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# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia





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• (1105)

[English]

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

My understanding—correct me if I'm wrong, Madam Clerk—is that the sound tests have been done, and everybody conforms to the sound quality standards.

We'd like to welcome Mr. Brad Corson, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Imperial Oil Limited, along with Simon Younger, senior vice-president for upstream.

Mr. Corson, welcome back to the committee. It's a pleasure to have you here today. Thank you for making yourself available. We'll start right away with your five-minute opening statement.

**Mr. Brad Corson (Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Imperial Oil Limited):** Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Brad Corson. I'm the CEO of Imperial and I'm joined here today by Simon Younger, the senior vice-president of the upstream at Imperial.

Thank you for the invitation to participate today. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the chair and the committee members for their flexibility in accommodating our schedules. I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting today in Ottawa on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin nation.

In this meeting today and on every day that we carry out our business across the country, we do so on the traditional territories of first nations, Métis and Inuit, who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations. We are all entrusted to care for the land, and that is a responsibility Imperial takes very seriously. We come today fully committed to our reconciliation journey.

As this committee knows, I was here on April 20. At that time I unequivocally apologized for what happened at Kearn, and I remain deeply sorry for the events that occurred and the community fears that stemmed from them.

Since our last appearance, we have focused on three key areas. First, we have been working very hard on our mitigation efforts, and I will say more on those shortly. Second, we are continuing to ensure that the environment is not adversely affected and that communities are safe. Third, we have increased our communication and engagement with our neighbouring communities, and on this last point I want to emphasize that Imperial is communicating with the Athabasca chiefs and presidents on a regular basis by phone, text and email. We also provide a weekly status update on our website.

We have met with communities approximately 70 times and we've arranged more than 20 community site visits to Kearn. I personally have met face to face with several chiefs and presidents as recently as October. I want to emphasize that we are collaborating with indigenous leaders and their communities to align on improved communication protocols to ensure that we are meeting their expectations, and we continue to support independent water and wildlife testing by all communities.

Since we last spoke seven months ago, I'm pleased to report that the measures we had put in place to expand and optimize our seepage, monitoring and collection systems are working, and there continues to be no indication of adverse impacts to human life, wildlife, vegetation or fish populations in nearby river systems. Furthermore, I can confidently report that the seepage has not reached any waterways, including the Firebag River, the Muskeg River, the Athabasca River or any other water bodies, including those in the Northwest Territories. There is no indication of any risk to drinking water for communities downstream.

This has been confirmed by testing done by government and our own testing, which includes more than 2,000 samples taken from more than 500 locations, including along the banks and within the Firebag River. Independent testing, as you are aware, has been undertaken by communities as well.

The focus of our mitigation work has been on expanding and improving our seepage interception system and our monitoring network. We have installed intersection trenches and sumps, along with a well-point vacuum system, and we have added liners to on-site ditches. Over the summer we increased the number of pumping wells from 19 to 27, with an additional 28 to be completed this winter. We have also completed 165 monitoring wells, with an additional 171 to be drilled over the coming months. This brings the total number of monitoring wells to almost 500. They will help us to further our understanding of the geology and hydrogeology at site.

This work is reviewed by a third party, and we share the results with regulators and communities. We're very pleased that these newly installed groundwater mitigations are working as intended and are preventing further off-site migration of impacted water.

Preliminary delineation data indicates that there is no deep seepage found beyond 1.3 kilometres north of the Kearn lease. For context, the Firebag River is an additional two kilometres north beyond that. We test and monitor along the remaining distance of the river, and there is no indication of risk to water or wildlife. Furthermore, there are no drinking water sources in this area.

Ongoing monitoring and sampling are an integral part of all our operations. We continue to provide regular reports to communities, the AER and federal regulators on the work I have just outlined.

Notwithstanding this positive update, we remain committed to enhancing these mitigations if future data demonstrates that they are required.

On behalf of the more than 5,000 employees at Imperial, I want you all to know that this matter continues to have the full attention of our company.

I would like to re-extend my offer to the committee to come to Kearn, where you can all see first-hand the work we are doing to protect the communities and the environment where we operate and to earn back your trust.

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you. I am happy to take your questions.

• (1110)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Corson.

Speaking of your offer, I should tell you that the committee actually intends to submit a budget request to the House of Commons, so that we can visit Kearn in the new year, probably in the spring when the weather is better.

Without further ado, we will now begin the first round. Mrs. Goodridge, who is participating remotely, will start things off.

Go ahead, Mrs. Goodridge.

[English]

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to Mr. Corson for coming back to the committee.

It has been approximately eight months since the last time you guys were at this committee. You gave a recap of the three key areas. I'm wondering if you can go into more specifics around what processes you've changed when it comes to communication engagement with your neighbouring communities.

I understand what you guys are doing with this particular incident and how you're responding. You've laid that out relatively clearly. What have you done as a company to prevent these communication failures as we go forward?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Thanks for the question.

Before I answer, I just want to congratulate you on the birth of your baby since we were last together in committee here.

With respect to the question, we have undertaken a thorough review of our communication procedures and protocols across the

whole company, not just those specific to Kearn. We learned that we had very robust and consistent protocols and procedures in place for what I would describe as emergency notifications to communities and surrounding neighbours—regulatory requirements and all of those appropriate notifications.

When it came to other incidents, we found some inconsistencies and some clear gaps related to communities.

Since we last met here, we have been internalizing those learnings and we're now looking for how we can enhance them. As part of that, we have put in place more consistent protocols. We have elevated, if you will, or expanded the types of information we would share with communities. We're obviously demonstrating that with the Kearn incident.

As it relates to Kearn, in our most recent quarterly meetings we've had with each of the communities, we've been sharing those enhanced protocols, seeking feedback from them and ensuring that they meet the communities' expectations as we go forward.

I feel quite good about the steps we've taken. Again, we're going to continue to work with the communities to ensure these steps meet their requirements.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Thank you.

I'm assuming that you have written-down processes and procedures in place that you guys have updated and this is now a company standard. Would you be willing or able to share at least some very specific pieces of what used to happen and what you're doing now? I think that's the crux.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We certainly have that outlined. As I mentioned, we're going through this kind of final step, if you will, to validate that with the communities.

Certainly we can make available what we have. I would prefer to wait until we've gone through that next step to ensure that we are meeting their expectations on what types of incidents they want communicated, as well as the timeliness and to what level in their organizations. Once that's done, we will have finalized that.

• (1115)

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** What kinds of procedures and processes have you put in place for internal communications? When an issue becomes a big deal, how can it be communicated faster within your organization, so you have everything in place? I think that's also an important piece, because I believe that was a failure as well the last time.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Yes, it's a critical piece.

What we've found is that we have quite a robust.... I would describe it as a matrix of reporting standards for internal incidents that look at a wide variety of factors around risk considerations. That determines what level it has escalated to in the organization, and in what time frame.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Do these standards exceed government requirements?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Well, certainly they're consistent with government requirements. There are things that get reported internally that don't warrant a government reporting requirement. I would say they're more expansive than government requirements, but they fully meet government requirements.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** You said there were 20 community visits. Can you give an explanation as to who was part of those community visits? How large were those community visits? Were they open to the public?

A bit more information would probably be very helpful.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Thanks for that.

I might ask Simon Younger here to provide a little more context about the visits. However, I would emphasize that we have continued to reach out to the communities to encourage them to visit our site, just as I have with this committee. We want to be very transparent. We believe we have made significant progress. We want to demonstrate it, so we're not limiting anybody.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** However, with respect to the 20 visits, perhaps Simon can offer a few—

**The Chair:** We have to move on to the next questioner.

I understand your external communications protocols are still being finalized.

Would it be possible to submit to the committee, when those are finalized, a list of the changes, so that we can see the before and after? That's as opposed to your just sending us the protocols, then our having to say, "What changed here?" Perhaps you could provide some kind of summary of where the improvements or amendments were made.

Mr. Younger, you'll probably have an opportunity later on to provide that answer.

We have to go now to Mr. Longfield.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, but I believe it's Mr. van Koeverden leading for us.

**The Chair:** Okay.

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

Thank you for joining us today and for coming back to the committee, Mr. Corson.

My first question is to you, Mr. Corson. If you'll indulge me, I have many questions. If you could keep your answers as brief as possible, I'd appreciate it. Perhaps that will allow me to get through my remarks.

Today, Mr. Corson, you suggested that no adverse impacts on wildlife or human life have occurred. You said there was no evidence of toxic tailings leakage into water systems such as the Athabasca River. That claim has been widely refuted by indigenous groups and other scientists who have appeared before this committee since April 20, and by many others online. They are widely claiming that 5.3 million litres of leakage have entered into natural systems like the Athabasca River.

Could you be clear, Mr. Corson? When you apologized for what has been referred to as a communications error, what precisely were you apologizing for, if none of these process-affected waters have impacted natural waterways?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I've been apologizing for the fact that the incidents occurred and all the communications around them—the fact that it created concern and fear in the communities and damaged our trust with indigenous communities. We're working hard to rebuild that trust.

However, I would restate that we are confident none of these incidents impacted the waterways.

• (1120)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Okay.

I'll repeat again that this claim has been widely refuted by affected communities. In particular, Mr. Corson, data filed to the oil sands monitoring program shows that sulphates at a sampling station in the Muskeg River have been climbing drastically since March 2022. That's within a year. They are 18 times higher than the 2021 average. That sampling station is just south of the Kearl lease. That is where the releases triggered the protection order on the north side.

Does that sound familiar, Mr. Corson?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I'm familiar with the Kearl leases, of course. I'm not familiar with the data that you refer to. I do know that all of our data sampling and analysis has concluded that no process-affected water has made its way to those water bodies.

We also know that sulphates are naturally occurring, and there can be a great amount of variability over time.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Okay, so it's possibly just a coincidence that sulphates are occurring at 18 times the average just following this release. I understand that to be your position. Thank you.

Mr. Corson, this Kearl site disaster highlights the apparent inability for oil companies such as Imperial to manage their waste. Mr. Pushor was here from the Alberta Energy Regulator, acknowledging that leakage is actually anticipated with these earthen dams, as you referred to them. Contamination of natural waterways and groundwater isn't actually a failure of the system or the regulations, or a communications error, as your organization has consistently called this; leakage is a feature of that.

Since indigenous communities were not notified, we have also seen a rise in some very specific and unique cancers that are linked directly to some contaminants from tailings ponds. People are literally dying from a rare form of cancer that's not seen anywhere else, and your company is claiming that none of these tailings and toxic contaminants are entering natural waterways. This is where indigenous people have hunted and drunk from for generations and generations.

How do we rationalize this stark and rapid rise in rare forms of cancer that are linked directly to effluent from your industry?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I have great empathy for the people who are suffering from cancer. Cancer is a horrible disease that affects many of us in many different ways.

With respect to those specific cases, I'm not aware that they have been directly linked to our operations. I would maintain, again, that there's no indication of contamination from our facility in the waterways. I believe it's important that the local areas and the government work together to better understand the sources of that cancer.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Do you believe that the obligation is incumbent upon indigenous communities, the government, the private sector and activists to prove that these contaminants, even though they are scientifically directly related to the types of cancer we're discussing here, are not related to your industry? Do you think that ought to be the responsibility of an industry that continually profits to the tune of \$10 billion a year as a result of what it is taking from the land and leaving behind? Whose obligation is it to clearly identify that these cancers are not linked directly to your activities in the oil sands?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We continue to demonstrate the quality of our operations. We continue to demonstrate through extensive sampling that we are not impacting the waterways. We take full responsibility for demonstrating the integrity of our operations.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** What responsibility, Mr. Corson?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I'm not a medical professional, so I'm not in a position to comment on what's required to better understand the source of those cancers.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** As a member of this government and as a Canadian, I would say that the obligation rests solely on the shoulders of Imperial Oil to demonstrate clearly that this is not a communications failure and that leakage ought not to be built into the design of your operations.

