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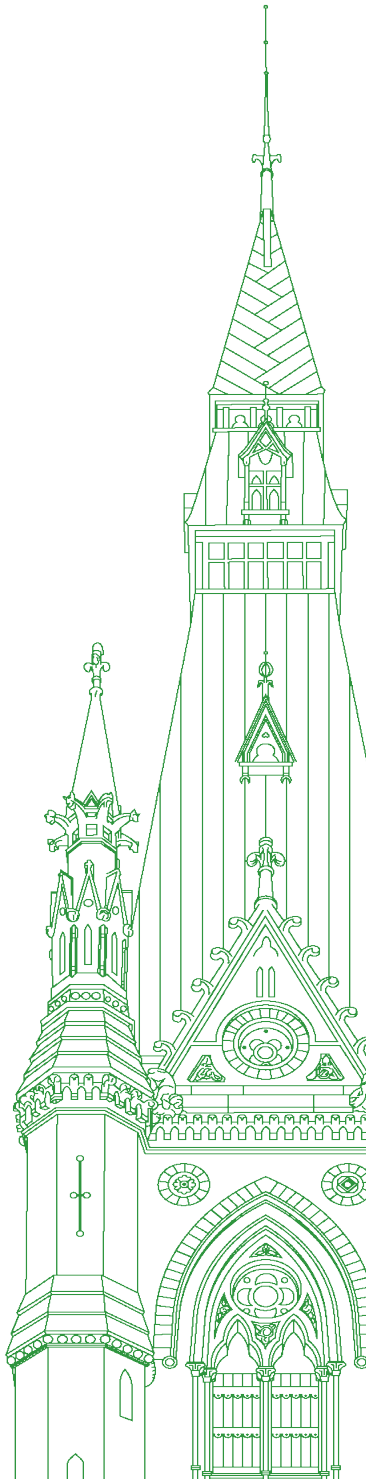

Chair: Mr. George Chahal

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Monday, February 12, 2024

● (1600)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting 85 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, October 17, 2023, and the adopted motion of Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the committee is resuming consideration of Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Regarding the committee's study of Bill C-49, as per the updated memo sent earlier today, I would like to remind members that all amendments, including subamendments, must be submitted in writing and sent to our committee clerk by Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at 4 p.m., eastern time. Should you wish to propose amendments during clause-by-clause consideration, please send the legislative counsel, Marie Danik, your written instructions as soon as possible. She will ensure that amendments are drafted in the proper legal format.

Since today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For interpretation, for those on Zoom you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

Although this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause serious injuries. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to a microphone. We therefore ask all participants to exercise a high degree of caution when handling the earpieces, especially when your microphone or your neighbour's microphone is turned on. In order to prevent incidents and safeguard the hearing health of the interpreters, I invite participants to ensure that they speak into the microphone into which their headset is plugged and to avoid manipulating the earbuds by placing them on the table, away from the microphone, when they are not in use.

Just as a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair. Additionally, screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

In accordance with our routine motion, I am informing the committee that all remote participants have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

Our witnesses for the first hour today are Mr. Kevin Stokesbury, by video conference; from East Coast Environmental Law, Kostantina Northrup, staff lawyer; from Econext, Alex Templeton, chair, by video conference; and from Seafreeze Shoreside, Meghan Lapp, fisheries liaison.

Before we begin with opening statements, I would like to remind everyone that I will be using these two cards. Yellow gives a 30-second warning, and red means the time is up. I will try not to interrupt you mid-sentence, but please try to keep an eye out for me when I use these flashing cards.

Ms. Northrup from East Coast Environmental Law, the floor is yours for five minutes. Please proceed, and welcome.

Ms. Kostantina Northrup (Staff Lawyer, East Coast Environmental Law): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My organization, East Coast Environmental Law, engages in federal and provincial law reform advocacy on issues that affect environmental health and sustainable development in Atlantic Canada.

We recognize the urgent need for a global transition from fossil fuels to sources of clean and renewable energy, and we know that we need good law in place to facilitate the transition and improve our ability to steward the environment we depend on as we undertake this Herculean task.

We have conducted considerable research on offshore wind regulation, looking at jurisdictions overseas and studying Canada's nascent regimes. We support Bill C-49 in principle because we understand the benefit of jointly managed federal-provincial regimes for the planning, assessment and authorization of renewable energy projects in offshore Newfoundland and Labrador and offshore Nova Scotia.

We know that this bill reflects the shared aspirations of the Government of Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Government of Nova Scotia, and we can appreciate that a lot of hard work and dialogue had to happen to get agreement on the text of the bill as it stands. At the same time, we think there are some changes that need to be made to enable successful, stable and sustainable renewable energy development in the offshore with minimum conflict between ocean users and ecosystem needs.

The most important change we want to see to the bill is the inclusion of requirements for tiered planning and assessment to inform key decision-making stages in the offshore renewable energy regimes. We would also emphasize that those planning and assessment processes must provide meaningful opportunities for public participation.

More specifically, we believe that areas within the offshore should not be open to renewable energy development unless they have first been assessed at a high level through a regional assessment or a strategic environmental assessment. In other words, we believe that calls for bids should not be issued for areas that have not been studied through a regional assessment or a strategic environmental assessment that is focused on the impacts of introducing offshore renewable energy activities.

We also believe that all individual offshore renewable energy projects should undergo a project-specific assessment, whether it be a federal impact assessment or an environmental assessment conducted independently by an offshore energy regulator.

Requiring tiered planning and assessment creates opportunities for public participation and input by stakeholders, like fisheries groups, in the key planning and decision-making stages that occur from the highest levels down to the level of project-specific proposals. Doing so helps to ensure that offshore renewable energy projects are sited in suitable locations, where conflicts with other ocean uses and ecosystem needs are minimized.

Bill C-49 gestures to the need for tiered planning and assessment by proposing to empower the offshore energy regulators to conduct regional assessments and strategic assessments. The bill also explains how offshore regulation would intersect with project-specific assessments under the Impact Assessment Act. What the bill fails to do is make high-level assessments and project-specific assessments required components of the offshore energy regime.

The bill proposes to give the offshore energy regulators discretionary powers—not clear responsibilities—to conduct regional and strategic assessments, and the bill is silent on whether the regulators can or should conduct project-specific assessments when federal impact assessments are not triggered.

Later this week, we will be submitting a written brief to the committee to describe in more detail the changes we hope to see. They include limiting calls for bids to areas that have undergone a focused regional assessment or a strategic environmental assessment, and they also include requiring project-specific assessments by the offshore energy regulators when proposed renewable energy projects do not trigger the federal impact assessment process. These changes would remove ambiguities from the regimes that have been proposed and help to create regulatory certainty. They would also enable more informed decision-making, and they would support wise and prudent stewardship of offshore resources, including not only our energy resources but also fisheries and the biodiversity of marine ecologies.

Finally, I'll close by noting that although we would like to see a cluster of key changes to the bill, we also support a number of the bill's provisions as they stand. In particular, we welcome enhanced federal and provincial powers to protect marine ecologies, particularly the proposed powers to prohibit offshore petroleum and offshore renewable energy activities in areas that are or may be protected by law as areas for wildlife conservation or protection.

● (1605)

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. I welcome the members' questions.

● (1610)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We'll now go to Kevin Stokesbury, who is here by video conference.

You have the floor, sir, for five minutes.

Dr. Kevin Stokesbury (Dean of the School for Marine Science and Technology, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to speak today.

I would like to talk briefly of my concerns for the fishery and developing wind farm industries of the Atlantic.

First, to briefly introduce myself, I'm a marine biologist and fisheries oceanographer. Born in Nova Scotia, I began working on the coastal fisheries at age 18 for DFO Canada.

I studied the effects of the first tidal power plant in Annapolis Royal on river herring populations for my master's thesis at Acadia University. I examined scallop ecology for my Ph.D. at Université Laval and estimated the impact of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill on the Prince William Sound herring fishery at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

For the past 25 years, I have worked on the sea scallop fishery of New England and Canada using an underwater drop camera to film 70,000 square kilometres of sea floor, counting the scallops and examining their habitat. I am the dean of the school for marine science and technology at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, which is in New Bedford, the number one fishing port in the United States. Our school focuses on interdisciplinary applied marine science and the development of innovative technologies.

The ocean faces severe threats from climate change, ocean acidification, land-based runoff, pollution and poor management of resources. Alternative energy sources are key to addressing several of these threats. Wind farms and fisheries both harvest renewable, sustainable energy.

The enthusiastic development of offshore wind will occur primarily on continental shelves, and as such, the overlap between wind farms and fisheries is inevitable. The U.S. plans to increase its offshore wind production by 79% between 2020 and 2030, and bids for lease areas have been in the billions of dollars. In 2021, there were 33 companies or call areas on the continental shelf of the east coast.

Given the structural requirements of offshore wind coupled with the huge financial investments backed by government mandates to replace emissions with renewable energy, fishing industries will need to adapt. The ability of fisheries to harvest within or next to these wind farms depends on the types of fisheries, weather conditions, the spacing and design of the turbine array, turbine foundation structure and the degree to which the wind farm development influences the fish and invertebrate communities. The wind farm industry should recognize and minimize these effects.

The proposed wind farms along the Atlantic coast are huge. The sea floor in these areas is similar, and they support a marine ecosystem based mostly on mud, sand and some gravel. Developing the wind farms will add hard structure, thousands of small islands, throughout these areas, islands that pull energy out of the system. This will change the environment: the sea floor makeup, the current structure, the acoustics both during construction and operation, and the electromagnetic field. All these will impact the associated flora and fauna of the areas. This will happen on the scales of the individual turbine, which is centimetres to kilometres; the wind farm fields, from tens to hundreds of kilometres; and the entire eastern seaboard. It will affect the fisheries. Some will be able to harvest within the wind farms; some will not. All will have to navigate through or around them.

Right now, some wind farms are beginning to monitor the marine environment and the animals associated with them, but it is a disjointed effort. There is no overall framework to coordinate the different scientific research or push for broader ecosystem understanding.

I suggest that a framework that categorizes information about the ecology, economics and social and institutional effects of each of these two industries, with appropriate spatial and temporal scales, is key to reducing conflict and improving co-operation.

Everyone wants to develop sustainable energy, but you do not want to replace one form of sustainable energy harvest with another. Rather, you want to optimize both and reduce our dependency on non-renewable resources. These are billion-dollar developments, the largest in the world, and there should be a similar effort towards understanding the effects, both positive and negative, on the ecosystem and on our coastal communities.

Thank you very much.

