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• (1135)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): We are ready to begin the meeting.

I think Mr. Deltell wants to say something.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Chair, pursuant to the Standing Orders, I would like to move a motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. I have Mr. Deltell, Mr. Mazier and Mr. van Koevorden.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Pursuant to the Standing Orders, I will move the following motion, which was made public within the prescribed time frame.

Given that:

- (a) the Chiefs of Ontario, which represents 133 First Nations, have filed a judicial review in Federal Court on the Liberal government's carbon tax;
- (b) the Chiefs of Ontario stated that the Liberal government "refused to negotiate with First Nations in Ontario to alleviate the discriminatory and anti-reconciliatory application of the Greenhouse Gas and Pollution Act on First Nations.";
- (c) the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations has publicly expressed her willingness to support the Chiefs of Ontario's judicial review application against the Liberal government's carbon tax;
- (d) the Chiefs of Ontario have noted that Indigenous communities would face greater challenges in switching to lower emitting technologies;
- (e) Grand Chief Abram Benedict of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne stated that "The government has boasted that Canadians will pay a carbon tax, but through the rebates, through the subsidies they will actually receive more than what they have paid. That doesn't ring true in First Nations communities";
- (f) Grand Chief Benedict stated that "This judicial review was completely avoidable if Canada only showed up to the table," and stated that "I sincerely hope that Canada gets the message that reconciliation and collaboration are non-negotiable, and policy made about us without us is never acceptable. Show up and work with us so we can come up with solutions that make sense.";
- (g) Canada's Environment Commissioner and Parliamentary Budget Officer acknowledge that the carbon tax disproportionately punishes Canadians who live in rural, remote, and northern regions.

The committee report to the House its disappointment in the Liberal government's failure to engage with First Nations on providing financial relief from the carbon tax; and pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a) the committee invite Grand Chief Abram Benedict and the Chiefs of Ontario to testify for no less than two hours by February 2, 2024, on their judicial review filing on the federal carbon tax.

No relationship is more important than the one the Canadian government and first nations must have. Who has said that, multi-

ple times, over the last eight years? It was the current Liberal Prime Minister. This is not the first time that first nations and the federal authority have had differences of opinion. This is not the first time that first nations have gone to court to assert their rights and to be heard.

In my opinion, this case is unprecedented. It is unprecedented to see more than 100 first nations chiefs come together to talk about a situation that is contrary to the spirit that the current government is supposedly espousing.

I would like to remind you that, in his first important speech, on December 8, 2015, here in Ottawa, before the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly, the Prime Minister said:

It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations Peoples.

One that understands that the constitutionally guaranteed rights of First Nations in Canada are not an inconvenience but rather a sacred obligation.

I wasn't the one who said that; it was the current Prime Minister. I could go on for a long time, as everything the Prime Minister has said flies in the face of why first nations in Ontario are now taking legal action. It goes without saying, from our perspective, that when first nations have something to claim, we have to pay attention to it. In particular, when such a large group initiates legal action, it is our supreme duty to ensure that they get the attention they deserve.

After eight years of Liberal government and multiple unfulfilled commitments, it is time for accountability.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deltell.

Mr. Mazier, you have the floor.

[*English*]

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

Thank you to my colleague for introducing this important motion.

This is a very serious matter. First nations are challenging the Prime Minister's carbon tax in Federal Court because the Liberal government refused to listen to their concerns. First nations are opposing the carbon tax because it's unaffordable. That's the truth. The Liberals are proud of their carbon tax. They pretend it's working and affordable when it's not.

If the Liberals refuse to listen to my concerns about the carbon tax, maybe they will have the decency to listen to the chiefs of Ontario. Grand Chief Benedict has stated, "Canada should be working with us to confront the climate crisis and close gaps on reserve instead of creating policy in an ivory tower that exacerbates the affordability issues our citizens face". Those are the words of the grand chief, not mine.

Last week, the Conservatives introduced a motion to hear the carbon tax concerns of first nations, but the Liberals abruptly shut down debate. I wonder what the chiefs of Ontario and Grand Chief Benedict think. Here's the reality: The Liberals don't want to hear from the first nations that oppose the carbon tax. They don't want to hear from the first nations that challenge the carbon tax in court, and they don't want to hear from the first nations that expose how costly their carbon tax is.

The people in rural, remote and northern regions can no longer afford this Liberal government's carbon tax.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Koeverden.

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

Disappointingly, the Conservatives continue to perpetuate the myth that affordability challenges and inflation are being driven by carbon pricing. On this side, we're always more than happy to meet with first nations, as we do regularly. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and the Minister of Indigenous Services have said this in the House of Commons and in the media. We would be happy to listen to their concerns here.

However, I think it's important to say, in the context of this meeting, being a public one, that the Conservatives continue to, once again, perpetuate the myth that pricing carbon—with a very similar plan to what they ran their last electoral campaign on—is driving inflation and affordability. Those are categorically false claims, Mr. Chair. It's been refuted by all economists across the country. There is not one economist in this country who is pointing to carbon pricing as a leading driver of inflation or food costs.

Now, the Conservatives were waiting for the food cost report to come out this week, and it did. It pointed to two factors, primarily, that were driving food costs. Number one is climate change, not carbon pricing. We ought not to get those two things confused. The second is the labour market. It's challenging out there. There is a labour shortage in Canada, the United States and elsewhere. Nowhere in that document did they point to carbon pricing, pollution pricing or carbon tax.

More recently, in a University of Calgary report that was then picked up by the CBC, Policy Options and lots of other publica-

tions, the results are unequivocally clear. This is not something you can have an opinion on. It's math. It's like climate change. You can't choose to believe in it or not. It's simple. It's actually not simple math. It's complicated math, but it's math that economists are very capable of doing. They have measured the impact of carbon pricing on groceries in Canada and, for a family of four in Ontario, it's less than \$1 a month. There was a good article in the CBC this past week on the impact of removing the carbon tax in Ontario and what that would do. The results are out. It would cost your average Ontario family of four \$300 per year. They get a rebate four times a year of almost \$1,000, and that far exceeds any costs they incur from carbon pricing.

Mr. Chair, any reputable plan to fight climate change and lower our emissions includes a plan to price carbon. Those are not my words. Those are the words of Michael Chong, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, in his leadership campaign; Erin O'Toole, the former leader of the Conservative Party; and Preston Manning, the former leader of the Reform Party. Carbon pricing works to lower emissions.

Only a few weeks ago, we had the commissioner of the environment here stating clearly, for all members and everybody watching, that Canada's emissions were on the rise in 2015. Since then, we've seen that blunted and turned around. Canada's emissions are now decreasing in every sector, with the exception of the oil and gas sector, where they continue to rise. The most important part of their presentation was when they clearly stated that one-third of the emissions decrease we've seen since 2015 can be attributed to carbon pricing.

Mr. Chair, again, on this side, we would be more than happy to continue to listen to first nation leaders. However, in the context of this motion today, I would once again move to adjourn.

• (1145)

The Chair: There is a motion to adjourn the debate.

It's a dilatory motion. There's no debate.

Will the clerk kindly take the vote, please?

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: I have Mr. van Koeverden, and then Mr. Mazier.

Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to re-raise my motion from Thursday, December 7.

Given that:

- a) The federal government is making monumental investments in technologies that will reduce emissions in the oil and gas sector;
- b) Canadians deserve to have certainty that these investments will result in significant emission reductions;

c) Capping and reducing emissions from the oil and gas sector is necessary to meet our 2030 emission reduction goals and avert the worst impacts of climate change; and

d) Reducing emissions in the oil and gas sector has the potential to create high quality, sustainable jobs.

The committee express its collective support for the government's proposal to amend the Federal Methane Regulations for the Oil and Gas Sector to require a reduction of methane emissions in the upstream oil and gas sector by at least 75 per cent below 2012 levels by 2030; and b) introduce a regulatory framework document on the proposed approach and stringency of a cap on greenhouse gas pollution from the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Chair, in the context of COP28 ending in the coming hours, I think this is a pertinent motion for this committee to discuss today.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I have a point of order.

The Chair: You wanted to be on the speakers list too, right, or is this a point of order?

Mr. Dan Mazier: This is a point of order.

The Chair: Do you want me to keep you on the list?

Mr. Dan Mazier: No.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: On a point of order, this needs to be brought forward as a motion to resume debate.

He didn't do that, so it's out of order.

• (1150)

The Chair: We will pause for a second.

Mr. Mazier raised a point of order. I have consulted with the clerk. Indeed, it would have required a dilatory motion to resume debate, and that wasn't done.

Mr. van Koeverden has a question for me, which I would like to hear.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Did we need a dilatory motion on the previous...?

The Chair: It was needed to resume debate, because your debate had been adjourned.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: We adjourned debate, and then I retabled my motion.

The Chair: You need a motion to resume the debate.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: But we didn't resume debate on anything.

The Chair: Well, that's what you're basically trying to do.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I reintroduced the motion from Thursday.

The Chair: I have to sort this out. We will have another little break here.

I'm sorry, but apparently it's a new motion. It's not resuming debate.

I apologize, Mr. van Koeverden. There was a bit of misunderstanding.

Mr. Leslie.