Mr. Corson—

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I have to stop you there, unfortunately, because your six minutes are up.

[*English*]

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Okay.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Pauzé, you may go ahead.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Mr. Corson, my line of questioning will be similar to Mr. van Koeverden's. You said the Kearn mine leak had no adverse impact on the environment or human health. Let me just say, I'm surprised. According to Alberta's regulator, it was merely a communication problem, apparently. I don't agree with that assessment.

In terms of everything that's happened, you said you had taken steps to ensure that indigenous communities were adequately engaged. According to you, the assertion that there have been no adverse impacts is based on assessments by the government and your company. You said some communities had done independent testing. Have you looked at the results of that independent testing?

• (1125)

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Yes. In fact, I will clarify that even the testing we do is really done by independent third parties. We have hired indigenous-owned contractors to do all of the sampling, and then those samples are sent to a government-certified third party laboratory. The results of those samples are then returned to the indigenous-owned companies to process the results and conclusions. That information is ultimately shared back to us, and we share it broadly with all the communities—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I see. I understand the flow of your communications.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** —so it's very independent.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I want to talk about a report.

It's called "Third-Party Sampling Data — September (as of November 17)". It's on the Alberta Energy Regulator's website, and it says that the two main water sampling sites are in the north and northeastern investigation areas. However, those investigation areas are not where the spill of 5.3 million litres occurred, referred to as release 2. Those areas are actually the site of what you called a small seepage in February 2023.

Why did your sampling exclude the leak locations that triggered the order under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We're not excluding any areas. In fact, over the last seven or eight months, we have gathered over 2,000 samples from approximately 500 locations, both adjacent to our lease and moving out, away from our lease.

That data has been analyzed, as I just described. We've also hired a separate third party company to help with the analysis of all that data. They have provided a report that we have now shared with AER and with the communities, and it has conclusions consistent with what I've been sharing.

The other thing I would like to clarify is that the 5.3 million litres you referenced were from a single incident when we had a drainage pond overflow, and the extent of that spill was contained in a very small area adjacent to our lease. It was very cold weather. It froze, and we immediately cleaned it up.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Let's talk about that small area. You said in your opening statement you had a 1.3-kilometre lease. Past that is boreal forest.

How can you assure people, especially indigenous communities, that everything stayed within your lease limits and that your operations didn't have an impact on the water, land or wildlife?

[English]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We actually have done extensive testing. What I was describing in my opening statement was that as we looked at all of the wells that we have drilled—all of the access to fluids—and analyzed them, the furthest we have seen any impact is 1.3 kilometres off our lease.

However, we have looked beyond that. In fact, we've taken samples all the way at the river—both at the banks and in the river—and confirmed that there is no continuation of that plume.

The whole reason we have this monitoring system is so that we can continue to validate that it is not going any farther. Now, with the pumping and interception system that we've expanded, our objective is to effectively move that plume back onto our lease and eliminate it from spreading any further.

• (1130)

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** In the time I have left, I want to focus on something you said in response to a question from Mr. van Koeverden. Following the spill, testing at the municipal water treatment plant revealed high levels of arsenic, iron and aluminum as compared with pre-spill levels.

In your answer to Mr. van Koeverden, you seemed to suggest that wasn't the case. He rightly reiterated that it had, in fact, been shown to be true. Don't you think you should take that testing more seriously?

[English]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We're taking them very seriously. That's why, just since we were last together, we've added 175 additional wells that allow us to intercept this seepage and mitigate it. We have several hundred more wells planned over the winter season between now and the end of the year. It's all so that we can ensure that we are not impacting the environment any more than we already have and to mitigate that in the future.

I will acknowledge that on lease—not off lease, but on lease—we have some incidence of higher levels of arsenic, for example. Arsenic is naturally occurring in this area, but we've seen elevated levels. Part of our cleanup is to deal with this, but it has not gone off lease.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Corson.

Welcome to the committee, Ms. McPherson. You may go ahead.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming back, Mr. Corson, to answer our questions.

Obviously it's very important that you are here. I, like many of my colleagues in this committee, have heard very different stories from what you have come to committee to share with us. I'm going to walk through some of the details.

Obviously, all of us here, myself included, are deeply troubled by what has happened and continues to happen at the Kearl site and by what it means for tailings ponds, for the environment, for freshwater and for the indigenous communities that are living downstream.

We know that the Kearl mine was built in a highly sensitive area. It was built right next to the wetlands feeding the Firebag River and Muskeg River systems. The review for the mine and tailings site recognized that there was higher permeability in the area proposed for the tailings ponds and that seepage from the tailings ponds could impact significant surface waters. The joint review panel stated that “the proposed location...overlies permeable surficial deposits that will likely be the primary pathway for transmission of process-affected tailings water.... The Joint Panel also [noted] that if unmitigated, this seepage will likely impact surface water bodies to the north, specifically the Firebag River and its three tributaries, and that groundwater and surface water quality could degrade.”

In other words, this was put into a place where it was expected to seep into the environment, and as a condition of approval for this site, the AER, the Alberta Energy Regulator, required Imperial Oil to conduct “a detailed hydrogeological” survey covering “a 5 kilometre radius of the plant;” to identify “groundwater flow patterns;” and to identify “depth to water table, patterns of groundwater movement and hydraulic gradients”.

Did Imperial Oil ever do this? Did it ever complete this hydrogeological survey?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I would certainly expect so. The time frame that you noted was before my time with the company, but I'm sure that as part of the regulator process—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** As CEO, you should probably be double-checking that this has happened.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** —we did complete it. I would just note that you are describing the findings—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** That was just a yes-or-no question. I don't want to be rude, but you do know how much time we have.

If you have, in fact, completed that, I'd ask that you submit that study to the committee. We'd like to be able to look at it.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We'll happily follow up on that.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** If you haven't, then we may have to find out why that is the case.

As predicted, Imperial Oil's water monitoring reports have shown that there is toxic seepage from this tailings pond and that it was excessive, that there were high levels of dangerous toxins that were seeping through the groundwater. We're talking about dangerous substances, as you know, like sulphate, sulphide, lead, arsenic, methylmercury, selenium, nitrate and PAHs.

Mr. Corson, Imperial Oil knew the risk to the environment and you knew that you were not capturing and containing all the seepages. We know this because data from the two off-lease monitoring wells on the north side of the site showed high levels of toxins associated with tailings, high levels of PAHs—PAHs that, as my friend from the Liberal Party has mentioned, are linked to bladder and other cancers. Those are the cancers that members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation have suffered at an exceptionally high rate.

You say that somebody should get to the bottom of this. You say that it's not your responsibility. I would beg to differ, sir.

As far back as 2019, Imperial Oil knew that the containment system was not working. In May 2022, you discovered what you called "brown sludge" on the surface, and you must have known what this was. It looked exactly like the brown sludge that sits atop the tailings ponds. You must have known, Mr. Corson, that your containment system was, again, not working. However, you didn't inform the indigenous communities. You didn't tell the communities that live downstream, and you did nothing to mitigate that. It wasn't until March 2023, ten months after the discovery of the brown sludge and six weeks after 5.3 million litres spilled and the environmental protection order, that you started constructing additional monitoring and containment wells.

In April, you came to this committee and claimed that you had solved the problem. You told me and other members of this committee that the containment system was a closed-loop system. If I'd asked you in 2020, Mr. Corson, whether your containment system was working, you would have told me yes. Was it?

• (1135)

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I would have told you yes then, and I would tell you today that we are continuing to adjust our seepage interception system to ensure its long-term effectiveness.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** If it was working, why did you have to add additional wells in 2021 and again in 2023?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** As I mentioned the last time I was at committee, we identified that there was an additional layer of groundwater that the prior studies, during design, had not identified. As a result of identifying this surface seepage, we then expanded that system to ensure that we're addressing those as well.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** You stated that the toxic plume extends 1.3 kilometres. You said that 1.3 kilometres is more than halfway to the Firebag River, that it includes boggy land feeding the Firebag River—actual tributaries—and of course the small lake known as Waterbody 3.

We know that there are still toxins seeping into this environment. The head of the AER admitted that to this committee a couple of weeks ago. The off-lease monitoring wells are still measuring PAHs. Downstream communities have reported sulphur and iron in their community-based monitoring since the spill. You say that drinking water isn't affected downstream.

Mr. Corson, to be perfectly honest, I don't understand how any Canadian can take what you're saying to this committee as truth. I find all of your testimony to be massively problematic. It doesn't align at all with people who are living on the land and who are in those communities and the measuring and monitoring that we've actually seen.

I have very big problems with your testimony, Mr. Corson.

**The Chair:** Mr. Corson, do you want to take 30 seconds to maybe respond to that?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Yes. Thank you.

Well, first I would say that we continue to be very transparent with all our data. We're happy to provide all those analyses to the committee, as we are to the communities and as we are to the regulator. That data continues to show that there is no impact to water. There is no adverse impact to wildlife. That's what our data shows. That's what third party data shows. Even the Alberta chief scientist recently came out with a report to validate that in their assessment, the drinking water was safe.

We have an abundance of information and data that we can provide you to demonstrate the credibility of my statements.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Corson.

We are now beginning the second round. Once again, Mrs. Goodridge will go first.

Over to you, Mrs. Goodridge.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



[English]

Mr. Corson, you said in your closing statement that there are 5,000 employees at Imperial, 5,000 hard-working people who get up every day and go to work. It's very frustrating to me to have the Liberals and the NDP and the Bloc just vilify an industry that is providing employment, and it's not just for people in my region; Imperial has an in-depth space that transcends just the Fort McMurray region. There are people who are employed in probably every single province, yet they continue to just vilify you and your company.

I'm not here to somehow give you an out on this, but you've increased the number of wells. Why have you increased the number of wells?

• (1140)

**Mr. Brad Corson:** First, thank you for your comments. You're exactly right. We have more than 5,000 employees who are working very diligently to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to this whole country. They take that responsibility very seriously. I commend them for what they do on behalf of Canadians.

We expanded these monitoring wells and pumping wells because we did identify that there were gaps in the seepage interception system that was initially installed as part of the original design for Kearl. We identified those gaps. We want to be quite prudent in mitigating those gaps. We've significantly expanded it. We are expanding it out of the abundance of caution. We're taking a very conservative approach.

When you look back at where we were at the beginning of this year, at the time the EPO was issued, relative to where we expect to be at the end of this winter season, we will have tripled the size of that seepage interception system. We will have tripled the number of wells we use to ensure that there is no adverse impact to the environment or wildlife or waterways.

We take that very seriously. We're going to do what it takes.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** It's know better, do better, and I think it's important to highlight that the NDP member is trying to push forward the idea that somehow you've increased the number of wells because you realized that everything is screwed up. The way I read it was that you've increased the number of wells to ensure that nothing is screwing up and to ensure that you are protecting the environment.

