Mr. Seeback for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, in your opening statement, you talked about \$60 billion under the pan-Canadian framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2016—you talked about 2016—greenhouse gas emissions in Canada were 707 megatonnes, and in 2019, they're 730 megatonnes. This is from Environment and Climate Change Canada's website.

If it takes \$60 billion to increase greenhouse gas emissions by 23 megatonnes, how much is it going to cost to get us to the 45% reduction that you're talking about in your plan?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question.

I would invite you to take a second look at the 2019 inventories. If you look at the projections to 2030, when we came into power, those projections showed that we would increase greenhouse gas emissions by 12%. Now, the same projection shows that we are in the process of reducing those emissions by 30 million tonnes, which is equivalent roughly to Quebec as a whole. That's 80 million tonnes per year.

We are changing the course of climate change emissions in Canada. As I said in my presentation, next week I will be tabling the emissions reduction report. That will give you, in great detail, everything we've done so far, how much our emissions have been reduced, where the projections are to 2030 and what we need to do to achieve our 2030 targets.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I understand what projections are. What I'm dealing with is the hard facts. For \$60 billion, greenhouse gas emissions went up by 23 megatonnes. This is based on your department's published figures, in and of itself.

You're saying not to worry about that, because the extra money you'll spend is going to get us there—sort of a “don't worry, be happy”.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: No, that's not what I'm saying.

What I'm saying is that we have started to deploy the plan, which is composed of regulations, legislation and investments, as you point out. Those—

Mr. Kyle Seeback: You deployed the plan in 2016.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: If I may, Mr. Chair, I want to answer the question.

Those investments are not fully deployed. We have started some programs, and some are in the process of being finalized. The money started going out the door, but the \$60 billion has not been fully invested yet.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Do you agree or disagree that from 2016 to 2019 greenhouse gas emissions, under your government, have gone up by 23 megatonnes?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I agree with what's in the 2019 inventory, absolutely. We will have more good news for you in the coming weeks on Canada's inventory.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Under vote 1c, it's funding for carbon pollution pricing proceeds return. Have you or your department done an analysis on the disproportionate impacts of the carbon tax on people in rural communities? We talk about the average. I asked you a question in the House of Commons yesterday about a senior in my riding who says she keeps her heat so low she feels like she's freezing. With the cost of propane and the carbon tax, she can't make ends meet.

Has your department looked at the disproportionate impacts of carbon pricing on rural Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you know, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, eight out of 10 households are better off with carbon pricing. It's true that the richest amongst us in Canada do not benefit from the rebates, but eight out of 10 households are better off with the implementation of the carbon pricing system—

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I've heard the number eight out of 10, but have you looked at rural communities? Rural communities don't have energy alternatives. They heat their homes with propane. They have to drive and commute often long distances to get to work, which means they're using gasoline.

Have you looked at the disproportionate impacts on rural Canadians? I can tell you that people in my riding talk about it all the time.

• (1120)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You know that there's a 10% addition to the system for rural households. There is clearly a rural lens that is applied to carbon pricing. Specifically, whether the department has done an analysis, I could perhaps ask the department—

Mr. Kyle Seeback: I'll ask them in the second hour.

If it hasn't been done, will you commit today to have the department look at the impacts of the backstop on rural communities?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You're asking me a question, but you're not allowing me to provide you with the answer.

If you want, we can ask the department if it has been done. Then you will have the answer, and we won't have to go into hypotheticals.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Sure.

Ms. Christine Hogan (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): We can follow up in the second hour, if that's okay.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Okay.

Then I'm going to ask you, if it hasn't been done, will you commit to doing that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: If it hasn't been done, we will make sure that it's done.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: When we look at funding to renew and advance clean technology-enabling measures, also under vote 1c... You've issued green bonds, but you've excluded nuclear and LNG from green bonds. We know that even the former governor of the Bank of Canada has said that there's no path to net zero without nuclear. Converting a steel plant in Ontario from coal to LNG, which is taking place right now, will save three megatonnes per year.

Why were these two things excluded from green bonds?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you know, it's our first issuance of sovereign bonds in Canada. We worked with TD securities and HS-BC. They made recommendations in terms of best practices for sovereign bonds in countries similar to ours. I can think of France and the European Union, which also include fossil fuels and nuclear energy. Since it's the first time we were doing it, we wanted to go with the best practices internationally, and that's what we did.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Weiler, for six minutes.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the minister for his first visit to our committee. Hopefully, it will be the first of many.

Over the last couple of years, we've seen the provincial NDP government in B.C. increase the pace at which old growth has been logged, in spite of an old growth strategic review that recommended immediate deferrals. This has led to widespread protests throughout the province. Recently, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Committee issued a very dismal report card on progress on the strategy.

Your mandate letter includes the commitment to bring forward federal funding to protect old-growth forests, as well as to include a nature agreement with the province to protect some of the last intact old growth in B.C.

Could you please update this committee on the progress of concluding this agreement?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question. This is clearly something that I and the department are very seized with. We've had a number of meetings with B.C. ministers in the four months that I've been environment and climate change minister on specifically the question of old-growth species at risk, as well as the signing of a nature agreement with the Province of British Columbia.

I can tell you that the work is going well. There's good collaboration. I think everyone agrees that it's in our best interest to come to an agreement on this. The alternative would be for the federal government, in the case of certain areas where species are at risk, to intervene unilaterally, which is not something that we want to do.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you.

As part of the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, which became law last year, the government is required, as you mentioned in your opening remarks, to table an emissions reduction plan by the end of this month that will indicate how we're going to be able to get to our 2030 GHG reduction goals.

Your mandate letter also includes a commitment to bring in a cap on oil and gas emissions that will steadily decline in five-year increments. I was hoping you could give some information to the committee on when you expect this cap to be announced and how we're able to reliably report and track our emissions reduction goals without including certainty on our largest and fastest-growing source of emissions.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question. The emissions reduction plan that will be tabled next week will be the first of many, but it will be the first time that we show parliamentarians as well as Canadians everything we've done so far and where we are in terms of emissions reduction.

It will include modelling. It will also include sectoral emissions for 2030. These are not targets, per se, but according to the analysis that the department did, this is our best analysis of where we think various sectors of the Canadian economy need to be in terms of their emissions reduction in 2030 for us to achieve our target. So this will not be the cap specifically in the case of oil and gas.

We have started consultations on the oil and gas cap. In fact, I was in Calgary just before Christmas to meet some oil executives. I was really fascinated—Christine and other officials were there with me—by the fact that everyone we met in the private sector said

they wanted to work with us on this cap. I did not meet a single representative from the private sector who said they didn't want to have anything to do with the oil and gas cap. In fact, the cap was inspired by the fact that some of the largest oil companies in Canada said they wanted to be net-zero by 2050. The cap is simply a way for us to put that commitment into regulation and to chart a course as to how we get there.

So all of the measures that we've announced will be included in the emissions reduction plan, keeping in mind that some are in the process of being developed.

• (1125)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you. That's reassuring to hear.

Canada has brought forward carbon pricing for large industry through the output-based pricing system that requires industry to emit less than the industry average for that sector, as well as provide credits for reducing emissions even further. Canada is also in the process of finalizing the clean fuel standard that will provide compliance credits for reducing the emissions intensity for oil and gas. We've also proposed bringing forward a tax credit for carbon capture, utilization and storage to encourage investment in a space that the IEA has recognized is critical to meeting the world's GHG reduction targets.

