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• (1540)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone.

Welcome, Mr. Minister.

Ms. Pauzé, I'd like to point out that no one is participating in the meeting virtually, so it wasn't necessary to carry out the sound tests. The room is packed. I'd like to thank the representatives of the Department of the Environment for being here.

I think everyone knows the drill.

Mr. Minister, you have 10 minutes for your opening remarks. Then, we'll move on to questions from committee members.

The floor is yours, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you mentioned, I am accompanied by several people from the Department of the Environment, Parks Canada and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

[*English*]

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

I will provide you with an overview, after which my officials and I will be happy to answer your questions.

[*Translation*]

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.

Canadians have a lot on their plates. They are concerned about the cost of living, and rightly so. But climate change makes these issues worse. The cost of inaction is stark. If we ignore climate change, by 2025 we could see a \$25 billion annual slowdown in our economic growth, according to Canadian Climate Institute. That's why our climate plan is not just a plan for the environment; it's a plan for economic stability.

We can't talk about how to fight climate change without talking about nature. Nature-based solutions are a cornerstone of our climate action plan. Among other things, I'm thinking of the 2 billion

trees program, our nature smart climate solutions program, and the commitment to protect at least 30% of land and water by 2030, in partnership with indigenous peoples, provinces and territories.

Which brings me to the importance to work closely with indigenous peoples. They have long been leaders in environmental stewardship, sustainable development and the management of natural resources. We have a lot to learn from them.

We have committed to supporting indigenous leadership in conservation through programs like the indigenous-led natural climate solutions program, to help protect ecosystems, species and cultures for future generations.

The expenditures I will now present are in line with this urgent need for climate action and biodiversity protection.

Let me mention a few significant increases in the supplementary estimates (C) for six main initiatives.

First, an increase of \$18.5 million is planned for the implementation of the Canada Water Agency and the freshwater action plan. Fresh water sustains life on earth. It supplies drinking water, grows food and supports ecosystems. It's a resource we often take for granted here in Canada, but it is crucial to protect.

[*English*]

Farmers in B.C. and beyond and industry analysts say that dramatic swings in weather are hampering grain and other crop yields at a time when farmers are leaving the sector, and the only way forward is to adapt with technology.

[*Translation*]

The renewed and strengthened freshwater action plan will support regionally specific actions to restore and protect the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Winnipeg and other waterbodies from coast to coast to coast.

Next, an increase of \$5 million is planned to support the Africa adaptation initiative for the food security accelerator. Let's not forget that climate change and biodiversity loss do not respect borders. This contribution will build on Canada's efforts to tackle food insecurity by investing in a mechanism dedicated to growing innovative small and medium agricultural enterprises in Africa.

Furthermore, an increase of \$3.3 million is planned for the negotiation and implementation of indigenous rights-based agreements. Across Canada, first nations, Inuit and Métis communities are disproportionately affected by climate change. These communities know how to recognize signs of imbalance in the environment. This investment will allow the Government of Canada to implement the Musqueam Recognition Agreement with Musqueam Indian Band, and the Burrard Inlet Environmental Science and Stewardship Agreement with Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

In addition, an increase of \$3 million is planned to promote the health of Canada's priority at-risk whale population. This investment will help renew previous activities focused on protecting at-risk whales using evidence-based decision-making grounded by science and technology, and help renew whale programming, including the coordination, implementation and enforcement of management interventions.

Lastly, an increase of more than \$37 million is planned for wild-fire response requirements. This increase has assisted Parks Canada to partially offset the extraordinary expenditures of the 2023 wild-fire season that were required to respond to the unprecedented number and intensity of fires in the places across Canada that are administered by Parks Canada.

However, I must point out that Parks Canada's efforts have been felt well beyond the boundaries of the sites it administers.

[English]

For eight years, we've turned over every rock, looking for ways to cut Canada's carbon pollution and to clean our air and water while growing our economy, providing good jobs, and building out affordable and reliable clean energy. We will continue doing so for our children and their children.

Thank you for your time.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll now move on to questions. I would like to acknowledge the presence of Ms. Falk, who is replacing Mr. Leslie.

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

Ladies and gentlemen of the public service, it's always nice to see you, as well as you, Minister. It's always a pleasure to talk to you.

Mr. Minister, you started off by talking about the cost of living. Those were almost your first words. Cost of living, of course, means government spending, and that spending needs to be controlled.

Following a request for information from my colleague Mr. Mazier, we received a report on the expenditures made by Canada during its participation at the conference in Dubai on January 29. The figure doesn't include everything, since there was other information to come, but we're talking about a total expenditure of \$1,353,307.09. As far as you're concerned, Mr. Minister, your air transportation cost taxpayers \$13,239.83.

When you were on the plane going there, did you think about the cost of living for citizens?

• (1545)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you know very well, Mr. Deltell, the fight against climate change requires an international effort. There is no answer or solution to climate change if we do not work together, all of us, at the international level. Roughly speaking, the G20 countries account for about 80% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the world. So it requires a concerted effort.

There was record provincial participation in the Dubai conference. I'm thinking of Alberta in particular. It was the largest Alberta delegation in the history of our participation in these conferences. That was also the case for Saskatchewan. There was also very significant participation from a number of other provinces, including our own, Quebec. That explains the cost of Canada's participation in this conference.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Minister, my question was specifically about your plane trip, which cost Canadian taxpayers \$13,239.83.

Did you think about the cost of living for Canadians when you were on that plane, yes or no?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you know very well, government ministers are subject to very specific spending criteria, those of Treasury Board, and I follow them to the letter. They're essentially the same criteria as when the Conservative government was in power, and the same guidelines.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I don't think I ever saw an invoice for \$13,239.83 to attend a conference in Dubai at that time.

I would now like to turn to another topic, that of public spending.

What will your strategy be to offset all the greenhouse gas emissions that you, as minister, and your team generated to attend this conference on the other side of the world, in Dubai, in the middle of the desert? That's greenwashing, in my opinion.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I profoundly disagree with your characterization of Canada's international effort in the fight against climate change.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'm not talking about—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: If I may, Mr. Deltell, it was because of those efforts that Canada was able to play a leading role at COP26, COP27 and COP28, where I was one of eight facilitators. Out of 194 countries, the COP28 president chose Canada to be one of eight countries that will facilitate reducing greenhouse gas emissions by billions of tonnes.

Before 2015, we were heading towards a world where temperatures were going to rise by 4 degrees Celsius, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC. Now, thanks to the Paris Agreement and its implementation, we're moving towards a world where temperature increases would be in the order of 2.3 degrees Celsius. For every tenth of a degree Celsius less, we are talking about hundreds of billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases that will never be—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Minister—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —in the atmosphere. I think it's worth—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Yes, okay, that's fine—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —working internationally to be able to do that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'll talk about your record later, but for now, I'm asking you to tell us what your approach is to make up, in an environmentally friendly way, for the two weeks you spent in the middle of the desert in big air-conditioned hotels. I call it green-washing, clearing your conscience.

How much will you, as minister, pay to offset your CO₂ emissions during this trip?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I think reducing the anticipated temperature increase from 4 degrees to 2.3 degrees Celsius is a proud service to the Canadian people and to the global population as a whole.

Obviously, I didn't do it on my own; it's a joint effort, but we must do it together.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Let's talk about this joint effort.

You were at COP28 in Dubai, where Canada's real record was presented. After almost nine years of Liberal government, Canada is now ranked 62nd out of 67 countries in terms of effectiveness in fighting climate change.

Are you proud of that record? Are you proud to be the minister representing the country ranked 62nd?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I'm very proud to be Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, as you know very well, Mr. Deltell. I make a sustained effort every day to carry out this role.

You know very well that when we came to power in 2015, the forecast showed that Canada was going to miss its 2030 targets by at least 12%. Currently, according to the latest inventory of greenhouse gas emissions, we are 7% below 2015 levels. Missing that target is a legacy of your government and—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I just want to remind you—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —and the difference between the two is the equivalent of taking over 16 million vehicles off the road. So

imagine Canada with 16 million more vehicles on its roads and their impact on air and climate pollution.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: When you were an activist, Canada was ranked 58th. Since you've been minister, it's been ranked 62nd. Are you proud of that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You quite like—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It's because—

● (1550)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I know that you quite like referring to that report, and I imagine that you have read it in detail.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Martians didn't produce that report, scientists from around the world did, and we ranked 62nd.

The Chair: We'll allow the minister to answer. You don't have much time left, but go ahead. I'll give you a little more time.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I'm sure you've read the report in detail. You know very well why Canada's ranking is what it is in the report. The report explains that it's because of the increase in greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector. We're doing everything we can to reduce that impact, but unfortunately, your party is doing everything it can to oppose it.

The Chair: We'll stop there and go to Ms. Taylor Roy.

By the way, I'd like to welcome Mr. Scheer, who is joining us.

Ms. Taylor Roy, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Guilbeault, we are proud to have you as our minister of the environment. Thank you for the work you have been doing. We have made significant progress.

My question is actually around the supplementary estimates. I saw some additional money for the freshwater action plan. I was in my riding last week on Friday, where we were able to talk to a number of the groups that are very excited about funding they're going to be getting to help fight the phosphorus loading in Lake Simcoe, which I believe is part of that plan.