It really aggravates me because, through this entire study, we've seen time and time again members of the opposition who have almost no understanding of this industry. They have almost no understanding. They might say that perhaps they've seen a picture of the oil sands, so therefore they understand it.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead on a point of order, Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I take some offence to that. I am married to somebody who works within the sector. My father worked in the sector. My brother is in the sector. I would prefer that not be—

**The Chair:** I appreciate that, but it's not a point of order. I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I'm sorry that they get offended by the truth. It's very complicated when someone is just going to vilify an industry because it's convenient. We are in a space where Canada needs to have energy. We need energy security. We could help prevent the war in Europe and shut down Putin's war machine if we were able to supply the world with clean Canadian energy. Unfortunately, through the LNG, this government has decided to not move forward with any—

**The Chair:** Ms. Goodridge, I'm not going to wait for a point of order. I really think you are departing from the subject matter. Anyway, continue, but please, let's focus on the problem at hand, which is the Kearl spill.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** But this is all related. If they're going to vilify the entire oil sands industry, which is exactly what they're trying to do in this study, then we're putting Canadian energy security at risk.

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

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I believe that the role of members of Parliament in committee is to question the witnesses, not to be ambassadors for the operations of the oil sands in this instance.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, Ms. Goodridge, but if you could please narrow your focus, it would be appreciated.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not here to be an ambassador for the industry. I'm here to be an ambassador for the hard-working people who make their living working hard to make sure that Canada has the energy it needs.

My question for Mr. Corson, through all of this, is this: What specific items have you done to ensure that this will not happen ever again?

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Mr. Corson, you have about 20 seconds. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Well, as I stated in my opening statement, we're working on mitigation, and that includes all of these monitoring wells. We've expanded our testing protocols. We've expanded our communication protocols. We're working hard to rebuild trust with all of our indigenous communities and partners, and it's through all of those steps that we are confident we will prevent this from occurring again.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Is Mr. Longfield next?

Go ahead.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. If I have some time at the end, I'll share some with Mr. Van Koeverden, but I also know that he wants to try to get up next as well.

I'll get straight to it with Mr. Corson, and thank you again for coming back. I know these are very difficult discussions to have, particularly in this type of forum.

I come from industry myself. I supplied into the oil and gas sector and the steel sector in heavy industry across Canada, the mining sector. Part of quality assurance is looking for root causes, and my question has two aspects to it: How many tailings ponds does Imperial have? Are the lessons being learned from Kearsarge being applied to other tailings ponds installations?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We have one main tailings pond that serves that purpose. Over time we will look to expand that as necessary to support our operations. This is the only Imperial operation of its type for which we have tailings ponds, but through other industry associations, we have been very deliberate about sharing our learning with our colleague companies in the industry, and we participate in several networks.

It's quite important that we all learn and that we all endeavour to get better and ensure that this doesn't happen again, not for us or for anybody.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** That's a great answer. Thank you. As we know, the risk on one is the risk on all.

We've heard some testimony about the design of the berms and whether they included clay or not, and they didn't. They were using basic substrates. There wasn't a liner being used. You're installing liners now.

On the technology that's being used as we work with the AER and Environment Canada, I think we need some more oversight on regulations in terms of tailings ponds design. Is that something you could acknowledge? Do you have an opinion on that?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Well, certainly we want to employ best practices. As I said, we participate in several industry forums to ensure we are applying best practices, and those even go beyond just oil sands but to other mining industries.

I'll defer to the regulators on whether more regulatory oversight is needed. I am aware that there are initiatives under way, both by the federal government and by the provincial government, to put in place some working groups to explore other enhancements or different approaches to managing tailings. We very much want to be a part of that, because we endeavour to make this better.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you.

I'll now pivot over to the health concerns.

We've had 17 people die of rare bile duct cancer. The normal incidence is one in 100,000. We don't have 100,000 people and we don't have 10,000 people. We have a fraction of that number who are being affected by bile duct cancer. The energy regulator who spoke to us said, "Well, that's another department: Go to Health Canada."

When you're working with the Chippewas of the Athabasca, in terms of monitoring and in taking some of the \$11 billion in profits

to be reinvested into communities such as the Chippewas to see whether they could be involved in monitoring to look into the health concerns they have, could you talk about the investments you're making, both in financial terms and also in discussions with the impacts on their way of life and their society?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Certainly. We—

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Then I'll turn it over to Mr. van Koeverden.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We place high priority and value on the relationships with the indigenous communities—

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** But are you spending that money?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We are definitely spending money with them. I think last year we spent over half a billion dollars with indigenous communities—

• (1150)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Are they involved in the oversight?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** The oversight of what?

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Could they be involved in monitoring? Are they involved with monitoring? Do they want to be involved with monitoring?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** They're absolutely involved in the monitoring.

All of the sampling we do is undertaken by indigenous-owned companies. We work very hard to build capacity in the indigenous communities. That is a key tenet of ours.

I would also comment that since we were last together, obviously mental health was a key consideration and key concern with this situation, so I'm pleased to say that we donated \$250,000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association in Wood Buffalo, requesting that it be specifically directed to the seven communities.

Those are just a couple of examples. There are many more.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Pauzé, please go ahead. You have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Two and a half minutes isn't much, Mr. Corson.

Earlier, a member accused the Bloc Québécois of vilifying the industry. I think you would agree that talking about contaminated water and extremely rare cancers isn't vilifying anything. I'm sure we can agree on that. The member also said that the truth was complicated. I say, repeating a falsehood over and over again doesn't make it true.

Why do I say that? I'll tell you. The results of independent testing show the opposite of what you said in the answers you offered up.

This is my question. In your opening statement, you said you remained committed to enhancing mitigations if future data demonstrated they were required. Which data are you speaking of? If you decide you need to do more, which data will you base that decision on?

[English]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Well, I base it on our commitment to correct the situation and make it right. We have been putting in place all these additional mitigations, and if we identify through—

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** No, I'm sorry, Mr. Corson. I'm talking about data. In your opening statement, you refer to future data. I don't want to hear about your good intentions again. I want to hear about the data.

Which data are you going to rely on? Your data? The government's data? Independent testing data? Which data will you look to?

[English]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We're taking on board all data. As I mentioned earlier, we've gathered more than 2,000 samples from 500 locations over the last several months. We've hired a third party consultant to help analyze that. They have recently produced a report approximately 24,000 pages in length that contains all of this data and conclusions, and we're going to continue with those sorts of processes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Where are you going to get the future data you refer to? It seems to me that you keep trying to give us the same answers.

I am again going to refer back to your opening statement. You say that you continue to support independent water and wildlife testing by all communities. Who pays for that testing?

Surely you understand from my question that I don't think indigenous communities should have to pay for what happened. How are you continuing to support independent testing, as you say? Are you paying for it?

**The Chair:** Please keep your answer short.

[English]

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Yes, the sampling is paid for by our company. These 2,000 samples were paid for by our company.

We have an approved program with the AER that addresses the frequency for testing. For all of these 500 monitoring wells that we

have put in place, we will pay for that. We'll use third party indigenous companies to do that.

We're going to continue. We're not doing it just for the short term. This will be a long-term undertaking and a long-term commitment.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** That's great. Thank you.

We now go to Ms. McPherson.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

You know, the Kearl site is not the only site that's problematic. All of the tailings ponds—all of them—as far back as 2009 have shown that they are leaking. We've seen that the Athabasca River is polluted with toxins from tailings ponds. The seepage at Kearl should be that final moment for us to realize that we shouldn't be building next to wetlands.

Unfortunately, right now, Alberta's approved a mine to sit right on top of the McClelland wetlands. There is no way to stop the leakage from going into those wetlands.

I have two questions for you, Mr. Corson.

According to your operating licence and government approvals, how far off-site are tailings or process-affected waters allowed to seep? Is it more or less than 1.3 kilometres?

If you have 2,000 sites that you are monitoring and a strong commitment to protecting wildlife, why did you need to euthanize a black bear yesterday?

• (1155)

**Mr. Brad Corson:** First of all, we regret that there is seepage that has gone a kilometre or more off our lease. That's why we're working diligently to mitigate that and ensure that it doesn't happen again.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Sir, the question was, according to your operating licence and government approvals, how far off-site are the tailings allowed to seep? Is it more or less than 1.3 kilometres?

You could just say what it is, more or less.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We expect those to be contained on-lease. Any process-affected water is supposed to be recycled back to the process and treated.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Is it more or less than 1.3 kilometres, sir?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** That would be less.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Can you tell me about the black bear that had to be euthanized because of a failure to recognize, with all of your monitoring, that there was a den in the area?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** It was a very unfortunate situation. It is completely unrelated to the seepage incident that we're talking about.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** It allows us to question a bit your commitment to protecting wildlife and the environment.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We place a very high priority on protecting the wildlife. We went to great lengths, as we always do, to ensure that we would not impact any wildlife.

In this situation, we were preparing a drilling site. The area had been previously swept by an indigenous contractor to confirm that there were no bear dens in the area. None were identified. The area was then cleared safely, with no impacts. We were getting ready to move some additional equipment onto the site. We swept the area again with this indigenous contractor. We did not find any signs of a bear den or signs of habitat—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Obviously, there were some. Obviously, that one was there and in place.

I think my time is complete.

**The Chair:** Your time is up. Yes.

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

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

I'm just curious. Will we be starting with the minister at 12 o'clock sharp?

**The Chair:** It won't be at 12 o'clock sharp, but very shortly after that. I want to finish this round with Mr. Corson.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Will the minister stay the difference?

**The Chair:** I'm sure. I'll ask him. I don't doubt that he will.

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

I appreciate you being here today.

To continue, the statements on the seepage were anticipated. The design of the Kearl tailings system and the seepage interception system failed in what it was supposed to do. It was unsuccessful. It seems like a bit of a technological failure.

I'm curious. Obviously, the impacts can be significant. What, beyond the additional wells being drilled, is the company's plan to try to technologically prevent this from happening again in the future?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** The basis for the wells is some extensive work we had done with subject matter experts on the geology, the hydrogeology, to understand the source of this additional aquifer, the source of additional groundwater, that was contributing to this seepage pathway to the surface.

We continue to engage those consultants, and that's the basis for the additional monitoring wells, the additional pumping wells and the additional trenches, all of which are intended to now address any new-found learnings around the hydrogeology.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** You mentioned the new-found learnings. Beyond the communications with the communities, which of course is important to rectify, are there any other approaches that you have learned thus far that you can share with us on how you will address this going forward, even if it's theoretical at this point?

Are there any kinds of planned approaches, whether it be for this project or others, to try to prevent any other incidents from happening?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I think there are several learnings for us that go back to the original design. Again, that's what we're addressing with this expanded seepage interception system.

I think that in the future we'll want to take all those learnings on board. Again, we're sharing those learnings with others in industry, so if they're progressing tailings ponds projects, they're aware of the learnings we had with this seepage incident.

● (1200)

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Could you expand on how that information is shared among industry partners or competitors? I think they're valuable and important lessons to make sure that whatever company is building a project, seepage is prevented. How do you go about sharing that information?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** There are specific industry networks and consortiums that focus on the oil sands industry technical practices. There are formal networks. There are also informal networks. For example, Imperial, through me, is one of six founding members of the Pathways Alliance for oil sands. We, as CEOs, meet every single Friday to advance that project to reduce our emissions, and when things like this come up in industry, we also take time to talk about these sorts of incidents and what we are learning.

It's the same with safety incidents, because we don't view these things as competitive in nature. We all need to be excellent in our performance in these areas—safety and the environment—so we collaborate.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** I can appreciate that.