● (1615)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We will now go to Alex Templeton, who is with by video conference, for five minutes.

Mr. Alex Templeton (Chair, Econext): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

As a quick introduction, my name is Alex Templeton. I'm from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Professionally, I'm a partner of the Atlantic Canadian law firm McInnes Cooper, where I maintain a litigation and regulatory practice. As a volunteer, I serve as chair of the board of directors of Econext, and it's in that capacity that I appear before you today.

Econext is a not-for-profit association of over 200 member businesses that are collectively focused on accelerating clean growth in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is to say environmentally sustainable economic development in our province. Our members include businesses that are engaged in the ocean economy, including the offshore oil industry, as well as businesses that are engaged in the emerging onshore wind and clean fuels industry and businesses that would surely engage in an offshore wind industry in our waters, should one develop.

As such, we've been following your committee's proceedings with keen interest. We attend today with the benefit of having seen much of the testimony you've heard so far. We thank you for the invitation to appear today as a witness.

Under Bill C-49, regulatory authority for offshore wind energy production in Newfoundland and Labrador would be granted to the C-NLOPB through an expansion of its mandate beyond offshore oil and gas projects.

Since the 1980s, the C-NLOPB has provided effective joint federal-provincial oversight of the offshore industry with a mandate that's focused on safety, environmental protection, resource management and industrial benefits.

The legislation that brought about its creation, the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, fundamentally altered the trajectory of Newfoundland and Labrador’s economy. The regulatory framework that was established enabled billions of dollars of investment activity into our province and Canada. However, the impact extended far beyond this. Investments made into the province helped to create and foster a world-class cluster of small to medium-sized businesses that have been developing state-of-the-art technologies and services that are world leading.

Econext members are active from one corner of the globe to the other, exporting their oceans-focused technologies. Research facilities at Memorial University and its marine institute—designed and financed in part to support the offshore industry—are among the best in the world, and innovators from all over travel long distances to access them.

The capabilities that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have developed are now being deployed internationally in support of offshore wind projects. Companies like Kraken Robotics, Rutter Inc., C-CORE and many others, which came in to being in part because of the opportunities provided by the offshore oil industry, are now using that knowledge to support the global energy transition.

Newfoundland's Port of Argentia is a good example. It's North America's first monopile marshalling port, supporting major U.S. offshore wind projects.

While offshore wind is still relatively nascent in North America, the fact is that it's a mature industry internationally with a considerable market value, and it's high time we welcomed some of this investment to Canada. The potential for offshore wind development in Newfoundland and Labrador in support of global commitments to net zero by the year 2050 is also significant.

However, without the enabling legislation and regulation in place, none of this will come to pass. Investors need certainty. Developers need clear pathways they can rely on. Offshore wind projects take many years to advance from concept to operations, and decisions are being made today about how long-term energy needs are going to be developed.

A modernized Atlantic accord could do it again: It could repeat the economic prosperity the original Atlantic accord achieved over the past four decades.

Whatever one's stance on renewable or non-renewable energy, the fact of the matter is that the C-NLOPB has the experience, technical expertise and a regulatory track record that are well suited to the offshore renewable energy sector. It's only logical to avail of this advantage. This approach is consistent with that seen in many other countries.

Joint federal-provincial jurisdiction is complex. Building on a strong foundation that both levels are comfortable with just makes sense.

Therefore, Econext is supportive of Bill C-49. It urges this committee to advance it expeditiously to the next stage in the legislative process. Delaying its implementation will only create uncertainty for investors and threaten the emergence of an industry that has great potential to transform Atlantic Canada's economy and allow for it to make a great contribution to Canada at large.

I thank you again for the invitation. I look forward to your questions.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We'll now go to Meghan Lapp from Seafreeze Shoreside. You have five minutes for your opening statement.

Ms. Meghan Lapp (Fisheries Liaison, Seafreeze Shoreside): Thank you, committee members, for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Meghan Lapp, and I am the fisheries liaison for Seafreeze, a Rhode Island commercial fishing company. We own five federally permitted commercial fishing vessels and two shoreside facilities.

I'm here to warn Canada against making the same mistakes that the United States has made in expediting offshore wind development. In our country, the government process has ignored our concerns, and as a result we have been forced into litigation as our only recourse. That is what will happen in Canada if the Canadian government follows in the footsteps of its American counterpart.

The proponents of offshore wind will claim that urgent action is necessary at all costs to prevent climate change. However, even U.S. government documents conclude that the proposed wind projects would have no measurable influence on climate change, and that the construction of offshore wind facilities is not expected to impact climate change. Therefore, the purported benefits do not outweigh the negative impacts.

Offshore wind development is the single greatest threat to the continued existence of commercial fishing on the U.S. east coast. Even U.S. government documents state that some fisheries "may not be able to safely operate and harvest the resource" in the wind development areas, and that, "In this situation, a large portion of annual income for vessels may be inaccessible during operations". The official record of decision approving one offshore wind farm acknowledged, "it is likely that the entire...area will be abandoned by commercial fisheries due to difficulties with navigation."

Our vessels will not be able to safely operate in a wind farm. Trawl gear such as ours can snag on the underwater infrastructure of the turbines and cables, and in a worst-case scenario cause the vessel to capsize. In the words of wind developer DONG Energy, now Ørsted, and a U.K. fisheries information agency, "Loss of gear, fishing time and catch can result if a trawler snags a subsea structure and there is serious risk of loss of life." An analysis prepared for the Dutch government depicts the consequences of fishing in an offshore wind farm with a trawl vessel snagging on a wind farm cable, in which the vessel ends up at the bottom of the ocean. All U.S. farms will become de facto exclusion areas for fishing vessels such as ours.

Deconfliction of leases and fishing grounds, with a priority on protecting commercial fishing grounds from any offshore wind development, is the only solution. Canada has the opportunity now to ensure the safety and protection of its fisheries.

Safe transit through wind farms will also be impossible for fishing vessels and other forms of marine vessel traffic. Offshore wind turbines interfere with all classes of marine radar on which our vessels rely, especially at night, in inclement weather and in the fog. In 2022, the National Academies of Sciences released a report entitled, “Wind Turbine Generator Impacts to Marine Vessel Radar”, confirming years of issues I have raised to BOEM—the U.S. federal agency in charge of offshore wind leasing—and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The National Academies actually quoted part of my U.S. Coast Guard comment submissions in the final report, as well as many, if not all, the studies I had previously submitted to the coast guard and BOEM—which they ignored in favour of offshore wind expansion. The study identified areas of potential future research, but no immediate solutions. Prior to even the 2022 report, the U.S. Coast Guard had admitted via correspondence that its own vessels would be impacted by offshore wind radar interference, yet the coast guard does not conduct an independent radar interference analysis, even on its own vessel capabilities, and instead leaves this to the developer.

More recently, the U.S. Air Force requested that Congress enact legislation to prevent construction of wind farms within two nautical miles of the nation's nuclear missile silos, specifically due to the need to fly helicopters in those areas. According to the Air Force, wind turbines create both physical obstacles and turbulence that make wind farms “really dangerous...to fly into” with a helicopter. The coast guard uses helicopters as a primary means of search and rescue. If the U.S. Air Force cannot fly helicopters in wind farms, neither can the coast guard.

An official U.S. Coast Guard transcript regarding a fishing vessel sinking off Rhode Island in 2019 states six times that one of the reasons for aborting the helicopter search for potential survivors, in addition to poor weather conditions, were hazards in the area, which were identified as the Block Island wind farm turbines. Two out of three men died that day. There are only five Block Island turbines, not the thousands planned coast-wide. Vessels don't sink in good weather. They sink in bad weather when visibility is poor, when vessel radar needs to work and helicopters need to fly low. The fact is that a major mission of the U.S. Coast Guard, that of search and rescue, will be compromised due to offshore wind interference with its own vessels' radar and helicopter operations, yet it has still not conducted any comprehensive assessment of the level of reduction in its own capabilities due to offshore wind, despite the fact that offshore wind construction is ongoing in U.S. waters.

I implore Canada: Do not do what we are doing. Commercial fisheries are a true renewable resource industry that should not be cast aside for a 30-year project. You can't eat electricity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

● (1625)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement.

We will now proceed to our first round of questions.

We'll start with Mrs. Shannon Stubbs from the Conservative Party of Canada for six minutes.

Mrs. Stubbs, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

Thank you to all of our witnesses here today to discuss, with committee members, Bill C-49.

Since we do have extended hours today, and everybody is here, with many here virtually, I would like to move the motion that I submitted and gave notice of on Friday, February 9.

I move:

> That the Standing Committee on Natural Resources report to the House that it:
>
> (a) recognizes that for hundreds of years, First Nations have suffered under a broken colonial system that takes power away from their communities and places it in the hands of politicians in Ottawa;
>
> (b) recognizes the importance of enabling First Nations to take back control of their resource revenues from the federal government through a First Nations Resource Charge;
>
> (c) recognizes that the Indian Act hands over all reserve land and money to the federal government and that this outdated system puts power in the hands of bureaucrats, politicians, and lobbyists—not First Nations;
>
> (d) agrees with the First Nations Tax Commission and First Nations Chiefs from across the country that a First Nation Reserve Charge would result in economic reconciliation allowing indigenous communities to take back control of their lives.

For the information of all committee members, as I ask for your support for this motion, and for all Canadians, you might know that in Vancouver on February 8, the Honourable Pierre Poilievre, leader of Canada's common-sense Conservatives, committed to enable first nations to take back—

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): I have a point of order.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: —control of the resource revenues from big government gatekeepers in Ottawa.

The Chair: Mrs. Stubbs, I'll ask you to hold for one second.

We have a point of order from Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: My concern is that my Conservative colleagues said they wanted witnesses on this very important legislation. We have witnesses, but they are no longer able to speak. They came and gave us their time. This is important legislation, and we've heard very provocative testimony. I'm asking the Conservatives to park their motion, so that we show respect to the witnesses who've come and show respect for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. We're expecting this to do work on their behalf today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus, for your point of order.

I acknowledge your concern, but the member is able to move a motion with her time. I'll allow the member to continue.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly did express my personal concern and, on behalf of Conservatives, respect for the witnesses who are here today. Because of our extended hours, I'm grateful for their accommodation too, because, of course, this initiative is important to every single Canadian in every community right across Canada.