Given that we have these three mechanisms, what assurances can Environment and Climate Change Canada provide that the emissions reductions activities won't be able to double or triple count with these three mechanisms and indeed be able to show that emissions reductions will be verifiable and additional to what would already be required under our carbon pricing system?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: This is a really good question. It's certainly something the department and my team are working hard on, as did Minister Wilkinson and Minister McKenna before, to make sure there's no double counting, because sometimes it is a bit complicated. There are a number of measures—you talked about the pricing, the clean fuel standards, the cap. We have to make sure that our methodologies are solid, to ensure that when we say a tonne is being reduced, then an actual tonne is being reduced.

We have a very robust system when it comes to inventories, based on the IPCC methodologies that we update as they are updated internationally, but this is something that we pay very close attention to.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Pauzé.

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

Thank you for being with us today, Minister.

In this committee, we have undertaken a study of the governance of radioactive waste. And then, of course, we have heard about World Water Day. In your presentation, you talked about the Canada Water Agency. Personally, I think the precautionary principle must always guide our actions, but I am not always sure this is a priority for everybody.

Protecting our natural sources of water and drinking water is important. I always point out that our bodies are made up of two thirds water. I believe this is an essential service. Watercourses in Quebec and Canada must not be imperilled by projects that are put on the table.

Would you be open to the idea of governance of radioactive waste being transferred to your department? I mention this because there are people who are calling for it. Having it under Environment and Climate Change Canada rather than Natural Resources Canada would make people feel a bit safer. It seems like a good idea to me.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question, Ms. Pauzé.

I can tell you, honestly, that this is the first time that proposal has been put to me. I had never heard of this. I would therefore propose that we discuss it in the department and that we follow up with you directly on this subject.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you. There have been witnesses who have appeared before the committee in connection with the study who talked about it. They would feel much better if it were under your department.

I am now going to come back to the document that the Net-Zero Advisory Body recently published. The document was released on Monday this week, so you may not have all the answers. On page 7, the Net-Zero Advisory Body said it had received a joint letter from your department and the Department of Natural Resources, and stated:

This request for advice was focused on reducing emissions associated with the production of oil and gas products, rather than their use, and, rather than reducing emissions specifically by reducing production.

That caught my attention. We talk about caps. Why have you abandoned setting caps, at least in the letter that was sent to the Net-Zero Advisory Body?

• (1130)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In fact, we have to distinguish between emissions and production. As you know, the production of natural resources is under provincial jurisdiction. At the federal level, we can make regulations or enact legislation concerning emissions, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Our commitment to capping emissions and reducing emissions in the oil and gas industry corresponds precisely to that. We are acting within our jurisdiction, which is pollution. We have not abandoned anything. On the contrary, we are moving forward on the proposal we made during the last election campaign.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Right. My interpretation is that when we set a cap, it's so it is not exceeded.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's right.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: However, a target can be exceeded.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It is really a cap for emissions, not a cap for production.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Right.

Can we get your agreement, officially and systematically, that the committee will be able to meet with the Advisory Body when it submits its report?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I would think that to be a reasonable request. I can certainly put the question to the people on the Advisory Body, but I would think it entirely desirable for you to speak with them too.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I wanted to draw your attention to something else the Advisory Body said that seems really important. It is on page 10 of the document:

3. Prioritize the development of a climate change data, insights, and monitoring digital platform by the end of 2023

That is the third item in the advice given by the Advisory Body. It is talking about every major GHG emissions source and sink.

The fourth item in the advice given is this:

4. Ensure that the models and analytical approaches used to project and assess Canada's progress towards emissions reduction targets are transparent, robust, and coordinated

Those two points seem to be very fair. This would provide concrete data.

Still on page 10, the document states: "draw on the expertise of government, academia, civil society, labour, and industry." I find that proposal very interesting. Of course, it doesn't appear in the supplementary estimates. At least, I haven't seen it. I should note that the report was released on Monday.

Could it be included in the general budget?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: When it comes to the data, quite honestly, I will look to my colleagues in the department.

Is there some provision for data availability? I think that was the sense of the Advisory Body's recommendation.

Ms. Christine Hogan: Thank you for the question.

[English]

I would just say that we received the advisory board's report on Monday and are digesting the recommendations contained in it. I think the idea of gap filling, and some of the issues they've identified from a governance point of view and the roles of different ministries to get at some of these issues going forward, is a very sensible recommendation. We will be looking at that in the context of our work going forward.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Collins for six minutes.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the minister for being here to answer our questions.

The “horizontal initiatives” include funding to establish a sustainable finance action council. The council would include only representatives from Canada’s financial institutions. It would exclude climate experts, civil society and indigenous groups from contributing, despite the recommendation from the expert panel report on sustainable finance that they actually be included.

The financial industry has been very slow to address the risks of the climate crisis, and they continue to push for inadequate and voluntary standards. Expert and civil society input on financial reform is critical if we’re going to achieve financial regulatory reforms that will help Canada reach its climate targets. I’m curious: Why wasn’t the advice of the expert panel report on sustainable finance to include experts and civil society followed?

• (1135)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That’s a good question. As you know, I wasn’t minister at the time that decision was made. I could certainly look with the department as to why the decision was made the way it was, and we could follow up with you.

That being said, you probably have seen, as I have, that we are starting to make some progress in Canada. I’m not saying that we’re a leader on these issues, but the Bank of Canada report, the OSFI report—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Really, my question is whether there is an interest from your ministry to head in a direction where we’re including civil society and expert analysis into this.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Beyond the action council, we are seeking the input of indigenous—

Ms. Laurel Collins: I absolutely hear you, Minister. Really, my question is about this council in particular. Its advice was to include climate experts, civil society and indigenous groups, so that they can form policy as well.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: If your question is specifically on that, I will have to go back and follow up with you.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Canada has been falling behind our peers in ensuring Canada’s financial sector is prepared for climate risks. Canada’s banks are some of the largest financiers of the fossil fuel industry. Why should the finance industry be trusted to effectively regulate itself?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: If you look at the composition of the SFAC, we have people who are experts in their field, people who have undertaken a number of initiatives to help Canada improve what it’s doing when it comes to climate finance.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I have no doubt, but they are representatives of Canada’s financial institutions. Their interest lies with the people they represent. That’s fundamentally my concern, but maybe—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Have you met with them? If you haven’t, I would encourage you to do so. I was pleasantly surprised to see that there are a number of very active and activist.... I know that not everyone likes that term, but—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you so much for the recommendation. I’ll follow up on that.

I hope you will take seriously the concern I’m expressing.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: The horizontal initiatives include “[f]unding to help developing countries address the impact of climate change”. At COP26, Canada was reluctant to show leadership and commit to our fair share towards loss and damage funds. The climate finance delivery plan pulled together by Germany and Canada does not even mention loss and damage.

The impacts of the climate crisis are already a reality for people around the world—here in B.C.—but are disproportionately impacting lower-income countries, displacing more than 30 million people in 2020 alone. Poor and vulnerable countries are least responsible for climate change but are already facing the worst of its negative impacts. I’m curious as to why Canada has been reluctant to pay its fair share toward loss and damage finance.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I would beg to differ when it comes to doing our fair share. We doubled our climate finance commitment in the lead-up to the Glasgow meeting. We’ve increased from 30% to 40% our share of grants versus loans, and I know there is a willingness or a request that it be fifty-fifty. We were at 30% and 70%. We’re at 40% and 60%. We’re definitely going in the right direction.

On loss and damages, it’s a complex decision. We have agreed to the establishment of the Santiago network, which will inform how countries could move forward on the issue of loss and damages, and Canada is a happy and willing party to this initiative.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I want to follow up on one of Madame Pauzé’s questions.