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): As a point of clarification, when can you ask for the floor to be at the top of the speakers list? Does it matter if it's during a vote or not?

What do the Standing Orders say on when you can request to be at the top of the speakers list?

The Chair: Are you saying that Mr. van Koeverden doesn't have a right to speak on this? Why?

Mr. Branden Leslie: He asked you to be on the speakers list right after we voted. In the middle of the vote being called by the clerk, he asked to be on the speakers list.

My question is whether that is allowed in the Standing Orders, or does it need to be at the conclusion of the vote before you can add yourself to the speakers list?

The Chair: That's a good question. I don't have the answer. We will take another pause.

It doesn't really matter when the person wants to put their hand up to get on the list. I don't see that as an issue. It doesn't matter who raises their hand and when; I'm going to put them on the list.

I have Longfield, Taylor Roy, Chatel, and Madame Puzé is before all of you.

Is there anyone else?

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. van Koeverden, you can continue.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. van Koeverden. We have a point of order from Mr. Leslie.

[*English*]

Mr. Branden Leslie: This is just another point of clarification.

Is this the same motion that was raised?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Branden Leslie: Is it a different motion? I noted that the member said he was going to “re-raise” the motion, so I'm confused as to whether it's the same text or it's different.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: It was a notice of motion, which is different from raising it.

I made a notice of motion and circulated it so that I could bring it up today.

Mr. Branden Leslie: You said “re-raise”.

The Chair: It's a different one. It's not the same one that we had adjourned debate on.

He doesn't need to give notice. He did give notice, but he doesn't need to give notice, because it's future business—which, by the way, is not in camera.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

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

In the context of COP28 coming to a conclusion in the coming hours, I think it's important that we discuss some of the resolutions and some of the progress we have made as a country and as an international community.

I know the Conservatives are eager to discuss their—

Mr. Dan Mazier: I have a point of order.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. van Koeverden. We have a point of order.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I don't know when we're going to flip to the witnesses. Is this going to cut into the witness time?

The Chair: We have until 1:30 today. I'd like to give the witnesses an hour. I think we can go until 12:30 and then have the witnesses until 1:30. It depends on how quickly we get through all of this business.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the context of the Conservatives' only plan to address affordability, I did want to raise, once again, that the economic analysis of Canada's backstop carbon pricing system indicates that if the carbon tax were removed immediately, it would cost all lower-income and middle-income families \$300 in 2024.

This affordability plan that the Conservatives are peddling, and have been for the last couple of years, would cost Canadians hundreds of dollars a year. It's no affordability plan. I would urge the Conservatives to bring forward some legitimate evidence that their “axe the tax” strategy would actually help Canadians, because every economist in Canada is telling them, clearly, that it would cost them hundreds of dollars a year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is there another point of order?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Chair, can we have a copy of this motion?

The Chair: It was sent around on the seventh, but we can send it around again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauzé, go ahead.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): With regard to Mr. van Koeverden's motion, I would like to propose a friendly amendment to point a). After the word “that”, I suggest adding “, with the expected scientific advances,”. The sentence would then read as follows:

a) The federal government is making monumental investments in technologies that, with the expected scientific advances, will reduce emissions in the oil and gas sector;

Here is the reason I am proposing this amendment. From everything I've been able to read on carbon capture and storage, no

one—except, perhaps, the oil companies—and no scientists are saying that this method will be effective, that it is a clear solution, that it is imminent. There is indeed a lot of investment in these technologies, but we do not yet know whether this method will be effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But that's why—

The Chair: Could you read your amendment again?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes, of course.

The motion would read as follows:

a) The federal government is making monumental investments in technologies that, with the expected scientific advances, will reduce emissions in the oil and gas sector;

I am moving this amendment because we are really not sure that this technology will be used.

The Chair: I understand.

Mr. van Koeverden, do you accept this friendly amendment to your motion?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Yes, I thank the member for that friendly amendment.

The Chair: We'll move on.

Mr. Longfield, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to Mr. van Koeverden for putting this very important motion in front of us.

Canada took a lead position on methane reduction at COP. I'm going to go on a converse argument that if we don't study this in our committee after our country has taken a lead position and we're the environment committee for Canada, we would be doing a disservice not only to Canadians but also to the other participants at COP.

I think this motion would give the oil and gas sector a chance to talk about what they are doing to reduce emissions. They are working on that. They were at COP, and they presented what they are doing to try to get to net zero. I think that's an important part of the discussion as well. So far, we've heard a lot of.... In fact, we've seen fewer results coming from the oil and gas sector, which, as Mr. van Koeverden said, is the reason we're not getting to the speed that we need to get to in terms of reductions overall. We need to hear from them what they're going to do, given the fact that we are putting a cap on methane to set a standard for them to follow. I think it's important for our committee to dive into that.

On the food report Mr. van Koeverden referenced, the University of Guelph was quite involved with the food report. It did show that 0.3% of the increase in food pricing was coming from the price on pollution.

The price on pollution is really what is driving us. In terms of methane reduction, the contribution of pollution from methane is significant and needs to be curtailed.

If we could get the work of the oil and gas sector onto the table to talk about why it hasn't been able to achieve the goals we've set out and how this might help it through our regulations and through the cap that we're introducing, that could maybe get us all on the same page to get out of the climate crisis we're in right now.

I would be supporting the motion. I really look forward to it as priority motion for us to study at the committee.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Longfield.

I give the floor to Ms. Taylor Roy.

Mr. Mazier, do you have a point of order?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Once this is all done, I would like to have a chance to speak.

The Chair: Okay, so you want to be on the list.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I would like to speak after this motion is done.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Chair, could I ask for a point of clarification?

Is this a study motion? The member kept referencing this.

The Chair: I'll ask the member.

Mr. van Koeverden, is this calling for a study?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: No. This is very clearly calling for us to acknowledge the work that's being done, but my colleague Mr. Longfield indicated that it's something he would enjoy studying.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I guess that answers your question, Mr. Leslie.

Go ahead, Ms. Taylor Roy.

[*English*]

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

I would also like to speak in favour of this motion.

It's clear that there's a lack of understanding about the severity of the climate crisis facing us, currently. There seems to be a lot of disinformation and controversy about actions to reduce emissions and protect our environment, and about the impact they have. I think this study could help us clarify a lot of that confusion, perhaps, and set out the disastrous impacts of continuing to allow emissions, especially from the oil and gas sector, which is the only sector that continues to increase its emissions. What is it doing to our country and our planet?

It's not only about the CO2 side—capping those emissions—but also about the very important new commitment we made to reduce methane emissions by 75%. As I'm sure everyone knows, methane emissions are four times more powerful than carbon, in terms of their impact on greenhouse gases.

• (1205)

The Chair: It's more.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Is it more than four? Okay. I was told that it's at least four.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: It's 70.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Is it 70 times more? Wow, I didn't realize that. Thank you for the correction.

Obviously, they have an incredible impact on the environment and the rise in temperatures.

I think understanding what's happening a little better will, perhaps, help us understand why we need to meet these challenges, because it is difficult to meet the challenges. We have to change. We have to change our behaviour. We have to shift our economy. We have to make difficult changes. There's a very existential reason why we are doing this. Just because something is difficult, that doesn't mean we should back away from it. Doing the same thing over and over again, and sticking to the old way of doing things because we're afraid of change or it might be difficult... Canada is an incredibly innovative country. We have incredible people who work in our energy sector and universities. We have a lot of knowledge about how we can transition to greener energy production and therefore a greener economy.

I think these kinds of programs we're putting in place—the price on pollution, which includes the carbon tax; the climate action incentive rebate, which addresses affordability; the investments in technology we're making so we can meet these goals—are very important. This is how Canada will face the challenge. This is how we will move forward and protect the next seven generations. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians, and especially as members of the environment committee, to look at these challenges, assess what we're doing, ensure we are taking sufficient action, and help Canadians face these challenges through the monumental investments in technology we're making.

Therefore, I think this study is needed. It's needed right now, because we can no longer afford to debate whether we need to make changes. We need to embrace the change, and we need to confront the challenges and the difficult task of making this transition. Also, we need all Canadians behind it. We all need to let go of holding on to the past and the disinformation out there, and embrace the change we need to make.

Mr. Chair, I would highly recommend that we undertake this study as soon as we can. I think it's very important to our future as a country and a planet, and to the work of this committee.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Taylor Roy.

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, first of all, I want to mention that this is the second time that the government members have refused to debate our motion on first nations. That's very unfortunate. If we need to have respect in—

The Chair: Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: No, that was my introduction, not a point of order. I wanted to participate in that debate.

The Chair: I'll put you on the list, then. I'm sorry, I thought it was a point of order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'm sorry, but no. I don't think I said that, either.

The Chair: We'll continue, then, with Mrs. Chatel.

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

I thank my colleague for moving this important motion. Indeed, if we want to reach our greenhouse gas reduction target by 2035 and get as close as possible to net zero by 2050, it is absolutely essential that we deal with the oil and gas sector.

It is important to note that this regulatory framework includes a consultation period as part of the next steps. In fact, the regulatory framework for capping greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector proposes different discussions. If we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a good pace, we will have to rely on the participation of all stakeholders, not only the environmental community, but also the industrial community and the oil and gas sector.