I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about the freshwater action plan and whether the Canada water agency is going to be responsible for that plan.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: The majority of our efforts in terms of the freshwater action plan were amalgamated in 2017 through that plan. Since then, and more specifically in budget 2023, we have invested \$650 million to strengthen the freshwater action plan, which is an historic investment in the history of our country for freshwater management and freshwater protection. This includes \$420 million over 10 years for the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes area, as well as a number of other bodies of water across the country. There is, however, a clear focus on the Great Lakes—and yes, the Canada water agency will be responsible for implementing the elements of the freshwater action plan as well as managing those investments announced in budget 2023.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you.

To follow up on that, in talking to the environmental groups, the conservation authorities and the activists last Friday, it was clear that there is a lot of work to be done to address the damage that has been done to our lakes and our freshwater bodies.

How will this freshwater action plan address stopping further degradation of these water bodies? Will this money and the agency also be used to ensure that no further damage is done?

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

In my initial remarks, I talked about the fact that we hold about 20% of the world's freshwater reserves. I think that sometimes we tend to take it for granted, but right now, as we speak, in Alberta they're having to ration water for residents, for farmers and for the private sector, for companies. We have farmers not just in Alberta but in the Prairies who are selling their livestock because of the droughts. They just can't feed them or give them enough water.

Despite the fact that we're a nation that's rich in fresh water, we have to do a lot of work to protect it and to ensure that, moving forward, with the activities we have—especially the industrial activities, but also in the agriculture sector—we put in place measures that will minimize the impact on our freshwater reserves.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you.

The Chippewas of Georgina Island actually live on Lake Simcoe, on Georgina Island. I think indigenous knowledge is very important to pay attention to here. We often talk about fresh water as a resource or a commodity, whereas for them it's very different: It really is life. I appreciate the work that's being done through the Canada water agency.

I'd like to turn now to nature-based climate solutions, because I noticed we also had funding for that. How is Canada encouraging nature-based climate solutions, not just here but also globally?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As part of our COP26 Glasgow commitment, in which countries like Canada and many of our G20 partners were encouraged to step up to the plate when it comes to climate financing, we did that. We doubled our climate finance commitment to \$5.3 billion over five years. We dedicated 20% of that to nature-based solutions.

We know that in the fight against climate change, our biggest and strongest ally is nature. When we protect a wetland that will filter our water, it will do so at roughly a sixth of the cost of building a plant to do it. Once you've protected the wetland, you don't have

maintain it. You don't have to invest in keeping it up to date the way you would have to do with a plant. Unfortunately, we can't do that all the time, but whenever we can use nature, it is the best investment in the fight against climate change.

I can talk about a number of our initiatives. Basically, \$1 billion of our climate financing will go to nature-based solutions. I recently made an announcement of \$15 million to support the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance and the Global Fund for Coral Reefs. We know that coral reefs are being heavily impacted by climate change.

There are a number of initiatives that Canada is broadly supporting here, obviously, in terms of nature-based solutions.

• (1555)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Fantastic.

I think I have time for one more quick question.

In Ontario, my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill is in the Greenbelt, on the Oak Ridges moraine, where there are a lot of very sensitive areas—not just hydrologically sensitive, but also other green areas. I've found that the provincial government currently seems to be going in the opposite direction from us. How can we work more effectively with the provincial governments to try to ensure that we move in the same direction and preserve these green spaces and don't build highways like the Bradford bypass or the 413 through farmland and wetlands and over rivers? Do you have any thoughts on that?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we'll have to work that answer into another answer at some point.

We'll go now to Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, thank you for being here with us. Welcome to the committee.

I would also like to thank all the officials who are with you.

You talked a lot about water with Ms. Taylor Roy. So I'm going to ask you about that.

I would like to talk to you specifically about the water from Chalk River, where the well-known near-surface disposal facility is located. The site has been off limits to the public for at least the past 80 years. The site is very close to the Ottawa River. It's an environment that provides a source of drinking water for millions of Quebecers, as well as large mammals.

You're going to tell me that issues related to Chalk River and nuclear waste are your colleague Mr. Wilkinson's responsibility. However, some aspects affect the environment, including faunal richness, which is remarkable; the forest is home to three species of endangered bats, migratory birds at risk and active black bear dens. In addition, a wetland is home to Blanding's turtles, which Canada has identified as an endangered species since 2006. The Species at Risk Act is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and it's directly related to the Chalk River disposal facility.

Mr. Minister, are you going to intervene so that at least a regional environmental impact assessment is done for this project, which I feel I should qualify as senseless?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As you said at the beginning of your question, Ms. Pauzé, that project falls under the Department of Energy and Natural Resources. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is responsible for conducting public consultations and the impact assessment, as provided for in the federal Impact Assessment Act.

We absolutely operated under the federal impact assessment legislation for that project. The assessment and public consultations took a number of years.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: The fact remains that certain aspects of Chalk River are the Department of the Environment's responsibility.

A number of stakeholders have called for a regional impact assessment for the area around Chalk River, including the Ottawa River, which borders part of Quebec and part of Ontario.

Once again, everyone is working in silos. This involves the Department of the Environment, Indigenous Services Canada and the Department of Natural Resources. All three departments are involved.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I agree with you, but what's true for the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is, generally speaking, also true for the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. When the agency conducts an impact assessment, it also holds public consultations—we could say that this doesn't necessarily concern the environment. Efforts are being made to reconcile with indigenous peoples. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is mandated under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to assess nuclear projects. It has the expertise. According to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which was passed in 2019, it's responsible for that, not only for the nuclear component, but also for public consultations and compliance with federal environmental law. Just because that agency is doing it doesn't mean the environment isn't considered.

• (1600)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: There were 140 municipalities that rejected the project, and all the indigenous communities rejected it as well. I was told in the House that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is independent. If I wasn't elected to take the people into account, to work on behalf of the people and their health and to protect the environment, then I don't know what I'm doing here. I'm a little disappointed in your answer, but I'll move on to another question.

I'd like to talk about the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. I met with representatives of two indigenous nations that are distressed by Imperial Oil's presence and neglect. For 20 years, they've been asking the department and Health Canada to conduct investigations in their region to shed light on the impact of toxic substances dumped in the Athabasca River.

Can you explain to me why these communities are not being heard? Representatives of these communities came to my office to tell me that the government was ignoring the communities. The requests were urgent, and they go back more than 20 years, but nothing is happening.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Since I became Minister of the Environment, that is to say for the past two and a half years, I have probably had around 10 meetings with representatives of those communities. A few weeks ago, I met with representatives of the Mikisew Cree First Nation. We have set up a working committee on the issue of settling ponds. This committee is made up of federal and indigenous representatives.

I don't know if I can call it a white paper, but we released a first report last summer and, if memory serves, it proposes more than a dozen measures that could be put in place to address the problems in these ponds. This has never been done in the history of the country. This is the first time that a federal government has sat down with indigenous people to find a permanent solution to the issue surrounding these ponds.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: It has to do with health. The chief appeared before the committee. He told us that he hadn't been able to meet with the Minister of Health. He met with someone from cabinet, but he wasn't able to meet with the Minister of Health. It seems to me that this directly involves the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health.

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, your time is up.

Ms. Collins, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

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

Thank you to the minister and to all the officials for coming today.

Minister, you talked about how Canadians are concerned about the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis. You mentioned the \$25-billion slowdown in our economy that is expected because of climate change.

Last night, hundreds of youth from across Canada joined us for a town hall on a youth climate corps. We had MPs from across party lines—Ms. May and Mr. van Koeverden were in attendance—and there is a real appetite from young people for this kind of transformative program. They really want an answer.

If this government is serious about tackling the climate crisis and supporting young people in entering into the jobs of the future, are you considering funding something like this?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I've met many of those, including one of the instigators of this proposal, Mr. Klein, just a few weeks ago. It wasn't my first meeting with him, obviously. I think the proposal has merit, but I would somewhat beg to differ with the characterization of your question: We are supporting youth employment in environmental issues every year.

Not doing this doesn't mean we're doing nothing, and this certainly looks like an interesting project. I'm not the Minister of Finance. This is.... We are studying the possibility of supporting that project.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I'm glad to hear you're considering it and I hope you meet with young people. We have hundreds of young people across Canada who joined in-person watch parties, and they are passionate about making a difference. They're worried about the climate crisis. They want to get engaged. This is a really tangible way to do that.

Last year when you were here around this time, I asked you about the Trans Mountain pipeline. At the time, the costs had ballooned to \$30.9 billion. This year, the costs have risen even more, bringing the total to \$34 billion. At the time, I asked you if you thought purchasing the Trans Mountain pipeline was a mistake. You said you couldn't answer and that would be a question for the Minister of Finance. I'm curious if now, a year later, with costs rising even more, you believe that purchasing the Trans Mountain pipeline was a mistake.

• (1605)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I would unfortunately give you the same answer I gave you last time. This is a question that you should ask the finance minister. The environment minister is not responsible for the financing of—

Ms. Laurel Collins: You are part of this government. You sit at the cabinet table. You make decisions with this government. Do you think it's a mistake?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Again, I would suggest you ask this question of the Minister of Finance about this project and the financing of this project.

Ms. Laurel Collins: That answer makes me think that deep down, you believe that it was a mistake to purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline, but you're not willing or you don't have the courage to say it. This is what we've seen from—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Your words—

Ms. Laurel Collins: This is what we've seen from your government time and time again. You might believe in climate change, but you're not willing to take the action required.

