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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia



# Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Tuesday, June 18, 2024

• (1610)

[Translation]

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

I believe that all committee members are aware of the instructions regarding the distance between the microphone and the earpiece. For the benefit of the witnesses, and I'm sure they already know this, I will remind you that we must be very careful to maintain a certain distance between the earpiece and the microphone. When you are not using your earpiece, please place it—

[English]

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** I have a point of order.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Just a moment, Mr. Mazier. I haven't finished giving the instructions.

Please place the earpiece face down in the middle of the sticker.

Go ahead, Mr. Mazier.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** I just noticed the minister is missing at the end of the table. I thought he was coming in today.

**The Chair:** Well, I understand you made that assumption.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Is that still a possibility?

**The Chair:** I asked him personally if he could make it, but he is still presenting to cabinet.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** He said no.

**The Chair:** He said he is presenting to cabinet. He did not actually say no, but I followed up, Mr. Mazier, at your request, and—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Actually, it was the committee's request.

**The Chair:** Yes, it was the committee's request through you.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Okay. Thank you. He's not here. Very good.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We have with us officials from the department who have a lot of knowledge about the various issues that fall under the purview of the department's mandate.

We have a five-minute opening statement from Mr. Tremblay.

[Translation]

Mr. Tremblay, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay (Deputy Minister, Department of the Environment):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

I am pleased to join the committee members today to discuss the 2024-25 main estimates for Environment and Climate Change Canada. I will provide you with an overview of our mains this year, after which my colleagues and I would be happy to answer your questions.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe first nation.

[Translation]

From coast to coast to coast, Canada is getting warmer, and it's warming twice as fast as the global average. Last year, the magnitude of the wildfires, the smoke, the length of the wildfire season and the impacts across the country contributed to making it the worst wildfire season we've had for a very long time.

For the first time in the history of our country, an entire capital, the capital of the Northwest Territories, had to be evacuated. So 20,000 people were evacuated from Yellowknife. This requires action to address the adaptation and conservation issues posed by climate change.

[English]

I will not go through the main estimates line by line, but allow me to mention a few highlights.

In all, the 2024-25 main estimates total \$2.8 billion. Compared with 2023-24, it adds \$314 million more.

I will mention a few differences.

One is regarding the creation of the Canada water agency. You can see reflected, in the mains, the budget 2024 decision to provide \$681 million in new funding over 10 years, beginning this year, and \$18.9 million ongoing to implement the freshwater action plan and establish the Canada water agency.

Another thing you will see is the new collaboration with the Canadian Climate Institute. Our mains reflect the government's decision to provide \$26.7 million over five years for new contribution agreements with the Canadian Climate Institute. The objective is for the CCI to expand its work related to adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

[*Translation*]

Our budget has also been adjusted to reflect an injection of \$211 million, including \$4.8 million for us, to ensure what we call access to high-performance computing.

This will help our department to advance science and research and prevent future conditions, including those that lead to extreme weather events. For example, by using high-performance computers, we will be able to better understand events and alert populations in real time about changes in the weather.

In the same vein, in terms of permanent funding for weather services, our main estimates include \$643.5 million over 10 years and \$62.3 million per year for Environment Canada's meteorological service to continue to provide Canadians with vital information 24-7 on the weather, water quantity, climate, ice and air quality across the country.

Finally, our budget includes additional funding to implement Canada's national adaptation strategy. Again, that is as a result of the decision in budget 2024.

The budget included \$935.6 million, of which our department receives \$637 million, to support the long-term implementation of the strategy. Of that amount, \$530 million is currently in the main estimates. It is for the green municipal fund, or GMF.

[*English*]

There are a few highlights and variations you can see in our budget for this year. More details about those funds can be found in the main estimates documentation.

Thank you for listening. My colleagues and I will now be happy to answer your questions.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1615)

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

We'll start with Mr. Deltell.

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

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to your Parliament. Most importantly, thank you for your service to the country in your very important role at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

First, I echo what my friend Mr. Mazier said earlier. It's really unfortunate to see that the minister isn't with us today.