I don't know what your thoughts on this are, but we are at a crossroads right now, and we absolutely have to work together. Imagine what our children and grandchildren will tell us if global warming ever approaches 2°C: They will look us in the eye and ask where we were and what we were doing when it was time to act. I am thinking of my colleague Mr. Leslie, who will soon be a dad. What will he say to his children?

That's why it's important to recognize the challenges we face in Canada in meeting our 2050 targets. The oil and gas sector has seen its greenhouse gas emissions increase, so I think we need to redouble our efforts for our children and grandchildren. There will be no other opportunity to act. Now is the time to do it. That is why I wholeheartedly support this motion, even though we will not be studying the regulatory framework right away, since we are doing a study on water, which is just as important. I'm very much looking forward to seeing progress in that sector. Reducing methane emissions from this sector and capping its greenhouse gas emissions are two very important initiatives.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: The Bloc Québécois will also vote in favour of this motion, but I will not do so wholeheartedly, unlike Mrs. Chatel. First, what the minister presented last week does not

reflect the climate emergency in which we find ourselves and all the extreme weather events that are going to cost more and more.

We agree on that, but what has been presented is not very ambitious. We're talking about a regulatory framework that would be planned for the spring of 2024, I believe, and, most importantly, there won't be a cap until 2026, whereas it's been expected since 2021. That's very late. When we talk about urgency, to me that means we have to act immediately.

We will still vote in favour of the motion because these are two policies that we support—on methane and on the emissions cap. However, what was presented rather reflects the pressure exerted by lobbyists. In fact, Mr. Boissonnault admitted that it was done that way.

So I am going to vote in favour of this motion, but only reluctantly.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am substituting here in the environment committee, and it is a great privilege. I was hoping we would be talking about fresh water, but I have to weigh in on this. The NDP will be supporting this motion.

On the first Environment Day in the 1970s, when I was a student, I and six of my friends blocked traffic with our bicycles. We learned two important lessons that day. The first was not to be too quick to pat ourselves on the back about the effectiveness of our actions—and I'll come back to that in a moment. The second was that it's really necessary to bring others along, to get buy-in—not to create anger or fear, but to create understanding of the issues and how we can move forward if we work together.

We're facing, really, an existential crisis on this planet, and it's necessary to bring people along. That's why I'm very upset with the Conservatives' so-called "axe the tax" movement, because it deliberately creates anger in the face of a real threat to our livelihoods and to our future when there is no threat to individual humans or individual families from the carbon tax. In fact, we know that the studies show that, apart from the very wealthiest in this country, most people will be harmed by eliminating the carbon tax, because it is a revenue-neutral measure. That debate spirals us away from what we need to be talking with the public about, and that is how we are a rich and privileged country and how, if we work together, we can meet the challenges we face. However, we can't do that if we focus on anger and division, so it's very disappointing to have what I will politely describe as this obsession with the carbon tax and the misinformation around it continually coming back through the House of Commons.

I want to go back to the first lesson, and that was that we can't be too quick to pat ourselves on the back. Like Madame Pauzé, I'll be supporting this motion, but I don't think that even this motion represents the urgency of the crisis we are facing. There's much more that we have to do. It's important to acknowledge progress, and that's why we'll be supporting this motion—because there is progress. At the same time, it's also important to recognize how much more there is to do and that we know what we need to do and we have the skills, ability and science to do those things. What we need to do is build public support for the country-wide movement we need to meet this climate crisis.

I don't think anybody else here is from British Columbia. I was present in Kelowna during the fires this summer. When people talk about the costs of the carbon tax, let's talk about the costs to families that lost their homes; let's talk about the cost to small business people who lost their businesses; let's talk about the health costs of the smoke damage to the lungs of the people in Kelowna last summer. These are the real costs of not taking action on climate change.

There's much more that we have to do, but I'm happy to support this motion.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I checked, and I didn't have a point of order earlier. I think that when you see us, you have a certain reflex.

The Chair: I'm at that point.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I say that in a friendly way, of course.

What we're talking about is very important. I want to reiterate that I am really disappointed to see that, for the second time, the government members are refusing to debate the motion concerning first nations.

You will recall that, the other time, we introduced it when there were witnesses. My Liberal colleague was angry about that situation, he felt that it made no sense—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: May I raise a point of order, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, Mrs. Chatel.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Are we debating Mr. Deltell's motion?

The Chair: No, we're debating Mr. van Koeverden's motion. Mr. Deltell is on the list. He will be followed by Mr. Leslie and Mr. Kram.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: For the third time, I want to say that I'm really disappointed that the government members refused to have a debate on the first nations issue. They are the ones who, for the past eight years, have been lecturing everyone about the relationships we must have—

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Will I have to repeat it a fourth time?

The Chair: One moment, please.

We have a point of order from Mr. van Koeverden and a point of order from Mrs. Chatel.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to point out, respectfully, that both at the beginning of my intervention regarding the motion brought by the Conservatives and at the end of my motion regarding that same motion, I said that I would be more than happy to meet with first nations leaders, but bringing a motion forward at this stage, on our second-last—

The Chair: I don't really think that's a point of order.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: —meeting before the break—

The Chair: I don't think it's a point of order.

I'll hear Madame Chatel's point of order, and then I have Ms. Taylor Roy's point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, my point of order concerns the relevance of Mr. Deltell's comments to the current debate. Can you decide if it's relevant?

The Chair: It may be a bit of a tangent. I hope he will get back to the subject of the motion soon. That seems acceptable to me as an introduction.

Ms. Taylor Roy, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I have the same point of order.

I don't see the relevance of debating this to the motion that's on the table right now.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I understand, but we're talking about a carbon tax.

Mr. Deltell, get back to Mr. van Koeverden's motion as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I don't think it's irrelevant to talk about first nations.

[*Translation*]

I would like to point out that I am following the recommendations made by Mr. van Koeverden a few days ago here in this committee. He said that it is better to debate and discuss motions during committee business, rather than when there are witnesses.

[English]

This is committee business, so this is exactly what we're doing. We had an opportunity to speak about that, and unfortunately, again, for the second time in a row, the Liberals decided to shut down conversation and debate about first nations. That is sad, very sad.

[Translation]

With regard to the motion currently being debated, I would like to remind you that this government has been constantly lecturing everyone on climate change for the past eight years. It keeps wanting to tax people. It keeps talking about ambitious targets, but the results are not there.

Earlier, Mr. Longfield referred to the statement made by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in Dubai at COP28, saying that Canada was the first country to now have a highly directive approach concerning methane. Once again, the government is very proud to say that it has ambitious targets and that Canada is the first country to do that. Canada is indeed first when it comes to speaking, but last when it comes to keeping its promises. That's the reality of the situation.

Yesterday, in the House of Commons, during question period, I asked for the consent of the House to table the 2024 report of the Climate Change Performance Index, which was presented and debated at COP28. I'm very proud to say that I was a virtual participant in that conference, with zero bills and zero greenhouse gas emissions. When I wanted to table this report in the House, the Liberals refused. Worse yet, during question period, when I asked if anyone knew where Canada stood in that ranking, never—

• (1220)

[English]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I have a point of order again, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I don't see it coming to the relevance of this motion—

[Translation]

The Chair: I think Mr. van Koeverden also—

[English]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: We're not talking about the price on pollution in this motion at all.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: No, I am right on target.

[Translation]

The Chair: No, we're talking about—

[English]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: No, this motion here does not talk about the price on pollution, and we're debating this motion.

The motion that's on the table is what we're debating, and the motion does not refer to the price on pollution. You can read it; it's in front of you.

The Chair: It's just that Mr. van Koeverden took some liberties to make some political points, so that's fine.

Mr. Deltell, go ahead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I think we are talking about “amend the Federal Methane Regulations”. That's exactly what I'm talking about.

Mr. Longfield talked about the announcement made by the minister a few days ago at COP28 about the new regulations and the ambitious program that this government has about methane. This is exactly what we're talking about here, so this is why I raised the point.

[Translation]

Why am I bringing this up, Mr. Chair? Yesterday, I asked the House of Commons for permission to table this climate change performance index 2024 report, and my request was denied. I asked the House whether anyone in the government knew where Canada stood in the 2024 rankings. We know that Canada ranked 58th last year. This year, does anyone in the government know? The one person who stood up claimed not to know. How can this government, which is proud to say that it has a delegation of 700 people in Dubai, not know about a document that I managed to find online with our team? Incidentally, we took part in the conference online, and generated zero emissions and zero bills for taxpayers.

We couldn't table this report in the House yesterday. As a result, I want to remind you once again that the Prime Minister's highly ambitious Canada, which always makes big announcements, has now fallen from 58th place last year to 62nd place this year. Once again, this government is constantly making big announcements and lecturing everyone, ready to tax people to fight pollution. However, it's a different story when the time comes to analyze performance.

[English]

On the climate change performance index 2024 rating table, after eight years of this Liberal government, Canada is number 62. It's all rhetoric, all dogmatic and nothing very pragmatic. This is what we are looking at right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, while the Liberals boast and crow about lofty principles, strong announcements and ambitious targets, the outcome is that Canada ranks 62nd, according to this report tabled at COP28. We aren't the ones saying this. The global experts, the people who prepared this UN document for COP28, reached this conclusion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deltell.