This government has continued to invest billions of dollars in carbon capture and storage, which maybe would be fine if the money were going just to direct air capture projects for hard-to-reduce emissions like steel and cement, but you're handing that money to big oil and gas companies that are making record profits.

Why would you not exclude them from the carbon capture and storage tax breaks so that those billions of dollars could be invested in climate solutions and those companies that have been fuelling the climate crisis could pay to clean up their own pollution?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I disagree with the characterization of your question again. We've done more—and you've heard that from many environmental leaders in this country, who've recognized publicly that we've done more—than any other government to fight climate change—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Environmental leaders have been calling on you to stop funding carbon capture and storage, to stop handing out billions of dollars—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I believe it's a convention to allow the minister to use exactly the amount of time at least as the question takes—

Ms. Laurel Collins: I think it's actually mentioned that it's my time—

The Chair: We don't actually function that way in this committee. It's a little more freewheeling—

Ms. Laurel Collins: —and I think the minister can defend himself—

The Chair: Excuse me.

We don't actually function that way in this committee. It's a little more freewheeling.

I stopped the clock. Where were we? Was the minister answering?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I was going to answer, with your permission, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, please.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Someone who used to advise your party, as well as other NDP parties in this country, has said in a public interview that.... When asked what people would remember of our government, he said that it's the first government to ever take climate change seriously in the history of Canada. This is someone who used to work for the NDP, not someone who worked for the Liberals.

I think a lot of people out there see that we're doing more than anyone has ever done to fight climate change, but you and I would agree that we need to do more. We could certainly agree on that.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I would hope that we could find agreement that we want to stop handing out billions of dollars to profitable oil and gas companies, but I haven't heard that agreement from you or from your party. Unfortunately, carbon capture and storage is just another giveaway to big oil and gas, much like buying a pipeline, which now costs taxpayers \$34 billion. Those billions of dollars should be going into real climate solutions.

I do want to ask you—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: A few weeks ago, I met with the leader of the company that's doing direct air capture. The tax credits for carbon capture and storage are not industry-specific—

Ms. Laurel Collins: If you'd left it to them, if you'd excluded oil and gas from receiving this, great, but you didn't. You decided to include oil and gas companies in this tax credit. That was a choice. It is a choice by a government that continues to funnel—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —because we need to decarbonize every sector of our economy—

Ms. Laurel Collins: —public money into the pockets of oil and gas CEOs.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, go ahead. I'll give you a little extra time.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: A fossil fuel subsidy as defined by the World Trade Organization is money from government going to a specific sector which gives that sector advantage over others from a financial or economic point of view. That's not what we're doing with carbon capture and storage. It's open to every sector where this technology could be applied: cement, steel, aluminum, electricity production, direct air capture and, yes, also oil and gas.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Mazier to start off the five-minute round.

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

Minister, you mentioned the cost of living. Seven out of 10 provinces oppose your government's plan to increase the carbon tax by 23%. Seventy per cent of all Canadians oppose your government's plan to increase the carbon tax by 23%. Do you still plan to hike the carbon tax on April 1, yes or no?

• (1610)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As the Supreme Court said in its ruling two years ago, it's not a tax; it's a pricing mechanism. It doesn't go back into general revenue of the government. It's revenue neutral, and all of the money collected goes back—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Minister—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —but yes, we will move ahead with the increase of carbon pricing, as well as the rebate, on April 1.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Since you were elected, can you name one federal policy that was opposed by seven provincial governments?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Can you repeat the question? Sorry.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Can you name one federal policy since you were elected that was opposed by seven provincial governments?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I could probably think of a few, but you're looking for.... I'm not sure how this is relevant to the supplementary estimates (C). Perhaps you can specify.

Mr. Dan Mazier: It has to do with talking about carbon pricing. There was only one policy that was rejected by seven provinces, and it's your failed carbon policy, Minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Many provinces oppose many things we're trying to do on the environment, which is not a reason that we shouldn't be doing them.

Many provinces opposed impact assessments. They opposed the idea that we should look at climate change when looking at the impacts of projects. I profoundly disagree with that position. They opposed including indigenous nations when we do the impact assessments of projects. I profoundly disagree with that. That's a clear example. Many provinces—more provinces than on pricing, actually—were opposed to it, and we decided to continue going forward with it.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Minister, the Chiefs of Ontario represent over 130 first nations. They say your carbon tax is making life unaffordable. Are they wrong?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: There are many different views within indigenous communities in Canada on carbon pricing. Some of them support it. Some of them don't.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Those 130 first nations say your carbon tax is making life unaffordable. Are they wrong?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As I said, there are more than 630 or 640 indigenous nations in Canada. Some of them support carbon pricing. Some of them don't.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Despite Canadians asking—right across this country, seven provinces, 130 first nations in Ontario, 70% of Canadians—it's very clear that you're just not listening to Canadians, Minister, when it comes to this carbon tax.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We've done two elections where carbon pricing was.... In fact, your own party during the last election ran on a campaign to put in place carbon pricing. We listened to Canadians. We said we would do that—

Mr. Dan Mazier: That's about two years ago. I'm talking about—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —in the 2021 election, and we're doing it. We got elected on a platform to put in place a pricing mechanism.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You promised not to raise it as well, Minister, so—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's simply not true.

That's simply not true—

The Chair: I think we're getting sidetracked. I think the points have been made.

Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Minister, when was the last time you filled up your car with gas?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It's a well-known fact that I don't own a car. It's public knowledge. My service vehicle is a fully electric vehicle, as are the vehicles of many cabinet ministers now.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Sir, have you ever owned a personal vehicle?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I've never owned a personal vehicle, which is also a well-known fact.

Mr. Dan Mazier: You're increasing the price of gas without personally understanding the consequences of your policy.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's—

Mr. Dan Mazier: I just can't believe—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: This may come as a shock to you, but I know people who own cars.

Mr. Dan Mazier: That wasn't a question. It was a statement—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: This may sound incredible, but I know people who own cars, and I speak with them on a regular.... I have family members—brothers and sisters—who own cars, and I speak with them on a regular basis, believe it or not. I know this sounds surprising, but it's true, and you can verify that information.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Minister, you stated, and I quote, “The government does not measure the annual amount of emissions that are directly reduced by federal carbon pricing.” Why are you increasing the carbon tax if you don't measure the direct results?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: The question was about the movement of individuals in Canada, including cabinet ministers.

As you know, or you should know, there is an annual document that is published by the Government of Canada, the greenhouse gas inventory, which is a detailed document that measures the emissions by sector, by province. It's been going on for I don't know how many years—probably more than 20 years now—and it's usually published around April. There was one last year. There will be another inventory this year. I'd be happy for the department to—

Mr. Dan Mazier: Minister, I asked you—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, we have to stop there.

Mrs. Chatel, the floor is yours.

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

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here with us. I would also like to thank your fine team.

I, too, am very proud of the work that all of you do.

I wanted to go back to what you said in your opening remarks. You were talking about the key role indigenous peoples are playing to help reach Canada's biodiversity goals and targets, for example. I know, because we talked about it. We worked with your team.

You've produced concrete results. You've allocated budgets to projects. Outaouais may be one of the first regions in Canada to have an action plan to achieve the targets. This plan will be led by the Anishinabe community of Kitigan Zibi. That's because of you. It's because of the work you're doing and the priority you're putting on it. As the saying goes, you walk the talk. Thank you.

I invite you to tell that story in other regions that would like to have a plan like that. What will the programs you've implemented with indigenous peoples actually do for Canada?

• (1615)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We've put in place a series of programs. I'm thinking in particular of the indigenous guardians program. That said, there are also indigenous-led conservation programs. Several hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars have been invested in conservation.

Last week we signed an agreement with the Nunatsiavut government to protect the marine conservation area right next to Torngat Mountains National Park, so the northeast tip of Labrador. Just before the holidays, we signed an agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the indigenous governments of the Northwest Territories. At the end of the day, there will be a million square kilometres of new protected areas. That's four times the size of Great Britain. We have a number of projects. The vast majority of conservation projects are led by indigenous people.

Mrs. Chatel, I congratulate you because you were very involved in the project with Kitigan Zibi. We've been there to support that on our side.

Partnership with indigenous peoples is essential if we want to achieve our nature conservation goals, but also to fight climate change.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you.

In your opening remarks, you talked about the Canada Water Agency and what it can do for farmers. I have a number of farmers in my riding. In fact, last week, I toured a number of farms.

You're right, farmers are concerned about climate change. It greatly increases their stress levels. There's also the issue of water levels. You were talking earlier about livestock. How can the Canada Water Agency concretely support our farmers in the face of this new situation caused by climate change?

As you said, 2024 may be the hottest year ever. We know that farmers are on the front lines of climate change.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes, there have been many studies.

I was in Nova Scotia last week and met with some farmers. Hurricane Fiona, which destroyed fields for cattle and dairy farms, pastures that were used to produce food, resulted in damages of hundreds of thousands of dollars per farm. That is just one catastrophe, not to mention the flooded fields. Nova Scotia has had the worst flooding in its history and the worst forest fires.

Climate change has many effects, and they differ widely from one part of the country to the other. In some places, there is not enough water, such as in the Prairies, with the long-standing drought. The east fared a bit better. The situation in British Columbia is very problematic. The entire winegrowing industry was hard hit by climate change once again this year. The effects of climate change on the agriculture sector are getting worse every year.