Further to that intent of excellence, what other measures do you take as a company in the surrounding area to preserve wildlife habitat and natural landscapes above and beyond just the measures to try to limit the impacts of potential incidents regarding the tailings ponds? More broadly speaking, what other kinds of offset programs do you undertake to improve the local environment?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** With respect to this incident, and more generally to our operations at Kearl and other places, we will install protective fencing if necessary to keep wildlife out of areas where it could be endangered. We have other systems in place to mitigate the landing of birds on ponds.

We are regularly doing surveys where we, again, hire indigenous contractors to come help us identify where there is risk of wildlife endangerment, and from those surveys we apply mitigations to ensure we avoid that.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** You mentioned the local contractors. On the question regarding the bear incident that happened very recently, what does that process look like? Why might there have been a failure to notice the den?

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds, please, Mr. Corson.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I would say that we're clearly investigating that. It just happened recently. We would not have expected a bear den to be there. We went to great lengths to make sure we were informed whether there would be one, and that obviously failed. We had a very disappointing incident with a bear that had to be euthanized. It was very unfortunate.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. van Koeverden is next.

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

Mr. Corson, you were the highest-paid CEO of a Canadian oil and gas company in 2022, yet sadly, this was not the only environmental disaster your company has been directly responsible for. Despite this, your pay nearly doubled in 2022 to \$17 million. That's your personal pay. It's probably because your company posted record profits that year of over \$11 billion. I might add that you did that by increasing prices for consumers.

It's obvious to me and to Canadians that there's a lot of cleaning up to do throughout the Kearl site and, more broadly, in the oil sands. It's been referred to as the largest environmental disaster in Canada. These tailings ponds pose serious risks to human and animal health. They are designed to leak, and they leak millions of litres of tailings effluent into natural systems every single year.

Mr. Corson, who should pay to clean up this environmental disaster—taxpayers, or you and your company, which is directly responsible for this contamination? Who should pay to clean up this mess and prevent future leaks and harm to human health and the environment?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** First, I take exception to your characterization that this is an environmental disaster—

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** It's not my characterization, sir. I'm not an environmentalist; I'm a politician.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Well, the source of it—I would say that I take exception to that.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I'm both, I guess. Thank you.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** With respect to the incident that we've been talking about, we are taking full responsibility as a company to address it, clean it up and ensure it doesn't happen again. We take full responsibility for that.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I think responsibility is one thing, but accountability is another, Mr. Corson.

The AER was here just a couple of weeks ago. They seemed not to be accountable for these leakages. They deemed you to be responsible for the leakages and for the lack of communication to indigenous communities.

Accountability is different from responsibility. Accountability means somebody loses their job, or you change your strategy. Who has lost their job at Imperial as a result of three...?

Do you know what 5.3 million litres look like?

● (1205)

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** How many Olympic-size swimming pools...?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We cleaned it up.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Do you still contend that none of that water entered natural water systems like the Athabasca River, resulting in higher cancer rates in people who drink directly from it and in animals that drink directly from it?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** Absolutely. We are confident it did not get into any waterways.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Well, unfortunately, testing by third parties and others directly refutes that, sir.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** I'd be interested in seeing that data, because it conflicts with the data we have and that we've shared with the regulator and the communities.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Again, I would call into question whether you have a reverse onus or an obligation to ensure your practices aren't negatively impacting communities and the health of the upstream river.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** We have a responsibility for that. We take it very seriously.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Corson, Danielle Smith, the Premier of Alberta, has claimed that "The Alberta oil sands represent the safest", most ethical "and cleanest fossil fuel extraction in the world."

Do you claim this to be true, despite all the evidence we've heard today, and despite the environmental disasters Imperial has been responsible for over the last decades, with you at the helm?

**Mr. Brad Corson:** These particular incidents are a disappointment to me and our company. We've been quite forward in apologizing for them. We've been quite proactive in taking the necessary steps to clean them up. We take great pride in our industry. Having spent 40 years in this industry, working around the world, I feel quite good about the quality of these operations and their overall environmental performance. I'm quite proud of what we're doing to reduce our emissions. I'm quite proud of the steps we take to protect the environment.

We've certainly had some disappointments. That's what I've admitted, and that's what we're working to correct. However, I don't think they are fully characteristic of the whole industry and our operations in general.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I'm glad you feel good, Mr. Corson. Canadians don't feel good about this situation. We're devastated by this situation. Frankly, it keeps people up at night. It's killing people and an entire ecosystem.

I have one final question for you, Mr. Corson.

Would you allow your family to drink water directly from the Athabasca River, as indigenous communities have for millennia?

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mrs. Goodridge.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** In my series of questions, I talked about how they were vilifying. This is now getting into a space.... We've heard very clearly that the drinking water is safe. There is independent information saying that the drinking water is safe. This is getting to a point where this is absolutely—

**The Chair:** I don't accept that point of order. I think it is irrelevant, in the sense that Mr. van Koeverden is asking for sort of a double confirmation of the data, and I'm sure Mr. Corson can answer that.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** In all honesty, Mr. Corson—

**The Chair:** We don't have much time left, so if you want Mr. Corson to answer....

Go ahead, Mr. Corson.

**Mr. Brad Corson:** With regard to the drinking water, I would certainly be happy to drink any water that has been tested and deemed safe.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Corson, I thank you for appearing today.

On behalf of Canadians, I want to tell you that you're failing. You're failing Canadians and future generations. You're failing the environment—

**The Chair:** Mr. van Koeverden, the time is up now.

Thank you. It's been a very interesting discussion. It will be incorporated into our water study, as we decided when this series of meetings began.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Corson and Mr. Younger.

We're going to take a quick break because we have the minister with us. We're going to prepare for onboarding the minister. We'll just take a short break and be right back.

Thank you.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We are resuming the meeting.

We have the Minister of Environment and Climate Change joining us after a long trip. You said you got back to Canada yesterday morning. Welcome to the committee, Minister.

Is your opening statement under 10 minutes or so?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** It's about 10 minutes, yes.

**The Chair:** All right. The floor is yours.

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

I did indeed get back yesterday, and I'm very glad to be back.

I am pleased to join the committee members today to discuss the 2023-24 supplementary estimates (B) for my portfolio, which includes Environment and Climate Change Canada, Parks Canada and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

With me are Jean-François Tremblay, deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change; Terence Hubbard, president of the Impact Assessment Agency; Andrew Campbell, senior vice-president of operations, Parks Canada; Andrew Francis, vice-president of finance, Parks Canada—it's pretty simple, all we have at Parks Canada are Andrews—Linda Drainville, assistant deputy minister and chief financial officer, corporate services and finance branch, Environment and Climate Change Canada; and John Moffet, assistant deputy minister, environmental protection branch, Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, who have long been stewards of the environment we share today.

I want to help build strong partnerships with first nations, Inuit and Métis communities. This is essential for climate action and conservation—just as essential as the funding we're going to talk about today.

As I mentioned, I got back yesterday from COP28, in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, and jet lag won't stop me from being proud of our country's progress and ambitious commitments to reduce the pollution causing climate change. I'm also proud to be part of a government that devotes a considerable budget to these efforts.

Mr. Chair, from coast to coast, Canadians are increasingly seeing the impacts of climate change. I don't need to tell you that we're all suffering the effects—and the costs, too.

According to the insurance industry, in Canada, insured damage caused by severe weather events cost \$3.1 billion in 2022 alone. That is 10 times more than in previous decades.

[*English*]

Last summer, forest fires forced tens of thousands of Canadians and several indigenous communities to evacuate their homes. These fires have caused a problem for air quality across the country and beyond our borders.

This type of event reminds us of the importance of doing more and doing it more quickly, in terms of climate action.

There were also droughts on the prairies, intense hurricanes on the east coast, extreme flooding on the west coast and melting permafrost in the north.

People pay the price for these impacts when they are forced to repair their homes or businesses after disasters.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

People pay the price for all these impacts when they are forced to repair their homes or businesses after a disaster. For example, just to repair the damage to Parks Canada infrastructure caused by Hurricane Fiona in the fall of 2022, this budget presents an additional expenditure of \$8.7 million. The costs of the climate crisis are very real—and they will continue to climb as long as pollution continues to increase. We absolutely need to change course.

At COP28, we received a wake-up call. The global stocktake of signatories to the Paris agreement, which occurs every five years, shows that we are not on track to limit global warming to 1.5°C. This means we need to pick up the pace and step up our investments. That is what Canada is doing. The expenditures I'm going to present today provide a snapshot of this.

This year's supplementary estimates (B) total just over \$380 million. As for my department's reference levels, I'd like to mention a few significant increases.

In particular, there is an increase of nearly \$153 million in connection with carbon pollution pricing, which is the most effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The funding will be used to ensure the distribution of revenue from excess emissions charges, paid by companies. The output-based pricing system creates a financial incentive for industrial emitters to reduce their emissions. In the end, it's the low- and middle-income Canadian families who benefit the most. In today's inflationary climate, we're delighted that the payments into the system are making life more affordable for them.

The supplementary estimates include an increase of \$38.8 million to continue implementing carbon pricing and the clean fuel regulations. This is another important component of Canada's climate plan. By encouraging the industry to reduce the carbon intensity of gasoline and diesel, our fuels will become cleaner over time, giving consumers more and more affordable alternatives.

Among the other increases, I'd like to mention a reinvestment of \$52 million in Canada's hydro-meteorological services. These are critical services, provided by a complex, integrated system. There are more than 3,000 weather monitoring stations across the country. We have complex models backed by cutting-edge scientific research to predict future conditions. We also have a number of specialized offices, such as the storm prediction centres, which provide all Canadians with information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We need this information to warn the population of the risk of natural disasters and to support core services, such as aviation, emergency management and military operations.

Supplementary estimates (B) include an increase of \$13.8 million for Canada's national adaptation strategy, which was launched in June.

This is the culmination of two years of engagement with the provinces, territories, indigenous partners, municipalities and various experts.

In the coming months, we will be working to bolster the safety and resilience of Canadian communities. For every dollar invested in adaptation now, we reduce the costs associated with future climate disasters by \$15. However, adaptation isn't just about responding to disasters. The strategy also aims to improve the management of risks to our health. We want to protect our livelihoods. We want to build resilient homes and infrastructure. We have already started implementing this policy.

We are developing an integrated climate lens, as announced in 2020, which will help integrate adaptation across the government. We are working with the provinces and territories to develop bilateral agreements and tailor federal programs to their specific needs. We are investing in the green municipal fund to help develop local adaptation plans for cities and communities. We have launched calls for proposals for the climate-resilient coastal communities program, the climate change adaptation program, and the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund.

In short, beyond everything we do to reduce emissions, we also need to help communities prepare for and adapt to the new climate realities. That is what the strategy will enable us to do. It will also enable us to strengthen adaptation action on a global scale. This is a global crisis, just like the biodiversity crisis.

I'd also like to highlight a few other additional expenditures aimed at funding the protection of species at risk in Canada. Environment and Climate Change Canada has reported a \$22-million increase in its reference levels. Parks Canada, whose mission includes protecting our natural spaces and ecosystems, has reported an increase of \$7.7 million. This work is so important. Biodiversity is our great ally in the fight against climate change. Healthy ecosystems absorb carbon. They produce oxygen and help reduce emissions.