You stated publicly that your government promised that an oil and gas emissions cap will not be part of the emissions reduction plan due next week. Do you plan to follow the Net-Zero Advisory Body’s advice to set legally binding oil and gas sector emissions targets?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I know there was an article that said the oil and gas cap would not be part of the emissions reduction plan. Everything we’re doing will be part of the emissions reduction plan. Keep in mind that some of our commitments are still under development.

We have said it wouldn’t be a voluntary cap. We’ve been very clear on that. Is it going to be regulated or legislated? The consultations will inform that decision. As you know, obviously, different paths are available to us to do this, and that’s why we’re consulting.

• (1140)

Ms. Laurel Collins: The Net-Zero Advisory Body's advice is that carbon removals and offsets should be used only as a last resort. Currently, the CCUS capture capacity is only 0.1% of global annual emissions. The IPCC points to uncertainty in the future deployment of carbon capture, utilization and storage and cautions against reliance on that technology. How does this align with your support of the CCUS tax credit?

The Chair: Minister, perhaps you wouldn't mind answering the question when you are given another opportunity, because we're at six minutes. I'd like to go to the second round. You can work that answer in, of course.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You mean instead of answering someone else's question?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Well, there might be some commonalities. We are very collegial here and we all want the same thing, which is to combat climate change.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Of course, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Dreeshen, go ahead for five minutes, please.

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

If I were to discuss that, I'd probably take it in exactly the opposite direction.

I would like to talk to you about one of the grants and contributions, the terrestrial cumulative effects initiative, and the transfers over to Natural Resources.

The government has stated its support for the development of an action plan with indigenous people to implement UNDRIP in Canada, indicating that this “can be a powerful tool to build alignment, understand mutual expectations and close existing, significant socio-economic gaps for Indigenous peoples.” As we look at the environmental policies put forward by your government and the fact that 65% of indigenous people support natural resource development, it seems as though there is potential in the making.

I'm just wondering how you see the future of oil and gas development in indigenous communities under the UNDRIP umbrella, in a way that acknowledges the need to maintain Canada's competitiveness as a consideration that is important to reconciliation. Can you explain how you will manage those who choose to develop oil and gas under their inherent rights to lands, territories and resources?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question.

As the Prime Minister has said time and time again, no relationship is as important to us as our relationship with indigenous people. I think going forward, there is no scenario in which we will continue to develop resources or protected and conservation areas without the full involvement of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Specifically, then, on their development of oil and gas.... We hear a lot about how they want to shut it down and so on, but that's not the way it is in their communities. They are full partners and they are looking forward to opportunities to en-

gage in an industry that is in their backyard. I just really want to talk about whether your government is going to look at that and say that maybe we can change the rhetoric, and that oil and gas are important to indigenous Canadians.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I would never speak on behalf of indigenous people, but I think we can probably agree that, as in the rest of Canadian society, there are different views about many of these issues. Perhaps I could turn to—

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I can always come back later. I'll just make this final point on that, if you don't mind.

We do tend to speak on behalf of indigenous people when doing so fits our narrative.

You also mentioned that no nation can do it on its own. Just a month ago, Russia and China had a 100-million-tonne agreement as far as coal is concerned. We know it is happening there. We understand the situations that are happening in eastern Europe and the ramifications of those, and also the significance of how, here in Canada, we can help. We could have been right there to help, but we can help.

I'm just wondering, when we're talking about money being spent on international initiatives and so on, if we're starting to have a different focus because of the realities in the world right now, or are we still just repeating the mantra that we have to do our part, even though the rest of the world is kind of falling apart?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: On climate change, I would disagree with your characterization of what is happening. I have been speaking with my counterparts, both from southern and northern countries, European ministers—Germany, France, the United Kingdom—and Special Envoy Kerry this weekend, and everybody is saying that we need to continue and even accelerate the transition towards the green economy.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Certainly, and I appreciate that. I've also spoken with European leaders, and they are also looking at the practicality in the situation that is occurring right now. With Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2, we recognize the reasons for why that was shut down.

This is a case of our not being prepared. We've taken the natural resources that we have in this country, which have built our hospitals, our schools and everything else, and given us the ability to have a safety net, and here we are. We are now not prepared, because we have put all of these roadblocks in place.

As we work our way through this, when you speak about an emission reduction plan, I'm wondering whether there is a recognition of what has actually helped us move forward. I think that's something that's critical in our conversation.

• (1145)

The Chair: You have 20 seconds, please, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I think Canada is very well positioned when it comes to energy security. We're probably one of the best countries in the world when it comes to our energy security. Frankly, as other countries are seeing the impacts of the war in Ukraine, and certainly an increase in crude oil prices, for example, Canada is very well positioned on energy security.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's so nice to not have to look at whether I'm muted or unmuted. We're here face to face.

Minister, thank you so much for being with us this morning.

My first question has to do with the Canada water agency. Our committee, in the last Parliament, worked on the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. A big part of our discussions and, in fact, recommendations was that this agency would be created and that it would be outside of government. Then this week, on World Water Day on Tuesday, we had elder Claudette Commanda talking about the connection between water and climate change, that the crisis is really about the life of the planet and that the water is the lifeblood of the planet.

In the supplementary estimates, votes 1c and 10c talk about—and you mentioned it in your presentation, Minister—\$7,855,539 for the creation of this agency. When are we going to hear from them? When is the first report coming from them? What's the status of that agency, if you don't mind?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In many ways, I suspect that Member Duguid would be better at answering this question than I would, from all the work he's done on that. That's probably why he is leading this file for us.

I think you're going to see significant progress in the coming months. COVID slowed the work of the implementation of the water agency somewhat. We wanted to be further ahead than we are now, but I think you're going to see significant progress in the coming months.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: We'll be watching. We would be very interested in hearing from it.

I want to build on a question from Madame Paupé.

We were just studying nuclear waste. In your presentation, you talked about the increased funding going towards the Impact Assessment Agency. There's a \$1-million transfer looking at the Ottawa River watershed, which was something we talked about during our committee. We have a report that is being drafted and that we will be working on and presenting in the House, hopefully soon.

Could you maybe give us a little more detail on how the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada is interfacing with nuclear waste?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I think Terence would be ideally placed to do that.

Mr. Terence Hubbard (President, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): Thank you for the question.

The Impact Assessment Agency is implementing a new framework for impact assessment. As part of that new framework, we'll be working with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and other federal expert departments to assess not only the environmental impacts but the environmental, economic, social and health impacts associated with proposed projects.

A key aspect of that is meaningful consultations, both with the local communities that are involved in it and the indigenous communities, to ensure that those perspectives are well heard and understood, and to develop a comprehensive set of mitigation measures and proposals to inform the minister or the GIC, as the case may be, to take an inclusive public interest position on whether or not those development proposals are in the public interest.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you, Mr. Hubbard. It will be interesting to see how that aligns with recommendations that our committee will be coming forward with from our study, and to see whether we're on the same page.

In vote 1c of the supplementary estimates, there is \$678,000 going toward the Sustainable Finance Action Council. MP Collins has also talked about the Sustainable Finance Action Council. My interest is in how that aligns with the United Nations sustainable development goals. Sometimes we focus only on environmental goals, but when we talk about sustainable development, we have 17 SDGs and a 2030 time frame looking at us right now that's coming quickly.

How does the work of the Sustainable Finance Action Council align with the United Nations sustainable goals?

• (1150)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It's a good question.

Obviously, its mandate is very specific to sustainable finance, but it is up to us, as a government, to ensure that it is part of our larger commitments on SDGs. We will be coming out with our new sustainable development strategy in the very near future. It's for 2022-26, if memory serves. We are looking at the various elements of the sustainable development goals, which include climate change, sustainable finance—

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Water.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —and water, as part of that package.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: That's great.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Paupé will now have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

Our committee is moving from one study to the next. We are now starting a study on Canadian subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. As we know, the G20 countries have committed to eliminating what are called inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. That is to be the subject of a peer review process, and Canada has been paired with Argentina. The review process has been in the hands of that member of the G20 since 2019, and we still have no news.