It would allow the discussion to proceed more efficiently with fewer of those interruptions. I will go back to briefing committee members and all Canadians about what happened on February 8, and why the Honourable Pierre Poilievre, leader of Canada's common-sense Conservatives, took this initiative to enable first nations to take back control of their resource revenues from big government gatekeepers—

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: —in Ottawa after announcing those indigenous-led consultations—I'll just finish my sentence—along with the First Nations Tax Commission—

The Chair: Mrs. Stubbs, I'll ask you to hold, please. We do have a point of order—

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: —and first nations communities across Canada last year on January 23, 2023.

The Chair: Could I ask you to hold your thought, and then you can continue?

You have my apologies.

We have Mr. Sorbara on a point of order.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to get clarification from my colleagues on the opposite side.

We know that both the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Province of Nova Scotia, and both premiers from opposite parties, and many stakeholders, wish to see this move forward. Will we be able to undertake questioning of the witnesses, who have taken time out of their days and their schedules, to talk about Bill C-49, or are we going to have the member opposite continue on this tangent for the foreseeable future?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sorbara, on your point of order.

Once again, as stated earlier, the member has the floor and does have the ability to move a motion with her time, as that's what has been done. If a member wants to address that with a statement they can, but procedurally they're allowed to move the motion.

Thank you.

● (1630)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Chair.

I hate to point out that this is just like—

The Chair: Give me one second.

We have another point of order, Mrs. Stubbs. I'll ask you to hold.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: —the colonialist, anti-energy policies of the NDP-Liberals, who have removed economic opportunities and the opportunities for economic reconciliation—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: Colleagues, we have a....

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: —with their anti-energy policies, while they simultaneously talk about—

The Chair: Mrs. Stubbs, I'll ask you to hold.

Go ahead, Mr. Sorbara, on a point of order.

I'll then go to you, Monsieur Simard, on—

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, can we get a determination on whether this motion is in order or not, please?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sorbara.

I will go to the clerk before I go to Monsieur Simard.

Monsieur Simard, give me just a second.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I just want to remind you—

[*English*]

The Chair: Give me just one second. I apologize. I just want to address that question.

Mr. Clerk, would you like to provide that answer to Mr. Sorbara?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Vassiliev): Yes, the motion is in order. It had 48 hours' notice.

The Chair: I'll now go to Monsieur Simard on a point of order.

Monsieur Simard, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I just want to remind you all that when several of you speak at the same time, you make it impossible for the interpreters. In the last 10 minutes, they've had to stop interpreting twice because people were talking at the same time.

Please be sensitive to the work of our interpreters. You must not speak when someone else has the floor.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Simard, for that.

Colleagues, it is very important that one member speak at a time and that you speak when you're recognized. If I ask you to hold or pause, I would like you to hold or pause, so that I can deal with the procedural items at hand and so that our interpreters, who always do a tremendous job, can interpret. That's what they're here to do, and they do a great job. However, they need to hear clearly what the member speaking or the individual speaking online is saying.

Please take that into consideration.

Now I will go back to Mrs. Stubbs. You can continue.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hopefully, the colleagues who were all waxing eloquent about doing this efficiently today will stop interrupting.

I will continue.

As our common-sense Conservative leader said on Thursday:

> For hundreds of years, First Nations have suffered under a broken colonial system that takes power away from their communities and places it in the hands of politicians [and bureaucrats] in Ottawa.
>
> The [racist] Indian Act hands over all reserve land and money to the federal government. This means that First Nations have to go to Ottawa to ask for their tax revenues [that were] collected from resource projects on their land.
>
> This outdated system puts power in the hands of bureaucrats, politicians and lobbyists—not First Nations. The direct result of this "Ottawa-knows-best" approach has been poverty, substandard infrastructure and housing, [unmet education needs,] unsafe drinking water and despair.

The former Conservative government, of course, made the historic apology for residential schools on behalf of all Canadians and launched the truth and reconciliation process and commission. More and more indigenous leaders and people across Canada after the last eight years call for overdue concrete measures towards what many indigenous leaders call "reconciliACTION" so that indigenous communities everywhere can move from managing poverty and gang crime to enabling prosperity and peaceful communities with abundant opportunities.

Last week, a visionary indigenous leader reminded me that many promises have been made by the Prime Minister after eight years. This Prime Minister says that the most important relationship to him is with indigenous people, but of course, he's failed over and over to deliver on his many big promises. That hereditary chief and former elected chief said to me that he says that the relationship with indigenous people is the most important one to him, but it's not Trudeau.

All parties should support this first nations-led optional tool because the first nations resource charge can help transform the status quo. Importantly, this is why it's an unprecedented proposal by a federal leader. It cedes federal tax room so that indigenous communities will no longer need to send the revenues to Ottawa and then ask for them back. It will make resource projects more attractive to first nations communities so that resource projects important to all of Canada and to every Canadian are more likely to go ahead.

This opt-in, optional program would permit first nations to collect 50% of the federal taxes paid by industrial activities on their land, with industry getting a tax credit in exchange. Under the tax-sharing proposal, businesses would pay tax directly to first nations in exchange for this 50% refundable tax credit. Of course, this proposal would respect existing treaties and uphold the Crown's constitutional duty to consult, and it could either replace or supplement any financial aspects of indigenous communities' pursuits of impact and mutual benefit agreements.

As many colleagues here will know, I come from Treaty No. 6 territory in Alberta, where indigenous communities and entrepreneurs have worked with the private sector and the government for decades to responsibly develop natural gas, heavy oil, clean and renewable energy, and oil sands. This is along with mutual benefit agreements and ownership positions in major projects, in energy infrastructure like power lines and pipelines, and in the service and supply sector. Oil sands and pipeline companies are, of course, the leading individual private sector employers of indigenous people in Canada, which is why the anti-energy just transition is so dangerous, particularly for them. Of course, indigenous employment in Canada is led by the mining and energy sectors overall.

Those indigenous communities all over Alberta have generated incredible own-source revenue, jobs, skills, opportunities and wealth for their community members and for future generations. They've created jobs and economic opportunities alike for their non-indigenous neighbours and for surrounding communities too. Opportunities and responsible resource development have helped indigenous communities teach the past, support their elders, heal people, help communities to learn and share languages and cultural practices, support essential health and well-being services, provide recreational and spiritual activities for youth, plan opportunities for future generations, and employ both their indigenous members and surrounding non-indigenous neighbours.

That's why radical anti-energy ideologies violate and undermine the aspirations and goals of hundreds of indigenous communities and people who want economic reconciliation for a brighter future with hope, opportunity and autonomy. Conservatives are especially mindful of how important it is to prioritize this kind of action because of all of the losses that eight years of the federal NDP-Liberal coalition's colonialist anti-energy, anti-private sector agenda has already cost all Canadians, especially indigenous people.

● (1635)

It's like the northern gateway pipeline, when Prime Minister Trudeau unilaterally vetoed the entire project in an order in council, instead of redoing the indigenous consultation—an option given by the court's decision on the shortcomings of that process. The Prime Minister's veto destroyed the years of work by indigenous leaders, who had secured dozens of impact and mutual benefit agreements worth almost $400 million. Those indigenous communities were not consulted on the Prime Minister's veto or about all of the major losses they would then sustain as a result, before the Ottawa-knows-best veto by Prime Minister Trudeau.

It's just like when the people of the Northwest Territories were caught off guard when the same Prime Minister unilaterally banned drilling—which was announced, of course, when he was in the United States. He stopped and blocked economic and energy investment opportunities in the north, where it's badly needed.

I'm thinking of the fact that the Lax Kw'alaams in B.C. were not consulted on how their rights and titles are undermined by the Prime Minister's imposition of Bill C-48, the anti-Canadian, anti-energy, anti-pipeline export ban. Of course, it wasn't a full tanker ban in the area. It only banned the onloading and off-loading at ports of vessels of a certain quantity and a certain size. It was deliberately to ban energy infrastructure and energy exports off of that coast, which indigenous communities wanted.

The Lax Kw'alaams are suing the federal government over C-48 because it violates their decision-making power over fishing activities and any pursuit of energy infrastructure and export opportunities, which dozens of indigenous communities leading to and in that area want to achieve.

I think of the brave Woodland Cree in Alberta, who went all the way to the Supreme Court in a multipronged effort to challenge this government's anti-energy, anti-private sector, pro-red tape Bill C-69, because it risks drowning out the voices of locally impacted indigenous communities who seek economic and resource opportunities on and around their lands. I make mention of the Woodland Cree because, despite all of the resources and the ability on the government's side, the Woodland Cree won.

It's been 122 days since the Supreme Court said that less than 10% of Bill C-69 is constitutional and that the rest is largely unconstitutional, yet those indigenous communities and all Canadians wait for this anti-energy, NDP-Liberal costly coalition to do something about that Supreme Court ruling, to fix that bill that Conservatives warned would result in exactly what has happened.

It's the fact that the Trans Mountain expansion was supposed to have been operating in 2019, but this federal government's deliberate, politically motivated failure to assert legal and political jurisdiction to ensure and prove that the project could actually get built by its private sector proponent delayed and risked the more than 40 indigenous mutual benefit agreements that their communities have worked years to secure with the private sector proponent.

That's even after the federal Liberals took the opportunity to redo their failed consultation after a federal court said they failed the first time around. After eight years, of course, the TMX is still not fully built or operational, and indigenous-led ownership groups are left waiting by this NDP-Liberal anti-energy coalition.

I think about the 15 losses of LNG projects since this government took office because of their anti-private sector, anti-energy red tape mess. We salute Woodfibre LNG, which has a groundbreaking partnership and proposal with the Squamish people as a regulator. They are entrepreneurial and leading their communities for economic and energy business opportunities.

LNG Canada was previously approved by the Harper Conservative government and then delayed by the NDP-Liberals. Thank goodness it's starting to be back on track. All 20 first nations along the route of the pipeline supplying LNG Canada have had elected band council signed benefit agreements with the private sector proposal from Coastal GasLink.

The Liberal red tape mess has killed energy and resource opportunity, over and over, for indigenous communities and for all of Canadians. I think of the indigenous communities who want to develop the ring of fire in Ontario and are speaking out because of the red tape mess of the regional assessments from Bill C-69. So far, they are lengthily delayed and roadblocked in their pursuit of essential infrastructure and economic opportunities in the region.

Both Webequie and Marten Falls first nations communities have proposed projects to support their development in the ring of fire region, but have been stuck in the Liberals' red tape mess.

I think of leaders like Dale Swampy of the National Coalition of Chiefs and Stephen Buffalo of the Indian Resource Council, who have fought against this colonialist, anti-Canadian agenda—

● (1640)

The Chair: Mrs. Stubbs, I'll ask you to hold on. We have a point of order from Mr. Angus.