Sincerely, Mr. Chair, I expected him to be here, since you were very optimistic about it last week. I find it unfortunate, all the more

so because he took part in four question periods last week, he was present yesterday and today in question period, and he was unable to push back the presentation he apparently has to make to cabinet by one hour. He would have been accountable here, in a parliamentary committee. It's his responsibility, and it may not be the first on his list, but it's nevertheless very important to be accountable to the committee. He didn't respond to our request, and that's very unfortunate. Also, I don't recognize him; it seems to me he's the guy who's always willing to go to the front. We want to bring him to the front here, but he's doing everything he can to avoid it. That's too bad.

**Mr. Deputy Minister:** I'd like to talk to you about the minister's presence. When he appeared before the committee, the first questions I asked him concerned a trip he had taken abroad for COP27, I believe. I asked him how much his environmental bill—or should I say “ill”?—was, and what he intended to do about it when he went halfway around the world. If I remember correctly, he went to Egypt to spend long days and work very hard there for almost 14 days. With regard to the carbon footprint, he told me that the government had standards, that it was the department that took care of it, that credits were being purchased and all that.

Can you give us a few more details to explain, Mr. Tremblay, about what might appear to many to be greenwashing?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Beyond a travel expense limit, the tonnes of emissions are calculated and the department pays an amount to Treasury Board to offset the use of transportation.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** The department pays, not the minister.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** The department pays for it.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Is that the case for everyone, in all situations and for all the minister's travel?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I would have to check, but it's normally calculated and charged to the department's budget.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** For the last COP meeting, how much did the greenwashing cost the government or your department?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I don't have the costs related solely to transportation, but to the overall costs related to COP28. In fact, the minister told you that it was important to be at the United Nations conference, or COP, and that it was more of an investment in the context of the effort that must be made on the international scene.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Yes, but it cost \$13,000 for a round trip to Dubai, in the middle of the desert. I understand that we have to—

• (1620)

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Dubai is far away.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** —serve Canadians, and I also understand that these trips are expensive.

You know, I haven't spent my entire life lecturing everyone on environment, but the committee feels this approach is very much about greenwashing. You travel, but you clear your conscience by buying credits. Is that correct?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** People do need to be made aware of their actions.

With respect to the UN conference, a lot of the effort to address climate change is also happening outside Canada. If we don't play an active role in that conference, we won't necessarily be able to influence the decisions that will be made there.

Here's an interesting fact as well: At COP28, the delegations included many more people, particularly those from the provinces. I'm thinking in particular of Alberta and Saskatchewan, which had a strong presence at COP28.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I'd be happy to talk to them if I were in Alberta, but I'm in Ottawa, and I have the deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada in front of me.

Can you tell me how many people went to Dubai and how much the department paid Treasury Board for greenwashing after it attended COP28?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I don't know how many people were sent by the various departments. I can tell you that Environment and Climate Change Canada sent 44 people to COP28. It was the same number of people, give or take one or two people, maybe, as it sent to COP27.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** If I understand correctly, your greenwashing policy applies only to air travel. It doesn't apply to the week you spend in air-conditioned hotels in the middle of the desert.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** You're absolutely right. It's for the carbon deficit, not necessarily for hotels.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Chair, I will use the rest of my time to move the following motion, of which we gave notice on Friday, June 14.

Given the large workload the committee has on the docket, the committee instructs the chair to book five meetings in between July 8, 2024, and September 13, 2024, while the House is adjourned, to deal with unfinished business, such as the \$8 billion Net Zero Accelerator fund waste and other pressing matters as they emerge.

It's imperative that Canadians see us working. As we all know very well, the summer period is not a vacation period. We're all in our ridings, meeting with Canadians and listening to them, and touring. Obviously, it depends on our political party's commitments. However, just because we're listening to Canadians doesn't mean that we can't be here in Ottawa doing our job as lawmakers.

We've been inviting the minister to testify for two months, but he hasn't had the opportunity to do so. Perhaps he'll find the time to come and testify before the committee during those five meetings. We're dealing with a number of very important issues that relate to Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The motion states that we want to deal with the Net Zero Accelerator fund and other pressing matters. That's one part of the \$8 billion.

In addition, there's a lot of debate on the impact of the carbon tax. We feel that the government didn't disclose and was hiding it. If the minister had been here today, we could have gotten to the bottom of things, but he decided not to come and testify, which is unfortunate.

We could also talk about climate change. We see the effects of it on a daily basis. Just because it's summer doesn't mean we can't meet on parliamentary business.

Of course, there's also the infamous green fund. Today, following a question from our colleague during question period, we learned that the Minister of the Environment had shares in a business directly involved in this scandal. That's quite significant.