Do we have any news about this? The report was to have been submitted within 12 to 24 months, but it has now been more than 24 months. Where are we on this?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's an excellent question.

I would remind you that in our platform, we proposed to eliminate the subsidies that the G20 defined as inefficient by 2023. That is two years earlier than our G20 partners. We also committed to eliminating all of these subsidies. So the first commitment is the G20's and the second commitment is about everything else that might resemble a fossil fuel subsidy.

On that point, you will see major progress over the next few months. We are going to be consulting the public and stakeholders on this subject.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: What about Argentina's report?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: On the report, I am going to have to follow up with you directly.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Right. That's good.

I would like to ask another question.

The Sustainable Finance Action Council was created by your department and the Department of Finance in the summer of 2021. Is it possible to know how the Council's work is progressing?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes, we can certainly send the committee information about what the Council has done to date. I could also invite representatives of the Council to come and talk to you about how the work is progressing.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Good.

Mr. Chair, I have no other questions. I don't know whether Ms. May would like to ask any.

The Chair: Ms. May, you have 30 seconds.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): In 30 seconds, I'm going to ask a very short question, and maybe the Minister can answer it when he is speaking later.

[*English*]

This is my question. I want to stay at a very high level. The emissions reduction plan is for the current targets, which are inadequate to meet our Paris goal of staying below 2°C and holding the 1.5°C. At the end of COP26, the secretariat of the UNFCCC said that, right now, we've succeeded in going from 16% above 2010 by 2030 to 13.7% below. That's the world.

My question, for when you have time to answer—which I don't think will be now, but maybe—is when Canada will seriously consider updating our NDCs. We really need to do it before COP27.

The Chair: Perhaps you could answer that in response to someone else. This is how we work in this—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I'm finding that I'm having very little success in doing that, Mr. Chair. The quality of questions—

The Chair: You just have to go for it when the time is—

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I have been passing the begging bowl around, hoping members could give me a little bit of their time here and there. Maybe we'll get another chance.

Thank you.

The Chair: Yes. I'll keep that in mind.

We'll go now to Ms. Collins.

Ms. Laurel Collins: The Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, except for section 23, came into force right away.

I'm curious about why the date for the financial reporting requirement to come into force hasn't been set. What's the delay?

• (1155)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's a good question. I don't have the answer—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Could you provide that in writing to our committee?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Of course, yes.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you.

Next, maybe we'll go back to the initial question.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That was a good question. Both the IPCC and the IEA do talk about the need for carbon removals, not as the beginning of a strategy, but as a last resort.

I agree with that, which is why we've invested \$30 billion in transit. We're investing in electrification. We're—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Could we stick to CCUS?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I am saying that we have put in place a hundred measures and \$100 billion of investment. After we did all that, we started looking at removal technologies. Our climate change strategy didn't start with removals, but it—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Oil and gas companies are currently making record profits. If CCUS is critical for them to reduce their emissions, then there is no reason they shouldn't pay for these investments themselves.

When Canadians are struggling with the cost of living, why is the government continuing to give handouts to the fossil fuel industry?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I would disagree with the characterization of your question.

We've made the commitment that our transition would be a just transition, that we would work with every sector of the economy and that we would work with every region of the country. We're helping steel decarbonize. We're helping—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Suncor is giving hundreds of millions out to their shareholders.

When we're talking about fossil fuel subsidies, and following up on some of the comments, I recently asked an Order Paper question and got a response back from the department that we still haven't defined what is an efficient or inefficient fossil fuel subsidy.

What is the definition of an efficient fossil fuel subsidy for you? Why has it not been set after six years?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As I was telling Member Pauzé, we've made two commitments in our platform. One is regarding G20-type subsidies and another one is regarding just about everything else.

Frankly, I think we're beyond this debate of inefficient or efficient subsidies. We've made a commitment to stop subsidizing—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Is there a commitment to align our definition with internationally agreed-upon definitions for robust criteria for “efficiency”?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Mazier, go ahead.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Minister.

I'm going to be focusing on the first line under budgetary voted appropriations, with regard to electric vehicles. Your government will be mandating the sale of electric vehicles. I represent rural Canadians. My riding of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa is geographically just slightly larger than the province of Nova Scotia. Do you know how many public charging stations there are in my riding?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I didn't expect you to know.

There are five, Minister.

Rural Canadians are really concerned that this policy you're implementing of mandating buying vehicles is out of touch with the reality of what's happening in rural Canada. Why hasn't your government introduced an electric vehicle plan specifically designed for rural Canada?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We're allowing for the reality of rural Canada to be taken into account. First, we're not going for zero-emission vehicles tomorrow morning. We're going for zero-emission vehicles in 2035.

We're in the process of deploying 25,000 charging stations across the country. We will do more after that.

Our program also includes plug-in hybrids, which can work very well for people in remote communities. I actually happen to know a

number of people who aren't close to urban centres and who have plug-in hybrids. It works wonders for them.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Specifically, though, for rural Canada, there are two national highways that actually go through my riding—Yellowhead and Trans-Canada—with five public charging stations.

There is no plan for rural Canada.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Of course there is. We will be deploying—

Mr. Dan Mazier: I heard that you're going to take them into account, but I didn't hear a specific plan.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We will be deploying these charging network stations all across the country, including in rural Canada.

In Quebec in 2015, we had six charging stations. We have more than 2,000 now, in a matter of four or five years. Things can change really rapidly and things are changing rapidly when it comes to electrification.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Are you confident that electric vehicles can survive -45°C going across the Prairies, with five charging stations?

• (1200)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't own an electric vehicle. I don't own a vehicle, full stop. My service vehicle is fully electric. It's 100% EV. I take the train as much as I can between Montreal and Ottawa, but when we take the car, even in the winter, it works.

Norway, as you may know, is a cold country. Fifty per cent of the vehicles in that cold country are electric today. It can be done.

Mr. Dan Mazier: It's not the size of Canada, though.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It's 3,000 kilometres from one coast to the other.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Minister, what is the average cost of an electric vehicle in Canada?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't know that by heart. We could provide that information to you in writing.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You're going to be mandating Canadians to buy electric vehicles, and you don't know the cost of them.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Again, it's 50% by 2030, and 100% by 2035. Most experts agree that by 2024-25, there will be no cost difference between an internal combustion engine and electric vehicles. Our mandate will come—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Canadians are concerned about today, though.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We're not mandating anything today, sir.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We're encouraging—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Toyota was in front of the committee here a while back, and they said that basically the average cost of a zero-emissions vehicle was \$56,000. That's double the price of a gas-powered vehicle.

Minister, the median household income in my riding is just below \$50,000. Not all Canadians make \$270,000 like you, Minister.

Do you believe these vehicles are affordable?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As I said, most experts agree that by 2024-25, there will be no cost difference between electric vehicles and internal combustion engines. Our mandate comes years after that. The first part of the mandate comes in 2030—it will come into force way after the cost difference between internal combustion engines and electric vehicles....

You have to remember that right now EVs are more expensive to buy, but they're way cheaper to operate. If you look at the full life-cycle cost of owning and operating a vehicle, there are substantial savings. Simply looking at the cost of purchasing the vehicle is only looking at half of the equation.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

A voice: Time flies when we're having fun.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dan Mazier: Yes, that's right. I'm done.

The Chair: We have Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you.

I actually wanted to turn to the supplementary estimates for Parks Canada. I was noticing that we do such great work with Parks Canada in terms of our cultural and heritage sites.