I want to point out that we have witnesses here with us. We still have a good ten minutes left. Actually, no, we have about seven minutes left. When those seven minutes are up, I hope that we can change course and give the floor to the witnesses.

Mr. Leslie, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mr. Branden Leslie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will endeavour to keep it under six minutes. I hope, given the precedence you've highlighted with the range of topics as it relates to the specific motion, you will give me much latitude before the onslaught of points of order from my colleagues across the way.

In addition, we seem to debate for a lengthy period of time a study that isn't in this motion. This motion itself is the government trying to pat itself on the back for a policy that gives it a chance to wax poetic about how it wants to change our country and our economy to some sort of, essentially, planned economy. It's going to make all these investments and it's going to choose winners and losers and sectors that it thinks are more appropriate than the jobs that support the communities I represent and the communities that are supported across this country by our natural resource sector.

Now we get the chance to highlight that the first nations across Ontario are bringing forward a lawsuit against the federal government. I will quote from an article, where Grand Chief Abram Benedict said, "The government has boasted that Canadians will pay a carbon tax, but through the rebates, through the subsidies they will actually receive more than what they have paid. That doesn't ring true in First Nations communities". It doesn't ring true in the Northwest Territories, where their premier has just said that this is too costly for northerners. It doesn't ring true in any communities that I represent.

My colleagues across the way may choose to tell people "this is helping you" and "please believe us" and that this must be true, but they don't. If you feel differently, I think we should bring the grand chief here. You should tell him that you think he is being misleading in his lawsuit, as well as the Northwest Territories premier, in saying on behalf of their constituents that the carbon tax is indeed making life simply unaffordable for them.

It's part of a long attack on our natural resource sector with Bill C-50, the so-called "just transition", where we're just going to move jobs around the economy as we see fit because Ottawa must know best. That's not a just transition, but a part of a lengthy approach from this government to try to kill our natural resource sector, and it is unacceptable.

My colleague across the way said we need to debate making changes to our economy and to our society. I look forward to that opportunity, and it will happen in the carbon tax election, where I know Canadians are going to choose to axe the carbon tax instead of quadrupling the carbon tax.

I will say one last thing, because my colleague across the way brought up that I'm expecting a child soon, which is extremely exciting for me, of course. I think we're going to take a somewhat different vision. After that carbon tax election, I'm going to be able to look proudly at my children and grandchildren and say that our future Conservative majority government created prosperity for this country and did our part to solve environmental challenges here and around the world, and I'll be darn proud of it.

• (1225)

The Chair: I'm asking the committee if we could move on to the next order of business. If there's no UC.... Could somebody propose a motion that we adjourn debate?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Chair, can I propose that we vote on this motion?

The Chair: Yes, but can you propose a motion that we adjourn debate?

I want to know if somebody is going to propose that we adjourn debate and go on to—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: We want to vote, and then it's naturally dissolved.

The Chair: We can't vote, because we have Mr. Kram, Mr. Mazier and Ms. Taylor Roy, so we can't just vote on this motion.

I'm asking if anyone wants to propose that we adjourn the debate so that we can move on to our witnesses. Can somebody propose a motion to adjourn the debate?

Unless Mr. Kram, Mr. Mazier and Ms. Taylor Roy want to get off the speaking list....

Mr. Kram and Mr. Mazier, do you still want to be on the speaking list? Yes, okay.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: I move to adjourn debate.

The Chair: We're going to vote on adjourning debate.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Chair, he doesn't have the floor.

I'm next on the speakers list.

The Chair: Okay. I have Mr. Kram, Mr. Mazier and Ms. Taylor Roy.

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

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the motion regarding the Liberal government's recently announced emissions cap and methane reduction regulations.

I would like to read a quote regarding these regulations from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, if I may, which was released on December 7:

Despite the federal government's stated objective that the emission cap should not put a limit on Canadian oil and natural gas production, the unintended consequences of the draft framework announced today of a cap-and-trade system with an interim target of a 35% to 38% emissions reductions below 2019 by 2030 could result in significant curtailments—making this draft framework effectively a cap on production. At a time when the country's citizens are experiencing a substantial affordability crisis, coincident with record budget deficits, the federal government risks curtailing the energy Canadians rely on, along with jobs and government revenues the energy sector contributes to Canada.

That was from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

I would also like to read, for the record, what Saskatchewan premier Scott Moe said regarding these announcements. He said:

These new federal policies will have serious economic impacts on Canadians and limit our sustainable Canadian energy products from providing heat and electricity to the world.

He also said:

Saskatchewan remains opposed to the new methane regulations and the oil and gas emissions cap, and we will protect our constitutional right to build our economy in accordance with the priorities of Saskatchewan families and businesses.

I would like to read one more quote, if I may, Mr. Chair:

We've been clear about our concerns about federal intrusion into matters of natural resources.... We've expressed concerns about our ability to meet those targets.

Mr. Chair, that is from Carla Beck, the official opposition leader of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. She is the leader of the provincial NDP.

Both parties in Saskatchewan are opposed to these announcements, because this will be detrimental to the livelihoods of people who earn a living in the oil and gas sector. It will be detrimental to first nations communities that rely on the natural resource sector, and it will be detrimental to provincial governments, whose budgets rely on oil and gas royalties.

I oppose these new regulations unequivocally, and so do the people of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1230)

The Chair: Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to go back to something the NDP was talking about: making this scary and how the Conservatives were carrying on and how we didn't really want...creating a false narrative, I guess.

The whole idea of bringing the first nations chiefs to committee was to listen to them, to actually hear what they had to say, because we've been trying to tell everybody else in Canada, besides the NDP and the Liberals, that the carbon tax is not working.

My colleague, Mr. Deltell, just said, from the report that he read, that actually the carbon tax is going up and the results are going down. You couldn't be much clearer than that. Those are the world's experts telling us that, yet the Liberals and the NDP still believe in this fantasy that this carbon tax is working. I just don't understand that.

They're laughing at me right now.

I think Canadians are so appalled at just how much they're being dismissed by this government. They're not even being heard. You know, you always hear, "Oh, you politicians, you're all the same." They are really realizing now that this policy is bad for Canada—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mrs. Chatel, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I don't understand the point of talking about carbon pricing. The motion talks about capping greenhouse gas emissions in the oil and gas sector. As the experts said, carbon pricing is responsible for over 30% of the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. It's highly effective. However, unfortunately, it isn't part of the motion.

The Chair: I gather that the government's framework will include a methane emission credit exchange. There will be a price on carbon for methane emissions.

Mr. Mazier, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier: I can carry on.

I'll reiterate that this emphasizes how tone-deaf they are.

Here's a quote from a news article:

First Nations see the reality of climate change every single day and expect Canada to address it. However, we do not accept a regime that creates new burdens on First Nations which already face deep infrastructure and economic challenges.

We all acknowledge that.

Canada should be working with us to confront the climate crisis and close gaps on reserve instead of creating policy in an ivory tower that exacerbates the affordability issues our citizens face.

Grand Chief Abram Benedict said that. How much clearer can it be? People are screaming to stop this insanity. What are you doing?

You just heard, "Oh no, point of order, this is all going to work. We'll put some more regulations on methane." The bare foundation of how we make energy in this country.... Let's put some more regulations on it. Let's restrict it a little bit more. Let's create more energy poverty. Why not? Let's get at 'er.

It's unbelievable, Chair.

Thank you.

• (1235)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Taylor Roy.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we've had a fulsome debate on this, and I would like to see a vote on this motion at this time.

The Chair: Well, we can't—

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I'm the last person on the list.

The Chair: Yes, I guess you are, so we will have a vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Chair, I want to move the following motion:

That given,

(a) the Minister of Environment and Climate Change travelled to Dubai to represent Canada at COP28;

(b) the Minister of Environment and Climate Change did not reveal the complete details of the individuals and entities he was scheduled to meet with in Dubai, including the items of discussion;

(c) Canadians deserve to know the priorities and outcomes of their national COP28 delegation in Dubai;

(d) the Liberal government has proven that they are unable to keep their environmental promises and have neglected to consult with many Canadians on their environmental policies;

(e) the Prime Minister stated, "That is why we committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in Ottawa." in his open letter to Canadians following his election as Prime Minister;

(f) the committee welcomes any effort to increase government transparency for Canadians

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the Committee order the production of the following documents related to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's trip to COP28 in Dubai:

(a) a detailed itinerary for each day the Minister was in Dubai;

(b) a list of all meetings the Minister attended while in Dubai broken down by (i) the meetings initiated and (ii) the meetings accepted by Canada's COP28 delegation.

(c) a comprehensive analysis of each meeting the Minister was present at including the (i) name and titles of the individuals in attendance, (ii) meeting notes, (iii) purpose of meeting, and (iv) outcome of meetings;

(d) all briefing notes provided to the Minister by all federal departments, including the reason for each briefing; and

(e) a detailed list of all expenses incurred by the Minister during his trip to Dubai;

And that these documents be provided no later than one week after the motion is adopted.

The Chair: I have Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the motion from my colleague. It's obviously in order.

Given that we have the minister appearing at committee on Thursday, that we have witnesses for the study at hand today, and that the time allocated for committee business has now concluded, I would offer my colleague the opportunity to raise this with the minister on Thursday.