And yet the Conservative Party's response is to create more pollution and to make it free, to have more climate change and effects of climate change, as well as eliminating assistance programs for agriculture. I think that response lacks judgment.

• (1620)

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I would also like to confirm something about dairy farms so that Canadians clearly understand the consequences of climate change. If there is not enough food for the cows because of dry pastures, for instance, there are very clear repercussions, and not just for one season. Those cows cannot produce milk or give birth.

The Chair: We have to stop there, Ms. Chatel.

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

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I have a quick question for you, minister, which should be easy to answer.

When Bill S-5 finally received royal assent last year, the government said it was planning to update the toxic substances management policy.

Where are we at with that?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I do not have that information with me.

Mr. Moffet, do you have the information on hand?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Since he has the information, I will ask him in the second hour.

Minister, I would like to talk about the emissions cap, a promise made in 2021, as we know. Yet it appears that we will essentially have nothing until 2030. Multinationals will be granted emissions rights, the same companies that racked up record profits in 2022.

The minister's natural allies have made their position known. According to the David Suzuki Foundation, "the framework allows industry to bypass real emissions reduction." According to Équiterre, "the framework lacks ambition and rigour. There are too many loopholes." According to Greenpeace, "This isn't yet the ambitious emissions cap we need to set us on a path to the full ... phase-out of fossil fuels."

I would like to ask you something. Your colleague, the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development, pointed out that his

meetings with lobbyists from the Pathways Alliance were valuable for drafting the details of the cap.

Did you meet with those lobbyists? Were they as important to you as they were to the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: The Minister of Employment and Workforce Development was not involved in developing the framework, except for the decision made in cabinet; it was the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change who was responsible for that. So I am not sure what you are referring to.

I do not have the press releases from Équiterre or the David Suzuki Foundation in front of me, but I think if you look at the beginning of each of those press releases, you will see that they welcomed the tabling of the regulatory framework for capping greenhouse gas emissions. As with other environmental groups in general, they would like to see more. I know how it is because I was part of environmental groups for 25 years. If you have them with you, you could share them—

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I have some excerpts of the press releases. In the Greenpeace one, the initial remarks are not positive. Greenpeace stated that it was not really the emissions cap—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You have excerpts. Greenpeace Canada's response was not the same as that of Greenpeace Québec.

The Chair: We have to agree that the time is up.

Ms. Collins has the floor now.

[*English*]

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

I want to ask the minister about forestry.

You mentioned the \$35 million to respond to forest fires. Do you have a sense of how much forest fires and wildfires are costing Canadians right now?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I don't think we have the cost yet. I think this is still being costed out. We would be happy to provide that information to the committee when it's available.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I would love to see the government's analysis.

In 2023, 18.5 million hectares of forest burned in wildfires across Canada. That is astronomical and unprecedented, more than double the area in the last worst wildfire season.

Without counting the health costs and the costs of damages on private property, there was a report saying that it cost about a billion dollars. While \$35 million sounds like a lot, it may not be enough to tackle this huge issue that Canadians are facing. People are being evacuated from their homes. We are seeing kids choking on smoke.

One of the proposals that we put forward is a national firefighting force, a force that could respond to wildfires. We know that fighting forest fires is a provincial responsibility, but crews get quickly overwhelmed when we have unprecedented fires, and we are going to see more and more unprecedented wildfire seasons. They could also work year-round thinning forests and doing the kind of management that will hopefully prevent some of the catastrophic impacts.

I'm curious about where your government is on this proposal.

• (1625)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I'll answer your question, but you understand that the \$35 million was specific to the work that Parks Canada did in fighting forest fires last season. It's not the entirety of the federal government's response to the cost of the forest fires. A lot of this will come from the ministry for emergency preparedness. We have a number of funds that are there to help and support Canadians.

The reality is that—

Ms. Laurel Collins: I would—

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —most of the money that has been spent by those funds has been spent in the last 10 years. The funds have been in place for—

Ms. Laurel Collins: I'd love to hear just the answer to the question about the proposal.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You may have heard the Prime Minister last June when he was asked a similar question—

The Chair: Please be very brief.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: It could be either a federal force for fighting forest fires or something like FEMA in the U.S., a national intervention force that could help with natural catastrophes. The Prime Minister has said that this is something that is interesting and that we're looking at it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Scheer, you have five minutes.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Thank you very much.

I have a few very brief questions. The answers should be yes or no, so just out of respect for my time, I ask the minister to keep his answers short.

Minister, do you have confidence in the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Yes, I have confidence in him.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Do you believe in his economic and fiscal report and the facts he finds?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In his reports on climate change, specifically the one on pollution pricing, he stated that he had not considered the impact of climate change in his analysis.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I'm sorry—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I do not share the opinion he stated in his analysis of pollution pricing.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: You're saying that you disagree with his findings on the cost of the carbon tax.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That's right, I do not agree with him. I have said that publicly before. This is not my first time saying it.

Further, he himself admits that his analysis does not include the impact of climate change.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Thank you, Minister.

On page 3 of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's findings, he states that in 2023-24, the average family in Alberta will pay \$2,466 in total costs. When you factor in the direct and all the secondary effects in the economy, it will cost the average family in Alberta \$2,466. Can you tell me what the rebate will be in Alberta?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Obviously, I am the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and not the Parliamentary Budget Officer. If you have questions for him—

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I'm sorry—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —you can certainly ask him.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Minister—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You will find some figures on the finance department website.

Your question was about Alberta—

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: For Alberta, in 2023-24—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: You can find that information on the finance department website. The cost per household is \$1056.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: With all due respect, Minister, it's a simple question. The cost is \$2,466.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: The rebate is \$1,700, which means a difference of about \$700 for families.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I'm sorry. Can you just repeat that? What is the rebate in Alberta?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: On the finance department website, you will find a table that we can of course provide to the committee. The average cost of carbon pricing is \$1056 per household. The annual rebate is \$1779, for a net benefit of \$723.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: What you have done there is you've just excluded all those secondary costs. You're not talking about the total costs of the carbon tax. The total cost of the carbon tax in Alberta is going to be \$2,466. You just said, I think, that the rebate was \$1,756. Which number is bigger? Is it \$2,466 or \$1,756?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: The most important figure is the average cost of the impacts of climate change. In Canada, it is \$2 billion annually—

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: You and your government—

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: That \$2 billion is more than all the amounts you mentioned.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: —are trying to pretend that the rebate covers the total costs of the carbon tax. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has found, has concluded, after studying all the impacts—the direct costs but also the secondary costs, as producers and shippers and retailers have to raise their prices—that it costs families.

I'll move on to Ontario. It will cost the average working family in Ontario \$1,363. Can you tell me what the rebate will be for a family in Ontario?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: In his analysis, the Parliamentary Budget Officer himself admits that he did not take into account the impacts of climate change that we are all paying for, whether you like it or not, Mr. Scheer.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: That's not what the question was. It's just a simple question. What is the rebate for a family in Ontario?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I will forward the information from the finance department to the committee. Their website is public.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: You and all your Liberal colleagues were waving these cards around in the House just a couple of days ago. You were carrying them around, and then we started pointing out that the rebate is actually less than the costs, and suddenly those cards have all disappeared, and you're not waving them around quite as much as you used to.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I did not agree with the PBO's report last year, and I still disagree.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Minister, you stated—

[Translation]

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

[English]

The Chair: Okay, we need a break. It's like in wrestling: Everyone go to your corner.

I've stopped the clock. I don't know where we're at now. It is a chicken-and-egg thing. Does the question come first or the answer?

Go ahead, Mr. Scheer. Let's try to not all speak at the same time.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: The minister stated a falsehood a few moments ago when answering my colleague. He said that the Liberal government, under this Prime Minister, had never promised that the carbon tax wouldn't go up. That is false.

In 2019 your predecessor, Catherine McKenna, promised—she stated—that the carbon tax would not go up beyond \$50 a tonne. Can you tell—

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We had a general election in 2021—

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: On a point of order, Mr. Chair—

Hon. Andrew Scheer: That was not a question.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order.

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

We're here to talk to the minister about the estimates. I am curious as to whether carbon pricing is in the estimates. Is this relevant?

The Chair: Is it relevant? Carbon pricing is an important economic and environmental issue and it no doubt impacts government decisions that are reflected in the estimates. I think it would be good to give the minister a chance to answer something.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: On a point of order, I wasn't asking a question; I was stating a fact.

The Chair: Okay.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: There's really nothing for the minister to respond to unless he wants to reflect on why he stated a falsehood, but he doesn't need to do that right yet and take that out of my time.

I do have a question, though.

The Chair: Go ahead, because you're running out of time.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I hope these points of order aren't coming out of my time.

Can you promise Canadians today that the carbon tax will not go up beyond \$170 a tonne? Can you make that commitment?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: As I pointed out earlier, it is not a tax, and the Supreme Court was very clear about that. It is a fee system.

Either you agree with the Supreme Court or you don't. I have often heard your party refer to Supreme Court decisions.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Whatever word you want to use, will you axe the price? Will it ever go up beyond \$170 a tonne? Can you promise that it will not go higher than \$170 a tonne?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Our commitment was to increase it to \$170 per tonne by 2030—

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Sir, can you make that promise?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: —and we have not made any commitments for subsequent phases.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: You cannot commit that it won't go higher.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: We have not made any commitment one way or the other.

The Chair: It is Mr. Longfield's turn now.