This additional funding will help us protect 25% of Canada's land and sea territory by 2025. It will also help us to achieve the target established at the biodiversity conference in Montreal of safeguarding 30% of land and sea territory by 2030.

Parks Canada will also be implementing conservation and restoration projects in various regions of the country, in close collaboration with indigenous communities. The agency ensures that indigenous knowledge and values are respected in the management of natural areas. Parks Canada is also reporting an additional expenditure of \$1.5 million to carry out three impact and benefit agreements with Inuit communities in Nunavut and Labrador, as provided for in the act. These agreements will enable them to participate fully in the co-operative management of five national parks. This is essential.

Across Canada, first nations, Inuit and Métis communities are disproportionately affected by climate change. They know their ancestral lands. They know how to recognize signs of imbalance in the environment. That is why, as I said in my opening remarks, we cannot advance climate action or conservation in Canada without promoting the leadership of indigenous communities.

Finally, supplementary estimates (B) include a request from the Impact Assessment Agency to support the development of renewable energy. The agency is requesting a transfer of \$140,000 from the Department of Natural Resources to support its regional assessments of offshore wind development in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. This work will support the energy transition that is central to Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to stop here. I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Deltell, we'll start with you.

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

Minister, I'm happy to see you. The last time you appeared before the committee was 262 days ago.

As you said earlier, you spent the last two weeks in the middle of the desert in Dubai. We would like to know what the environmental cost of your presence in Dubai is.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Deltell.

As you probably know, the department offsets the greenhouse gas emissions associated with travel.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Personally, how will you offset them?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We will publish that information, but we have to compile it first.

I remind committee members that, before the Paris Agreement was signed, we were heading toward a temperature increase of 4°C.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** You'll have an opportunity to say that a little later, Minister, I'm sure, as I have other questions for you.

I just wanted to know—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's still important because our collective work—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Yes, I have no doubt about that, Minister.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —is going to save tens of billions of tonnes of pollution. Perhaps it is worthwhile to meet to do that once a year.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Maybe not in the middle of the desert, but it's not bad to talk to each other; I understand that.

So what came out of that meeting was that we need to transition from fossil fuels now. We agree with that.

However, I would like to know if you agree that, as long as we need fossil fuels, we should use Canadian fossil fuels.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I have said publicly on numerous occasions that studies by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency show that we are going from a world where we currently consume about 100 million barrels of oil a day to a net-zero world where we will consume about 25 million barrels a day in 2050. So there will be a significant reduction in the consumption of fossil fuels and, as a result, in the production of hydrocarbons. We need to prepare for that transition, and that's what our government is working on.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Should we prioritize Canadian fossil fuels in this situation, yes or no?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The government does not decide who buys our products, as you know very well. It's the market that decides. Companies' customers decide. Currently, we account for 5% of the global oil production market. Who knows what that figure will be in 2050?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** You are from Quebec, I am from Quebec. Let's talk about oil consumption in Quebec. You most likely remember the front page of *Le Devoir*, which announced last year that, according to a study by HEC Montréal, 18 billion litres of oil were consumed in Quebec.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Per year? I don't recall—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Yes, per year. You can trust me and you can trust *Le Devoir*, as well.

So we recognize that 18 billion litres of oil is a lot, but that's what people want. That's what people need. In this study, we learned that 47% of that oil comes from the United States. Do you think it would be better if it were Canadian oil and not American oil? That is because we are sending hundreds of millions of dollars outside Canada.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question.

I assume you're not telling me that the federal government should bring back the national energy program and force Canadian provinces to sell their oil to other Canadian provinces, rather than in world markets. I don't think that's what you're suggesting.



• (1225)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Do you want Canadians to buy more Canadian oil, rather than American or foreign oil?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** What I want is for us to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels as quickly as possible. That is what Quebec is doing. In fact, Quebec is the province, along with British Columbia, with the fastest uptake of electric vehicles. We're at about 20%, and the figure is a little higher in British Columbia. So 20% of new cars sold are zero-emission vehicles. This trend is also evident on the industrial side, as we electrify our industries. So we are moving toward a world where we will consume less and less fossil fuels.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Yes.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It is not up to the federal government to decide to whom companies should sell their products.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Yes, but don't you think that, as Canadians, we would be better served if we consumed Canadian oil? You know, in Quebec, 47% of oil is bought in the United States: That's hundreds of millions of dollars that we send to the United States. I have nothing against Texas and Louisiana. On the contrary, I love them very much, but can you tell me how much Texas and Louisiana contribute to equalization?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Once again, I sincerely doubt that provincial premiers agree that the federal government should interfere in their decisions on the use of their natural resources. I often hear comments from provincial and territorial representatives saying that it is not up to the federal government to decide what to do with their natural resources.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I must give you one thing: You are very good at making announcements and having ambitions. Unfortunately, you are not very good at accomplishing things. I am not the one saying this; these are international figures.

You are a member of a government that has been running Canada for eight years. Eight years later, the Canada you are running is the worst in the G7 when it comes to pollution. Canada is one of the worst countries in the world in terms of delays in the implementation of current policies and commitments. There is a 27% gap between what you promised in 2015 and what you are doing now.

According to the report tabled this week at COP28 concerning greenhouse gas emissions, Liberal Canada ranks 60th. When we look at Canada's overall record, compared with all the other countries in terms of efficiency and climate change, you have fallen below the rank you had last year. Liberal Canada now ranks 62nd out of all the countries in the world. Are you proud of that record?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I have said it a number of times: We are playing catch-up in Canada because, for many years, nothing was done to fight climate change.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** You have been in government for eight years, sir.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We can draw a comparison with Great Britain, France and the Scandinavian countries, where, systematically, since the early 1990s, public policies have been put in place to fight climate change. That's what makes these countries—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** We are not here to put Jean Chrétien and his government on trial—

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, your time is up.

Ms. Taylor Roy, you now have the floor.

[*English*]

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here today, and for explaining all of the different initiatives that you're taking, as well as the supplementary spending that's going into them to make sure we accomplish the goal of doing more and doing it more quickly, as it's much needed.

The price on pollution program has been a topic of conversation for quite some time. Could you perhaps explain the different components of it? Folks seem to be preoccupied with focusing solely on what is referred to as the carbon tax, and not mentioning at all the climate action incentive payments.

Could you explain how this price on pollution program works, and why it's a program that addresses affordability as well as the much-needed work we have to do to fight climate change?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It is important to note that the price on pollution will be responsible for somewhere between 20% and 30% of the emissions reduction plan by 2030, according to analysis done by the department, so it is a key component of our climate action plan.

As you know, when we came into power in 2015, the projection was that by 2030 Canada was going to blow way past our target by at least 9%. We have managed to eliminate this present that the previous government left for us and we have now reduced emissions by 7% below 2005 levels, according to data that's already two years old, because that's how long it takes to compile inventory numbers in our country.

We are on the right track. There was, in fact, an article that appeared on the CBC earlier this week, or at the end of last week, saying we're on track for the first time in our country's history to meet the interim target for 2026.

Pricing is an important component of this. As you know, we return 90% of the revenues from the fuel charge of the carbon pricing system to households. According to independent analysis, low-income and middle-income Canadians get more money back from carbon pricing than they pay.

The richest among us don't, as we shouldn't. We shouldn't be getting money back, but most Canadians, the vast majority of Canadians, get more money back from the program. If we take that away, we're taking money away from Canadians.

• (1230)

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** The cheques Canadians get four times a year from the backstop program don't change, but the amount that a family might pay through this program would change if different choices are made by that family. Is that correct?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Some people have asked, “Why put in place a price on pollution, and then give us money?” It's a rather simple and basic economic theory. You give a price signal, and then people can decide what to do. They can use the money they get back from the government and continue with the same lifestyle they have—we will pay for the increased cost in carbon pricing—or they can decide to change some of their behaviours, and then they would have more money back in their pockets.

They can go with a smaller vehicle. They can use some of our programs, such as home energy retrofit, to save money. Some will even decide to go with an electric vehicle. Electric vehicle sales in Canada have tripled in the last two years. We were barely at 3%; we have passed 10% in the first quarter of this year.

Canadians are seeing the multiple benefits of adopting a less carbon-intensive lifestyle, and carbon pricing is a way we can help them do that.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Thank you very much for that.

It has also been said that the price on pollution, though, is causing inflation. You referred to a CBC article. I read an article just recently, I believe in *The Globe and Mail*, that said it was not the cause of affordability and inflation. Could you address that a bit?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The Bank of Canada has specified that the price on pollution is responsible for 0.15% of the increased costs of products in Canada. It said that it does not contribute to price increases and the inflation that we're seeing. It is not one of the drivers of inflation in Canada, pure and simple.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Why do you think there's such confusion around that, then? It seems that a lot of people believe this is the cause right now. What can we do to address that?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I think it's a convenient scapegoat by some who do not believe we should act to fight climate change and who think that fighting pollution will just happen on its own. This is why Canada has one of the worst records....

For decades, and certainly under the previous Harper government, nothing happened and pollution went up through the roof. At a time when affordability is an issue, they decided to use this as an excuse to say that the government is making the cost of everything go up because of carbon pricing. It's simply not true, and it's not just that it's not true: It is detrimental to Canada's ability to fight climate change and to the role we can play in the world.

By doing that, we are imposing on our kids and grandkids an incredible burden that they will have to live with. There will be more natural catastrophes—

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, I have to stop you there to let Ms. Pauzé to ask her questions.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

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

Minister, thank you and your entire team for being here.

Last week in Dubai, you unveiled the famous regulatory framework for capping greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development said that the delay in this measure partly explains Canada's failure to meet the 2030 emissions reduction plan target of a 40% to 45% reduction by 2030.

Although we support these regulations, we find that it took a long time for them to be announced. We also note that the regulatory framework is more of a pamphlet and that the real measure will be announced in six months. There will also be what we in the Bloc Québécois condemn—flexible measures for oil companies, as well as offset credits, among other things, to help them. So it won't make much of a difference. Maybe they won't even be asked to invest in renewable energy. That won't help them improve.

I would also like to talk about reduction percentages, which seem ambitious. I must say that I keep seeing new figures and that I am starting to get mixed up. Sometimes it's 35%, sometimes it's 31%. It's a matter of 2019 levels, and then it's a matter of 2005 levels. There has still been a 14-megatonne increase in greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector, to which it will be entitled, according to what you published about the 2030 emissions reduction plan and the emissions cap.

You were criticized for the 2022 target, but all these figures give me the impression that ambition has not been increased and that oil company millionaires are packing their tie—

• (1235)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The expression is lining their pockets.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** You're quite right.

In short, it is quite fascinating. With all these numbers, are you trying to sweep this under the rug? I know what we would call that in Quebec. You're a Quebecker, so you know the term “emberlifécoter”. I think that it could be used here.

Why are we still providing so many favours to the oil and gas sector, which is worth billions of dollars anyway?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question.

First of all, I do not share your interpretation of the last report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. It doesn't say we're not going to meet our target; it says we have less and less time to meet the target. So we need to move faster, and I have said that many, many times since I became minister of environment.

The update on our climate change plan, which my colleague Mr. van Koeverden tabled in the House last week, shows that we are 90% of the way to meeting our 2030 target. It cannot be said that we failed to meet our 2030 target in 2023; that makes no sense. We still have seven years to implement measures.

On the specific issue of the emissions cap, you say that it took a long time and that it took two years to put forward the framework. I would remind you that it took five years to develop the clean fuel standard. Since I became minister of environment, our collective objective has been to reduce the time it was taking to develop these regulations to about two years.