I move to adjourn debate on this motion and move towards the study.

The Chair: Let's vote on adjourning debate.

Yes, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I have a point of order.

I just want to be clear that if we move to adjourn debate on this, we will be moving to hear the witnesses on fresh water. I've said nothing about whether I support the Conservative motions they've been moving. I might, in fact, be likely to do so. But I'm here today to talk about the important issue of fresh water.

The Chair: The first step is to adjourn debate. Then I'm going to ask that we move on.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I take it that we now agree to hear from the witnesses, whose appearances have already been postponed once.

I don't see any objections. I would like to invite the witnesses to the table. I think that two of them are participating by videoconference. We'll take a short break.

• (1240)

(Pause)

• (1245)

The Chair: The sound tests have been completed. Ms. Botelho's test was successful, but Mr. Sopuck's test is still in progress. We'll see where things stand when his turn comes.

I want to welcome back our four witnesses, whom we're delighted to have with us once again. Three of the witnesses have already given their opening remarks. I'll ask them to keep their comments to two minutes, just to provide some context and refresh our memories a bit.

Mr. Madison, since you're a new witness and you haven't been here before or had a chance to give your opening remarks, you'll have five minutes. We'll start with you.

Mr. Mathieu Madison (President of the Board of Directors, Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec): Good afternoon. My name is Mathieu Madison. I'm president of the board of directors for the Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec. Our group includes 40 not-for-profit organizations from across Quebec that practice regional water governance.

I want to talk today about governance. I'll focus on two areas, which are Quebec's experience with regional governance and our recommendations for the Canada water agency, including considerations for its future structure and activities.

I want to share three key points with you. These points are drawn from our 20 years of experience in providing integrated water resource management at the watershed level in Quebec, with the help of 40 watershed organizations. Our main findings are as follows.

First, we found that water management in general is complex. It's complicated to talk about water quality, flooding and ecosystems. It's even more complicated to consider all the challenges, interests and concerns that sometimes differ from one water stakeholder to the next. It would be a mistake to try to simplify these complexities. Instead, we recommend working in an inclusive way, involving everyone in the discussion and holding extensive conversations with all water stakeholders. The goal is to identify the additional steps required to ensure collaboration and build consensus.

Our second finding concerns division. Water is managed in silos, both at different levels and scales, and also with local stakeholders. We recommend breaking out of these silos and implementing truly integrated management. We need to break down silos and find innovative and creative ways to get people to work together. In other words, we must break with the past to try to improve our current practices.

Our third finding concerns the choice of targets. Stakeholders often have a hard time understanding or implementing environmental targets for water quality or for a specific percentage of ecosystem conservation, for example. Farming is a good example. A farmer is unlikely to feel concerned by targets for water quality or invertebrate mackerel in a river. Since we want to be inclusive, we must find targets that more closely reflect the realities of the people we work with. We would like to redefine the notion of success. We'll no longer necessarily refer to environmental objectives, but rather to resilience, adaptation, creativity and innovation.

To some extent, this has been the experience of our watershed organizations for the past 20 years. Our mandate is to design a blueprint for water management. The blueprint should include the objectives and measures required for each area of our watersheds and a way to then engage and involve local stakeholders in implementing this action plan. Our findings show as much.

I also want to talk about what sectors the Canada water agency should focus on. The opportunity is ripe here to set up an agency that can provide real governance and try to address the proposed recommendations. The Canada water agency must bolster the legislative and executive authority of the Government of Canada in its jurisdictions.

The agency should also provide a platform for different national water stakeholders to discuss policy approaches and strategies; regulatory frameworks; and the prioritization of water research or specific projects. It could be a place to discuss the environmental assessment from a water perspective and to set funding priorities for water management. The agency would provide a genuine platform for the stakeholders and the departments involved to share ideas.

We also believe that the agency must take into account both provincial and federal jurisdictions. The Canada water agency must focus on certain exclusive jurisdictions or shared jurisdictions, such as transportation. We talked about navigation and invasive alien species. The federal government must be involved in these areas.

We must also consider transboundary watersheds. For example, in Quebec, we can't work on the Ottawa River without taking into account that a different province on the other side of the river handles water differently. To top it off, think of transboundary water-

sheds with the United States, such as the Saint John River, Lake Winnipeg, the Columbia River or the Great Lakes as a whole. Much work must be done on transboundary watersheds.

Of course, the federal government must address the issue of reconciliation with the first nations and their vital shared role in water management, particularly in a number of Canadian provinces. Thank you.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Madison.

[English]

Mr. Pentland, would you like to take two minutes to encapsulate what you already said in your five-minute opening statement?

Mr. Ralph Pentland (Member, Forum for Leadership on Water): Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I won't repeat what I said last time. I will just briefly remind you of what is in the seven-page FLOW submission.

The FLOW submission looks back half a century and forward a couple of decades. If you look back half a century, it concludes that we have been steadily bending the arc of history in the direction of justice. To look forward suggests that there's considerable potential to continue that trend.

The submission takes both the evolving issues and the evolving convention of wisdom into account and briefly describes 15 priority areas.

We use two main criteria in choosing the priorities. First, they have to be of national importance, and second, they have to be ripe for significant progress over the next few years.

As short-term priorities, say over the next five years, we speak to the Canada water agency, improved collaboration, Canada-U.S. shared waters, indigenous drinking water, flood damage reduction, climate change adaptations, water prediction, river basin priorities, water data and water research. That overlaps with what you just heard here.

As medium-term priorities, say over the next five to 10 years, we speak to legislative renewal, chemicals managements, water apportionment and principles for a watershed approach.

Finally, as a long-term priority over some undetermined period of time, we foresee evolving social justice principles being incorporated more fulsomely into water management decisions.

I'll leave it at that and welcome questions from the members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pentland.

We'll go to you, Ms. Botelho, for a couple of minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Zita Botelho (Director, Watersheds BC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members.

I'm speaking to you today from the unceded traditional territory of the Songhees and Esquimalt nations.

Since 2021, Watershed BC has partnered with two philanthropic organizations that administer \$42 million in provincial funding to support 110 watershed security projects.

[*English*]

Today I want to highlight a critical issue. Over the last 15 years, federal engagement in B.C.'s watershed freshwater challenges has been insufficient compared to other regions.

Today, I propose—as I did the other day—a quadruple win opportunity for the federal government in B.C., emphasizing collaboration with the province, NGOs and first nations.

The four conditions for federal leadership are offering economic benefits and employment opportunities, rural community support, UNDRIP implementation and addressing climate impacts.

• (1255)

First, B.C. has invested \$57 million since 2021 in watershed security, with an additional \$110-million commitment for a watershed security fund endowment.

Second, we know that watershed security generates economic potential and jobs. We've seen 1,273 direct jobs associated with \$20 million of funding. The Indigenous Watersheds Initiative currently is supporting 103 jobs, with an estimated 245 jobs primarily in indigenous communities.

Third, as fellow witnesses have shared, in addressing climate impacts, watershed security is a proactive step to saving long-term costs. The 2021 floods in B.C. cost \$9 billion. This year's wildfire costs were \$987 million. The historic drought we experienced this year is predicted to result in \$1 billion in losses.

Lastly, we've proven that investing in watershed security supports UNDRIP implementation, allowing first nations to focus on priorities such as protecting and restoring their watersheds.

In conclusion, B.C. is ready for collaboration. We recommend that the federal government invest \$400 million in B.C.'s watershed security fund.

I commend Mr. Bachrach's motion of November 30. Allocating resources to this work creates jobs, watershed security and community resilience and proactively addresses climate disasters.

I hope today that we can have a conversation about these freshwater priorities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think we are still working on Mr. Sopuck's connection.

We'll go to the questions. When there's a question for Mr. Sopuck, we'll see whether he is able to take it.

We'll start over with Mr. Deltell, followed by Madame Chatel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, we would like Mr. Sopuck to take part in this.

Welcome, Mr. Madison. I'm pleased to see you and meet you for the first time. I'm especially happy to hear from you. Your comments were highly insightful, especially your three observations based on 20 years of experience. If anyone knows what they're talking about, you do. Thank you for being here and for accepting my colleague's invitation. You provided excellent input for our discussion, and I appreciate it.

Of your three observations, I want to focus on the choice of targets. You clearly explained how a farmer's concerns are different from the concerns of a person living in a cottage by the river. Can you explain how you managed to convince the farmers? I know quite a few of them. First and foremost, they care about protecting the environment. They know that their careers depend on a healthy environment. Given your experience over the past 20 years, can you share some examples of farmers who managed to adapt by creating an innovative and environmentally friendly approach?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: Thank you for the question.

We made headway with the farming community a little later in relation to water management. We need social innovation in terms of how we involve the farming community. We also need technical and financial support. Quebec's watershed organizations must create a collaborative platform to try to engage the farming community and to involve the community in making decisions about strategic water planning in Quebec.

At the domestic level, the Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec works with the Union des producteurs agricoles, for example, to find out what farmers are experiencing and what they really care about and need in terms of water. We put these issues at the forefront of our discussions. Our role is to then turn these discussions into action with regard to water management. Each watershed organization deals with the matter in a different way, with the agriculture stakeholders in its area. Watershed organizations must engage and involve the community, and then work on the water-related technical and financial issues in their area.