Mr. Angus, go ahead on the point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I would ask out of fairness and respect to people who shouldn't have to listen to this that we agree to suspend for five minutes to let the witnesses leave so they don't have to sit here and put up with this. Then Mrs. Stubbs can talk all night.

This is really disrespectful to people who have real expertise on an issue that is really important and that legislation has to get passed on.

I would make an offer on behalf of our party that we suspend. Let the witnesses leave so they can get on doing important things rather than having to sit and watch this show, and then we will go back to Mrs. Stubbs and whatever she wants to talk about.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Chair, I have the floor, so I will continue. I will continue with my argument since I have the floor.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus, for bringing that forward.

The debate may end, and we do have a change of panels partway through, so I'm hoping that maybe Mrs. Stubbs is near the end of moving the motion, and maybe we can proceed from there if other members would like to do so.

I think we will see if Ms. Stubbs is close to wrapping up and we will determine the course of action. If it looks like we're going to get into the next panel, we'll do so appropriately.

Thank you for your feedback.

Go ahead, Mrs. Stubbs.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will now move to why the Conservative proposal is a solution to many of these challenges and why all parties should support it. It will amplify the voices of indigenous leaders who support the initiative.

I'm quite confident that all the witnesses who are here, especially all those Canadians who are here who are also energy experts, are also seized and concerned with this topic because, of course, they rely on and depend on certainty, clarity, consultation and negotiations for all of their good work. I'm sure they are just as concerned.

I don't know why MP Jones seems to think it's hilarious, but I certainly don't think that the colonialist, anti-energy, anti-private sector agenda that has taken opportunities away from indigenous people right across this country is at all funny.

In response to my colleague Charlie Angus—

● (1645)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Stubbs, can I ask you to hold, please?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: —there is not a thing that's a single show about this. I represent multiple indigenous communities involved in energy development—

The Chair: Ms. Stubbs, I will ask you to pause, please. We have a point of order.

Go ahead, Ms. Jones, on a point of order.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The member opposite knows that I did not say those words. You can throw whatever jargon you want in your presentation, as many untruths as you want, but do not quote what I do not say, please. I ask you that.

I ask you show a little respect for the committee as well and let our witnesses do their jobs today.

The Chair: Colleagues, there was a point of order.

I would ask colleagues to work with everybody in a collegial manner and not make statements that are maybe misleading or that members feel are targeting them in an unfair way or make a mischaracterization.

Thank you for your point of order.

Mrs. Stubbs, I will go back to you.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Chair.

I would like to apologize to MP Jones if I misinterpreted her laughter when I said that I would move on.

Maybe you were having a side conversation and laughing. I'm sorry that I misinterpreted that. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to clarify. You did start laughing right around when I said I was going to explain how important this is.

Thanks again for giving me the floor back, Chair.

I'm sure this is an initiative that deeply concerns every elected member around this table who cares about economic and energy opportunities for all Canadians and also for indigenous communities.

Let me just explain the driver, the genesis and the catalyst of this proposal that common-sense Conservatives bring forward for all parties to consider, especially when they consider walking their talk on truth and reconciliation with indigenous people and communities.

To be clear, this is a first nation-led solution to a made-in-Ottawa problem. It was developed by the visionary leaders and experts at the First Nations Tax Commission. They developed that plan, along with multiple other first nations, and brought it to Conservatives. There have been 14 months of consultations and conversations all across the country and of course our common-sense Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, has announced our endorsement of this proposal.

It's a new optional model that can help simplify negotiations between resource companies and first nations. The reality is that Conservatives have listened to first nations advocacy, and we support this optional first nations resource charge that enables first nations to take back control of their resources, their money and their lives on their lands.

This new optional model will not preclude any community from continuing to use other existing arrangements or pursuing impact mutual benefit agreements with private sector proponents. First nations can choose the FNRC as they wish, and the FNRC will respect all treaty rights and all constitutional rights.

Meanwhile, a Conservative government will work to properly deliver on the Crown's duty to consult with indigenous communities, including the necessary back-and-forth, two-way dynamic for redress and accommodation of issues raised by indigenous communities early on or throughout the assessment of major projects, including—importantly—decision-makers being at the table so all parties can be confident in the ultimate recommendations.

Putting first nations back in control of their money and letting them bring home the benefits of their resources and resource development will help get local buy-in for good projects to go ahead. That will mean more earnings for grassroots first nations communities, not Ottawa gatekeepers and layers and layers of bureaucracy. Those earnings will mean paycheques, schools, cultural exercises and clean water for people, to name just a few.

It's pretty clear—even with the reactions of the NDP and Liberal MPs here on this committee—that only common-sense Conservatives will fight for real economic reconciliation by supporting first nations to take back control of their money and their lives. Today we'll see that there will be an opportunity for NDP and Liberal MPs to show whether or not they want to join us in that effort.

Common-sense Conservatives, of course, commit to repeal Justin Trudeau's radical anti-resource laws to quickly green-light green, good projects so first nations and all Canadians can bring home more powerful paycheques.

Let me just share the words of Manny Jules, the chief commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission. He said—

● (1650)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I'll let you call on the NDP MP who wants to interrupt what an indigenous leader said.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, go ahead on the point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I carry this work with respect and integrity for the job before us, which is the mandate of this committee to address Bill C-49. I would like to ask my colleagues that we perhaps write to the premiers in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to tell them that the Conservative Party are adamant. They said that they were going to block this legislation. We've tried to work with them. We've brought witnesses.

I think it would be fair to bring a letter to the premiers saying that we are dealing with a party that is using indigenous issues now to try to obstruct.... I think it's very low, but they're going to do what they're going to do.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): George, this is not a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Our job was to respond to the premiers of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, thank you on your point of order.

I just want to remind all members that, when we do bring forward a point of order it must be procedurally relevant and not used for debate. However, I do want to hear from members when they make a point of order so that I can determine if it is or isn't.

Mr. Falk, you have a point of order. Go ahead.

Mr. Ted Falk: I do have a point of order, because this committee, over the past several months, has experienced constant interruptions from the NDP's Charlie Angus on non-points of order that he has claimed have been points of order.

This was not a point of order. This was debate. He wants to write a letter to the premiers. Good on him. Let him write it.

Mr. Chairman, this is not a point of order. Mrs. Stubbs has the floor. She's making a point as to why reconciliation with first nations is important. She was just going to quote from the financial chief. This is important. Our first nations folks need to be heard. This is a good motion that has been made—

The Chair: Mr. Falk, as you've just suggested, you're also now engaged in debate on a point of order that is not a point of order. You're using your time for debate as well.

I would ask all members not to use the time, when stating there is a point of order, to engage in debate, so that we can continue on with the debate that's occurring. If you would like to debate this motion, please let me know, and I'll put you in the speaking order.

Mrs. Stubbs, I'm going to go back to you. If you're close to wrapping up and can indicate that, I will get back, hopefully, to our witnesses at some point, but we will be changing to the next panel as well in a few minutes, so I'm not sure if we'll get to that point or not.

I will go back to you.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Chair. Certainly without all the interruptions I would have been finished, but it's par for the course around here with all the high carbon hypocrisy.

Just to respond to MP Angus's remarks about motive, what I am talking about here today and the way I'm talking about it is not remotely new. I have consistently advocated on these issues repeatedly in my various roles relating to natural resources, including on behalf of the five first nations and four Métis settlements that I represent in Lakeland and on behalf of the indigenous communities in Alberta and certainly right across the country. This isn't remotely new or a show, like he said.

Let me lead with the words of Manny Jules, the chief commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission. He has spent his life's work fighting for recognition of inherent rights and title and advocating for tax and other fiscal capacity and economic opportunities for indigenous people.

He said:

> In 1910, my ancestors asked then Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier to accommodate our jurisdiction and fiscal powers in Canada. We wanted to look after ourselves and be part of the economy. Instead, they took our children and denied our rights, fiscal powers, and jurisdictions. This approach has failed. It’s time for a real change. The First Nations Resource Charge is a practical step towards the better future my ancestors asked for 114 years ago—together [with all Canadians and governments] we will make each other great and good.

I would also like to share the words of Chief George Lampreau from the Simpcw First Nation in B.C. He said:

> The Simpcw First Nation is leading the First Nations Resource Charge. I call on the federal and provincial governments to cede room for the first governments of Canada to implement a First Nations Resource Charge. Real change means all governments need to offer tax room instead of revenue sharing.

He continued:

> The FNRC will provide a good option for First Nations, especially those who have not had the same opportunities as urban communities, like my community, Simpcw. However, even if we choose to use this option, we will still need to build on it through negotiation, to develop fully comprehensive agreements. Those agreements must ensure that we can take advantage of the economic opportunities that projects bring and that our voices are heard with respect to understanding the environmental impacts of major projects on our historic lands.

Let me share the words of Chief Derek Epp from the Tzeachten First Nation in B.C. He said:

> Thirty years ago, like many First Nations, we were 95% dependent on federal transfers; now, 95% of our revenues are from our tax and other own sources. The Fiscal Management Act...and the Framework Agreement...helped us take advantage of our location advantage. Similarly, the Resource Charge supported by the FMA and FA is going to help a lot of rural communities take advantage of their resource advantages.

The Tzeachten First Nation also stated:

> First Nation jurisdiction should be a non-partisan issue, and we call on all parties and provinces to do the same and support the FNRC.
>
> The Tzeachten First Nation has been a leader in First Nation tax and jurisdiction initiatives [including their] work with the First Nations Tax Commission to advance the FNRC along with other First Nation fiscal powers....
>
> Currently, First Nations must negotiate economic and fiscal agreements for every proposed project in our territories. No other government in Canada must do that. These constant one-off negotiations are wasting time and money.
>
> It is good to see the Conservative Party of Canada propose to cede some of the federal corporate tax room. The First Nations leading the FNRC proposal, and the First Nations Tax Commission will hold them to this commitment.

That is a commitment that our leader, the Honourable Pierre Poilievre, made on Friday.

They state that it "represents practical reconciliation. It addresses long-standing grievances and starts to bring the first governments of Canada, First Nations, into the federation. Confederation was based on the fiction that First Nation rights didn't still exist."

They point out that:

> The Indian Act legislated First Nations out of the economy [and that the] FNRC will help right these historic wrongs and begin to legislate First Nations back into the economy.
>
> The FNRC allows interested First Nations to become more self-reliant. It will mean First Nations can begin to close the many infrastructure and service gaps that exist between them and other Canadians [including] education, health, social, and environmental services.

● (1655)

The Chair: Mrs. Stubbs, could I ask you to hold for one second?