I was also noticing that we need a lot of money to go into protecting them, especially with the extreme climate events that we've been seeing recently. I was wondering whether the supplementary budget requests will be going into protecting these parks and dealing with wildfires and other threats.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I could try to answer, but I think Andrew could give you a much better answer than I can on that.

Mr. Andrew Campbell (Senior Vice-President, Operations, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you, Minister and thank you, member.

Certainly, a portion of the \$7.5 million that is in supplementary estimates (C) does go directly into our wildfire preparedness program.

It actually does, I think, three things that are important to talk about. One, it does fire safety around different communities and economic interests that we have close by in parks. Two, it looks at the effect of fire on biodiversity and our ways of projecting into what will go on. Three, from a fire prevention perspective, it looks at how we would reduce some of the fuel stores through a prescribed burn-type of operation that we do in many places across the country.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: That's good to know. So, those funds will be going into the protections.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: They go directly into those.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you very much.

I was also wondering about the funding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the transportation and methane waste sectors. I'm not sure where that question should be directed, but I think there's an additional \$9 million in funding requested for that area.

Could you share with me how the committee is going to be ensuring credible reduction in greenhouse gases as a result of that investment?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We're doing a lot of work on trying to shift Canada's economy from a linear economy to a circular economy. That certainly includes waste management. We're putting a big emphasis on plastics, for obvious reasons. We're looking at the whole waste equation. It's work we're doing with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

Landfill methane emission is one of the few low-hanging fruits we still have in terms of emission reduction. Technologies are very mature. We know how to do that. It's being done in many parts of the country. It's relatively easy to count the emission reduction. Nothing is easy in this file, but this is an easier category of the non-easy things we have to do.

● (1205)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Do you expect to see very positive results in that area?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes, absolutely, and I expect lots of collaboration with provinces, territories and municipalities.

Everyone agrees that these emissions shouldn't be going up into the atmosphere. They can be captured and transformed into biogas, and you can burn it to produce electricity. There are a number of things we can do, rather than let it go up and contribute to global warming.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Great, thank you.

The third question I have is about the national parks funding for urban parks. I'm very pleased to see that there's going to be funding for additional urban parks across Canada. I think they're incredibly important, especially with extreme climate events. We've seen that it makes a huge difference, having green space in urban areas.

Is there an allocation of funds to help municipalities or regions create urban parks? Can they be created from existing protected spaces that aren't urban parks?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Andrew, would you provide some detail on that?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Yes, certainly. I'm happy to do that.

There are funds that are going towards national urban parks that help. Because of the three things that urban parks are trying to do—one of those is reconciliation with indigenous populations in the urban centres—there are funds available both for the municipalities and for indigenous groups as we move forward. We are in the process with the minister of signing agreements with mayors and indigenous groups all across the country at this point, and we have those in place.

The last part of that was on....

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: It was about existing protected green space.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: I'll use Colwood as an example. Colwood will probably be brought together from a lot of existing different protected areas, including some that are already in the federal family.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Okay, and what about agricultural land?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: We are looking at that as we move forward.

As MP Carrie probably well knows, in places like the Rouge there is an agricultural component, and we certainly see that as part of how we would move forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to give myself a question or two, and I don't need long answers.

I've had some mail from constituents who are concerned about the Trans Canada Trail and whether funding for that will be extended. Do you have any insight on that?

Also, I know you're looking closely at the land around the Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport and doing what you can to preserve as much of that as possible. I encourage you to keep us in mind in the West Island around that issue.

I don't know if you know whether there's been a request to extend funding for the Trans Canada Trail. It's a very technical question, and I don't mean to put you on the spot.

I don't know who would like to answer that.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Andrew can answer on the Trans Canada Trail for sure.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: The Trans Canada Trail funding was funding that came in a previous budget and is sunseting. I think we will all be waiting to see as we move forward in the federal budget.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, please, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We are having ongoing conversations with the Minister of Transportation, Aéroports de Montréal, as well as the City of Montreal to try to find a project that we can all agree on regarding the land—

The Chair: Wonderful, thank you very much for your attention to that.

Yes, Mr. Dreeshen, go ahead.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: I know that we had Mr. Carrie on for the last question.

I'm wondering whether—

The Chair: I don't have his name here. I'm sorry about that. I would have tried to accommodate it.

Minister, thank you for your appearance. Thank you for a lively and informative discussion. I think we all come away from this with some new information and insight, and we look forward to seeing you again.

Members, we're going to take a very brief break to bring in some new witnesses. Then we'll get going for our second hour.

Thank you again, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to members of the committee.

● (1205)

(Pause)

● (1215)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We'll start with a six-minute round for Mr. Carrie.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to say thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I see a few familiar faces.

I was a little disappointed, Mr. Chair. I didn't have a chance to ask my questions of the minister, but I'm sure the officials will be able to give me some good answers.

Like my colleague, I wanted to talk about a few things that are important to my local riding. One is the canal system, and the other is the automotive sector, coming from Oshawa. I was a little disappointed to hear the minister. I guess he can get around in his government-provided car, but most people in my community need a car. They commute back and forth to work. When the government moves towards an electric mandate, what's really important is the infrastructure. We heard from the minister that there is something going on there.

As many of you know, we manufacture cars in Oshawa. The automotive industry is asking what the plan is to eliminate unnecessary regulatory and trade barriers between Canada and some of our competitors, particularly the United States. When they make investments in Canada, they're looking 10 years down the road, and they want to make sure there's no uncertainty there.

Could you please answer what the plan is to eliminate these unnecessary regulatory and trade barriers, particularly between Canada and the United States, and could you frame it around a competitiveness lens? We were working toward a convergence of regulations, and now we're seeing many regulations differ between Canada and the United States. That will affect our competitiveness and our ability to attract that new investment.

The Chair: Should I assume that Ms. Hogan will be answering that?

• (1220)

Ms. Christine Hogan: I will make a first attempt and then pass it to my colleague, Paul Halucha, our associate deputy minister.

I would say that this very active area of climate change policy related to transportation and ZEVs, in particular, is a collaborative effort among a number of federal departments. Innovation, Science and Economic Development has a particularly important role to play with the automotive sector, as does Transport Canada. We have a key role to play on the emissions dimension of the issue.

Paul, would you like to respond as well?

Mr. Paul Halucha (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): I'd be very happy to.

It's a pleasure to see Mr. Carrie again.

There are a couple of things. The transition to electric vehicles is critical for the environment. It's also critical for the auto sector, as you well know. Competition is at the core of investments that the government is making, so Minister Champagne and Innovation, Science and Economic Development have been working in close partnership with provincial governments—Ontario in particular—to support the assembly plants as they have been making commitments to transition their facilities in Canada to manufacturing electric vehicles.

In addition, we're looking to capture the greater supply chain. We have a strong strategic advantage around critical minerals and getting those supply chains in Canada, and linking that into the assembly is a critical part.

We have two government-wide policy objectives here. The first is the transition and the reduction of the emissions from the sector. Equally important is the retention and even strengthening of our assembly plant mandates in Canada, and continuing to ensure that they can provide the strong, well-paying jobs that they currently do. That transition is really critical.

The minister has talked about the partnerships with oil and gas executives, and the fact that he's been meeting with them. We are also meeting with executives in the auto sector.

On the point of regulatory coherence, I'll note that we are in alignment with the U.S. The North American standards continue to be absolutely critical to competitiveness for other reasons, as you well know, sir, in terms of our ability to continue to attract mandates and to secure them. We have a very close eye on ensuring that the CAFE standards and the air quality emissions have alignment between the two jurisdictions.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you very much. I would like a bit more detail. Perhaps you could provide the comprehensive plan, if you have it, or even the fuel standards. Moving forward, I'm hearing a bit more about that.