We see farming and environmental professionals working closely together. On an economic level, they'll work together to find solutions backed primarily by the farming community, rather than trying to implement measures on farmland that come solely from the scientific community.

• (1300)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Do you have a specific example drawn from your experience over the past 20 years?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: I'll give you an example that has just been made public, including in the media. In the Mille-Îles river area, the Conseil des bassins versants des Mille-Îles is working on a stream in the Oka area. The stream is used extensively by apple growers for their water supply. Since people are drawing water from the same stream, the resource must be shared and there have been conflicts over its use. The waterway, the Rousse stream, flows into Oka national park, where it also serves as a habitat for protected species.

The watershed organization set up a discussion platform, funded in part by the provincial government, to work with farmers on their real concerns, find common ground and reach a consensus on the water resource. These discussions give rise to all types of solutions, primarily proposed by farmers, for how to share water in the area. Farmers are joined by other experts who come to discuss biodiversity, climate change or the impact of water shortages or the spring freshet.

This social innovation process plays a key role in our search for ways to resolve water-related concerns.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I think that the example of the Mille-Îles river could serve as a model for everyone. When we work together, when we don't impose anything, but find solutions together, the process is much more effective. When we're part of the solution, we can implement it more effectively than when the solution is imposed by other people who, in some cases, don't know the daily reality of farmers.

I also want to talk about federal jurisdiction over transportation, alien species and transboundary watersheds. Thank you for raising this point. How could the current federal regulations be changed to

make a real and tangible impact? Could this be done in keeping with your earlier example?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: In terms of federal jurisdiction over transportation, the regulations concerning navigation immediately come to mind. They date back to when shipping was the main mode of transportation. These regulations don't apply well to an environment where we're trying to adapt quickly to the risks posed by invasive alien species in bodies of water. I think that Mr. O'Connor has also come to talk about this issue.

We find that it would likely be better to make decisions about navigation at the municipal or local level, rather than at the federal level, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity. A process is in place to help communities work on the navigation issue, but it's fairly arduous. Granted, changes have been made recently to make the process easier or less time-consuming, but it still involves a complex methodology for the stakeholders involved. This is just one example.

We could also talk about transboundary watersheds. For example, we have watershed organizations that handle the Ottawa River or some of its tributaries and an Ottawa River round table, but their work applies only to the Quebec side. As a result, there's no easy way to work with organizations on the Ontario side of the river. The challenge is even greater in the case of the Richelieu river, which draws all its water from the United States.

The Chair: Unfortunately, I must stop you there.

Mrs. Chatel, you have the floor.

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

I agree with my Conservative colleagues that our farmers are innovative, especially in Quebec. I'll get on my soapbox here. The farmers in my constituency are proactively coming up with many solutions. We spoke with an outstanding group called Farmers for Climate Solutions, which works with watershed organizations in the Outaouais, for example.

You spoke of governance and the importance of breaking down silos. I've been hearing about this matter from all water management stakeholders, such as farmers and the Agence de bassin versant des 7 here in the Outaouais. I applaud these recommendations, which align completely with what I'm hearing at home.

You also emphasized how the federal government must bring the provinces to the table. Where I come from, the Ottawa River is vital, but it flows between Ontario and Quebec. You said that the Canada water agency must help both provinces, which share a watershed and a river, along with its tributaries. Can you elaborate on this excellent recommendation, Mr. Madison?

• (1305)

Mr. Mathieu Madison: Thank you for the question.

The Ottawa River is a good example, but it could easily apply to other Canadian provinces as well. Integrated water management at the watershed level must be based on the geographical unit of the watershed involved. The Canada water agency could be a place or platform for combining Quebec's regional governance model with Ontario's model, to find ways to work together on the issue on both sides of the border.

We know that conservation authorities have a completely different type of governance in their area. We have much to learn from each other. However, we, the watershed organizations, along with the Quebec government, don't have the mandate to work with them, nor do they have the mandate to work with us.

The Canada water agency would provide a good national platform for handling one of Canada's priority watersheds, for example, but also all kinds of other rivers, including most of Lake Winnipeg's tributaries.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: That's an excellent recommendation; I'll pass it on to our analysts. That would be a great thing for the Canada Water Agency to do.

You were also talking about different departments talking to each other to promote better collaboration and cohesion within a given province. What I'm hearing from watershed organizations is that it's hard to get all the actors to sit down together at the table. That includes RCMs, municipalities, ministries and farmers, for example. What concrete recommendations do you have to facilitate that kind of co-operation?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: You realize the need for that right away when you try to solve one of the problems on the ground. Take land development, for example, which is under Quebec's ministry of municipal affairs and housing. This is a key factor in most of the water-related problems in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. If we really want to tackle land development, we have to factor in all the ministries that are directly or indirectly involved. The ministry of municipal affairs and housing works with municipalities on development plans and city planning, but we also have to consider public resources overseen by another ministry.

We also have to look at how we manage bodies of water, and that falls under another ministry. We can't work on this without including everyone involved. The Canada Water Agency can do this work at the national level when we need to talk about issues that are covered by several ministries at once. We know departmental org charts can be pretty complex. The person responsible for water, say, at Quebec's ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food, can be associated with a ministry that's pretty far removed and doesn't necessarily have a direct connection to the other ministries working on the same issue.

Having a centralized platform where those kinds of discussions can take place, something inclusive that enables integration and desilos everyone is, in our opinion, the only way to come up with viable solutions.

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

Mr. Chair, do I have a few seconds left?

The Chair: Yes, you have 45 seconds left.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Perfect.

Mr. Madison, you also talked about funding. Personally, what I've been hearing is that watershed organizations, like the Agence de bassin versant des 7 in my riding, lack funding and can't deal with all the issues on their plate.

What options do you see for watersheds? Can the Canada Water Agency help?

The Chair: Please keep your answer brief.

Mr. Mathieu Madison: I think that Quebec's model, in which the watershed organization gets government funding for its mandate to foster collaboration, is a good thing. Implementing measures has to be done a different way, though. I think the Canada Water Agency should serve to bring everyone together for a common purpose so priorities can be established for where the money will be used to implement measures.

The Chair: Perfect.

Apparently Mr. Sopuck is online. We'll just do a test.

[*English*]

Mr. Sopuck, can you hear us?

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Former Member of Parliament, As an Individual): I certainly can.

The Chair: Perfect.

We understand you're recovering from some knee surgery. I hope that's going well.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I am.

The Chair: Could you take no more than two minutes to do a little roundup of what you already said the last time?

• (1310)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you for the opportunity.

Again, I'm aware that I made a statement in my first appearance, and—

The Chair: Please give me a second.

Do we have interpretation?

Can you talk for 30 seconds about something unrelated? Is there anything you want to say about your riding and your successor, or something?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It's the best riding in Canada, and I have been succeeded by a very able gentleman, who is doing great work for his constituency.

The Chair: Can you lower your mic on the boom a bit, and tell us a bit more about Mr. Mazier?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I could go on and on, but I would use up most of the committee's time, so it's not fair.

Can you hear me okay?

The Chair: We are looking at the interpreters to see if we have a signal.

They're going to try. They say it's not bad.

Could you give us a 120-second review of what you said last time?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sure.

Again, the issues deal with water quality and quantity. I brought up the issue of groundwater being very important. My testimony is on the record. If people wish to see it, they can.

I'll add a couple of points to it.

In terms of freshwater management, I have a bias for action. We need things to get done. We can't stand by. There are very pressing water issues out there. I'm a strong proponent of adaptation and mitigation. Again, I look to what Premier Duff Roblin did in Manitoba: a floodway and flood-control structures to protect Manitoba and Winnipeg from floods.

I must go against the grain of some people, I'm sure. I'm not a fan of the idea of the Canada water agency. Water is too interdisciplinary to be given its own agency. The model I strongly prefer is—some people on the committee may remember it—the prairie farm rehabilitation administration, which, unfortunately, was cancelled. That was an agency that integrated everything: water management, water supply, tree-planting, better farming practices, watershed conservation, and so on. It was an agency developed after the Great Depression and it did a stellar job. To me, the prairie farm rehabilitation administration is a model that needs to be expanded, writ large, across the country.

My very last point is this: We need to hear from people who live on the land—the farmers and ranchers, especially veterans who've been on the land for 30 or 40 years. They understand the issues of climate change, conservation and environmental management better than anybody. I would implore the committee to do what they can to get people like that in front of the committee on this study.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Pauzé, it's your turn.

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

I thank all the witnesses for being here with us.

Mr. Madison, I want to pick up on something you said at the end of your remarks earlier. In response to Ms. Chatel, you said that, for the Canada Water Agency, all the funding should be equally distributed. Some of the money has already been allocated, but Lake

Champlain and Lake Memphremagog weren't covered by that funding.

That came as a surprise, especially since, in your opening remarks, you talked about the importance of contact with our neighbours to the south, the United States. Can you please fill us in on what's happening with that?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: I don't want to comment on funding for those two areas specifically, but one thing we know for sure is that they, like others, have less funding than they need to adequately address water management issues for those two bodies of water.