You have the floor, Mr. Longfield.

[English]

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

Thank you to the minister and to the officials for being here. It's fantastic to see the team in person.

I want to go back to the estimates, particularly around the science investments and the transfer to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and biophysical sciences.

I was at an event in my riding last week with Dr. Paul Hebert. He was awarded the Benjamin Franklin Medal for Earth and Environmental Science for his work on biodiversity. He is one of only four Canadians in 200 years to receive the medal. He's developed a system for tracking DNA whether it's in the air, in the water or in parts of DNA sequencing from animals.

I know, Minister, that you've been involved with the global biodiversity framework. In 2022 we hosted COP15, and I know you were involved with the international partners to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Dr. Hebert is working on monitoring the biodiversity loss. In fact, he's looking at it as a life forecast, not a weather forecast, and he's developing a platform for that. Could you share with the committee how the government is working with the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you for the question.

COP15, which led to the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework, is referred to by many journalists, scientists and activists as “the Paris moment for nature”.

The first time the conference of nations committed to protecting at least 30% of lands and waters by 2030, 30% was not a number that came out of a hat: It was based on the equivalent of the IPCC research, but for biodiversity. Obviously it's not a ceiling; it's a floor. It's at least 30% of lands and waters.

When we came into power in 2015, Canada was not even protecting 1% of its oceans and coastlines. We're now at almost 15% and on our way to meeting our 2030 target of 30%. We're a little below 14% for terrestrial, and we've invested massively since 2021, with \$4 billion for nature protection, including \$2.3 billion over five years for Canada's enhanced nature legacy, under which we have signed an agreement with a number of provinces and territories, including Nova Scotia, Yukon and B.C.. We have made an historic announcement regarding our commitment to work together to achieve 30% by 2030, and we are working with a number of other jurisdictions on these bilateral agreements.

We are investing historic amounts, but it's not just about investment. We have to work with partners. I was talking with MP Chatel earlier about indigenous-led conservation, which is a cornerstone, but we also need to, and want to, work with our provincial and territorial colleagues on that.

● (1635)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Thank you.

I was very interested in the transfer to NSERC and how Environment and Climate Change Canada is working with other departments. Dr. Hebert said that we can get DNA from our weather forecasting using existing equipment. Is that science going to Industry and Innovation or is it going to Environment and Climate Change?

It's about how departments interact and try to come together around science. I chair the science and research committee, and it's something near and dear to me. Could you comment on the science that's going on in the government departments and how they're working together with guidance from your folks?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: I think J.F. would like to take this one, if you'll allow me.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Absolutely.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment): We have departments that are really science-based departments. Environment is one of them. There are committees among the departments that are really important and significant from a science perspective.

We of course share a common agenda. Our scientists work together. We try to encourage them more and more to do that, even sometimes in sharing the same labs in the same place so that the ideas can come together and we can avoid duplication. That's constantly what we're trying to achieve.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Well, I'll be in touch. Guelph has the largest DNA data repository in the world now. There is a lab in India that's being named after Dr. Hebert for his pioneering work. I'm trying to find room for him to try to join the conversation.

The Chair: That's very interesting.

I want to thank the minister for making himself available and exchanging thoughts with us.

We'll take a very short break. We'll continue with the ministry representatives at the table to answer questions.

[Translation]

Thank you for your time, minister.

We will take a short break now.

• (1635)

(Pause)

• (1640)

The Chair: Order.

We will begin right away so we can finish on time.

We will have two rounds of questions.

Mr. Kram, you have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today.

I'll start with Deputy Minister Tremblay.

Just before Christmas, the Regina food bank released a report that said one in four children in Regina was food insecure. That's a polite way of saying that they don't have enough to eat. Prior to now and prior to last Christmas, were you aware that one in four children in Regina was food insecure?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm not sure I had the numbers for Regina. I spent a lot of time on the issues of the food banks when I was the deputy minister of ESDC, because that was part of the mandate. Like any Canadian, I'm quite concerned by this issue of affordability. I'm quite pleased to see that inflation is going down a bit. I hope it's going to continue that way.

Yes, I was aware of that. More and more, food banks are asking.... They are actually saying that they have needs that are higher than what they have experienced over the last few years, for sure.

Mr. Michael Kram: I should have been clearer. I didn't necessarily mean you personally, off of the top of your head, but your department: Do you keep track of rising food bank use in different provinces or different metropolitan areas?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I don't think the department is necessarily the one responsible to track those things. I would like them to track the indicators on the environment, which is their core responsibility, but they're aware and take it into consideration, of course. The rest of the departments do that too, on any measures we're taking, and the impacts on the rest of the population.

Mr. Michael Kram: This April 1, we're going to see a 23% increase in the carbon tax. Does the department have any modelling that would tell us how big an increase in food bank use will result from a 23% increase in the carbon tax?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We don't have impacts, necessarily, on what happens with food banks. We have the Bank of Canada, which said that the impact of the carbon pricing on inflation was actually very, very small. Inflation is due to other factors that actually are way more significant than the carbon pricing.

Mr. Michael Kram: Why does Environment and Climate Change Canada not track something like that?

One has to understand that environmental policies don't impact only the environment; they impact the cost of living and Canadians' day-to-day lives. Why would food bank use be a metric that your department would not keep track of?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We do work with other departments. The numbers the minister showed previously, for example, were from Finance. We work with Finance. We work with ESDC. We work with other departments. They analyze the impacts of all measures. When we go to cabinet, this information circulates among departments, and everybody has a chance to get in and talk about the impacts.

That's one of the reasons the carbon pricing has been managed the way it has. If you look at the rebate, it is higher for 80% of the families who are paying. The way it's framed is to make sure that the ones who are impacted by affordability are the ones receiving more in terms of their return, and the ones who can pay are the ones who are paying. The redistribution that came with carbon pricing was precisely to limit any impact it would have on the poor population—most of them don't drive cars, to be honest.

• (1645)

Mr. Michael Kram: Let me put it this way: When the carbon tax goes up 23% in a couple of weeks, how many more Canadians will become food insecure and how many more Canadians will have to turn to food banks?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: When the carbon pricing increases, 80% of people who receive more money than they pay through the tax will receive even more money. If you look at the numbers the minister presented, they increased compared to last year. Money doesn't stay in the government's pocket; it's sent back.

Mr. Michael Kram: You're guessing that the carbon tax increase on April 1 will result in fewer people going to food bank. Is that—

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I don't do that. That's not the work I do. What I'm saying is that from a purely mathematical perspective, the money that comes from carbon pricing is going back to Canadians. It's going back to a redistribution that makes sure that people who are in worse conditions get more, people who are in rural areas get more and people who are in first nation, Inuit and Métis communities get more too.

Mr. Michael Kram: Okay, but you are aware that the rebates are going to be less than the actual cost when one considers the direct and indirect costs of the carbon tax.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: The minister told you about the numbers from the.... I beg to disagree with the PBO on this.

What can I tell you? As I said, I don't disagree with the Bank of Canada, which says carbon pricing has a very limited impact—I think it was 0.2% or 0.3%—on inflation.

Mr. Michael Kram: Earlier, we heard that the minister disagreed with the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Do you also disagree with the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We have a methodological issue with him. With the way he calculated it, if he doesn't take that into account.... I trust he is using the right numbers, but we would take into account the cost of climate change. It's the same thing when he doesn't take into account the investments from businesses to green their businesses or invest in clean energy, which also creates jobs and creates growth in the economy.

There are multiple factors at play. We cannot just select one and not the others.

Mr. Michael Kram: To summarize, if I heard you correctly, Environment and Climate Change Canada has methodological issues with the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Is that what I understood?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Let's say we would take that into account, because we are the Department of the Environment and we think the costs....

I've been the deputy minister of other departments and managed emergency issues. The costs of managing emergency issues have increased significantly in departments—

The Chair: I think the point has been made on both sides.

Ms. Laurel Collins: On a point of order, or a point of clarification, I heard the official mention that “most of them don't drive cars”. I wonder if he can follow up in writing with—

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: We can. We actually published our difference with the PBO at the time, so we can share it with the committee.

As the minister said, it's not something new. It's something that's been said before, but we would be more than happy to share that.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to Mr. van Koeverden for six minutes, please.

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

As I was listening to the previous question, I was reflecting on the meetings that I've had and hosted with organizations like Feed Opportunity and the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security. I've always been really honest about growing up in community housing and wanting to get involved in government to eliminate poverty. I actually think that poverty is an option, a policy choice that successive governments have made.

When I hear the Conservatives talking about food banks, as they do often—which is fair, because food banks are experiencing higher than ever volumes right now—I do take issue with how they frame that line of questioning. The reason I take issue with it is that when I meet with the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security or other poverty elimination organizations, none of them make any recommendations with respect to carbon pricing. If that's different from the testimony that has been received from the Regina Food Bank by my colleague Michael Kram, then I'd like to chat about it. I'd like to hear about the testimony and the evidence that's coming from poverty reduction experts in Saskatchewan, because perhaps they're different from the poverty reduction experts I talk to in Ontario.

My dad used to live in Regina. I used to visit often. The national championships for the sport that I love have been hosted on Wascona Lake many times, and I've spent a lot of time there. I love Regina; it's a great city. I gave the Regina Food Bank a follow on Twitter just now to see who else they follow. Indeed they follow Feed Opportunity and the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security, and I thought it would be pertinent to bring up some of the recommendations that they've made.