We have a number of questions, and we have to debate a number of issues. We could do that at those five committee meetings.

Let's be clear: We have about three months to do this. It's not rocket science. We're all able to find time to meet during the summer. All the members around this table care about being accountable to taxpayers. That's true of the government and the opposition parties, who must do their work diligently.

We feel that it's not too much to ask that we meet five times during the summer. The government must be accountable for its poor management of public funds, particularly at the Department of the Environment.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you.

Thank you to my colleague for bringing out these important points. We have a lot of work to do here. We've done a lot of studies. We've been doing this water study here for, I don't know, 15 or more meetings. Is that right?

There's a lot of good information, and we have a lot of work to clean up before we head into the fall session, never mind all the other things we're finding out in this committee, such as the \$8-billion net-zero accelerator fund, for which over 70% of the projects have given no commitment to reduce emissions, when the fund was supposed to reduce emissions.

We're now finding out that this carbon tax is going to cost Canadians \$30 billion a year, or \$2,000 per family. It's ridiculous. We need to be talking about this, because this is all because of the carbon tax. This is a government-made problem by our minister that this committee was supposed to report on. The fact that he's not here today spells it out very clearly. Hopefully, he will see wisdom and the error of his ways, and he will get here this summer when we have these committee meetings.

I don't think anybody realizes just how serious this is. There is a massive amount of money leaking out of this government every day—

• (1625)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.):** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Pardon me, Adam.

I guess you have trouble defending yourself.

**The Chair:** We can't have cross-party conversations.

Mr. Mazier, please go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Anyway, to the other members of this committee, the Bloc and NDP members—obviously, the Liberals won't want to step up—as MPs we have a responsibility to the Canadian taxpayer. Please, give this some consideration.

Thank you.

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

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

I'll start by reiterating that the Minister of Environment has appeared at committee nine times. He came most recently on May 22. He was here on March 19 of this year and on December 14, 2023. The minister comes here frequently and regularly. We appreciate his attendance.

Mr. Chair, the suggestion from the Conservatives that everything Canadians are facing right now, from an affordability crisis to a housing crisis, is all a result of pricing pollution is something that has been soundly refuted by 300 economists across Canada, as well as William Nordhaus, who won a Nobel Prize for his work on carbon pricing. There isn't one reputable Canadian economist or international economist who agrees with their version of reality.

For that reason, Mr. Chair, I would move to adjourn debate on this motion so that we can get back to our work. As the member very rightly pointed out, we have work to do. We have experts here. We have these officials here. They have come to this committee to answer our questions. I'd like to get to those questions.

I move to adjourn debate.

**The Chair:** That's a dilatory motion. There's no debate.

We will go straight to the vote on whether to adjourn debate on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** We'll go to Mr. Longfield for six minutes.

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

To our eight witnesses who are here to answer our questions, thank you for being here and for your dedication to the work that has to be done in the climate crisis.

I want to focus my question around the cap on emissions, something we've been talking about over the last few meetings with both the bank executives and the oil and gas executives. Our emissions, according to our latest estimates, have dropped since 2005.

To your understanding, are the proposed emissions levels in the cap we're working on consistent with the commitments we've already made with oil and gas companies? Could you maybe share with us how things are moving along in terms of the emissions cap? They are continuing to increase production at a rate that is faster

than they're decreasing their emissions density. Those emissions are now 30% of the overall emissions that our economy is facing. Where are we with all of this in terms of our estimates and the work you're doing as a department on capping emissions?

• (1630)

**Mr. John Moffet (Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Branch, Department of the Environment):** I can try to answer that question.

I'll start with the context that you refer to, which is that in our most recent national inventory report, we indicated that Canada's total emissions in 2022 were significantly below the highest level pre-pandemic, the 2019 level. Our total emissions are coming down and trending down towards our 2030 target.

However, we have one sector that is relatively flat, and that's transportation, hence the need for some more measures in transportation. There's only one sector whose emissions continue to actually increase—the oil and gas production sector. That's the rationale for the government to have made its announcement that it would cap emissions. It's in that context that the government has announced a cap.

Just to reiterate, the intention is to cap and reduce emissions in a predictable, accountable manner without affecting production decisions. In order to do that, of course, we're engaging with the sector and with provinces to identify what is the maximum technically achievable. It's not what they will actually do, but what is achievable over a certain period of time. We'll put in place a cap to ensure that, at a minimum, that level of emission reductions occurs.