In this case, we put forward the regulatory framework. The draft regulations are expected to be announced in June, probably, and the final regulations are expected to arrive in the middle of 2025. So we will have put those regulations in place in about two years.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Again, that's a lot of numbers. As I told you earlier, things are starting to get complicated. It's fascinating to see all the numbers changing.

You say that you are 90% of the way to meeting the 2030 emissions reduction plan targets. However, the commissioner says that Canada has almost no chance of meeting its targets, that emissions projections are unreliable, that they are too optimistic, that the implementation of mitigation measures has considerable flaws and that there is no way for the ministers responsible to be accountable for the failure to meet the targets.

So how will we get there? It seems to me that playing with figures is not going to get us there.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No, we have to implement measures more quickly, and that is exactly what we are doing.

You have to understand that since I've been Minister of Environment and Climate Change, we've announced a zero-emission vehicle strategy, proposed clean electricity regulations by 2035, and the most ambitious regulations on the planet to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector. We are the only G20 country to have eliminated fossil fuel subsidies. We also announced a greenhouse gas emissions cap for the oil and gas sector. No other country in the world has done this, no other. You know this as well as I do.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I understand that, Minister. I know that this is not an easy position in a country where Alberta and Saskatchewan depend on oil, while Quebec depends on clean energy.

I have one last question on the figures. In Canada's national statement at COP28, you say that we need to get out of our comfort zone and realize that our current actions are insufficient to build a sustainable future. However, the emissions cap will only be implemented in 2026, and the methane regulations in 2027. The Bloc Québécois agrees with these two positions, but not with such a long time frame. Do these measures really reflect the urgency of the situation?

• (1240)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Again, we want to reduce by more than half the time it takes to develop and implement these measures.

You're talking about methane. The oil and gas sector will reduce its methane emissions by at least 45% by 2025, which is almost half of emissions. We are not starting from scratch. We have already done some of the work, but we are told that 45% is not enough and that we have to go even faster. We also have to look at the reduction of emissions in the electricity sector.

Why has Canada not yet managed to meet the target? We still have seven years ahead of us, but there is one sector where emissions are not going down, and that is the oil and gas sector.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Pauzé and Mr. Guilbeault.

Mr. Bachrach, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. It's good to see you.

I'll pick up where my colleague Madame Pauzé left off, talking about this question of whether Canada is indeed on track. I think that we, along with several other parties at this table, want to see ambition and we want to see the necessary work being done to meet the promise that you've made to Canadians.

It's interesting. This committee heard maybe a month ago from the environment commissioner, and he told a story very different from the one you're telling today. I'll read what he said in his report.

It reads:

Environment and Climate Change Canada estimated that the measures in the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan were not expected to reduce emissions to the extent needed to meet the target.

The environment commissioner, whose work is required as part of the emissions accountability act, has found that Canada isn't on track to meet either the 2026 objective or the 2030 target, yet ECCC's progress report that came out last week had a very different conclusion. It said that everything was rosy and well on track to meet both the 2026 objective and the 2030 target.

The key criticism that the environment commissioner makes is that the projections that ECCC uses are overly optimistic.

I was looking through the progress report that includes these optimistic projections, and I noticed that for the oil and gas industry, for instance, a fairly precipitous drop in oil and gas emissions in 2023 is projected, back down to below the prepandemic levels.

My first question is this: How should Canadians understand the contrast between the message we received from the environment commissioner and what you've put out, which is much more optimistic, and do you have information that suggests the oil and gas industry is going to reduce its emissions next year, the year after and the year after that, as this modelling in your report clearly shows?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Bachrach.

This is not a criticism of the work of the environment commissioner, but it's important to remember that his work is based on data that is already a year old. When he did his report, we hadn't announced the zero-emission vehicle mandate. We hadn't announced the clean electricity regulations. We had not announced the new targets for methane. We hadn't announced the cap on oil and gas emissions. We hadn't phased out fossil fuel subsidies. These are all new elements that have happened since the commissioner was able to do the work.

The issue of modelling is extremely complex. One of the things we have started doing, following recommendations by the environment commissioner, is to work with other organizations on modelling to perfect—although it will never be perfected—or improve the modelling we do. We share this information so that other organizations—I can certainly think of at least one other, which is the Climate Institute—can contest whether the modelling we're doing and the assumptions in the projections that are in the documents, such as the progress report of the ERP, the emissions reduction plan, are valid.

I'll be the first one to acknowledge that it is a challenging sphere and one in which we're trying to improve year after year.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I guess what I'm getting at, Minister, is that your report provides that optimistic projection of emissions declining in the oil and gas sector, but we know that emissions in the sector are actually going up year over year.

I am wondering why there is the disconnect there. You have modelling that shows they're declining in the next three years, before the oil and gas emissions cap is even in place. Are the emissions expected to go down?

We've heard from Rich Kruger from Suncor, and other CEOs, that they want to expand production as quickly as possible. They want to make money and increase emissions like gangbusters. How do we square the circle here? We have an industry that's increasing emissions. We have a policy that doesn't come in until 2026, and we have a graph, based on ECCC modelling, that shows the emissions from the oil and gas sector magically going down between now and 2026.

Is that actually going to happen?

• (1245)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's not magic, but it is going to happen. You—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Sorry, but I will stop you there. It's going to happen. You're saying that emissions from the oil and gas sector

are going to go down between now and 2026 when the key policy comes into force.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** If I may—

**The Chair:** Answer briefly, please, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You're basing your assumptions on the fact that the only thing that will result in emissions reduction in the oil and gas sector is the emission cap, whereas we've already implemented clean fuel regulations to reduce emissions from refineries. We already have methane regulations. We already have a price on pollution, which goes up year after year and which will—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** And yet you—

**The Chair:** We have to go on now to our second round. It's with Mr. Mazier.

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

Thank you, Minister, for coming today.

Minister, will you provide the committee with all of your meeting and expense details from the trip to Dubai?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I will, as we always do—yes, of course.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You'll provide those documents to the committee. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** The environment director for the Chiefs of Ontario stated that the carbon tax “exacerbates the affordability issues our citizens face”.

Do you agree with the Grand Chief's statement?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The Bank of Canada disagrees with that statement.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** But do you agree with that statement?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I agree with the Bank of Canada statement, which I referred to earlier in this testimony.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** The Prime Minister says that it's “misinformation” to say that the carbon tax is costing Canadians more. Do you believe that the Chiefs of Ontario and the Assembly of First Nations are spreading misinformation by saying that the carbon tax is unaffordable and unfair?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I said earlier, the Bank of Canada has stated that carbon pricing in Canada contributes 0.15% to inflation. It is not a driver, it's not even contributing 1% to inflation.

We have been discussing with the Chiefs of Ontario, for a while now, how we can compensate them. That was part of the program from the get-go of the application of carbon pricing.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Minister, you haven't answered the question. Do you believe that the Chiefs of Ontario and the Assembly of First Nations are spreading misinformation by saying that the carbon tax is unaffordable and unfair?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As I said earlier, we understand that for remote indigenous communities, there are different realities in terms of being able to have alternatives to the use of fossil fuels. That is why we're working with them, so they can become—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Is it unfair?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I said earlier that 90% of the revenues from carbon pricing go directly back to families. The other 10% is for organizations or nations like these indigenous nations, so that they can be compensated for the application of carbon pricing on their communities.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Is it unfair?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No, I don't think it's unfair, because we are finding mechanisms to compensate them.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Can you promise Canadians that your government will never raise carbon tax higher than \$170 a tonne?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We've made a determination until 2030. We haven't made any determination for what will happen after 2030.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You once said that you wouldn't raise the carbon tax, and then you raised the carbon tax after an election. After 2030, will you never go over \$170 a tonne?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I respectfully disagree with the characterization of what we said. We said that the price on pollution would increase until 2022, and then we said we would make an assessment to determine whether or not it should continue. That's exactly what we did.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You're not committing to not going over \$170 a tonne and increasing cost to Canadians.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's a decision that hasn't been made.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Did you call any senators to discuss Bill C-234?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Can you repeat the question, please?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Did you call any senators to discuss Bill C-234?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I had conversations with five or six senators, yes.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You said five or six senators. What are their names?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, it was five or six. I don't have the names with me.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Can you table those names?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'm sure we can make those available, yes.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Okay, thank you.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I did not bully anyone, as opposed to some Conservative senators who had to apologize in the Senate for bullying in some of their comments over Bill C-234. I had conversations. As you know, we don't tell senators how to vote or what to do.

● (1250)

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** That's okay.

If you can pass on those names, that's great.

Will your clean fuel regulations increase the cost of gas and diesel for Canadians?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'd be happy to provide technical information on the projections between now and 2030 in terms of the application of the clean fuel standards. This information is public, but I don't have it in front of me.

As you know, when we develop regulations, we have to develop what's called the regulatory impact assessment statement, which provides technical information—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** What will you provide from that statement?

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Let me provide the information from this impact statement for clean fuel regulations. It says that the regulations are estimated to increase the price of gasoline and diesel.

Will the clean fuel regulations increase the cost of gas and diesel for Canadians, yes or no?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I don't have it in front of me. I'd be happy to provide a—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** But it's from your own government document—

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You're quoting from a report that I don't have in front of me. I'd be happy to provide that information—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** This was an impact assessment before the decision was made—

**The Chair:** Time is up, unfortunately, Mr. Mazier.

We'll go to Madame Chatel.

[Translation]

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

Minister Guilbeault, welcome to the committee. You took part in productive discussions at COP28 in Dubai. Thank you for ensuring that we were well represented by the Canadian delegation.

I have a question about the Conservatives' position on carbon pricing. In 2022, oil and gas companies made almost \$400 billion in profits. We've never seen that figure before. We were talking earlier with Mr. Corson, the president of Imperial, who earns \$17 million a year.

When we fill up our tank with gasoline, what main factor determines the price? Is it the price of crude oil? Is it distribution costs? When I did some research, I realized that most of the money that consumers pay for gasoline ends up with the oil and gas companies.

However, carbon pricing is responsible for only 0.15% of the current inflation, as you said earlier. Of the revenue generated by carbon pricing, 90% goes to families.

The Conservatives want to remove this measure, which gives money back to families. However, they don't want to do anything about the major oil companies. If the goal is really to help Canadians, isn't it time to start looking at oil company profits?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for the question.

The figures that you quoted aren't the ones that I've seen. Canadian oil sands companies made around \$35 billion in profits. According to independent analyses, these oil companies invested around 1.4% of this \$35 billion in decarbonization. In my opinion, that's clearly not enough. The cap on greenhouse gas emissions means that these companies will invest in decarbonization, technology and job creation in Canada. Right now, they aren't making these investments.

In an increasingly carbon-neutral world, we'll likely continue to use oil. However, the oil will have a very small carbon footprint. If we don't invest in decarbonization, our oil will simply no longer be competitive with the oil from other countries or from other parts of Canada. For example, oil extraction in the Atlantic generates ten times fewer emissions than oil sands extraction. If we want an industry, jobs and communities that are viable over the long term, we're in serious trouble.

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you.

Let's talk about biodiversity. As you know, in my Outaouais constituency, we're carrying out a project. We're highly motivated to meet our targets for the protection of biodiversity. As you said, biodiversity is one of our greatest allies in achieving net-zero emissions.

The supplementary estimates (B) 2023-24 include \$139 million for conservation initiatives, \$291 million for Canadian nature funds and additional funding to protect species at risk.