They made a budget letter submission, as a lot of these poverty elimination organizations do, such as the Daily Bread Food Bank and the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security. All of these organizations make regular submissions to the federal government and ask us to consider different policy choices. Not one food bank or poverty elimination organization that I have ever talked to—and I meet with them frequently—has ever recommended eliminating the price on pollution.

Last week I was on a program with Andrew Scheer, who was here earlier, and I brought up a gentleman named Peter Gilmer. To my colleague from Saskatchewan, we have a couple of weeks at home in April, and I would implore you to look up Peter Gilmer. He lives in Regina. Peter Gilmer is a poverty reduction expert from your city. Perhaps you already know about him.

Peter Gilmer has said that an elimination of the carbon price in Saskatchewan would actually have devastating impacts on the lowest-earning individuals in Regina. It's quoted. He works in poverty elimination. None of the organizations that I've met with have suggested or cited that the carbon price is a leading cause of food inflation or that eliminating the price on pollution would help lower-income families. I want that to be on the record.

I also want to thank the officials for joining today. I want to provide Mr. Tremblay with the opportunity to elaborate a little bit more on the work they've done to ensure that the Canada carbon rebate that goes out to Canadians on the price on pollution accounts for the expense that the carbon price costs them, particularly the lowest quintile of earners in Canada.

The price on carbon has been widely regarded as a good tool and an effective mechanism for lowering our emissions. A gentleman named William Nordhaus won a Nobel Prize in proving that carbon pricing is the cheapest and most effective way to lower our emissions.

Our emissions are coming down, and they have been since 2015. That's good news for Canada. I know that the Conservatives ran their election under the failed leadership aspirations of Andrew Scheer with a plan to increase emissions. He said it again yesterday on television. He said that Canada should be allowed to increase its emissions, which is absurd. It is not our goal, and it is not what Canadians voted for in 2015, 2019 or 2021. Canadians strongly believe that we should be leaders on fighting climate change and lowering our emissions. I don't know how those failed aspirations of the former leader of the Conservative Party found their way back into the contemporary political debate, but they're here; like a zombie; they won't die.

Mr. Tremblay, let's have some words from you on how we've ensured that the price on pollution does not have a negative impact on food costs or the lowest-earning Canadians.

• (1650)

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I will turn to John, who has been our specialist on this for years.

Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment): Thanks.

I have just a couple of facts, off the top.

As our deputy minister mentioned, there are two important numbers that are relevant to this discussion, and they have been released by the Bank of Canada and various economists. The Bank of Canada, just last year, said that the carbon price contributes less than 0.15% to inflation each year. Policy Options, which is, as you all know, an unaligned think tank, just this year published a report saying that, at most, the carbon price contributes a 0.33% increase to grocery prices. We know that the impact is negligible.

To your question of why that is the case—

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Moffet—I hate to interrupt you—we're past six minutes. I think you made your point.

We'll go now to Madam Pauzé for six minutes. She of course can continue on that line of questioning if she wants.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Moffet, I want to go back to my earlier question, but first I have a question for the representative from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada—I asked the minister the same type of question earlier.

In the relatively recent history of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, have you ever conducted regional assessments in certain parts of the country?

Mr. Terence Hubbard (President, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): We are conducting regional assessments right now. There are two assessments ongoing regarding offshore renewable energy development, one in Nova Scotia and the other in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: What criteria have to be met for you to decide to conduct a regional impact assessment?

Mr. Terence Hubbard: The essential criterion is support for assessments of future projects. We have to make sure that there will be projects in the future that could have a federal impact. Before those projects are developed, we have to assess their potential impact.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I would like you to provide the committee with a written explanation of the various locations where regional assessments will be conducted.

Mr. Moffet, I would like to return to the famous Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which was passed and has received royal assent. I am very interested in the toxic substances management policy. Since our study pertains to water, there are links with the management of toxic substances.

Further to the amendment of the act, the following statement appears on the Government of Canada website:

... the Minister of Health will be responsible for fulfilling the risk management obligation under CEPA where the Minister of Health will be leading the development and implementation of the new risk management instruments in relation to substances that pose health concerns ...

As you can see, we are not working in isolation. The ministers of health and the environment work together. They have regulatory powers.

Since royal assent, what progress has been made with regard to the management of toxic substances?

Mr. John Moffet: I will answer your question in English, Ms. Pauzé.

[English]

The federal government has been involved in the assessment and management of toxic substances for over 30 years. In the last 15 years, the government has become a little more coordinated and centralized through the development of what we'd call the chemicals management plan. As you correctly mentioned, the bill that was recently passed, Bill S-5, requires the government to essentially renew that plan by developing a new plan of priorities. The law requires the minister to come forward with that plan in two years.

We have started consultation broadly with the public and with indigenous communities on what that plan should contain. We will continue those public discussions. Then we will release, as we usually do, a draft, and then a final report. That work is well under way.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you for your answer.

I will now turn to the officials from the Parks Canada Agency.

Hello.

Natural Resources Canada is responsible for the famous program to plant 2 billion trees, and the Agency has requested \$37 million for the fund to fight forest fires.

Can you tell me how many Parks Canada forests were decimated by forest fires in 2023?

I am asking because, when trees are replanted, we must avoid past errors that led to the forest fires spreading so quickly. The trees that are planted must be diversified.

• (1700)

Ms. Darlene Upton (Vice-President, Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation, Parks Canada Agency): Last year was very different for us because the fires burned nine times the number of forests in our parks. That requires a lot of work from the agency and a lot of coordination with our provincial and territorial partners. Further, we have a monitoring program to measure the effects of the fires and a process for determining the best way to restore those forests. In some cases, it is better to wait because nature will do the job itself, while in other cases we can use more specific processes, such—

The Chair: Thank you. I gave you a bit more time, but we have to stop here.

Ms. Collins, you have the floor.

[English]

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

I want to thank all of the officials for coming today and sharing their expertise and knowledge.

One of the questions I wanted to ask the minister but didn't get a chance to ask was around forestry emissions. Many experts, including the environment commissioner, have noted that emissions in the forestry industry are wildly under-reported. They estimate the government is under-reporting emissions by 100 megatonnes.

When are we going to see a review of these forestry emissions?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: John can go into this with the details, but the way we account for this, as you know, is being reviewed internationally on a regular basis and by peers in Canada. There has been a review process, and we should get new numbers quite soon, if I remember it well.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Do you have any comments on the discrepancy? That's a huge number.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It's more of an accounting issue. I think John can go into this. It's a different methodology, but the methodology we use is recognized internationally. It's been recognized by United Nations organizations and by experts. It's just a different way, but we're not....

I don't know if John wants to handle this.

Ms. Laurel Collins: The environment commissioner has noted this discrepancy, and experts are saying we don't have integrity in our accounting and that we're missing 100 megatonnes. That's huge.

Mr. John Moffet: As the deputy explained, there are methodological issues and choices need to be made. I don't think it's fair to say that our system lacks integrity. There are definitely judgments that have to be made in the way that we estimate emissions. The goal is to estimate anthropogenic emissions only. To do that requires modelling a forest with no human impact, which of course requires—

Ms. Laurel Collins: Can we expect any changes?

Mr. John Moffet: Any changes we make will be changes that are guided by evolution in international norms.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thanks.

I want to give you a quick opportunity to.... Maybe this is a question for Mr. Tremblay as well.

We've heard about the cost of the carbon pricing system, but there is a huge cost to climate change.

When we are comparing the impact of crop failures, droughts and extreme flooding on grocery store prices and folks who are struggling to pay for their food, do we have numbers on what the impact of the carbon pricing system is for Canadians?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Just to give you a sense, when we were looking at the costs more than a decade ago, on an annual basis, the cost in insured goods or assets per year after catastrophes and environmental disasters was an average of close to \$500 million. We're more in the \$2-billion range now, so when the minister uses the \$2-billion figure, that's where it's from.

When you look at what happened with the fires, I think we need to include in this that there's a cost in life when there are events like that. When the air is not good, as you mentioned before, it has a significant impact on the population—

• (1705)

Ms. Laurel Collins: There are 15,000 preventable deaths every year.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: Exactly, so there's a significant number there, and there are also, of course, other consequences, such as people losing days of work and productivity in businesses going down during those times. It is a serious number that varies a lot, but I would say that over the last few years it's been skyrocketing, if I could say that.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Could you follow up to the committee with the same kind of analysis that Mr. Moffet provided with the 0.33% figure? Could you find a similar number?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I'm sure there's a list of recent events and the costs for each of them, including on lives. We can send that to you.

Ms. Laurel Collins: If there is a larger look at one year or something along those lines, that would be helpful as well.

Mr. John Moffet: Could I just add that this is the methodological disagreement that we have with the Parliamentary Budget Officer?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's estimate of the GDP impacts did not compare the GDP impacts of carbon pricing to an economy facing climate change without the carbon price. It compared the impact of carbon pricing on the economy to an economy with no carbon price and no climate change, so it was an unreal comparison.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Given the report showing that there's going to be a \$25-billion slowdown in our economy because of the climate crisis, clearly this needs to be accounted for.

How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Laurel Collins: I know that there's other business, so I'll cede my time.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll now go to the parties in the second round. Mr. Leslie, you have five minutes.