We've been engaged in discussions for over a year on this, and as I think the minister has stated publicly to this committee and in other places, the intention is to provide a draft regulation early this fall.

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

You mentioned provinces. We always come across the jurisdictional questions, with provinces being responsible for setting limits on the production of product that's coming out of the ground in the province of jurisdiction.

I'm trying to think of how I can phrase this in terms of our estimates. There's the work we're putting into getting the density down faster and working with the companies involved, because we don't want to put them out of business with unrealistic targets. We'd like to work with them in terms of the net-zero emissions goals that they have and the technology that needs to be employed for them to get to net zero faster.

How do you work with ISED or with other departments in terms of the innovations that need to happen faster?

**Mr. John Moffet:** That's a very important question and issue for the Government of Canada.

I'll start where you started with some of the critiques about the cap. I'll reiterate that the intended focus of the measure is on emissions. It is our intention, as you will see in the draft regulations, that the focus is on constraining emissions and not on dictating where oil and gas gets produced or, indeed, how it gets produced, so long as the sector is able to reduce emissions over time.

As is the case with the government's overall approach to decarbonizing the economy and moving towards net zero, the government's approach to decarbonizing the oil and gas sector involves a suite of measures. At its foundation, of course, is carbon pricing, and then in some cases there are additional regulatory measures established, primarily either where pricing won't send the right signal or where it won't send the signal adequately because of the trajectory of the sector.

In addition to regulatory measures for which Environment and Climate Change Canada is the lead, the government deploys, as you mentioned, a number of other measures, including investment tax credits and direct financial contributions from the net-zero accelerator, etc.

• (1635)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you. I have to stop you there, but you'll have other opportunities to speak on the issue.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Thank you very much for coming, and so many of you as well.

I'll start by asking Ms. Raffoul and Ms. Brady a question about the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

In your departmental plan for 2024-25, it says:

Work will be done, in collaboration with other federal departments, to capitalize on efficiencies so major projects, in particular projects that support clean growth, advance more quickly.

However, we learned that Impact Assessment Agency staff had been assigned to a working group alongside representatives from the oil and gas industry. It provides advice to a central government committee called the "main table". At this main table, there are representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and others from the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. They were supposed to meet with various industry figures who are members of the well-known Pathways Alliance. Issues like indigenous engagement, regulatory coordination, economic inclusion, emissions accounting and project development and funding are to be discussed.

So we have this table, all the lobbying done by the Pathways Alliance and all the opacity surrounding certain information. All these elements correspond, in a somewhat worrisome way, to the demands of the so-called Pathways Alliance. That's what it was asking for in the spring. So we seem to have given it every single thing it was asking for.

Are you going to allow the regulatory relief the oil and gas industry is requesting, particularly by not subjecting some of its projects to the Impact Assessment Act?

**Ms. Patricia Brady (Vice-President, Strategic Policy and Programs, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada):** I will try to answer your question.

[English]

The projects that are subject to the Impact Assessment Act are set out in Governor in Council regulations. They set out the types of projects, including certain oil and gas projects and their size, that are subject to the law. It's not a result of lobbying efforts or otherwise that a project would or would not be subject to the act. There is provision in the act as well for the minister to use discretionary authority to subject a project to impact assessment.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I will stop you there, because I'd like you to tell me about emissions control, since you're going to work with the oil and gas companies to calculate emissions.

According to a study by Environment and Climate Change Canada and a university—I can't recall which one—the oil and gas industry is not reporting all of its emissions. Its emissions are actually much higher.

So you're going to sit down with people from the industry to calculate emissions.

What are you going to base your calculations on?

[English]

**Ms. Patricia Brady:** I'm not familiar with that study or the Impact Assessment Agency's being involved in it.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Okay. So I will move on to another question.

My next question is for the representatives of the Department of the Environment.

The federal government has announced significant funding for the energy transition. In fact, the private sector and the western provinces will be able to benefit from numerous subsidies and investment tax credits, particularly for carbon capture and nuclear energy development.

In return, the federal government offers a 15% tax credit to Crown corporations such as Hydro-Québec for the development of green projects. Let's just say that Hydro-Québec is already quite green. However, a windfall of public money is being sent out west.