Regarding the critical minerals, as you so rightly pointed out, we have an advantage there. However, I was wondering if we have, from an environmental standpoint, some way to encourage the min-

ing sector, so that we can be supplying that technology and those minerals to the auto industry.

The second question is about the canal system. It's such a great potential economic driver. Just north of Oshawa, we have the Trent. What is the infrastructure deficit on our canal system now? Do we have a plan to remediate it? One of the things the minister said is that he wants to protect Parks Canada and support safe and sustainable tourism, but what is the infrastructure deficit in our canal system right now?

• (1225)

Mr. Andrew Campbell: Thank you, MP Carrie. We can certainly get you what our infrastructure deficit is.

I can say, though, that over the last several years we have made historic investments in the Trent-Severn Waterway, with the replacement of everything from bridges and swing bridges, from a historic perspective, to investments in the lock stations and major investments in the dams. We will continue to move forward in making those investments.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you for your investment in the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue canal. It's a big hit. The jetty is a big, big hit.

We will go now to Ms. Metlege Diab.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to the witnesses for being here this afternoon. I'm here to take advantage of subbing in for Ms. Thompson. I'm really appreciative of that opportunity.

I would like to direct my questions to environmental issues that are important to Canadians but really to my community of Halifax West. I come from Nova Scotia. That's why, when the member talked about his riding and mentioned Nova Scotia, I was really happy to be on the committee, because I think I'm probably the only Atlantic Canadian here on the committee.

Let me direct my questions to Parks Canada initially, if I may. Can you explain for the committee the development of our national urban parks policy with the selection and development of certain national urban park sites? Obviously, I'm very interested in the potential site in my riding, Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, which is an important ecological and recreational asset to my residents and also a tourist site.

Quite frankly, the last two years with COVID, we have seen so many people, regardless of where they live, come to those sites. I had the opportunity this summer for the first time to go and see it. You really have to walk through mud and dirt. There's no access to it. You get to it through a business, which apparently has given folks the okay to go through it and keep their eyes kind of...

I'm really interested in hearing where that policy is and where we are on that.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: On that, I'm very happy to be able to turn to my colleague Darlene Upton. She is the head of the protected areas establishment and conservation group within Parks Canada and is working on that policy as we speak.

Ms. Darlene Upton (Vice-President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada Agency): Thank you very much.

Last August, we launched the national urban parks program. We're concurrently developing the policy while we have assigned currently six collaborative agreements with municipalities and indigenous communities in a variety of locations, one of them being in the Halifax area. We're excited about the objectives of the program and are working off a policy framework that has been developed. We're looking to ensure that the program contributes to nature and biodiversity. That also includes climate, particularly in urban centres on mitigating climate effects, connecting Canadians to nature, and working to support reconciliation with indigenous partners who are a part of these projects.

We have six under way now. We're in discussions in the Montreal area. The commitment is for 15 more. We are continuing to invite municipalities and communities that are interested to contact us for more information on the program.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: If I may, just as a supplementary on the specific one, I know that \$130 million was announced last year for the national urban parks program. What is the projected cost to be spent over whatever number of years, and will it all be on planning and feasibility and consultation? Is there money set aside for infrastructure costs, like parking lots or trail clearings?

If you have any of that kind of specificity, I would appreciate hearing that.

Ms. Darlene Upton: Yes. Thank you.

We have \$130.9 million for the next five years to work on the establishment of six national urban parks. That will be mainly for feasibility studies and support for partners to work with us and to get those parks to establishment. There is some limited money for some infrastructure work, but once these places are established and the governance structures are set up, we will be looking at funding for the future management of those.

● (1230)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you.

With the time remaining, let me turn my attention to a very different topic. I am very happy and privileged to sit on the historic parliamentary committee on science and research. Let me ask some questions regarding the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council.

In the remarks, there was mention of \$155,000 going to NSERC to contribute to grants that will ultimately support the new impact assessment system. Can somebody please explain to me how this evaluation process works better to protect the environment? Can you shed some light on that?

Mr. Terence Hubbard: Thank you for the reminder, and thank you for the question.

The new Impact Assessment Act puts in place a number of new features to really increase the robustness of the evaluation process around major projects. In supporting the implementation of the new framework, we have a number of funding programs within the agency, including a modest research program, that are intended to encourage research and development into practices that support impact assessment.

Because it is a modest program, we've looked at how to best leverage the resources we have at the agency. We've leveraged the existing networks that the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council has in place with universities, post-doctoral students and post-graduate students. We're leveraging those relationships in place to provide supplemental funding to encourage further research into areas that will advance research and science, and will support impact assessments. We're leveraging that research to further enhance the science and understanding of approaches that impact the environment with major project developments.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

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

I would like to thank the witnesses who have stayed with us.

I am going to give a quick bit of background about Natural Resources Canada's Emissions Reduction Fund. When Commissioner DeMarco testified before the committee, he said that it was a complete mess and was doing nothing to reduce emissions. In my opinion, the Department of Environment and Climate Change should be responsible for monitoring the funds to make sure they are contributing to achieving the right objectives.

Now I want to talk about funds at the international level. I have some figures here.

In just over five years, Canada has put \$2.6 billion dollars into some 50 projects, under the heading of "Canada's international climate finance". That's good; that's one of Canada's commitments.

From 2021 to 2026, we will be committing \$5.3 billion. Again, this is positive and is one of our commitments under the international agreements.

However, when a government department or organization sets up funds like these, again, I think it is up to the department to make sure the money is actually being used to reduce emissions.

Is there an accountability system for this fund, which is going to total \$8 billion?

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

[English]

This is a very important question, because it is a lot of resources, when you think about it: \$2.65 billion, which has now been doubled to a level of \$5.3 billion.

We work very much in lockstep with Global Affairs Canada as a delivery partner for our international climate finance work. There's an array of programming, whether it be delivered through multilateral investments that the government makes or through bilateral work that we do in the developing world. We will be ramping that up and doing the planning work around where the \$5.3 billion will be invested.

There are a couple of things to be aware of. At COP26 in Glasgow, the government did make a couple of commitments about the allocation of those resources. One was very specifically around the phase-out of coal, and also a commitment that 40% of our international climate finance will be dedicated to the existing adaptation challenges. There was also a commitment that 20% of our international climate finance will be going toward nature-based solutions and biodiversity. There are a number of dimensions to our planning going forward.

Your point on accountability is very important. We report on an ongoing basis about the results that we achieve against those programs.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I would like to note that when the Commissioner met with the committee, I asked him more or less the same question, and he had to do an audit on the subject. We can see on the government website that there are two departments and some 60 organizations. So we might wonder whether there is accountability.

Can we know where the money is going? Will the result not be the same as for Natural Resources Canada's Emissions Reduction Fund?

[English]

Ms. Christine Hogan: I think for every investment we make, particularly in the area of international development—and I used to work at the Canadian International Development Agency—there are very clear accountabilities around those dollars, and that information is available. Maybe there are things we can do to better tell that story and explain it to you so we can—

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: So it is the responsibility of the Department of Environment. Okay.

In the supplementary estimates (C), there are funds for government advertising programs.

On that point, something came to mind when my colleague spoke about electric cars. We know that the makers are spending billions of dollars on advertising. Because people respond to advertising, Ford F-150s and Dodge RAMs, among others, are selling well. This is actually a critical situation for the environment. Back to the subject now.

Regarding advertising, there is spending on page 1-23 of the supplementary estimates (C) to raise public awareness, but why is the Department of Environment not involved in these communication initiatives? That spending totals \$19 million, but there is nothing for the Department of Environment.