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

Based on the responses to my colleague Mr. Kram's questions regarding the economic analysis and consideration of the impacts of the carbon tax, is it fair to assume that despite being the department that designed and implemented the program, the tax—because you're the Department of Environment—there's nobody here who can answer the question as to what the expected or anticipated costs of hiking up the level of the carbon tax actually will amount to?

Is that fair? Am I correct that nobody here can answer how much that costs and how much the carbon tax is costing in terms of food costs?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: I think we told you that there was a very limited impact of the carbon pricing on any inflation in this country. It's a negligible factor—

Mr. Branden Leslie: It is a major program that costs billions of dollars—

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It doesn't cost billions of dollars—

Mr. Branden Leslie: You mentioned that cabinet has access to a number of other departments in looking at information. Did any other departments...? I can think of agriculture, finance and perhaps trade looking at the competitiveness issue as it relates to our having a carbon tax versus our American counterpart or any other countries.

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It happens regularly between departments—

Mr. Branden Leslie: Has there been an analysis of any of that?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: John, would you comment?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Could you share it with us?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes. We have plenty of analysis on trade impacts, competitiveness impacts, affordability impacts.

Mr. Branden Leslie: You can submit all of that to the committee.

Mr. John Moffet: Yes.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Okay. I will look forward to that.

Have you guys done outward looking as we get to \$170 a tonne by 2030? Have there been analyses done further out that you could also share with our committee? What are the anticipated cost increases of food prices when \$170 a tonne is the carbon tax per tonne?

Mr. John Moffet: I don't know, and I don't know that we have that analysis.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Do any other departments?

Mr. John Moffet: We'll have to look.

Mr. Branden Leslie: If you could check, please submit anything to this committee that has been done as an analysis for when it reaches \$170, and hopefully, on a year-by-year basis, what the impacts are in terms of food prices and any other analysis that has been done. That would be appreciated.

Switching lanes a bit here to the plastics ban being ruled unreasonable and unconstitutional, are you aware of some of the other impacts as they relate to the outcomes of that ban, particularly the implementation or use of paper straws or other plant-based straws, or in particular a study published in the journal *Food Additives and Contaminants* that examined more than 20 brands of plant-based straws—

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

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we have a point of order. Wait a moment, Mr. Leslie.

Go ahead.

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

Is the plastics ban pertinent to supplementary estimates (C)?

• (1710)

The Chair: I don't know if it has an impact on legal costs the department might have to assume. Maybe we can get to the bottom of that.

Go ahead, Mr. Leslie.

Mr. Branden Leslie: I appreciate it. That was exactly where I was going, Mr. Chair.

Are you aware of the study that indicates that in fact, as a witness in our water study said, PFAS are a major problem? Many of these alternative straws have a high level of PFAS and therefore contaminate our environment.

Have you guys looked at any other alternatives so that when you make a decision such as a policy on straws or banning other things, as we have the upcoming plastics summit, has there been an analysis done from an economic standpoint of the alternatives, such as for plastic bags versus the types of polymers used in other bags?

Has that been done, and can you share it with our committee?

Mr. John Moffet: When we published the ban on single-use plastics, we also published, as we do with every regulation, a regulatory impact assessment statement, which included a review of the economic costs of replacing single-use plastics, including plastic straws.

Potentially regrettable substitutions, like a straw that includes PFAS, is a regular issue we address. When we take action on one substance, we try to ensure we're also looking at potential alternatives. The government has an equally comprehensive agenda on managing the use of and risks from PFAS, for example.

Mr. Branden Leslie: I'd appreciate it if you'd be willing to share anything with our committee, beyond the gazetted information.

I'd like to cede the remainder of my time to Mr. Mazier.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move the motion that I gave notice of on Friday.

An hon. member: I'll speak to that motion, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Conservatives are demanding that the Liberal government release their carbon tax analysis. It's unfair to force Canadians to pay a carbon tax without revealing direct results.

Thank you.

The Chair: I have Mr. van Koeverden and Ms. Collins.

Mr. Dan Mazier: It's a simple motion to do a study.

The Chair: Do you want to debate this now?

Mr. Dan Mazier: It's up for debate.

No, I just want it passed. Let's go.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I appreciate the motion by my honourable colleague, and we'll review it, but out of respect for our witnesses, I think we can adjourn debate now and resume debate when we have committee business.

Thank you, Mr. Mazier.

The Chair: It's a non-debatable motion. We have to vote on it.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: You can ask if we have unanimous consent.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. Dan Mazier: We want it passed. No. We need this study done.

The Chair: Okay, we don't have unanimous consent. We'll call the vote to adjourn debate on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Ali for five minutes.

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I have a question, and anyone can answer it.

Earlier this week, the leader of the official opposition stated that he did not believe pollution pricing should apply to industry.

What would the impact be on Canada's emissions if pollution pricing was not in place for industry?

Mr. John Moffet: I will start by repeating the analysis that we've shared publicly.

We estimate that of the total emissions reductions that will be achieved economy-wide by 2030, approximately one-third will be attributable to the carbon price. If we were to remove the carbon price from the economy, we would either achieve far fewer emissions reductions or we would have to replace the carbon price with another set of measures that, in order to achieve the same reductions, would inevitably cost the economy far more.

• (1715)

Mr. Shafqat Ali: Thank you.

I have a few questions for the officials who are here from Parks Canada.

Parks Canada is seeking over \$37 million in operating expenditures, grants and contributions for "Funding for wildfire response requirements". Please describe the wildfire response that this funding covers.

Are Parks Canada employees responding to wildfires themselves, or is Parks Canada funding other groups to respond?

Mr. Ron Hallman (President and Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency): Chair, Parks Canada is the only federal firefighting force in Canada. We work on lands that we administer, and we work in collaboration with provincial and territorial firefighters at the provincial level and internationally. We have more than 300 firefighters engaged in a number of different practices, including incident command, direct fire line operations and support.

The funds that are contemplated—the \$37 million-plus in the supplementary estimates—partially offset the \$90 million or so that Parks Canada expended on behalf of Canadians in managing wild-fire preparedness and firefighting last year.

We engage in activities to prevent wildfire through “FireSmart” programs and through prescribed burn. We do that ourselves through planning with communities and with indigenous partners to make sure that we’re using knowledge and our science knowledge.

Darlene Upton is here to speak in greater detail about the fire-fighting program if there are more questions.

Aside from the financial cost, I would really like to draw the committee’s attention to some of the human costs of these fires—not only for the communities and the indigenous partners and their families, who are on the land and experience the horrors of these fires, but for our employees. Many of them live in these communities and had to say goodbye to their families when they were evacuated. They stayed behind to help. In 2023, most of our fire team members were away from home for four to seven shifts, from 70 to 98 days—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr.—

Mr. Ron Hallman: —which is more than double what normally happens.

I’m sorry, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Ali wanted to give some time to Ms. May.

Mr. Shafqat Ali: I’m sorry.

If you could submit that, it would be great. I wanted to give the rest of the time to Ms. May.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds, so it’s not very much, but go ahead. Give it a shot.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): I understand I have 30 seconds, Mr. Chair.

The question I’d like to pursue.... I may get more time from Madame Pauzé, I hope.

The question is related to the Supreme Court of Canada reference case. It’s clear from this reference case that the entirety of the unconstitutionality within the impact assessment regime stems from changes made under the Harper regime in the so-called CEAA 2012.

What I want to know is this: Is the department examining using the recommendations from the expert panel in order to remedy the illegalities that crept in in 2012?

The Chair: Answer fairly briefly, if you can. I know it’s a comprehensive question.

Mr. Terence Hubbard: Thank you for the question.

We’re looking very closely at the recommendations from the Supreme Court of Canada. As ministers have noted, we will be advancing—

Ms. Elizabeth May: With all due respect, I don’t have much time. That wasn’t my question. My question was whether you are looking at the expert panel chaired by the former chair of BAPE, Johanne Gélinas. Are you looking at those recommendations to fix the errors that crept in in 2012?

Mr. Terence Hubbard: The focus is primarily on responding directly to the recommendations and advice put forward by the Supreme Court.

The Chair: We’ll go now to Madame Pauzé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I will give all my time to Ms. May, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Ms. May. You have two and a half minutes more.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you so much, Madame Pauzé.

I hated to cut you off like that Mr. Hubbard, but the reality is that the expert panel report would, if enacted even now in remediating the environmental impact assessment regime, provide a full, comprehensive, legal and constitutional response that would remedy all of the defects identified in the reference case.

Given the time I have, I can’t go through my annotated copy of the Supreme Court decision. What I’m asking is if Environment Canada, the Impact Assessment Agency and the Department of Justice will consider using Madame Gélinas’ report now to completely repair the environmental assessment regime.

• (1720)

Mr. Terence Hubbard: The report and recommendations of the expert panel and Madame Gélinas were leveraged and utilized to support the development of the Impact Assessment Act.

At this point in time, we are reviewing very closely the recommendations from the Supreme Court and we will be responding directly to the areas in which the Supreme Court identified shortcomings.

Ms. Elizabeth May: With all due respect, Mr. Hubbard, the expert panel report was completely ignored by the agency and by the minister. Had those recommendations been accepted, we would be back in the four corners of federal jurisdiction from 1975. We’ve been paying a lot of tributes to the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, and certainly when the Mulroney government passed the environmental impact assessment regime, it was completely constitutional.