The federal government is now interfering in the management of public corporations in Quebec by requiring Hydro-Québec to use this tax credit to lower people's electricity bills and to publicly disclose how it has reduced the cost of electricity for taxpayers.

Will Ottawa require western oil companies to publicly disclose how billions of dollars in public funds have reduced our carbon footprint?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** With respect to tax credits, I would have to defer to my finance colleagues. That's why I don't want to get into too much detail about that.

To answer your question, I would say that the government developed this to guarantee decarbonization and growth in clean energy production. We also wanted to make sure that the bill would not be passed on to taxpayers, so we made changes. That's why this measure was put in place.

In terms of the specifics of how the tax credit for decarbonization of the oil and gas sector will work, I can't speak to that because I don't have it in front of me right now.

• (1640)

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** No. I don't want to know how the tax credit works, but rather whether oil and gas companies will be required to do the same thing as Hydro-Québec.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I also can't tell you about the conditions related to tax credits at this time, because I don't have that information in front of me.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Okay. I'll try something else.

[English]

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I don't know if John has information on the conditions.

**Mr. John Moffet:** Environment and Climate Change Canada will support Finance Canada in analyzing whatever input is required from companies. It will be Finance Canada that will stipulate the conditions, and I think the Minister of Finance is over recording saying that they anticipate providing those details this summer.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You have five seconds left, Ms. Pauzé.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** As we say back home, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. In other words, if we ask Hydro-Québec—

**An hon. member:** I really feel sorry for the interpreters.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Oh, yeah! Ha, ha!

I'm thinking that if Hydro-Québec is going to be asked to prove that this tax credit reduces the cost of electricity for taxpayers, then I want the oil and gas industry to be very transparent as well. We talk a lot about transparency here; so we would ask them to be very transparent as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Collins, you have the floor.

[English]

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

I want to thank the witnesses and experts for coming, the officials.

Mr. Tremblay, you mentioned wildfires in your opening remarks. I just noticed that we didn't get a copy of your opening remarks.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** They were not distributed. I was because I rewrote them. I'm sorry that happened. I can make sure you get them.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** That's wonderful.

In the future, when you're appearing, if you could submit them in both languages before that so the committee can have them, it would be helpful.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** It was too long, and I didn't want to waste too much of your time. I'm sorry.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** The first question I have is around wildfires. We know that last year was just an excruciating, record-breaking wildfire season. We expect to have these kinds of wildfire seasons from now on. Already this year, the hectares burned are getting close to the 20-year average, and we're not even halfway through the year.

The New Democrats have been calling for a national wildfire service. We know that the military has been talking about how they don't have enough personnel to respond to the increase in disaster response. Is this something that you and your department have been engaged in conversations about?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** Yes. I can also point to Parks Canada on this effort.

On our side, what is very important is to provide all the accurate information for all the decision-makers. That's not just the federal government; it's also provinces and local governments, because we do provide meteorological services to all Canadians 24-7.

As you said, the climate is more unpredictable, let's put it that way, and we also see a significant shift. I was talking with my friends from Parks Canada, who said that, at some point, you can have snow one day and 27°C three days after—

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Because we have a limited amount of time, could we focus on wildfires?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** What we focus on, in our case, is building up our capacity to be able to support our friends at Public Safety in their effort. As I mentioned, we also make sure that we have ongoing funding and more funding to support decision-makers.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Have you had conversations about the idea of a national wildfire service?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I don't personally have discussions about what that should look like, but we have discussions about how we are getting more effective at responding to the demands, for sure.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** What I'm hearing is that there have been no discussions about the creation of a national wildfire service or the possibility of that with your department.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I'm not part of discussions on this at this stage, for sure.

Maybe Andrew has some information.



**Mr. Andrew Campbell (Senior Vice-President, Operations, Parks Canada Agency):** We are perhaps the only federal department that has firefighters on the ground beside those who are with the Canadian Armed Forces. That is all run through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. Within that system, all of the inter-agency groups work together in order to be able to move firefighters across the country, so we would have firefighters moving—

• (1645)

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** I guess the specific question is around whether or not you've looked at having a national service. There are conversations starting right now. Given that we've heard from the military that they don't have enough personnel to respond to natural disasters and given that we're going to see summer after summer of increasing wildfire events, have there been conversations with any of your departments around the creation of a national wildfire service?