I think the cross-border aspect is interesting because we need a game plan that everyone affected by this issue can commit to. We need to be able to do that no matter where the border is. Then we have to work with local actors to prioritize where the money should go. We can develop an action plan based on costs and benefits and prioritize projects and initiatives based on what they will cost and how effectively they'll solve problems. We can decide together where to spend the money.

One thing is for sure: We need more funding to implement actions that stakeholders on both sides have prioritized.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

You talked about the Ottawa River earlier. I'd like to talk about that body of water because, as we know, there's a proposal to build an open dump. A lot of experts and observers say there's a high likelihood it'll pollute the Ottawa River.

Can you comment on that? Are there any observations you'd like to share with the committee about Chalk River and the Ottawa River?

• (1315)

Mr. Mathieu Madison: I won't take a position on the project itself. Typically, what watershed organizations do is not take positions on issues but listen to the stakeholders on the ground.

If the Canada Water Agency is given that role, it may be interesting to discuss those issues. A platform could be created where stakeholders can discuss a given issue.

Of course, there are environmental assessments. In Quebec, that's done by the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement. Anyone can state their position on a platform, but there's no dialogue among stakeholders.

In Quebec, we have the Forum d'action sur l'eau. Stakeholders usually submit briefs on bills, and the forum enables them to discuss issues around specific projects and participate in discussions about Quebec's strategic policies and approaches. There has to be a place where these issues can be discussed openly because that's how you can assess the risks and repercussions of a project on the ground.

Watershed organizations are there to manage the process, not take positions.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Are there any approaches you can suggest that would respect Quebec's jurisdiction?

A conversation about freshwater will of course centre on Quebec and the municipalities. You talked about that, but are there any steps the federal government could take that would respect the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: That's a very important question. Quebec has a model that's been in place for 20 years. The strategic planning and stakeholder mobilization mandate is well established with watershed organizations. That model may not exist in other provinces, though, and the federal government could play a role in helping the other provinces implement that kind of initiative.

I hear other people tell us about what should be set up in other provinces. I think you need to have a process managed by neutral organizations so as to bring stakeholders from different regions to the table. That kind of process should be funded, regardless of where the funding comes from.

The next important thing is implementing an action plan, but there's a funding gap there that the federal government could fill.

There are also issues that aren't adequately addressed by the federal government and that we don't have the power to study at the provincial level. Transportation came up earlier. Fisheries and oceans is another one, fish species in marine waters, for example. Agriculture is another one; it's shared between the provinces and the federal government, and federal departments could provide additional support there.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Funny you should mention transportation. For this study, we sent questionnaires to every department, and in response to nearly all the questions, the Department of Transport said it was not involved. We were a little taken aback by that answer.

You talked about money, of course. I have here a document from Alexandre Brun from a long time ago, over 10 years. He asked for \$65,000 per year to fund an organization. Since then, many structures have been added, and money has been invested. It doesn't take long to destroy the environment, but it takes a long time to restore it.

Have you costed your current needs?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: We sent each watershed organization \$65,000 to do integrated water resource management, to carry out the process.

However, the amount needed to implement the master plan for water is much higher. The Government of Quebec put \$500 million on the table for the plan, and we'll hear about that soon. That mon-

ey will enable myriad measures, but there will be implementation needs everywhere else too.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to ask my questions to Ms. Botelho, not just because she's from my riding, but because of the important work that Watersheds BC has been doing on the concept of watershed security.

I wonder, Ms. Botelho, if you could tell us a bit more about the key elements that have been identified by Watersheds BC with respect to watershed security.

Ms. Zita Botelho: All of the work we have done to date demonstrates that watersheds impact all elements of our economic and community security—so that's personal security—as we've seen in the climate events across the country but particularly in B.C. with the floods, the wildfires and the drought.

There are both short-term and long-term impacts. They include the ability of businesses to conduct business. We saw the country-wide impacts of what happened with the transportation infrastructure as a result of the floods of 2021. From our work and the investments that have been made in British Columbia we have seen how restoring watersheds—in terms of riparian areas—restoring wetlands and ensuring that there is erosion protection make a difference. We saw that in real time during the floods when there was water retention in particular areas that prevented flooding, which also created a refuge for wild salmon in the Fraser Valley.

We also saw how infrastructure that focused on natural infrastructure and infrastructure that took into account future conditions and benefits to salmon also had remarkable results during the flood. We know that the insurance sector is floundering and really being devastated by the costs of these impacts, and I know you've heard in other committees about how they are dealing with those and about what's needed. We know that water is an important and critical, if not central, part of the climate crisis and that it costs humans. It costs our fellow citizens, it costs our economy and it costs our ecosystems.

• (1320)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Obviously, you've made the case that watershed security is important both ecologically and economically.

Can you talk a little bit about what we see as the main threats to the health of watersheds across Canada at this point?

Ms. Zita Botelho: I would say, again, that I think climate is one of the most significant factors right now because it's impacting not only supply—that means water being available for communities to do business and to have safe drinking water and for ecosystems to be able to survive—but also the other things I mentioned, such as flooding and wildfires.

You've heard from my fellow witnesses about the challenge of governance. There is an intersection of multiple jurisdictions—first nations jurisdictions here in British Columbia, local governments, the federal government and provincial government—coming together and needing to make decisions that are appropriate for particular places.

You've already heard from my fellow witness in Quebec on the benefit of having local watershed governance bodies that can bring people together and ensure that there is enforcement and an ability for all levels of government to do the work they need to do, which requires not only skills and capacity but also the funding to do that work.

Something else we have seen in British Columbia is that there is a need for training and skills associated with this work. There is enormous potential for this sector. We've done some research on the watershed sector and we have seen the economic potential of the workforce associated with this.

I would say we need to look at governance, climate and the federal government investing in the work.

Mr. Randall Garrison: There's been a very interesting initiative in British Columbia, called the Indigenous Watersheds Initiative, which I know you have been involved with. Can you talk a bit about the importance of an initiative like this, and how it might be a model for other watersheds?

Ms. Zita Botelho: Thanks for that question.

This is a \$15-million fund that was supported by the Province of B.C. and is being delivered in partnership with MakeWay Foundation. The way that the funding has been designed and delivered has been in collaboration with an indigenous advisers circle, which has played a critical part in allocating the funds to the 49 projects that we have funded through this work. It is being delivered over three years, so the way we have done the work and the flexibility we have incorporated into the design of the work have enabled communities to start work immediately and to focus on their priorities.

In particular, many regions in B.C. and first nations communities are in remote locations and are isolated, so it is difficult to access the territory to do the conservation work and to do the work on the landscape that needs to happen.

• (1325)

The Chair: Thank you. We'll have to stop there.

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

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

Welcome back, Mr. Sopuck, to the committee. My questions will be for you today.

The last time you were here, you talked about the incentives to assist farmers to conserve wetlands on their property. Could you elaborate on that a bit and provide some recommendations on what the best ways are to incentivize farmers to preserve wetlands on their properties?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sure. The issue, Mr. Kram, relates to property rights and incentives. Right now, all of the incentives to producers and farmers are to produce as much as they can. Mr. Leslie, for example, who represents a major farm community—and Mr. Mazier, as well—knows that farmers are under the gun to produce as much as they can.

On a piece of farmland, for example, Mr. Kram, there are also “public goods”, and those public goods are water, wildlife and so on. The private goods pay the bills on a piece of farmland, for example. The public goods are primarily a cost. As you well know, farming around wetlands—and I've done it myself—is very difficult, so in this day and age of all the incentives to produce more and more, farmers are responding to those incentives and draining wetlands.

The only way to deal with this—and there's no other way to do it—is to publicly subsidize the maintenance and restoration of wetlands on private lands. We'll end up with a win-win situation whereby farmers are recompensed for the conservation and enhancement of public goods while, at the same time, being able to maintain their private livelihoods.

One very last point I'd like to make is that Canada is the only industrialized country in the western world that does not have a large-scale program of incentives for producers. The United States Department of Agriculture, for example, has a \$6-billion conservation fund, making it the largest conservation agency in the world.

That's how I would solve that problem, Mr. Kram.

Mr. Michael Kram: What do you see as the best way of implementing that policy? Is there currently a registry of all the wetlands on private property everywhere in the country, or would a farmer have to proactively register with the government and get some sort of tax breaks or something like that?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: That's an excellent question. Wetlands are classified between, basically, permanent and ephemeral wetlands. Ephemeral wetlands come and go, depending on the rainfall. Permanent wetlands are, as they say, permanent. There's lots of work where wetlands have been inventoried.

Again, I make the point, Mr. Kram, that other countries are way ahead of us in this regard. The U.S., for example, has the “Swampbuster” program. We do not need to reinvent the wheel if we are to have a program such as this. A program such as this would be the single most effective environmental conservation program that Canada has ever seen.

Mr. Michael Kram: Thank you very much.

Last time you were here, you talked about the Smith Creek watershed in Saskatchewan. You also talked about restoring wetlands to decrease flood peaks. Can you elaborate on the benefits of restoring wetlands to decrease flooding and flood peaks?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Sure.

Wetlands act as little sponges. As spring rolls around, the snow starts to melt, and if there are enough wetlands on a piece of land, the water collects in the wetlands and is slowly metered out over the course of the advancement of spring. Thereby, rivers and streams are able to handle that kind of flow.