If we had returned to the advice of the expert panel—and we still could—then we would have a completely constitutional regime that would also deal comprehensively with federal projects, whereas currently a great number of them are no longer reviewed at all.

I mention, just for the committee's benefit, paragraph 242 of the referenced case, which pointed out that in the past, thousands of federal projects were reviewed every year, but that after the passage of the omnibus budget bill, Bill C-38, in 2012, that number dropped to 70 a year. In other words, the government was doing less while being found by the Supreme Court to be conducting itself in a way that was ultra vires.

I don't accept at all your evidence, Mr. Hubbard, that the department used or leveraged the report of Madame G elinas, and I would urge you to consider it now.

The Chair: We have to go now to Ms. Collins.

Ms. Collins, do you cede your time? No?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Thank you.

I want to follow up on the question around costing the climate crisis.

I am curious. Right now with the modelling you do, you mentioned disaster by disaster, but are you doing yearly reports on the cost of the climate crisis in total? Is that something your department is tracking?

Mr. Jean-Fran ois Tremblay: The Canadian Climate Institute actually did release a report on this, so you may want to look at it. Their assessment, if I remember well, was that by 2025 the cost per year would be around \$20 billion to \$25 billion, which is more than \$600 per capita in the country. Those are numbers that are out there and that have been developed by people.

I don't think we have a report in Environment Canada that actually tackled this, but there are reports out there that are doing it.

Ms. Laurel Collins: The minister talked a little bit about at-risk whales and some of the numbers in terms of how we're protecting land, air and water.

Can we get an update specifically on land? I heard 14% or 15%. When the minister says that we are actually on track to meet those targets, what are the next steps the department will be taking in order to ensure that we'll meet those targets by 2030?

Mr. Jean-Fran ois Tremblay: We have different projects. There's been an increase of 32% over the last years in terms of protection of lands. That's why we are now at 13.7%, if I remember well.

We continue to work with groups. We continue to work with indigenous people. We also develop agreements, province by province, as you may have seen. We have tripartite agreements with B.C., including with first nations groups.

The objective is to look at areas where we can increase and actually protect more biodiversity across the country at the same time that we are conserving lands. That's the process we're in.

We're also advancing the PFPs with indigenous peoples. We're working on four of them. They received \$800 million. The minister referred to one of them—

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Chair, how much time do I have?

• (1725)

The Chair: You have 10 to 15 seconds. You have time for a statement.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Please finish your thoughts.

Mr. Jean-Fran ois Tremblay: I was just saying that we are also working with indigenous leaders on the PFPs. The minister mentioned the one million square kilometres in the north. Those are projects on which we work with provinces, territories, indigenous groups and the private sector or foundations.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

With the time I have left, I would like to give notice of the following motion:

Given that the provinces of:

Newfoundland and Labrador,

Nova Scotia,

Prince Edward Island,

New Brunswick,

Ontario,

Saskatchewan, and

Alberta,

have formally asked Justin Trudeau to cancel the Liberal government's plan to increase the carbon tax by 23% on April 1, 2024; pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the committee invite all seven premiers to testify on their request to the federal government, within one week of the motion being adopted.

I'm just tabling the motion at this time, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You're not moving it.

Mr. Michael Kram: I'm not moving it at this time.

The Chair: Since you're just tabling it, you can go ahead with your questions.

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

I would like to follow up with Mr. Moffet on an answer he gave a while ago about the methodological differences between Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Mr. Moffet, if I understood you correctly, your department has a model that links the carbon tax to the effect of Canada's CO2 emissions on the change in global temperatures, and the change in global temperatures to Canada's GDP. Did I understand that correctly?

Mr. John Moffet: I don't think our model draws a straight line between global temperatures and our GDP.

It is an economy-wide, computable general equilibrium model that can estimate the GDP impacts of various issues, including climate change or any new measure, such as the carbon price, regulation X or program Y.

Mr. Michael Kram: Does the model take into consideration the annual increases in the carbon tax and figure out what effect that would have on extreme weather events or the change in temperatures? How would you have a positive effect on the economy with the carbon tax?

Mr. John Moffet: For every measure we've introduced, we've had to provide Canadians with modelling about the estimated impacts, including, in particular, two impacts.

One of these is this: Will the measure contribute to the reduction of emissions?

The answer, as we've stated repeatedly, is that carbon pricing has and will continue to reduce emissions, which will have the effect of reducing increases in the adverse effects of climate change.

Mr. Michael Kram: Is an adverse effect of climate change global warming?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes.

Mr. Michael Kram: Okay.

Can your model figure out what effect the change in Canada's CO2 emissions will have on the overall warming of the planet?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes. We shared this analysis globally. There is a fairly well-established methodology for estimating the incremental impact of a tonne of greenhouse gas emissions—regardless of where it comes from—on the overall climate and progression of climate change, in terms of whether it will get worse or better.

Mr. Michael Kram: What effects will next month's carbon tax increase have on the temperature of the planet? Surely it must be so tiny you can't even measure it.

Mr. John Moffet: No, and that's not what I said we could do.

What we have done is provide information—we'll table it with this committee—about the expected impact of our collective set of measures on Canadian emissions and the expected effect of our collective set of measures on GDP in Canada. That will be, importantly, relative to impacts on GDP in the absence of having taken action on climate change.

• (1730)

Mr. Michael Kram: Okay. I look forward to the tabling of your modelling.

Has the modelling been peer reviewed?

Mr. John Moffet: Yes, it has, repeatedly.

Mr. Michael Kram: Okay.

I believe that's my time, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll go to Ms. Taylor Roy for the last series of questions.

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

I want to follow up on the modelling and the estimation.

We repeatedly hear estimates from the opposition about what programs like the price on pollution or the change in the single-use plastics will cost, but they don't anticipate any change in behaviour due to these programs.

How do you model for that or anticipate how people's behaviour might change due to these programs, since that is the point of the programs in the first place? Is it fair to just put a straight-line projection out, saying nothing will change and that the cost will be X?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: There's a significant amount of literature on the impact of pricing on people's behaviour, and that's one of the reasons that the government selected this option. It has been documented, so there's no doubt about that.

We also continue to track the results, but it's not just about carbon pricing; it's about other measures that we need to take into account.

It's also sometimes that people look at the.... That was the point that John was trying to make too, which is that the status quo is not cost neutral. That's a point that was in some analyses in Europe, and it's important.

That status quo costs money, and it is going to cost more money for Canadians and for the globe in general. We saw it last year. We're more exposed to that—I don't think anybody here denies it—so when we look at those elements, we also need to think about the risk of not taking any action versus the risk of taking some action.

When we take those actions, we try to minimize any negative impacts on the population. That's why, as we mentioned before, the government decided to frame the carbon pricing in this way, to make sure that there is a strong redistribution and that the redistribution will go to those who need it the most.

That's the way it is. The models are models, in the end. We need to check them against reality, and that's what we're doing on an annual basis to see if they translate into facts.

Yes, it's going in the right direction, but of course, as some of you mentioned, there's still work to be done for sure.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: I have one more quick question before I pass it to my colleague.

The estimated impact of doing nothing is something we hear about a lot, and we know from a lot of the reports by the Parliamentary Budget Officer and others that it's not ever incorporated in terms of the trade-offs between having a program and not having a program.

Do you have any kind of estimates of what these dramatic climate events cost Canadians? Can we, in any way, distribute that across the population to say that just the extreme climate events are already costing us up to \$200 billion, or whatever?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: As I said, the Canadian Climate Institute has numbers that are around \$25 billion annually on the GDP. That's quite a serious number. Is it the best calculation? I will not pretend that I'm the expert at the moment to say that, but it is a cost that has been documented by many people, and we've seen it. We've seen it in all departments in terms of costs to address emergencies.

Parks Canada sees it, and that's just one element. Others will see it too. I was deputy minister at Indigenous Services, and the numbers for evacuations and emergencies were getting very high, so that's—

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Thank you.

I want to leave time for my colleague Sophie Chatel.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a quick question. If we do not have carbon pricing just as Europe, the U.S., California and the G20 are moving to implement it, the large economies will impose a carbon pricing adjustment.

Will we be able to export to Europe if we don't have a carbon pricing system?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It's hard for me to talk about hypothetical questions, so I would not go too far on this, but it is a legitimate question about how we make sure that we align with some of the big economies in the world.

The other elements that I would add to this—

• (1735)

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Europe has a carbon pricing adjustment on sectors such as cement. Today, would a company in Canada be able to export products to Europe when they're listed on the carbon pricing adjustment?

Mr. Jean-François Tremblay: It's not in force at this stage.

Mr. John Moffet: It's not yet in force, but it's coming into force.

The results of the CBAM in Europe would not be to ban Canadian cement, but to impose a surcharge on Canadian cement.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Is it better to collect the surcharge here in Canada through carbon pricing or to pay it to Europe as a carbon tariff?

Mr. John Moffet: I'll leave that to you to decide, but—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I think you answered that. Thank you.

Mr. John Moffet: —I can tell you that as a result of having a carbon price, we have had successful negotiations with Europe to recognize the price that Canadian producers of cement, steel and aluminum pay. Therefore, although final decisions haven't been made, all signals are that they won't be subject to the CBAM.

The Chair: We'll end on that note.

It was a very interesting discussion, as it always is when we have the experts from the department with us, so I thank you for your time. I thank the members for their questions, which were at times incisive but always interesting.

We'll stop here. We'll see all the members of the committee on Thursday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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