**Mr. Andrew Campbell:** Certainly there have been reviews of the functions of CIF through Natural Resources Canada and the departments that are with that. There has been an overall look by all of us, just in the last year, of how we can do better as inter-agency departments on all hazard analysis, and that's being taken on by Public Safety.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Thanks so much.

Ms. Shannon, I want to ask in particular about last year's report from the environment commissioner. I was pretty shocked that they seem to find the work on the Species at Risk Act extremely lacking from multiple departments.

One thing jumped out for me: Environment and Climate Change Canada had completed only one of the 399 reports that it was required to produce under the act. The environment commissioner had many other criticisms, but I'm curious about the progress since that report came out.

**Ms. Tara Shannon (Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Services, Department of the Environment):** You will recall that, since the report came out, we have accepted all the recommendations of the commissioner. The work continues. I don't have the details for you in terms of the number of reports, but I would say that we take the report very seriously, and we have accepted all the recommendations. We'll continue to work, both internally and with our partner agencies.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Could you follow up in writing with the committee to get us the numbers on how many have been completed?

I see you nodding. That's wonderful.

Then, in particular, there's been media around the spotted owl. I'm wondering if you could give us an update on what's happening with that.

**Ms. Tara Shannon:** Absolutely. I can say, in short, that work continues in collaboration with British Columbia on the spotted owl. We are engaged currently in discussions with British Columbia and the surrounding first nations, Spuzzum in particular, on what an action plan for the spotted owl might look like.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** My next question is on the Impact Assessment Act, and in particular Highway 413.

**The Chair:** Ms. Collins, we're really out of time.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** How long do I have?

**The Chair:** The time's up, actually.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Okay, I'll wait for the next round.

**The Chair:** You'll have another shot, for sure.

We'll go into our second round.

Mr. Mazier, go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the officials for coming out this afternoon.

Mr. Tremblay, the Liberal government gave away \$96 million to General Motors through the net-zero accelerator fund. General Motors is an American company that made over \$235 billion in revenue last year.

How many emissions are supposed to be reduced directly from this \$96-million handout?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I think we have had this discussion before. I would invite you to invite my colleagues from ISED, who are the ones managing this program, and they should be able to answer the question.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** What's your position again?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I'm the deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You're responsible for emissions reductions.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** We are responsible for emissions reductions and for the plans in general, but each department, in coordination with us, is responsible for the programs they manage. For example, Finance manages the ITC, and other departments manage their programs. We're not in a place where one person actually rules them all.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Mr. Tremblay, the Liberal government gave away \$300 million to a company by the name of Air Products through the net-zero accelerator fund. Air Products is an American company worth over \$80 billion.

How many emissions are supposed to be reduced directly from this \$300-million handout?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I'd answer in the same way.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You are the deputy minister responsible for emissions reductions.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I'm the responsible.... If you look at the Federal Accountability Act that was passed by the previous government, the way it works is that each deputy minister is responsible for the fund engaged within their departments. That's the way it is and always has been.

If you want the answer, you should invite the minister or the deputy minister responsible for the management of this program.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** So you don't know.

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I'm just saying they're the ones who should come to answer that question.

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

Sometimes on this committee, the Conservative members treat non-partisan officials as if they're politicians.

• (1650)

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I think it's condescending and rude, and I'd ask that all members respect our witnesses.

**The Chair:** That's not a point of order.

Ms. Taylor Roy, go ahead.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order on the relevance of the questioning. We're talking about the main estimates here. The program the member opposite is referring to is not in these estimates, and the officials here are not responsible for this program. I'm wondering if this line of questions is actually relevant.

**The Chair:** That's a good point, since the program is not—

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** The officials actually brought up the net-zero accelerator, and it's in the minister's mandate letter. It's talking about emissions reductions, so it's 100% inside the—

**The Chair:** Ms. Collins, go ahead on another point of order.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** On this point, I want to put in my word that if the officials bring something up, I think it's a fair thing for us to ask about.

**The Chair:** That is unless they're bringing something up that's outside the ambit of their mandate.

**Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Just to clarify, we invited officials from that department to be here today, and they refused. Is that correct?

**The Chair:** No, they're coming, but we agreed that they'd come in the fall.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** I thought the deputy minister couldn't come today and that's why we couldn't have them here.

We've tried; that is my point.