I could draw another parallel. When we wanted people to stop smoking, billions of dollars were invested by governments to explain the harms and persuade the public. So it seems to me that the Department of the Environment should also get its share of the advertising budget.

The Chair: There are 30 seconds left. I don't know who wants to answer.

Actually, is that a question or a comment, Ms. Pauzé?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: It was simply to say that I want the department to have money for advertising.

The Chair: I understand.

Who wants to respond to that?

[English]

Ms. Christine Hogan: I'm happy to respond. That is part of our supplementary estimates this time.

One of the things I would highlight is that in the mandate letter of Minister Guilbeault, there's actually a really important reference to enhancing communications with Canadians, particularly around the climate issue. We are working very hard on elaborating on a much more robust approach to communications, advertising, outreach and engagement with Canadians.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you.

Ms. Collins, go ahead for six minutes, please.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

The department is requesting an additional \$1.3 million and proposing to transfer \$2.5 million to the Department of Natural Resources for the terrestrial cumulative effects initiative, which is open to indigenous groups on the 2019 Trans Mountain expansion project's consultation list, and to additional indigenous communities consulted for the 2021 NOVA Gas project.

Will this funding support capacity building within indigenous communities for cumulative effects monitoring, and will the project's mitigation measures be adapted if cumulative effects monitoring data reveals increasing negative environmental effects?

Ms. Christine Hogan: I may refer this to John Moffet, but what I can say off the top is that this is a very important part of Environment Canada's—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Could you respond to this question in writing to the committee?

Ms. Christine Hogan: I could if you like. The work we do on cumulative effects related to these projects is a really core part of Environment Canada's contribution to the science and to the health and safety issues around these projects.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you so much. I just want to get an answer as to whether, if the data shows these cumulative effects are increasing, it will be changed.

Oh, Mr. Moffet is online. I'm so sorry.

• (1240)

Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): I could answer very briefly, if you want.

Ms. Laurel Hogan: Yes, please.

Mr. John Moffet: The answer is yes, the funding is absolutely focused on capacity development, and, yes, the program is designed to be adaptive so that it evolves over time based on the data input.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you so much.

I'm sorry, Mr. Moffet. I didn't realize you were there online.

I'm also particularly interested in the horizontal initiative funding for wildfire and flood preparedness and response capacity, given the climate fires in B.C. and the devastating flooding this past fall. What specific preparedness and response activities are being funded, and how is that money being distributed across the country?

Mr. Andrew Campbell: In supplementary estimates (C), there was the additional \$7.5 million, as I said when the minister was here, to wildfire protection. A great amount of that wildfire protection goes toward, as I said, the reduction of fuels, but also toward the type of modelling work that goes on across the country.

Parks Canada is the federal organization that has actual firefighters on the ground, and we take that expertise all around the world as well. We were in the California fires and down in the Australian fires. That's a big piece of the work and the science work that we do.

I don't know whether Darlene wants to add anything.

Ms. Laurel Collins: My next question is about the climate lens initiative. What are the anticipated activities that will be funded through the approximately \$1.9 million allocated to this?

Ms. Christine Hogan: The climate lens is actually a really interesting new area for us. What we're starting out on with these initial resources is piloting the work across several departments to try to better embed both mitigation and climate adaptation considerations as proposals and policies are being developed across those departments.

It's very much a work in progress. We're in that pilot stage. We'll see how things progress over the course of the coming year or two and figure out how to institutionalize it more fully.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Okay.

The department is requesting a total of \$9.8 million in funding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation and methane waste sectors.

Given the environment commissioner's recent report on the emissions reduction fund, which wasn't actually designed to reduce emissions, necessarily, but amounted to a subsidy for fossil fuel producers and didn't actually follow key greenhouse gas accounting principles—forgive me for being a bit skeptical about this—how will the government ensure credible and sustainable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of this \$9.8 million in funding?

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

On the waste and transportation—the minister referred to that in an earlier question—particularly on the waste in landfill, this is a major challenge in terms of Canada's methane emissions. The goal here is twofold. One is to increase the number of landfills that are collecting and treating their methane, and the second is around ensuring that existing landfill operations are meeting systematic requirements.

We've been consulting with Canadians on those new regulations. There's a discussion paper out right now, I believe, that John Moffet's team is working on and, similarly, there's the regulatory work that goes on related to the transportation sector that was referenced earlier.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Last, just very quickly, the peer review with Argentina on fossil fuel subsidies is years behind schedule. Do you have a date? When do we expect to see that review complete?

Ms. Christine Hogan: I'm going to ask my colleague Hilary Geller if maybe she has an update. I think our own timeline around 2023 obviously creates some importance of completing that work.

I'll turn to Hilary.

The Chair: We have 20 seconds, please.

Ms. Hilary Geller (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you.

I'll just note that Finance Canada is leading the peer review with Argentina. The first step is a self-review report that gets submitted for peer review, and then there's the peer review itself. My understanding is that the self-review report is on track to be finalized towards the end of the year.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go now to the five-minute round, starting with Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Good afternoon. Thanks for coming out.

Since I represent rural Canadians, I'm going to talk about rural Canada. In today's PBO report, there was I guess a lot of speculation. We know that rural Canadians pay a disproportionate amount of carbon tax, basically, but the government always comes back to us and says, "Well, here, you're getting 10% more than any other Canadian because you live in rural Canada." I just want to know how that tax, the 10%, was calculated for rural Canada.

• (1245)

Ms. Christine Hogan: Thank you.

These are very important questions, and I think we've worked hard, both we and the Department of Finance, to ensure these questions of rural Canadians, farmers and a number of northern communities are all factored into our work.

John Moffet leads our team on carbon pricing—the carbon markets bureau—and does a lot of the collaborative work with the Department of Finance. I'm going to ask that maybe John respond.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I'll ask John, then.

Was there a study done to come to the 10% number?

Mr. John Moffet: The 10% was not based on a study.

There are a couple of points. First, the PBO report continues to confirm that the average Canadian who receives—

Mr. Dan Mazier: That's average, not rural. Rural is my point.

The answer is that no study was done on the 10%, then.

Mr. John Moffet: No, the 10% is a top-up to what other Canadians receive.

We've done studies on the impact of carbon pricing in the territories. We commissioned a study on the impact of carbon pricing in indigenous communities and the RIAS that we prepared—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Where's rural? Because I just—

Mr. John Moffet: I'm trying to answer your question, sir. The RIAS—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Well, I have other questions here, so that's okay. There's no study.

An associate deputy minister from the Department of Finance testified at this committee on this matter. He stated, "It is not based on any scientific assessment."

Is this true? Was there a scientific assessment done, yes or no?

Mr. John Moffet: No, not to determine the 10%.

Mr. Dan Mazier: There was no scientific study done.

Mr. John Moffet: That's correct.

The RIAS we did for the output-based pricing does include an analysis of impacts on rural Canadians.

Mr. Dan Mazier: There was no assessment. Okay.

I notice there's a line item for funding from Agriculture to support the greening growth in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

What was that money used for?

Ms. Linda Drainville (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Finance Branch, Department of the Environment): Thank you for your question.

We are working in collaboration with Agriculture Canada. We are doing work with them to ensure that we have a good understanding of the impacts of some of the work they are doing from an environmental perspective. Through an agreement we have in place with them—

Mr. Dan Mazier: What's the wanted outcome of spending that money, for agriculture?

Ms. Linda Drainville: I'll turn to my colleague who is responsible for the program.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I have more questions, so if you could table that, that would be good. What's the purpose of spending that money for agriculture and what is the expected outcome?