Can you comment on how this funding will really help areas such as the Outaouais better protect their biodiversity?

• (1255)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you for your question.

Since COP15, we've signed agreements with Nova Scotia, British Columbia and the Yukon. In these three agreements, we

pledge to work together with the indigenous peoples of the provinces and territory to establish protected areas, conservation areas and, in some cases, national parks.

In the past two months, we've also announced agreements—in particular with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut—for the conservation of one million square kilometres of new protected areas. This amounts to four times the size of Great Britain.

All these projects are led by indigenous people.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Pauzé, you have two and a half minutes.

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

I'll talk about the figures, Minister Guilbeault. I think that you're quite optimistic.

Let's talk about Canada's methane regulations for the oil and gas sector. You spoke earlier about a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025, I think.

First, the Bloc Québécois once again applauds this measure. However, the time frame is a source of criticism.

The International Energy Agency confirms that global methane emissions from the energy sector are 70% higher than the level self-reported by the industry. Therein lies the problem. The industry "self-reports" its level of emissions, according to the International Energy Agency.

In my opinion, we mustn't give in to the oil lobby's demands for deregulation. Last week, there was much criticism regarding the 2,000 meetings held with lobbyists over the past two years.

Under these regulations, will the methane centre of excellence have a substantial mandate, and can we count on emission balances prepared with reliable and industry-independent data?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I'll touch on two points briefly. If you want, I can then give the floor to Mr. Tremblay, who can clarify the methane inventories.

Fatih Birol, the executive director of the International Energy Agency, was by my side in Dubai when I announced Canada's new methane regulations for the oil and gas sector. He hailed the new regulations as proof of Canada's leadership in the fight against climate change.

You'll notice that Mr. Birol hasn't taken part in many press conferences with many governments. This shows how important he thinks it is to—

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Yes.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —on the one hand. On the other hand, we already have methane regulations. We're now updating them.

We have a constitutional obligation to consult the provinces, territories and indigenous peoples before adopting regulations. Should we fail to fulfill this obligation, you would likely be the first to say that we didn't consult Quebec.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I'll stop you there because of the time.

I want to talk about how the International Energy Agency claims that the industry provides these figures and how the actual figures for the energy sector are supposedly much higher. I'm wondering about this. It's significant.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The Canadian government supports the development of technology, particularly satellite technology. The Canadian and Quebec-based company GHGSat now has an agreement with the European Space Agency for methane and carbon dioxide detection. This technology is the only one in the world that can detect methane emissions on site.

In addition to our traditional methods for compiling methane emissions data, we'll have access to satellite data, a brand new item in our methane tool kit.

Indeed, methane emissions are a global concern. These emissions are often short-lived and sometimes difficult to measure.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours.

[English]

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

Minister, I'm sure you agree that despite the policies you mention, increased production of oil and gas is likely to result in increased emissions over the next few years until the oil and gas emissions cap comes into effect. I think the real concern here is that 2026 is too late for that key policy to start making a difference.

It's only four years before the 2030 target, and what we're going to see between now and then is that emissions from the sector will continue to rise, and when that policy starts taking effect, it's going to be this unrealistic sprint to the target. What's going to happen is that we're going to fall short yet again. This is the concern that the environment commissioner expressed as well.

My question is, how do we expedite that timeline? You said earlier that we need to pick up the pace. That is the core message that we're hearing from COP, from the international community, yet what we see with the oil and gas emissions cap is a very status quo rollout of a policy, with three years to develop the regulations. You've spent all this time developing a framework, and now it's going to take the conventional amount of time to develop the regulations. How do we expedite that and cut that time down by half so that it comes into effect in late 2024?

• (1300)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I would argue that we have been able to cut the time it takes to develop our policies. The zero-emission vehicle standard draft regulations were announced in December of last year. We will have final regulations by the end of this year—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** I mean specific to the cap.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** The cap was.... ZEV was a bit easier because a number of jurisdictions in the world have done ZEV before. The Americans are doing one. We've been working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency on that. As for the cap, no one else has done this—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Arguably, you've done a bunch of the work, because you created the framework. A bunch of the work has already been done. Why does it still take three years to develop the regulations?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** No, it doesn't take three years. It's going to take another year now that we have the framework to develop draft regulations and final regulations. It takes the team at the department a lot of time to develop these regulations, and we have a responsibility to do it right, because if we don't, then these policies and regulations will be shot down in the courts and we're no better off—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** It's 2023. The regulation is going to start taking effect in 2026. That's a lot of time. The question is, how do we encourage the government to move more swiftly to ensure that there's enough time before 2030 to make those reductions?

Right now, it seems that even with the smaller reductions you've committed to, which are less than the least cost pathway that's modelled in the emissions reduction plan, and even with that less ambitious target—

**The Chair:** We're at time, Mr. Bachrach.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** —it's still a lot to do by 2030.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kram is next.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Are we out of time for a response also?

**The Chair:** Well, we're up to three minutes. I'm sorry, Minister.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Okay. I'm sorry. I just wasn't sure.

**The Chair:** You can insert your answer in the response to another question, of course.

Go ahead, Mr. Kram.

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

Mr. Guilbeault, thank you for joining us today.

Minister, are you still the executive vice chairperson of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, I am, as was one of your previous colleagues in the Conservative Party of Canada.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Yes, and that leads into my next question, actually.

The other day, the National Post reported that your two-day trip to Beijing last August cost \$140,000. When Stephen Harper's environment minister, Peter Kent, travelled to Beijing in 2014 to meet with the same council, his trip cost only \$9,900, and that included staff.

Minister, why were your travel costs 14 times that of Stephen Harper's environment minister to fly to the same city to meet with the same council?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I haven't seen those numbers, so it's hard for me to comment.

What I will say is that things have changed since 2015. We now have a memorandum of understanding with the government of China to develop policies on coal, on carbon pricing, on joint work on nature, which are things we didn't have.

The meeting didn't last for two days. We were there for four days. That information is public, but I don't have the comparison to 2014. I don't have those numbers in front of me.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Okay.

Minister, in 2022 China approved the construction of 82 new coal-burning power plants, and for the first half of 2023 they approved another 50. Minister, do you support China's construction of these new coal-burning power plants?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** As you probably know, Canada and the United Kingdom started a movement in 2017 called the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which started with those two nations and about 20 other small island states. This organization now spans more than 170 members, including the United States of America and including pension fund investors.

Through the work of the Powering Past Coal Alliance, we've been able to cancel 75% of planned new coal construction in the world, but there's still lots of work to do to fight coal. Scientists tell us that one of the most important things we can do to fight climate change in the short term is to focus on coal and to focus on methane. That's exactly what we're doing.

• (1305)

**Mr. Michael Kram:** When you visited Beijing last August, did you criticize the Chinese government for their ramping up of coal production and burning coal?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We have a work plan with the Chinese government to work with them so we can help them reduce their dependency on coal. That's what we're doing.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Did you criticize them, or did you encourage them to build more? There were 82 new coal-burning plants last year and 50 for the first half of this year. That's a lot of new coal being burned in China. Given your role on the CCICED, have you played any role in trying to reduce those numbers?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes, we have absolutely. We're one of the world's leading advocates for the reduction of coal-fired elec-

tricity, pure and simple. With the United Kingdom, we're leading the charge globally. That's absolutely what we're doing.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Have you encouraged China to transition away from coal and towards natural gas?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We've started the conversation with the Chinese minister of environment on a number of initiatives, including coal, but that work hasn't concluded.

What I would say is that we have to be careful. We have to phase out fossil fuels—all fossil fuels—including natural gas. In most parts of the world, and it's certainly true in Canada, it's now cheaper to produce electricity from renewables than it is from natural gas. It's certainly true in your own province of Alberta, where the cost of producing energy through renewables is cheaper than through natural gas, which is why what's being built right now in Alberta is mostly renewables, because it's cheaper than gas.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Okay. There are a couple of things. I'm from Saskatchewan, not from Alberta.

Do you feel that Canada could play a useful role in exporting liquefied natural gas to China to displace the use of coal in that country?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There are a number of LNG projects that either have been approved or are in the process of being approved. As you know, the federal government doesn't develop resource-based projects. This is a prerogative of provinces. We have approved a certain number of LNG projects. Some are under impact assessment review right now.

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** If you look at the LNG facilities being built in the United States, Australia and the Middle East, you see that they've been building dozens over the last few years. Canada has only one under construction. Why do we have so few LNG facilities here in Canada compared to lots of countries?

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, Minister, before we go on to Mr. Longfield.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** You should talk to the provinces that are developing those projects.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Do you think it might—

**The Chair:** Mr. Kram, we're done. We're way over time.

Go ahead, Mr. Longfield.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



Thank you, Minister, for being here. What a terrific discussion we're having today. You're certainly fielding a range of questions.

I'd like to go back to the supplementary estimates that you're here to discuss with us. In the estimates, there's \$33 million that's included in support of initiatives to help transition us to the cleaner fuels that you're talking about, things that will help us in terms of preventing pollution. I'm looking at how we change behaviours through \$33 million on measures to prevent pollution, as we're introducing clean fuel standards to try to provide both a carrot and a stick.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** If you don't mind, Mr. Longfield, our friend, Mr. Moffat—

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** It's technical, so yes, thank you.

**Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment):** The money that you're referring to is money that has come to the department to support the implementation of those regulations.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** That's right. Is supporting the implementation helping in the transition?

**Mr. John Moffet:** It's to hire staff and to make permanent the staff that we hired to develop the regulations. We also need electronic reporting systems that we maintain. We have staff that are required to support the implementation of those systems, to answer questions, to do compliance promotion and that sort of thing. This is standard with respect to any kind of regulation that we develop.

• (1310)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Okay. Thank you for clarifying.

In the supplementary estimates, there is also \$139 million for conservation initiatives, \$291 million for the Canada nature fund and additional funding to help protect species at risk. Could you share with the committee the progress that our government's making to protect species at risk, while conserving our natural environment, something near and dear to us in Guelph because of the greenbelt initiatives and the other initiatives down in Niagara?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Thank you very much for the question.

When our government came into power in 2015, Canada wasn't protecting even one percent of our oceans and coastlines. Next year, we should be at 20%, which is a staggering jump. In 2015, we were protecting about 10% of our terrestrial lands. At the end of 2024, we will be at roughly 20%.

We're on our way to meeting our interim goal of protecting 25% of each of these categories by 2025 and on our way to at least 30% for each by 2030 as per the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you.

I may have confused the \$33 million with the \$34 million that is being put into the clean fuel regulations to help with innovations.

Could you share with the committee how introducing innovations at the same time as clean fuel regulations will help people avoid the costs of doing nothing, particularly in the agriculture sector?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We can get back to you in writing for this specific question.

We are obviously supporting the development of innovation in the fuel sector. We've seen about \$2 billion worth of projects being announced, whether it's in Saskatchewan, your province—my apologies—Quebec or Newfoundland, for biofuels. In some cases, traditional refineries are being retrofitted to accommodate these innovations.

I believe some of this money is used to support companies as they develop new technologies and implement them.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Great. Thank you.

I know I'm getting really short on time. I wonder, Mr. Chair, if I could make a motion to adjourn.

**The Chair:** Well, yes; we're done, basically—

**An hon. member:** Wow. What? Why?

**The Chair:** No, the minister said he'd be—

**An hon. member:** I have a point of order.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** It's a dilatory motion.