**The Chair:** Yes. He couldn't come today, but we've agreed to look at the whole issue of the net-zero accelerator in great detail in the fall rather than only look at it partially today.

Go ahead, Mr. Mazier, but Mr. Tremblay has given the same answer twice. I think maybe you might want to move on to another topic.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** The deputy minister responsible for emissions reductions doesn't know anything about emissions reductions. Is that true?

**The Chair:** I think this is the third time now. This is becoming a bit of badgering of the witness.

I like robust debate at committee, as you know, but I think...

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** There are more than 80 initiatives under the plans for climate change. There are more than 80

programs, and each program has I don't know how many projects. You should not expect me to come here on behalf of all those people without being briefed in advance and have answers about each project that is funded under each program that exists in the federal government.

**The Chair:** Mr. Mazier, go ahead.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Mr. Tremblay, the Liberal government gave away \$551 million to a company by the name of Umicore through the net-zero accelerator fund, which you've mentioned, and you're responsible for emissions reductions. Umicore is a Belgian company that made over \$27 billion in revenue last year.

How many emissions are supposed to be reduced directly from this \$551-million handout?

**Mr. Jean-François Tremblay:** I'm not responsible for emissions reductions. Everybody is responsible within the government for the emissions reductions they're supposed to make through their own programs. We are responsible for coordination and support of other departments in the way they develop their programs, but as I mentioned before, the accountability is still with each department to manage the programs it has.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to move the following motion:

Given that

The Liberal government released its internal economic data on the carbon tax, revealing it costs Canadians \$30.5 billion and over \$1800 for every household in Canada;

This is in addition to the increased costs the carbon tax puts on gas, groceries and home heating;

The Liberal government tried to cover up this information from Canadians; and

When the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that the Liberal government had this data they placed him under a gag order and attempted to ruin his reputation;

The committee report to the House that the environment minister must resign immediately.

Mr. Chair, Minister Guilbeault needs to resign. Minister Guilbeault has been caught hiding a damning report from Canadians. Canada's budget watchdog, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, revealed that the Liberals were hiding a secret report from Canadians. Not only did we learn that the Liberals were keeping this internal carbon tax report a secret from Canadians, but we also learned that they placed a gag order on Canada's budget watchdog. Yes, the Liberals silenced the Parliamentary Budget Officer with a gag order, preventing him from speaking about the damning piece of evidence.

We must ask ourselves, why would the government hide its own economic analysis of the carbon tax? Well, we know why.

• (1655)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** I have a point of order.

I'm looking at the motions that we have notices of motion for, and this isn't one of them. Is this a notice of a new motion? If so, we probably shouldn't be debating it.

**The Chair:** Let's find out.

Notice was given on the 13th.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** We must ask ourselves, why would the government hide its own economic analysis of the carbon tax? Well, now we know. The government's internal carbon tax analysis revealed that the cost of the carbon tax will be more than \$30 billion per year. That's almost \$2,000 per family.

For years, Minister Guilbeault told Canadians that the carbon tax wouldn't cost them, but now we know that Minister Guilbeault willingly chose to vandalize Canada's economy with the carbon tax. He knew that the carbon tax was going to harm our economy. He knew that the carbon tax was going to cost Canadian families, but he chose to plow ahead with his carbon tax hikes anyway. Minister Guilbeault is an economic vandal. He needs to resign.

After nine years of this Liberal government, Canada is broken. Food is up. Gas is up. Home heating is up. In the middle of a cost of living crisis, Minister Guilbeault chose to punish Canadians with a carbon tax. The fact that Minister Guilbeault kept his economic analysis a secret from Canadians is absurd. How can Minister Guilbeault be trusted? What else is he keeping secret from Canadians?

In testifying before our committee, Minister Guilbeault was asked if he planned on increasing the carbon tax over \$170 per tonne past 2030. He refused to rule out further carbon tax hikes. I asked the environment minister at committee, "Has your government decided whether it will increase the carbon tax over \$170 a tonne past 2030? Give me a yes or no." The environment minister dared to respond with "I'm not obliged to answer yes or no to those questions."

The fact that his carbon tax will cost the Canadian economy over \$30 billion per year doesn't bother Minister Guilbeault. The environment minister doesn't believe that he needs to tell Canadians if he plans to hike the tax on gas, heat and groceries even further. I encourage all members of the committee to ask Canadians if they have confidence in Minister Guilbeault. If they did, they would quickly realize that most Canadians want Minister Guilbeault to go, and I agree. I represent a completely rural constituency. No minister in this government has inflicted more harm on rural Canada than Minister Guilbeault. Minister Guilbeault has to go, and that is right now.