I will go to Ms. Jones on a point of order.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to indicate to our witnesses how sorry we are that we are not able to get to their testimony. They have been an hour and a half in the room, but the Conservatives have delayed Bill C-49 since the beginning, five months, by bringing forward other motions that are unrelated to this study or to the panels that are ongoing within the committee.

It's not that the motion is not an important motion that needs to be debated, but bringing it forward today is an intentional strategy on behalf of the Conservatives so that we do not get the chance to ask questions of the witnesses who are here, to hear their testimony and to hear their responses to issues that could impact them in the legislation and, to be honest, it's a very disrespectful practice that is occurring here.

Mr. Ted Falk: I have a point of order.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: I want the witnesses to know that, in the last hour and a half while they've been sitting here, we've been sitting here waiting to ask them questions about a bill that is very important to so many industries in Canada. We are unable to do so because the Conservatives are filibustering this session with a motion.

The Chair: Ms. Jones, we have a point of order from Mr. Falk, but before I go to that, I just want to address your point of order, Ms. Jones.

You stated it in your point of order that the member does have the right to move the motion. Although you'd like to hear from the witnesses, the member does have the right procedurally to move the motion, so the motion is in good standing.

I will go to Mr. Falk on the point of order.

Mr. Ted Falk: My only point of order, Mr. Chair, was that what the member opposite was engaged in was more debate than an actual point of order. I think she acknowledged that the procedures of this committee are completely in order. I would really like it if the Liberals and NDP would stop interrupting with their points of order.

● (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Falk, on—

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a point of order.

The Chair: —providing a point of order but also engaging in debate on your point of order.

I am going to go to Mr. Angus on a point of order.

Mr. Angus, go ahead, on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Again, I offer my deep embarrassment to our witnesses.

This legislation is important, and they know it. If they reached out to my office, we would do whatever we can to hear more from them, to talk with them, because our job here is to deal with the legislation before us and not to play in this gong show set up by the Conservatives.

I'm sorry you have to witness this. If you leave us at this time, you will not be blamed. Any normal human being would leave if they could, but please reach out to my office. We'd love to hear your testimony. You're raising some really vital and important information that is necessary to create proper legislation to protect all interests, so thank you very much for your presence. I'm sorry that this is being done today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus, for your point of order.

I just want to take a moment at this point to let the witnesses know that, if you do want to provide a further brief from your opening statement, you can do so and we can accept it. We are nearing the end of our time for our first panel. I don't know how long we will be, but I do not want to continue to hold you further. If you still would like to provide additional information to what you've provided in your opening statement, please do so to the clerk.

Colleagues, we will now suspend and change over to our next panel.

Mrs. Stubbs, we will continue with you when we come back, but I'd like to release the panel members who have been waiting for an opportunity to engage for the last half-hour. We have another panel that we will proceed to.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I have a point of order right now.

The Chair: I've said we will suspend, so we will suspend and come back.

● (1700)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1710)

The Chair: We are back. I call the meeting back to order.

We have a new panel. I would like to advise our witnesses for the second panel that we have a motion on the floor. Hopefully we will get an opportunity to hear your opening statements, but we currently have a motion on the floor. We suspended previously and we will go back to that point in the meeting.

Before I go back to Mrs. Stubbs, I have a point of order from Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: As an act of simple respect for our witnesses, who have expertise on really important legislation, I would ask Mrs. Stubbs if she could hold off and allow the witnesses to testify so that we have them on the record. They've taken their time to do this. She can then go back, take the floor and do what she's going to do.

It's really important that we get this witness testimony, and I think it would be really disrespectful to the role that's been given to us to not let the witnesses speak first.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus, for your point of order.

Mrs. Stubbs has the floor, so if we have unanimous consent from colleagues to allow the witnesses to speak, we can proceed with witness testimony and then go back to where Mrs. Stubbs left off. I will defer to my colleagues around the table.

Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus, for providing that, but we do not have unanimous consent around the table. I will go back to Mrs. Stubbs.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm sorry. Just to clarify—

The Chair: Mr. Angus, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a point of order just to clarify that.

Because I'm virtual, I didn't see it. I understand that the Conservatives are not allowing the witnesses to speak on legislation for Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.

● (1715)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Show up and you can see who it was, Charlie.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, can you hold for a second, please, on your point of order? You are correct. We did not have unanimous consent to allow the witnesses to speak, but I know Mr. Patzer is back for the second hour.

I gave a little speech earlier in the meeting today, Mr. Patzer. I did. I gave a speech to members earlier.

Colleagues, when a member is speaking or if the chair is speaking, let's not have multiple mics turning on. It is very difficult for our interpreters to interpret, and we want to make sure that they can do the great job they always do of interpreting. However, if they can't hear the individual or see them being able to speak, it's very difficult for them.

I'll ask, colleagues, once again. We're starting the second panel. Mrs. Stubbs had the floor, and we will go back to Mrs. Stubbs. She can continue from where she left off.

Mrs. Stubbs, I'm going back to you now. Go ahead. The floor is yours.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's interesting to see MP Angus blocking discussion about an initiative that would benefit indigenous people in communities all across the country, when he talks about lots of things that are going wrong but chooses to prop up the Liberal government anyway.

I will just continue to wrap up my comments as efficiently as possible, which of course will happen better without interruption. I know that it's important to every Canadian and every community and person invested in energy development of all kinds in all parts of this country.

Before I talk about a couple more of those indigenous voices that Charlie Angus and the Liberals around the table are trying to silence, while they also don't acknowledge the fact that it's their own government motion that pushed Bill C-49 behind Bill C-50. In fact it was my November 1 motion that asked this committee to get the government to fix Bill C-69 and then immediately move to work to move on Bill C-49, so that the government didn't pass a bill as written that has multiple sections the Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional. It would obviously cause uncertainty and invite immediate litigation on a number of grounds if they passed Bill C-49 as it's written.

No doubt I certainly appreciate and value the opportunity to fix Bill C-49 so that it will do what its proponents say they want, except that as of now, of course, the bill is one of additional red tape, lack of clarity and uncertainty that will block both traditional oil and gas and renewable offshore energy development.

To explain why the common-sense Conservative endorsement of this first nations resource charge is important, let's talk a little bit about the organization. It is important to note that it will build on the most successful first nation-led legislative initiatives in history, the First Nations Fiscal Management Act and the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management, and of course there are now over 400 first nations using one or both frameworks.

I'm going to really put a fine point on why this optional tool is so important. It will especially help smaller first nations communities with capacity challenges and fewer resources to be able to bring home all of those economic and multiple other kinds of benefits from pursuing responsible resource development through this "reconciliACTION" initiative that Conservatives are proposing. It will help smaller communities to negotiate with big companies and law firms to secure benefits and opportunities.

To that end, I want to share the words of Chief Sharleen Gale who's from Fort Nelson First Nation in B.C. and she's the chair of the First Nations Major Projects Coalition. She says,

> For too long, our people and governments have been left out of the resource bounty of this land. Many of our nations and members want to be part of the resource economy. They want careers, business opportunities, and equity stakes in resource companies. The First Nations Resource Charge finally means our fiscal jurisdiction over the resources on our lands is implemented. The Resource Charge will mean we can increase the economic benefits to our members and regions, improve services and infrastructure and close the gaps with the rest of Canada sooner.

The chief and other members of the Doig River First Nation in B.C. say it's ridiculous that the smallest governments must navigate the most complex negotiations. They say:

> We want to implement a charge like other Canadian governments to streamline business. The Resource Charge is going to provide the kind of revenues we need to have the water, health care, education, and opportunities that every other Canadian takes for granted.

They also say:

> We have many resource projects in our territory. The current process for negotiating financial compensation for First Nations takes too long, and it costs too much. We are small administrations. We cannot respond and negotiate in a timely way. It costs us hundreds of thousands of dollars. Our time is scarce. It costs Canada tens of billions in lost investment every year. The FNRC changes this. It is a pre-specified standardized charge for doing business in our territory—whether that is forestry, mining, hydroelectricity, oil and gas or any other resource project.

That captures especially well why our common-sense Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party of Canada are urging the government to support this optional first nations-led tool.

Chief Donna Big Canoe, who was in Vancouver, from the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation in Ontario, says:

> Confederation in 1867 divided everything between federal and provincial governments, treating us as if we didn't exist—wards of the state—leading to poverty, dependency, and the existence of residential schools for years. The solution is to bring First Nations into the federation by granting us tax powers to exercise our own jurisdiction. The First Nations Resource Charge aligns with this goal.

● (1720)

I'm mindful of Councillor Strater Crowfoot from the legendary Crowfoot family from the Siksika Nation in Alberta, who also supports this initiative. He says:

> In 1989, we passed amendments to the Indian Act that gave First Nations the option to assume tax room and service responsibilities on reserve lands. A lot of people thought it was minor and would never amount to much. Other people thought we simply weren't capable of carrying out such responsibilities. That, to me, is the most dangerous form of discrimination. Other people thought it was some plot to hold First Nations back. But First Nations all over the country proved the naysayers wrong. A lot has changed since then and for the better. I was there in '89, so I know. And I'm proud to be here now. This is going to allow many First Nations who were unable to take advantage of that earlier initiative to become more self reliant and more self-determining. It's also a major step in acknowledging our rights and obligations over our historic lands. I welcome the Leader of the Opposition for supporting this, and I hope every political leader in the country will support this. It's the right thing to do for First Nations and for the country too.

I will conclude, Chair, with a couple of other comments by indigenous leaders who've been involved in the work of developing this proposal, and I urge the members of Parliament and the House of Commons to consider supporting it.

Chief Darren Blaney from the Homalco First Nation in B.C.—

The Chair: Mrs. Stubbs, I want you to hold onto that quote until you can get it in. We have a point of order from Ms. Jones.

Ms. Jones, go ahead on the point of order.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm wondering if Mrs. Stubbs might want to outline her position on UNDRIP as well in bringing forward this motion. They're connected in terms of upholding the rights of indigenous peoples. I understand that they voted against UNDRIP, so I'd like to know what her views are on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jones, for your point of order.

That is a very important consideration, although it is a part of debate. I would just ask all colleagues to use a point of order for a matter of procedural relevance, although I would like to—

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you. We have a point of order from Mr. Angus.

Mr. Angus, go ahead with your point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'll repeat what I said in the previous session when our witnesses, who brought such expertise, were so disrespected and not allowed to participate.