**The Chair:** We have to vote on it.

The minister said he'd give us an hour.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** The notice of meeting says 1:30.

This is the first time I've had a chance since being elected to ask this minister a question, and this member decides to adjourn on behalf of his minister. That's not acceptable.

**The Chair:** The idea was always that he would come for an hour.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Order. Excuse me. By way of background, I built in the extra half-hour because of votes potentially interrupting and because we've often had motions tabled that caused delay. I wanted to make sure that the minister would be here for at least an hour, even if we had votes and even if we had motions in between.

He has given us more than an hour. Anyway, we have....

What's your point of order, sir?

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** It's a dilatory motion and non-debatable. We shouldn't be debating it and you shouldn't be debating it either.

**The Chair:** That's what I'm getting at. I'm not debating the motion. I'm giving you some background.

Okay, let's vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

**The Chair:** We're not adjourning.

Minister, I don't know what your schedule is. We can only go another 15 minutes because we lose the resources after that. Are you okay with staying another 15 minutes?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Yes.

• (1315)

**The Chair:** Okay.

I don't know how we're going to do this in terms of apportioning the time. I'm going to have to make a calculation to make sure everybody gets their fair share.

We have 15 minutes. I'll tell you what I think will work. It'll be two and a half minutes, two and a half minutes and then 1.2 minutes....

Anyway, who wants to go for the Conservatives for 2.5 minutes?

Go ahead, Mr. Leslie.

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

Thank you for staying a little longer, Minister. I appreciate your acknowledgement of calling senators regarding Bill C-234.

I'm just curious. Given that you were so adamant about not giving another carve-out to Canadian farmers and therefore having lower food prices, and given the first nations of Ontario and the Chiefs of Ontario and their stated opinions....

I know I'll get ahead of you. You're going to hide behind the Bank of Canada, so you're either going to say you believe the Chiefs of Ontario, who are suing your government, when they say life has become unaffordable because of the carbon tax, or you're going to say you don't believe them, but will you possibly think of giving another carve-out to first nations communities that are taking on the undue burdens of your carbon tax?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We have been working with these nations, and others as well, so that they can receive their share of the fuel charge through carbon pricing—

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** Why are they suing you, then?

You work as well with them as you do with the provinces, it seems. On that note, the fact is that you said earlier that provinces say the feds shouldn't interfere with their natural resource development. I appreciate that you've acknowledged that. However, your track record in the courts this year doesn't add up, obviously, with Bill C-69, the “no more pipelines” bill, being slapped down by the Supreme Court, and a host of other cases being slapped down due to the unconstitutional nature of your imposition on the rights of the provinces to regulate their own prosperity in the natural resource sector.

This is my question to you: Did you seek external legal opinions over the constitutionality of your clean electricity regulations and your proposed methane regulations, particularly given the recent Supreme Court decisions regarding your imposition on the provinces?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** There have been no recent Supreme Court decisions. There's been an opinion by the Supreme Court on impact assessment. It's not a decision. There's a difference.

There's been a Federal Court judge who has disagreed with our list on plastic pollution. We've already said we will appeal that.

You seem to forget there was also a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada—not an opinion, and not a Federal Court judge—that said the federal government can act on matters of pollution and, more specifically, on climate change pollution through carbon pricing, and that's exactly what we're doing. We're using similar mechanisms for electricity.

As for methane, I find it difficult to understand why the Province of Alberta would be against the new methane regulations when it has supported the previous ones. It's okay for us to develop methane regulations—

**The Chair:** Next up, we'll go to Madame Chatel.

I'm sorry I have to be strict at this point, but that's the way it is.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Conservatives would like to take us back to the stone age when it comes to climate action, but the world is moving forward with carbon pricing internationally. A lot of work is being done there. There are also border adjustments for carbon.

If we regress to the stone age of climate action, what will happen to our economy when we want to export our products to countries that have carbon pricing if we, by accident, no longer apply it?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's a great question.

I would be very curious to hear what the Conservative Party representatives have to say about this, given that the European Union and the United States of America, our largest trading partner, are developing this border tax. If Canada abolishes carbon pricing, we'll have a price imposed by the Europeans, the Americans and others who develop it. I would be curious to hear the Conservatives' comments.

They are going to jeopardize the economic prosperity of the country solely for ideological reasons, because they have no plan to fight climate change, since they don't really believe in it. You can't say that you believe in something if you aren't prepared to take action on it, yet that's the position the Conservative Party finds itself in. By acting irresponsibly, it's threatening Canada's economic prosperity and, of course, environmental prosperity, which affects the kind of planet we will pass on to our children and grandchildren.

• (1320)

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel:** That would mean job losses, but it would also mean an increase in the price of products. In terms of affordability, not following the major economies of the world would be a big step backwards for us.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It's difficult at this point to put a figure on the impact that the imposition of tariffs by the United States, the European Union and probably other countries would have on Canada. That said, there would definitely be an impact. That's quite clear.

Just look at what's happening with the softwood lumber tariffs, which are affecting thousands of jobs in Canada's forestry sector. Imagine the repercussions on a host of other sectors, from food to technology to auto parts. In Canada, all the sectors that export—

**The Chair:** We'll have to stop there because the member's time is up.

It's your turn, Ms. Pauzé, and you have about a minute.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I'm fixated on the numbers today, Mr. Minister.

The recent budget implementation provides \$83 billion in assistance to oil companies, including \$30.3 billion in tax credits. Oil companies are making record profits, and they don't need handouts. They can afford to invest. If they really believe in carbon capture and storage, they should take their profits and invest in this technology. But they're not doing that; they're taking taxpayers' money. The government is giving them taxpayers' money.

There have been 2,000 meetings of Canadian oil lobbies, and their influence is clear to see. Your government is giving them taxpayers' money, while the oil companies have ample means to make the investments needed to clean up their pollution. Don't you think that's scandalous?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** According to the World Trade Organization, a subsidy is an advantage given to a particular sector. However, the tax credits we've put in place for carbon capture and storage are not just an advantage for the oil and gas sector. It's available to all companies that want to use this technology. It won't be just for that sector, and companies will have to compete with others.

That's why we've eliminated fossil fuel subsidies. There's still public funding, which wasn't part of the G20 commitments. We're working on that, and Canada is the only G20 country that has committed to doing that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bachrach is next.

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

Minister, in 2021, your party promised to “introduce a Clean Electricity Standard [that will] achieve a 100% net-zero emitting electricity system by 2035.” However, I have an analysis here from ECCC showing that in 2035, according to your new policy, there are still going to be nine megatonnes of emissions on the grid.

How is retaining a grid that emits nine megatonnes per year net-zero?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** It is because those emissions will have to be compensated. The commitment was not to have a fossil fuel-free—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** No, but it says net-zero. They will have to be compensated by what?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** They will be compensated by different mechanisms—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** But what are the...?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —like offsets, for example, which are an agreed-upon mechanism as part of the Paris Agreement. Canada is making very—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** You're saying that those nine megatonnes will have to be offset using credible offsets in 2035.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** We're developing different protocols for offsets, which will not be specifically for—

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Those nine megatonnes will have to be offset.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** —the electricity sector. Our goal is to have a net-zero grid by 2035.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Those nine megatonnes will have to be offset.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** That's what we're working towards.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell is next.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Minister, we asked the first question about the environmental bill for your trip to Dubai. Very attentive people who follow our debates inform me that a return trip to Dubai generates 18.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. So I trust you to personally compensate for those emissions in your own way. It isn't up to the department to do so, but to you personally, since you were the one who went there. You will recall that, when you became minister, you said that you were going to cross Canada by train. I know you really believe in it, so show it with an approach to offset those 18.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Speaking of travel, the minister appointed a Canadian ambassador for climate change, Ms. Stewart. The QMI agency has reported quite spectacular figures in terms of travel. In her first year in office, Ms. Stewart made 23 trips abroad. Of course, she didn't go to Maine. She went to Paris, Lisbon, Rome, Florence, Abu Dhabi, Bali and London. She likes to travel. That's about one trip every two weeks. I understand that she is an ambassador and that, theoretically, she has to represent Canada. We understand that.

However, Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask you a question and have you answer it sincerely, since we know each other well. Does a bi-weekly trip make sense?

• (1325)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Mr. Deltell, if it weren't for international co-operation in the fight against climate change, we would be heading toward a world where temperature increases would be 4°C. All we see in terms of the impact of climate change is an increase of 1°C. Thanks to the Paris Agreement, we're heading toward warming of about 2.3°C instead of 4°C. It's on the record; you can read it in black and white.

Every tenth of a degree of reduction is billions of tonnes of pollution that will not end up in the atmosphere. I think it's worthwhile for our Canadian ambassador for climate change, who, by the way, is based in Europe precisely to have to limit her transatlantic travel—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Oh wow!

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** She is currently based in Germany, so going to London or Paris is a lot less distance for her than if I were the one going. So we made that policy decision.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** What is the environmental bill for her 23 trips, which you ultimately say aren't that bad? We think that's quite a lot. So what's the environmental bill? This information was reported in the media two weeks ago, and I can't believe that you don't know.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** This is where I strongly disagree with you, Mr. Deltell, because if it weren't for this international work and this international collaboration on the fight against climate change, there would be billions more tonnes of pollution in our atmosphere. I think that—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Is Ms. Stewart not familiar with Zoom and Teams?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I don't think anyone wins from that.

**The Chair:** Mr. van Koeverden.

After that round, it will be over.

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

[English]

I'd like to thank my colleague Mr. Deltell for re-tabling the CCPI report, because the rankings are one thing, and they are concerning. However, looking at how they arrived at those rankings and what the recommendations are is very important as well. The number one thing that they point to is that oil and gas production is on the rise. The emissions from that sector are the only ones that are on the rise in our economy, and they point to that as more or less the sole reason for our ranking.

Alberta is by far the highest, and they are constantly fighting the federal government in court regarding our jurisdiction to reduce those emissions, but as I said, the recommendations in the CCPI report that my colleague Mr. Deltell raises are the most important, so I'm going to list them, Minister, and I'd appreciate it if you could keep track and let me know which ones our federal government has a plan for.

Number one is a strong oil and gas emissions cap.

Number two is a fossil fuel phase-out from the provinces, one that supports workers.

Number three is an emissions reductions plan that is transparent.

Number four is a climate-aligned financial regulatory system.

Of those four, Minister, which ones do we have a plan for—a strong oil and gas emissions cap, a fossil fuel phase-out from the provinces that supports workers, an emissions reductions plan or a climate-aligned financial regulatory system?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** I hadn't seen those recommendations, but by the looks of it, we've either implemented or are in the process of implementing three of four.

We've announced a framework for the cap. We have an emissions reduction plan, which many have said was the most transparent and most complete in the world. Number two would obviously be in the provinces' court.

On the alignment of financial flows, the first thing we did was eliminate the fossil fuel subsidies, but we are working as per the fall economic statement to implement further measures on taxonomy and climate disclosure.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Thank you very much for that. Given the Conservatives' continual use of the CCPI report to advance their claims, I hope that they will also get behind those four recommendations.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I want to table this report, but unfortunately we are refused each and every time.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Minister, I want to thank you for being with us a little longer than expected.

I have to end the meeting, as we no longer have the resources to continue from here.

I'll see you later, colleagues.

I would like to wish everyone happy holidays, a good rest, and it will be a pleasure to see you in January.

The meeting is adjourned.

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