Again, this is not an anti-farmer thing. It's just a fact that if wetlands are gone, runoff is speeded up, and excess runoff goes into waterways that are not equipped to handle it. That's how we end up with flooding.

In order to deal with flooding, as I alluded to the last time, we need a mixture of both hard infrastructure and natural infrastructure. As one of the previous speakers alluded to, and I strongly agree with it, wetlands can be considered natural infrastructure. As I said in my previous testimony, when any infrastructure programs are designed by any government, I think there should be a category for natural infrastructure. That pertains to the wetlands, as you alluded to, Mr. Kram.

• (1330)

Mr. Michael Kram: Finally, with the time I have left, can you elaborate a bit on tillage practices and new crop varieties that can increase resistance to drought and improve water policy?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we only have nine seconds left. Maybe you can take that up on a future question.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be exceedingly brief, with just one question for Mr. Pentland, if that's okay.

Mr. Pentland, in your remarks, you shared priorities around flood damage reduction, climate change adaptation, water prediction, river basin priorities, water data and water research. It seems to me that we're very lucky in the province of Ontario to have so many great conservation authorities doing the science and doing this work.

Is it your view that this new Canada water policy could take lessons from Ontario's vast knowledge and resources in infrastructure with respect to our conservation authorities and apply that

same logic and reason across the country? That will be my only question. After that, I cede the floor to you.

Mr. Ralph Pentland: I served for several years on the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, and I'm very much impressed by their model and by their work. One of the things I really like about their model is that it's self-financing.

For most of these things that are being suggested, there's a nice start and you fund them up front, and then they die over the years. These conservation authorities have lasted for 70 years, mostly because they're self-financing. They are financed through a per capita levy on municipalities. They've been around for 70 years and are still very healthy. My authority, for example, has a budget of \$10 million or something. As a citizen, I probably pay \$10 a year to support that. It's very good value. They do very good work in a lot of areas. There are very good examples that could be....

On the question of flooding, I think I will add just a bit on that. After the flood in B.C., FLOW, together with a recently retired bureaucrat from the B.C. government, did a detailed policy analysis of the flooding and what could be done about it in the future. I just offer that up. I will send that to the secretariat at some point. It may be useful for you.

Another general point, while I have the floor here, is that I've been listening to some of your seminars. They're very useful and for very good reasons. It's obvious that all politics are local: You're getting a lot of local questions and a lot of local advice. You're not getting much advice on national policy—very little substantive advice on national policy. I'll just put out an offer for the analysts for when they're doing their work. If they have any questions about national policy, please feel free to direct them to us. We will be very happy to help you with those.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: In fact, Mr. Pentland, if I could, I'll formally request in writing the top five things that a national policy ought to include from your wise.... That's off the top of my head. If you have a different way of compiling it, or if you have some recommendations for us, a written report would be very helpful and very much appreciated.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paupé, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

Mr. Pentland, I'd like to pick up on what you said in your opening remarks. You have a lot of experience, 60 years of observing a lot of major changes in water-related issues. However, one of your top priorities for the next decade is chemicals management. That's very important to me, especially since Health Canada is being asked to approve more and more of them. That's why I think the timeline for that priority should be five years. What are your thoughts on that?

Please keep your answer brief because I have another question for Mr. Madison.

Mr. Ralph Pentland: Thank you for the question. I agree with you in principle.

[English]

There's something called the Collaborative for Health and Environment. It's an international group of the best experts in the world, and they give seminars about twice a month. In fact, right at this moment, there's one going on on the question of endocrine disruptors and their impact on children's brain development and learning abilities.

I think we should keep an eye on that very closely. The direction these experts are sending us.... We'll never understand risk well enough to regulate strictly on risk, and we'll have to move in the direction of judging whether things are essential or not. I think we're going to move in that direction.

On the timing question, what the bureaucrats will tell you and what the industry will tell you is that this is—

• (1335)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Go ahead quickly, please.

[English]

Mr. Ralph Pentland: —a continental and perhaps even a global industry, and you can't move ahead in Canada faster than that. I don't entirely buy that, but we probably can, because some of the European countries do move ahead very quickly.

What will happen typically—

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'll stop you there, Mr. Pentland. Essentially, what I want to do—

The Chair: I'll give you another 45 seconds because Mr. Garrison won't use all of his time.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: If Mr. Garrison isn't using all of his time, that gives us a little more, Mr. Pentland. Then I'll ask Mr. Madison a question.

[English]

Mr. Ralph Pentland: Typically, what happens is that the Europeans move first in this area, the Americans follow, and then the Canadians follow. I suppose we'll always do that, because there is no substantial chemical industry in Canada, so we're kind of tied to the Americans.

Maybe Mathieu wants to add something.

Mr. Mathieu Madison: I think I agree with that.

[Translation]

I'll continue in French for the sake of clarity. The fact that water is a scarce resource in Europe means that it has to deal with these issues long before North America does. However, once the issue or the risk is known, it tends to turn up here pretty quickly.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Here's the question I wanted to add. Earlier, you talked about regulations being fluid. Can we be more en-

abling without compromising the regulations or making them too weak? I think regulations need to be rigorous, but if we make things easier, is there a chance we'll be less rigorous?

Mr. Mathieu Madison: I think that depends on what's being regulated. I think it also depends on how jurisdiction is shared between the feds and the provinces.

There are some things where regulatory rigour is good as long as the regulations are submitted to all the stakeholders they impact and are accepted by them. For example, when you're working on a bill, it's good to have all the stakeholders involved at the table. That can help get to a solution that works for everyone. The Canada Water Agency can provide that kind of platform.

Everyone will agree that there has to be regulatory rigour on this, but the stakeholder working group may decide that, for other kinds of problems, regulation isn't the way to go and other types of more socially innovative tools would work better.

The Chair: Excellent.

I'll give Mr. Mazier the floor to wrap things up.

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Sopuck, DFO has a history of interfering with farmers and landowners who manage the landscape, as I have much experienced over my farming career.

How do we ensure that federal departments are not doing more harm than good when developing freshwater policy?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I strongly favour, Mr. Mazier, the incentive approach when dealing with private land. When you have regulators coming onto your land and basically interfering with farming operations, it simply does not work. It creates nothing but antagonism in rural areas.

I think I mentioned in my previous testimony that when DFO was on the prairie landscape in full force, the officers would show up with guns at municipal meetings. We're a very gun-friendly area where I live, but that's disconcerting. Nobody shows up with a firearm to a municipal meeting, even though it may have been government policy. The point I'm making is that this policy was implemented by people who did not know what they were doing.

I served on the fisheries committee for nine years, and when we were reviewing the changes we made to the Fisheries Act, one of your colleagues, Ron Bonnett, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, was absolutely scathing in his criticism of DFO officials coming on his farm. This is in spite of the fact that Mr. Bonnett had won many awards for conservation and was exemplary in the field of on-farm conservation programming.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I'm reflecting a little on Mr. Pentland's testimony. He offered some documents and ideas, as far as developing federal policy goes.

You mentioned before the difference between the PFRA and the proposed water agency, which I have very few details about. It seems to be quite a common concern among all Canadians—whoever I talk to right now. The government is talking about it, but we don't know many details.

If you could table the same type of document Mr. Pentland will—some dos and don'ts of developing a national water policy in Canada—it would be much appreciated by the committee, as well.

We're going to the Great Lakes now.

How significant a threat are algae blooms in the Great Lakes? How do we address this?

• (1340)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: When I was on the environment committee—this was about five or six years ago, or maybe more than that—we did a study on the Great Lakes water quality. I would heartily recommend to all committee members that this study be reviewed.

As we discussed in my earlier testimony, algae blooms result from non-point source pollution, which is basically runoff from the watershed. My colleague here on the panel talked at great length about B.C. watersheds, and I strongly agree with her approach. What needs to be done is.... Runoff, whether it's from farms, cities, towns, roads or suburban developments, somehow needs to be controlled. The eutrophication is largely caused by phosphorus. People often think nitrogen is involved. That's not the case, as shown by the great work at the Experimental Lakes Area by Dr. Schindler. It

sounds simple, getting rid of phosphorus input into lakes, but it's devilishly difficult, because just about everything we do on the landscape causes some kind of runoff.

Eutrophication is a problem in the Great Lakes. It's a problem for lakes that are naturally eutrophic. Lake Erie is a naturally eutrophic lake. It's not really a problem in Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Those are oligotrophic lakes that are nutrient-poor. However, Lake Erie is nutrient-rich to begin with, with an excess of phosphorus. Knowing the development going on in Ontario, both urban and agricultural, and the loss of wetlands, Lake Erie, from a eutrophication standpoint, is in serious trouble.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Okay.

That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you, colleagues.

Thank you, witnesses, for making yourselves available a second time. It was very important to hear from you. We got wonderful testimony today. Thank you, again, for being with us—two of you in person and others online.

We'll look forward to continuing our study after the holiday break.

On Thursday, we have Imperial Oil and the minister.

To the witnesses, please go on with whatever you have today, and we'll play catch-up with you at a future time. Thank you.

Thank you, colleagues. I'll see you later.

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