I will ask that our witnesses be excused so they don't have to put up with this gong show. I would like to ask them if they would send us in writing any thoughts—

● (1725)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: I have a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: —about the legislation. Bill C-49 is very serious legislation for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. The Conservatives are determined to block it, but our witnesses should not have to put up with this. They have better things to do. They're experts in their fields, and I apologize to them that they're witnessing this. I would ask that they send us anything that we can use so that, when we get this committee back on track, we can use their testimony.

Again, I'd like to apologize for this embarrassment.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, thank you for your point of order.

We are scheduled, and I am hoping we will get to the witnesses at some point to get opening statements, but we may not. Witnesses can provide statements in addition to the opening statements.

I offer my apologies to all the witnesses who are waiting patiently to provide opening statements. I do hope we'll get there, but it's not up to me. It's up to our colleagues who have a motion on the floor.

I will go to the point of order from Mr. Patzer.

Mr. Patzer, go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, as a recurring theme with this committee, Mr. Chair, I would ask you to remind Mr. Angus to be judicious in his words, because I'm not too sure what he meant by a “gong show”. Is he calling the first nations resource charge a gong show, or was he referring to my colleague as a gong show? Either way, that is a completely ridiculous and absurd thing for him to say. I would hope that he would reconsider the words he chooses next time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your intervention on the point of order, Mr. Patzer.

I would ask all colleagues, as we have a good working environment here, to make sure that we use language that is appropriate when dealing with others and not use language that targets or misinterprets anything anybody else says.

On that, I will go back to Mrs. Stubbs.

Witnesses, if Mrs. Stubbs does finish up or we do get unanimous consent to allow you to proceed first, we will get there. If not, we will proceed back to Mrs. Stubbs on her motion.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thanks, Chair.

Of course, the sooner people stop interrupting me, the faster I will be able to amplify and share the voices of the indigenous people who want this initiative, for the benefit of indigenous communities and all Canadians right across the country, as well as for the benefit of the future of responsible resource development in Canada, which is so integral to our economy.

Chief Darren Blaney of the Homalco First Nation, B.C., said, as I was saying before I was interrupted:

> It is our responsibility to act as stewards and guardians of our lands and waters in a balanced way. Our connection to the lands and waters runs deep, but we also know the importance of economic opportunity. Homalco has projects and businesses that work towards this balance—whether it is forestry, tourism, or fishing. There is a proposed $10 billion hydroelectric dam in our territory. The Resource Charge doesn’t mean we won’t say no to bad projects where the costs to us are too high. It could mean, however, that good projects happen faster. This is what we all want. We want to continue to open up good, quality economic opportunities and participate meaningfully in projects in our territories.

Grand Chief Mike Lebourdais of the Whispering Pines First Nation in B.C., who has been a very outspoken leader about the importance of energy development to indigenous communities, including fighting for the pipelines that have been killed or delayed by this Liberal government, said:

> The Resource Charge is a First Nation led initiative. Whispering Pines and many other First Nations want to be in the business of doing business. We don’t want to be in the business of negotiating how we should do business. The First Nations Resource Charges means less time negotiating and more time raising our quality of life to national standards.

Councillor Thomas Blank from the Tk’emlúps in B.C., with whom I had a wonderful conversation in Vancouver on Thursday, said:

> Tkemlups has led First Nation tax initiatives for the last 50 years. The First Nations Resource Charge builds on what made our previous tax proposals work. What if instead of the federal government collecting money, and then negotiating with First Nations how much they get and how they spend it, we just let First Nations collect it and make their own decisions? It worked for urban First Nations, like [one of their communities] with property tax and property transfer tax. We know not all First Nations have a location advantage, but many have resource development opportunities on their territories. Let’s make it work for rural First Nations with the First Nations Resource Charge.

Jean-Claude Therrien Pinette, from an Innu community, said, “We recently participated in a conference on the initiation of the First Nations Resource Charge organized by the First Nations Tax Commission. This initiative makes sense for us. We have many industries on our traditional territories. Gone are the days when we simply received offers of low-paying jobs. We expect to receive a share of tax benefits and charges, as do other governments. That’s why we support the resource tax proposal.”

Let me close with comments from Dale Swampy, president of the National Coalition of Chiefs. He said, “We think it is the First Nations that should be leading the development of Canada’s natural resources to show how these partnerships with industry can ensure environmental protection and sustainable practices...more First Nations support the natural resource sectors, like oil and gas, than oppose it”.

I do certainly hope that all the witnesses get a chance to speak today and give their comments. I want to make sure they are invited—and know that they should and ought to, because it will allow them to give more comprehensive information—to submit written submissions and their recommendations for any amendments to C-49. We certainly will all take that into account.

As of right now, we very efficiently could resolve this, Mr. Chair, by putting a vote to the committee. To that end, I would ask the Liberal, NDP and Bloc members of this committee to support this common-sense motion. I ask for that full support in order to help bring home this optional step in the right direction, in a good way, towards economic reconciliation for indigenous communities to gain opportunities in ownership, equity, contracting and so many others in responsible resource development.

● (1730)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Stubbs.

I do have a speaking order on the motion that I've identified from hands that were raised, so now I will proceed to the next speaker on the list, who is Mr. Aldag.

Mr. Aldag, go ahead.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Thank you.

First of all, for any witnesses from the first panel and for those who are on the second, my comments will be brief, but I would like to begin by apologizing for this diatribe that we've all been subjected to by the lack-of-common-courtesy Conservatives. It is astounding that, every time we have credible witnesses here, this is the type of filibustering that we are subjected to.

I would like to make a few comments on the content of the motion. I would point out, first of all, that our government, the Liberal government, is intent on advancing reconciliation and supporting indigenous peoples in participating in and benefiting from natural resource projects, especially those on indigenous territories, and this remains a top priority for our government.

We believe that it is fully important to move forward with the full engagement of indigenous communities, including meaningful consultation. I'm very concerned that the Conservatives are trying to advance this motion. I'm curious about what kind of consultation went into it. At the committee here, we have not had any sort of study on this matter that's part of the motion being dropped on us. We've had no witnesses. There's been no report produced by this committee.

Reconciliation is an important issue that deserves fulsome and meaningful consultation and discussion with those directly impacted. In this case, it's with indigenous communities across Canada.

I would note that the first nations resource charge is not defined, and that's a problem. There's no mention of Inuit or Métis communities, so it's concerning that the Conservatives would omit those very important groups from this motion.

I find it also very concerning that this filibustering on a very important study comes the first day back after we had the first round of debate in the House on the first nations clean water act. We had a Saskatchewan Conservative MP, Kevin Waugh, who made extremely offensive comments and allegations during his party's first intervention on that legislation that first nations were burning down their own water treatment plants and that they weren't educated enough to operate them.

This is a completely baseless and offensive claim, but it's not surprising, because the leader of the official opposition himself has said that residential school survivors need a stronger work ethic. I'm not surprised that the Conservatives will resort to these kinds of baseless claims and use whatever straws they can reach to try to stall Bill C-49.

I find it particularly offensive that first nations are being used as pawns in this filibuster today by the Conservatives.

I would like to point out that the Conservatives had the opportunity to demonstrate through actions that they were meaningful supporters of indigenous issues in Canada, but they voted against $4 billion in indigenous housing. They voted against UNDRIP legislation. They voted against the indigenous loan guarantee program. They voted against first nations water and infrastructure funding. They voted against equity investment funds for indigenous governments. It's very concerning that these are the kinds of actions we see, although it's frankly quite unsurprising that these are their actions.

I really do believe that we have important discussions that we'd like to have today, so at this point I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Chair: Clerk, we have a motion to adjourn debate.

Please, go ahead.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

● (1735)

The Chair: Before I begin the second panel, I would like to provide some opening remarks for our witnesses who have joined us today.

Thank you for your patience.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, October 17, 2023, and the adopted motion of Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the committee is resuming consideration of Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Since today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of members and witnesses.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating via video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. In terms of interpretation, those on Zoom have the choice, at the bottom of the screen, of the floor, English or French. Those in the room can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. Additionally, screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

In accordance with our routine motion, I am informing the committee that all remote participants have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

With us today for the second panel, we have Ches Crosbie, as an individual. From the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, we have Mr. Paul Barnes, director, Atlantic Canada and Arctic. From the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association, we have Bonnie Brady, executive director, by video conference. Also by video conference, from the Maritime Fishermen's Union, we have Ruth Inniss, fisheries adviser; and Mr. Duane Boudreau, fish harvester.

We will now proceed to opening statements for five minutes each. We will start with Ches Crosbie.

The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Ches Crosbie (As an Individual): Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to express my concerns about Bill C-49.

I oppose the bill both as a citizen of Canada and as a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador, because it is a death blow to my province's ability to remain a contributing member of Canada.

Honourable members, in my respectful submission, Bill C-49 deserves to be known as the “no more offshore act.”

I'm a long-time member of the bar of Newfoundland and Labrador and a sometime leader of the legislative opposition. Now a non-practising member of the bar and retired from elected life, I'm involved in pro bono work for organizations like the National Citizens Inquiry.

My interest in Bill C-49, the “no more offshore act”, is not that of an industry spokesperson, of a fisher whose livelihood is affected or of a proponent or businessperson who hopes to profit. My interest is solely that of a citizen who wants a better Newfoundland and Labrador and, thereby, a better Canada.

In 1985, Prime Minister Mulroney and Premier Peckford came together over a deal enshrined in mirrored federal and provincial legislation to make Newfoundland and Labrador the principal beneficiary of the oil and gas resources of the subsea areas of our provincial shores to the 200-mile limit. This historic accommodation enabled Premier Peckford to proclaim that, “have-not will be no more.” This was the historic meaning of the Atlantic accord, that have-not will be no more.

The proposed change of title from Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act to the “Atlantic accord implementation and offshore renewable energy management act” tells us that a radical transformation of the Atlantic accord, the mainstay of jobs and prosperity in Newfoundland and Labrador for 30 years, is about to occur.

This radical transformation creates uncertainty about the viability of exploration permits and fishing rights over huge areas of the offshore and uncertainty even as to the availability of compensation for the expropriation it enables. As all know, uncertainty kills investment, prosperity and jobs. Uncertainty creates impoverishment.

The bill ensures that have-not will return, and have-not will return to stay because offshore natural resource development is drill bits in bedrock, but offshore wind-to-hydrogen heavily subsidized by government is pie in the sky.

Have-not will return because proposed section 56 of the bill imposes a reign of fear of the unknown on traditional energy developers, which will inevitably drive them away along with the jobs and tax revenues they generate. It has already driven them away. In 2023, these energy developers decided not to make a single bid for exploration—zero. Have-not will return because clause 8 of the bill says that the Atlantic accord does not apply to offshore renewable energy resources, which means that the principal beneficiary status of Newfoundland and Labrador, my home province, will not apply either.