Thank you very much.

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

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

Over a year ago, the Canadian Climate Institute issued a statement that said that the PBO's latest carbon pricing report had big flaws. It took a little bit over a year for the Parliamentary Budget Officer to re-quantify the economic effects of carbon pricing and issue the statement that there were flaws in his 2022 and 2023 report. We respect and appreciate the work of the PBO, and we're looking forward to their clarification this fall.

I'd like to reiterate that the open letter from 300 economists on Canadian carbon pricing has been up on the Ecofiscal website for over three months. I wonder if any of the Conservatives have taken the opportunity to read it or to heed some of the very pointed requests and recommendations that the economists make. They basically urge people who are naysaying to come up with an alternative if they are making suggestions that carbon pricing...which is a revenue-neutral approach that is very effective at both reducing emissions and supporting energy affordability.

Mr. Chair, what's more concerning than that.... The PBO arrived at committee to reclarify, despite being badgered by Conservative MPs, as we've seen at this committee today, that he has not been told not to disclose the government's carbon pricing analysis. He clarified that in the news and he clarified that in the committee, yet the Conservatives are misrepresenting what he said. What he said was in his second language and he made a mistake.

The Conservatives should read the news. They should accept the fact that the Parliamentary Budget Officer re-clarified that his economic analysis of the impact of the carbon tax was overestimated in his report of 2022 and 2023. The Canadian Climate Institute basically warned more than a year ago that there were flaws. Despite those flaws, the PBO confirmed that 80% of Canadian households get more money back than they pay in carbon pricing.

I'd remind Canadians who are watching the environment committee that on June 14, many Canadians received their Canada carbon rebate, as I did. If you did your taxes on time but not early, you would have received April's payment on the 14th.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, what's more concerning is that the Conservatives continue not just to badger witnesses, but also to completely misrepresent—

● (1700)

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

**The Chair:** Is it a real point of order?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Is Adam planning on shutting down debate?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** It's "Mr. van Koeverden" to you. Thanks.

**The Chair:** What's the point of order?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Does Mr. van Koeverden intend to shut down debate?

**The Chair:** Well, he'll say when he wants to, I guess.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden.

**Mr. Branden Leslie:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** What report?

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** You just mentioned it.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Sure, I would absolutely love to table the report from 300 Canadian economists on carbon pricing.

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

**The Chair:** Order.

Mr. van Koeverden has the floor.

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

As I said, Mr. Giroux, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, clarified that after being badgered at committee and speaking in his second language, he had made a mistake. He made an error that he reclarified on Monday. Yet, the Conservatives are using the previous error. They're basically saying that Monday didn't happen.

Mr. Chair, it's unbecoming of any member of Parliament to badger a witness or to misrepresent a public servant. For that reason, and out of respect for our witnesses, I would ask that we adjourn debate on this frivolous motion.

**The Chair:** We'll go to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

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

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** As requested, I'd like to table the report where the PBO said he is not being muzzled by the Liberal government, despite the fact that Conservative MPs badgered him at committee.

**The Chair:** What did you want to table?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** It's a news article in which the PBO reclarifies his position on the economic impact of the—

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

**The Chair:** You can send that to the committee, Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Mazier.

**Mr. Dan Mazier:** Chair, I have a point of clarification.

What is he actually sending to committee? Is it a news article, or is it an actual report done by the PBO?

**The Chair:** I'm clarifying that with Mr. van Koeverden right now.

Mr. van Koeverden, if you wish to send this article to the committee, we'll have it translated and distributed.

Is that what you'd like to do?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** I'm happy to.

I'm responding to a request by Mr. Leslie. I can send Canada's Ecofiscal Commission's report by 300 economists indicating that carbon pricing is effective and is not contributing to inflation.

**The Chair:** You can send what you wish and we'll distribute it.

• (1705)

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

**The Chair:** We're out of time, unfortunately. I'm going to suspend the meeting. We'll take the time required, a few minutes, to make the adjustments to go in camera.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here and for answering our questions. If we don't see you before the summer break, I wish you all a good summer. I know you'll be busy, but hopefully you'll get some time for a bit of vacation.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]







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