I want to continue on to talk about the climate action incentive fund, specifically with the MUSH retrofit stream. MUSH stands for municipal, universities, schools and hospitals. How much money from this stream has been returned to municipalities or hospitals in Manitoba?

Ms. Christine Hogan: Climate programs are led out of our climate change branch, so Douglas Nevison, who's our ADM there, can maybe respond to how the CAIF looks from a Manitoba point of view.

Mr. Douglas Nevison (Assistant Deputy Minister, Climate Change Branch, Department of the Environment): Yes, thank you very much, Deputy.

Not breaking down the money that's flowed at this point, of the CAIF money for 2019-20, \$60 million has flowed to the MUSH sector across the four backstop provinces. We could certainly provide you with the—

Mr. Dan Mazier: They've only announced \$5 million. Why haven't they announced the whole \$60 million? What's the holdup? You seem to be taxing quite nicely.

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please, because we have to go on to Mr. Weiler.

Mr. Douglas Nevison: As you noted, in the report that just came out this week, the Manitoba-committed funding was \$5.4 million as of March 31, 2021.

The money is still flowing. It's a specification from the 2019-20 fuel charge. I would just make the point that all money collected and attributed to CAIF will eventually flow to the provinces.

The Chair: Mr. Weiler, go ahead.

• (1250)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At this point, I'd like to move a motion that was circulated about three hours ago. This is based on the routine motions that we talked about in our last committee meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Weiler, could we do it at the end? We're not in committee business at the moment.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Okay, we'll do it at the end. Scratch that.

I'd like to ask a question.

In the supplementaries, there are \$3.2 million to support wildfire and flood resilience. It would help produce flood plain data and maps for communities across Canada that are most at risk of flooding. Of course, this is top of mind in my province of B.C., given the events of last year.

I was hoping we could get an update on this funding and how it factors into the national adaptation strategy that we've committed to putting out before the end of this year.

Ms. Christine Hogan: The first point is that this work links very directly to the work we're doing related to a national adaptation strategy. This is building that capability and capacity to better understand what is happening out there in the world, so the flood mapping work has been ongoing for a number of years, with NR-Can, Public Safety and Parks Canada. This is a major part of that equation.

I expect that, as the national adaptation strategy takes shape over the course of the year and the consultations continue, along with the very deep engagements that we're doing, we're going to hear more about what more needs to happen in Canada to make sure that preparedness is a very large part of our resilience planning going forward, given the change in climate we are all living with.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: As part of this national adaptation strategy, I mentioned flooding and wildfires, but I'm wondering what other natural disasters... What other impacts of climate change are being modelled as part of this strategy? Are there opportunities for the individual Canadian to be able to participate in part of these consultations?

Ms. Christine Hogan: I'm going to ask Doug Nevison to reply again. His team is leading the work.

There are absolutely a lot of opportunities for Canadians to engage. We are working extremely closely with provinces, territories and, importantly, with indigenous partners—Métis, first nations, Inuit—on the development of the strategy, but we also really need to hear from Canadians. There will be a lot of opportunities for that, and we will be committed to facilitating it.

Doug, do you want to comment on anything else related to adaptation?

Mr. Douglas Nevison: I will, Deputy, just to add that the next phase of the engagement process for the national adaptation strategy will be starting in the next few weeks. The key element of that is that there have been a lot of consultations—as the deputy mentioned—with provinces, territories, national indigenous partners, municipalities and business.

The next phase of the engagement process will be with interested Canadians. It will be a public engagement process to help develop the national adaptation strategy, which we hope to have developed for the fall of this year.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you.

I want to pick up on a line of questioning that MP Collins brought up earlier about the funding in the Department of Environment to look at terrestrial cumulative effects. Last year, there was a seminal court case decided in B.C. with the Blueberry River First Nations that looked at the cumulative impacts of oil and gas development within the traditional territory as being such that it impacted their treaty rights.

Is this a case that has been analyzed and incorporated into the work of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada? How is this going to change the way cumulative effects are assessed with respect to projects on first nations traditional territory?

The Chair: Answer very briefly please. You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Terence Hubbard: It certainly was a very important court decision. The Impact Assessment Agency is working with federal partners, discussing with the Province of B.C. and working with our colleagues at Justice to review the outcomes of the decision. We're working very closely with the province to look at their action plan to respond to the court judgment. We are looking at how we can better assess cumulative impacts in our project assessments as part of the Impact Assessment Act, as well as looking at the tools available to us to address the issues we can't address on a project-specific basis.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to go to Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

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

I have two minutes and I am going to ask two questions.

The analysts prepared a document for us that contains essential facts. As an aside, I would like to thank them for that. From what is shown in the document, the Impact Assessment Act moves us to a methodology that takes the environmental, economic, social and health factors of a project, both positive and negative, into consideration.

Doing an assessment takes time. Sometimes, when you get to the end of the process, some things may have changed.

Could the Agency consider putting a team in place to update knowledge, to take into account new knowledge that comes up during the assessment process?

Mr. Terence Hubbard: We are still in the early days of implementing the new Impact Assessment Act. So we don't have a lot of experience when it comes to the process as a whole, from start to finish.

Of course, it will be important to rely on the best available scientific data to support the decisions made by the Minister or the government in this process.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I recommend it because it seems to me that it would be worthwhile for the Agency's operation. It would harmonize with the Agency's proposals and mandate and would significantly enhance its mission.

My next question deals with the climate lens initiative the Minister referred to earlier. He said it took climate, economic and social considerations into account in government decision-making.

What activities is funding planned for with the \$1.8 million provided for this initiative, in the horizontal items?

[*English*]

The Chair: Please answer very briefly, because I'm told we have a hard stop at one o'clock. I didn't know that was the case.

Ms. Christine Hogan: It's an excellent question.

The climate lens resources here are to stand up a centre of excellence, build capability and capacity, and launch this pilot initiative. When you talk about social, economic, and environmental considerations being embedded more into the decision-making processes of departments—ultimately cabinet decision-making, budgetary choices and decisions—the climate lens will create some discipline for departments to do that work in a more systematic way.

The Chair: Ms. Collins, I'm sorry. I didn't know that we would have a hard stop. I thought we could go over 10 minutes, but I'm being told by House resources....

Can you be very brief, Ms. Collins?

Ms. Laurel Collins: The minister mentioned that in reference to the clean fuel standard, we must ensure our methodologies are solid.

Why isn't the government designing a standard that is in alignment with clean fuel standards in Europe, California, and British Columbia?

Ms. Christine Hogan: Mr. Moffet.

Mr. John Moffet: The clean fuel standard is very much inspired by and based on the clean fuel standards that have been developed in other jurisdictions. We have developed a refined life-cycle analysis tool that is specific to Canadian circumstances and that is based on best practices globally.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I have one last question.

The UVic Environmental Law Centre has submitted a response to the proposed draft regulations on single-use plastics. It has a handful of key recommendations, including expanding the narrow definitions of single-use plastics away from durability requirements toward their intended use, expanding the scope of the ban on food service materials to include phthalates and perfluoroalkyl substances, and ending the export exemption.

Is the government going in this direction?

The Chair: Please answer briefly, because we have to stop.

• (1300)

Ms. Christine Hogan: I'll go back to John Moffet, whose team is leading this regulatory development.

Mr. John Moffet: The current regulations are intended as an initial step, so we are looking very closely at the recommendations from the University of Victoria and others about ways in which the regulatory regime for single-use plastics should be expanded in the future.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate your accommodating the last-minute news that we have to stop at 1:00 because there's an event at 1:15.

Thank you to the witnesses. It was very informative and very interesting. We look forward to seeing you, hopefully shortly, when we do the main estimates, maybe in the next couple of weeks. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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