The current federal government embraces a radical anti-carbon ideology to the exclusion of economics, so it may consider that killing the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore resource industry and the 25% of the provincial economy it generates is acceptable collateral damage. It may consider that ousting commercial fishermen from thousands of square kilometres of traditional fishing grounds is acceptable collateral damage.

● (1740)

More perplexing is the response of Newfoundland and Labrador legislators, provincial and those federal members not bound by cabinet solidarity. Only they can explain why they failed to defend the Atlantic accord and the jobs and prosperity it brings and could yet bring. Only they can explain to fishers why they failed to protect their livelihoods. Only they can explain why “have-not will be no more” will become “have-not will be again”.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Crosbie, for your opening statement.

We'll now proceed to Mr. Paul Barnes, director from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Mr. Barnes, you have five minutes.

I just want to remind everybody that I'll try not to interrupt you, but the yellow card is a 30-second warning and the red card means the time's up.

Mr. Barnes, go ahead. The floor is yours.

Mr. Paul Barnes (Director, Atlantic Canada and Arctic, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers): Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide comments related to Bill C-49.

As the chair mentioned, my name is Paul Barnes, and I am director of Atlantic Canada and Arctic with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers or CAPP. I am based in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. I have over 30 years' experience in the offshore oil and gas industry and have worked extensively during that time with the Atlantic accord legislation, which is being amended with this bill.

CAPP is a non-partisan, research-based industry association that advocates on behalf of our member companies that explore for, develop and produce oil and natural gas throughout Canada. CAPP's members include several that are active in the Atlantic Canada offshore area and that will therefore be directly impacted by any accord act amendments.

One main driver behind Bill C-49 is to provide authority to the offshore petroleum boards in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to regulate offshore renewable energy. My remarks are not specifically focused on this aspect of the bill, as it falls outside of CAPP's oil and gas industry mandate.

My remarks will instead focus on the aspects of Bill C-49 that directly impact offshore exploration, development and production activities.

Before moving into my specific remarks, I want to note that there are several positive changes included in the bill that our industry supports, including providing clarity in the role of the offshore petroleum boards in the regional impact assessment process. Natural Resources Canada staff have also been extremely helpful in providing clarity to CAPP and our members on aspects of the bill that we highlighted in a letter to Minister Wilkinson in August 2023, which we provided a copy of to the committee on February 2, 2024.

To begin, clause 36 of the bill introduces a significant change for the oil and gas industry, which is the move to a 25-year, fixed term, significant discovery licence on future licences. CAPP recognizes the desire of the governments to find new ways to encourage the development of discoveries in a timely manner, but cautions that moving to a fixed term without adequate flexibility to extend the term could have unintended consequences.

The Atlantic Canada offshore is one of the most challenging operating environments in the world. Current projects have taken up to 30 years to develop. There may be unique cases in the future where more than 25 years are necessary to move from exploration to production. Flexibility in the fixed-term licence is critical in a jurisdiction with such challenges. Specifically, legal language on the ability to extend the term if an operator can demonstrate that they are diligently pursuing development should be included in the bill.

Should governments move towards a fixed-term licence, CAPP suggests they direct the offshore boards to remove escalating rentals in the terms and conditions of the licence.

Clause 28 of the bill, which proposes to amend section 56 of the accord act, leads to the prohibition of oil and gas activities in a marine protection, environmental or wildlife conservation area. CAPP and its members had concern with this section when we wrote our original submission to the NRCan minister in August 2023, as we viewed it as expanding the prohibition of oil and gas activities to other conservation or protection areas outside of the Oceans Act marine protected areas or national conservation areas. However, following discussions with NRCan staff and provincial Government of Newfoundland staff, we now better interpret the intent of the section and the role of both the federal and provincial natural resource ministers if there is to be any prohibition of oil and gas activities in any area.

Clause 71 of the bill allows government to make regulations to regulate access to offshore infrastructure, including to enforce tolls and tariffs. It is CAPP's view that in such a small operating basin in Newfoundland and Labrador, where all current offshore oil and gas activities are focused, access to infrastructure is not an issue that requires additional regulation, nor should it be included in this bill.

Offshore facility owners are open to considering adding production from others that wish to access their facilities. If a facility has extra capacity, allowing others to have access to it can reduce costs and extend the commercial life of a project provided, however, that those others share the responsibility of all related costs and liabilities, plus provide a fair return on risk investment.

● (1745)

Access to infrastructure is a commercial issue and is best left to facility owners and those wanting to access the facility to manage and negotiate. Moving towards a system whereby governments can regulate access and enforce tolls and tariffs adds uncertainty in an environment where there are a limited number of projects and where facility owners are open to negotiating directly with others.

As I see that I'm coming rather close to the end of my time, we will provide specific written remarks to elaborate on a couple of other issues that I wanted to bring to the committee's attention.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barnes.

We will now proceed to Bonnie Brady from the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association, for five minutes.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Bonnie Brady (Executive Director, Long Island Commercial Fishing Association): Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for allowing me to join you virtually to offer my experience from the U.S. as you discuss Bill C-49.

My name is Bonnie Brady. I am the executive director of the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association, which represents all gear types of commercial fishermen on Long Island in New York.

In 2003, we became involved with offshore wind, when 100 offshore turbines were slated for our state waters. That project was killed when the real cost of the project to ratepayers was revealed in 2006.

I am here to join the chorus of warnings about offshore wind. No matter what you have been told about Canada being the new Saudi Arabia of wind, there are far more threats lurking ahead from offshore wind to commercial fishing and its coastal communities, your domestic seafood production and infrastructure, mariner safety, national security and the ocean itself. I implore you to not move rapidly without being aware of the pitfalls.

To begin, you must protect commercial fishing, fisheries and benthic habitat by removing fishing grounds from offshore wind lease areas, including where cables are placed. Without having specific language within your fisheries law, and perhaps also in Bill C-49, you may be unwittingly signing an economic death warrant for fishing communities and possibly the ocean's productivity itself.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has had minimal to no contact with commercial fishing experts in the siting process here in the U.S. It only included them after the project design was locked in via state power purchase agreements. Best management practices are a mirage.

The consolidation of federal decision-making power under BOEM means that other agencies have been ignored and fisheries are considered at the last stages of its federal review. By then, alternatives are severely limited by developer and state decisions, even though the lease is in federal waters. Our NOAA fisheries—which is our main regulator, like your DFO—is not a lead agency. As such, it cannot say no to a project. BOEM has full authority.

Federal agencies are instead deferring to multinational or foreign government-owned energy companies, advertising the permanent installation of turbines as solely a good thing for our oceans, and prioritizing build-out goals at the expense of our nation's wild-caught seafood security. By losing access to fishing grounds for multiple fisheries and direct access to ports throughout our coastlines, our entire commercial fishing industry and its infrastructure will be gutted.

As of late, we've seen procurement agreements cancelled, but with new mandates and rebidding right around the corner, development is all but guaranteed, shutting out ways to protect our industry and the environment. As Ms. Lapp mentioned, our only recourse is to sue.

The U.S. has no language to protect or compensate commercial fishermen for the taking of their fishing grounds for offshore wind, unlike Denmark, whose law states, “No obstacles may be placed in the way of legally practiced fishing.” They will tell you that compensation was only because, in Denmark, they closed wind lease areas to fishing and here you won't be prevented. What they won't tell you is that it's dangerous to enter wind farms because marine radar will not work.

Fishermen from Thanet, England, told us the same in 2014. Their 10-metre boats are now forced to travel around the Ørsted-built offshore wind farm to cod grounds much farther from port because the cod are no longer in the lease area. In 2016, we began telling U.S. regulators about false ghost targets on radar, using the example of the Block Island wind farm, which is a small, five-turbine, six-megawatt site off Rhode Island. We were ignored. In the spring of 2022, the National Academy of Sciences corroborated fishermen's long-standing radar interference concerns.

As Ms. Lapp mentioned in earlier testimony, Rhode Island lost the fishing vessel *Mistress* and two of its three crew in the early hours of New Year's Day in 2019. The U.S. Coast Guard report described clearly that the Sikorsky Jayhawk helicopter that was sent to look for survivors returned to base after arriving offshore, as they were “unable to conduct search due to high winds, low [visibility], hazards (windmills) and low ceiling”.

That's for five turbines far smaller than the more than 3,000-plus U.S. offshore wind turbine planned assault on the Atlantic Ocean.

In 2020, the offshore wind turbine radar mitigation workshop webinars made clear that a one-foot error in ocean current height based on high-frequency radar will become a 24-kilometre error in the search zone for a lost soul. The entire search and rescue operations' SAROPS model, which is used to predict search zones, will be rendered useless.

Another reason that Thanet fishermen must travel farther is that their former fishing grounds, now the Thanet wind farm, are churning up constant underwater sediment plumes up to six kilometres long and over 150 metres wide 24-7, with scour pits up to 40 metres deep behind each turbine. Those sediment plumes can be seen from space. I'm not kidding. NASA did a paper on it in 2014.

We do know, through European research, that offshore wind farms warm the sea surface temperature, mimicking climate change. They affect ocean circulation patterns, produce a substantial loss of wind for up to 60 miles past a lease area and impact upwelling and downwelling, which feed the ocean and all of its denizens.

● (1750)

Please do not rush forward as the U.S. has. If you do, you risk it all.

I look forward to any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statement. It was right on time.

We'll now go to the Maritime Fishermen's Union.

Ruth Inniss, you have five minutes for your opening statement. Please, go ahead.

● (1755)

Ms. Ruth Inniss (Fisheries Advisor, Maritime Fishermen's Union): Thank you very much. I'm very happy to follow Bonnie on this, as I represent a fishing organization that's quite afraid.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak this evening and to provide our testimony to the natural resources committee on Bill C-49. We, Duane and I, are here tonight on behalf of the 1,300 multispecies harvesters who make up the Maritime Fishermen's Union. Our members fish lobster, crab, tuna, scallops and herring, along with many other commercially viable species along the shores of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Currently, the fishing industry in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick accounts for a combined $5 billion in revenue and well over 30,000 direct jobs, which help to fuel the economies of many coastal communities. Our membership is gravely concerned about the impact that rushed legislation, inadequate consultation and the lack of wind energy science will have on the fishing industry. The fishing industry has long been a partner in the marine space, sharing waters with each other, other industries and other nations.

The bill, as it stands before us, is sorely lacking in protections for the fishing industry, the aquatic species we depend on and the livelihoods that depend on fishing. Simply put, while we support the expansion of clean energy, it should not be at the expense of the fishing industry. The legislation, as drafted, covers damages to gear and equipment resulting only from safety incidents or infrastructure failure, as well as damage from the release of materials or spills. There is no consideration of damages that may be incurred based on changes, resulting from water temperature changes, electrical pollution and displacement from traditional fishing grounds, should the wind energy industry have a detrimental effect on dispersal, productivity or availability of the species we depend on—in short, the livelihood of our members.

Harvesters cannot respond to industrial developments of this magnitude by simply moving from one area to another. Restrictions established by DFO for boundaries, gear and other regulations restrict the ability of harvesters to adapt, confounded further by the unknown impacts of wind energy on the very resources that they access.

Additionally, while harvester groups have joined together to identify a number of areas as “low impact” to the fishing industry as part of the regional assessment process, there have been no guarantees that the results of our efforts will be considered when evaluating areas for wind energy development. Wind energy developments will require vast tracts of ocean area, and there is no guarantee that the fishing industry will be consulted on the complex task of spatial planning.

Moving a bill through that could potentially harm the fishery is irresponsible without proper consultation, proper science and a collaborative approach with all the stakeholders affected. The industry has consulted, partnered with and, in many instances, led efforts in conducting science when working with government agencies. Our organization has a world-class science arm called Homarus, which frequently leads or is consulted on matters of marine conservation.

Our industry is facing profound challenges related to climate change. Fisheries and stock migration patterns are changing and evolving, and we do not have enough scientific evidence of what this will look like in the future. Rushing poorly thought-out legislation to govern an industrial marine development that remains largely in an experimental stage for Atlantic waters, and legislation that lacks proper safeguards to ensure a sustainable, viable and resilient coastal economy, is extremely irresponsible.

There are fundamental differences between the offshore petroleum industry—which this legislation was originally intended to apply to—and the burgeoning offshore wind industry, which is dramatically different in structure, function and effects. We are extremely concerned that the redrafted legislation fails to account for or to even consider this fact. In short, decisions that affect the fishery must include the individuals who harvest the fish and provide the protein and the economic drivers in communities.

We have a process in place to share information and receive input from our members. We conduct meetings, pass resolutions, conduct workshops and convene annual conventions to engage our membership. The timing required to have fulsome discussions and deliberations on this extremely important bill, Bill C-49, is woefully lacking.

We have the time to collectively develop good legislation and a responsible world standard for offshore wind development. We have the responsibility to make it the best possible legislation for our members, the marine environment that supports them and the communities that depend on this successful industry.

● (1800)

Mr. Chairman and committee members, we ask you, number one, do you think it is responsible to push legislation through that does not consider the effects on historical and current stakeholders? Do you fully understand how this legislation will affect the fishing industry in Atlantic Canada? Have you considered—

The Chair: Ms. Inniss, I ask you to wrap up. I apologize, but you're out of time.

Ms. Ruth Inniss: Have you considered endangered species?

I'll leave it at that, and thank you very much. I'm sorry for going over time. I had almost finished.

The Chair: That's okay. Thank you.

We will now proceed to our first round of questions—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Chair, point of order.

Since Ms. Northrup is still with us, may we have unanimous consent for her to join us at the table? It would be nice if we could ask her questions too, since she wasn’t here for the last round of questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Colleagues, yes, Ms. Northrup is here. If there's unanimous consent we can ask Ms. Northrup to come join us at the table and answer any questions that may come forward. Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Ms. Northrup, if you'd like to join us, you can come forward, please. Thank you, Ms. Northrup.

We will now proceed with our first round of questions with Mr. Small.

Mr. Small, you have six minutes.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for coming out to take part in our very important study of this legislation. I'm going to try to spread my questions around, and I'd like the witnesses to be brief in their answers. If there's more they'd like to add that they don't get out in their responses to me, they could get that across in written submissions. Thank you.

First of all, Ms. Inniss—just briefly here—I heard you say that there's no guarantee of consultation on spatial planning. Has your organization had experiences in the past in negotiating areas where fishing activity has been prohibited? For example, in the development of marine protected areas, what's been your experience?

Ms. Ruth Inniss: We've had a number of experiences working with spatial planning around MPAs. Years ago, we were strong members of—I don't know if you'll remember—the eastern Scotian Shelf integrated management plan, ESSIM. The point I'm making is that spatial planning is very complex, and we believe that every stakeholder that's going to be affected in the decision-making for that part of the ocean's space needs to be at the table and part of the discussion.

Mr. Clifford Small: In the past, in the development of MPAs, were your concerns reflected in the rollout of the final product and the layout of the MPAs? Were your concerns listened to or not?

Ms. Ruth Inniss: That's a black-and-white question, and the answer is grey. Some of them were. Some of the MPAs or areas of interest were still open to certain types of fishing, so that was a success because—and I don't know for sure but I would say—without our voice they would have been completely closed.

Mr. Clifford Small: Is it fair to say that may be the basis of your concern with this bill?

Ms. Ruth Inniss: Do you mean that we wouldn't be listened to?

Mr. Clifford Small: Yes.

Ms. Ruth Inniss: Yes. I'm always concerned that the fishing industry is not being listened to. It doesn't matter what file it is, but yes—

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you very much. You can submit some more.

● (1805)

Ms. Ruth Inniss: We will.

Mr. Clifford Small: To Mr. Crosbie, in the development of a bill like Bill C-49 to change the Atlantic accord, is the tone and messaging as important as the legal jargon that's in it, in terms of potential investment in wind energy and petroleum energy projects?

Mr. Ches Crosbie: That's a pretty hefty question.

Mr. Small, as you're aware, I took a high-level approach to the bill. There's plenty of scope for getting into what might be more technical legal problems.

One of them would be that we've just seen the Supreme Court of Canada—last year—shred Bill C-69. This piece of legislation, Bill C-49, in dozens of places wants to coordinate itself with the statutory scheme and regime of Bill C-69, yet how can it do that when Bill C-69 is lying in tatters on the cutting-room floor? That is a major legal problem that perhaps some other people with legal backgrounds might want to express an opinion on.

Otherwise, as I've said, I just tried to take a high-level view of things. To my mind, this is an abrogation: an abrogation of the historic Atlantic accord, the accord between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada, which has served Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada so well for 30 years.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Crosbie.

Just to be fair and to spread it around a little bit, Ms. Brady, you gave some very powerful statements a little while ago. What kind of framework in terms of fishing industry involvement in the process would prevent uncertainty both to the fishing industry and to potential investors in offshore wind, based on your experience on the eastern seaboard?

Ms. Bonnie Brady: I can't speak on behalf of the developers, but I know that no matter how many times we've gone to the table—and I've been doing this on the present U.S. offshore wind structure since 2014—we haven't been heard at all.

Basically, we have no option. BOEM makes the final decisions. For any socio-economic or fisheries data—anything we brought to the table—they said at the time when they leased the area, “Oh well, we can do it when we get to our construction and operation plan.” However, by the time they submit that, they've spent so much money surveying the area, etc., and the state-purchased power agreements have been put in place, and they're not going to suddenly shut down the area.

For example, the Empire Wind 1, which is Equinor—which is Statoil—had a lease in the New York Bight. We actually sued. We gave them all the information about where we fish. The director's memo had four choices for Abby Hopper at the time. It was 2016. You could remove section A due to offshore fishing grounds, remove section B due to offshore fishing grounds, remove A and B or open it all up. She opened it all up, and it has been that way ever since.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

The time is up for our first round.

We'll now proceed to Ms. Jones from the Liberal Party of Canada, for six minutes.

Go ahead, Ms. Jones.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of the witnesses who are here today.

Unfortunately, we've missed two hours of committee time because of filibustering by the Conservatives. They've filibustered this bill for five months, because we know the Conservatives do not support Atlantic Canadians. They do not support the Atlantic accord.

Maybe I'll start with you, Mr. Crosbie. Perhaps you remember when Stephen Harper tried to axe the Atlantic accord for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Chair: Ms. Jones, can I ask you to hold for a second? We have a point of order from Mr. Small.

Mr. Small, go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to remind MP Jones that her party tried to put Bill C-50 in front of Bill C-49.

The Chair: Colleagues and Mr. Small, the proceedings at this committee are quite public. Everybody knows what's occurred in recent history and what hasn't. I would ask and encourage all members not to use a point of order for debate. When you do have time, when you have the floor, then you can add your comments with the questions you ask.

I will go back to Ms. Jones.

Ms. Jones, please go ahead from where you left off.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the record, Conservatives filibustered Bill C-50 for months in committee as well.

Mr. Crosbie, do you remember when Stephen Harper offered the ultimatum to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on the Atlantic accord in 2006, when they wanted to axe the accord because we were already getting benefits under equalization?

● (1810)

Mr. Ches Crosbie: Vaguely.... I'm not saying that the Atlantic accord can't be improved. There are areas where it could be improved for the benefit of the province and the country—

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you. I—

Mr. Ches Crosbie: —but this is not going to improve it. It's going to shred it and abrogate the Atlantic accord, and that's not in the interest of the country.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: That is not the intent of the bill. This is a regulatory bill.

You were a former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in Newfoundland and Labrador. Are you against this bill just because you want to side with the Conservatives in Ottawa and the Poilievre government—like the Stephen Harper government—which is now trying to get rid of any regulatory body around offshore wind or the Atlantic accord?

Mr. Ches Crosbie: That's somewhat of a rhetorical question. I'm against it because I'm a Canadian patriot.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you.

You also said in your testimony that you didn't see any benefits in this agreement for Newfoundland and Labrador. Did you see any benefits in the Atlantic accord for Newfoundland and Labrador under the regulatory body of the C-NLOPB?

Mr. Ches Crosbie: The accord has functioned more or less as intended, with some disputes along the way, which did get resolved. I think you—

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Why is it your—

Mr. Ches Crosbie: —referred earlier to the one between Prime Minister Harper and Premier Williams. That's not to say it can't be improved. I don't argue with that.

This is not an improvement. This is an abrogation.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Chair, I'd like to note for the record that the MOU between Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada has been signed. I want witnesses to know that.

I also want them to understand that this is a regulatory bill, and this bill does not openly sanction any offshore wind development without going through the proper environmental processes. I'm not sure if the three witnesses we've had today from the United States understand how that process works in Canada. Obviously, it's much different from how it works in their states. I want to note that for the record.

I would like to turn my questioning to the Canada offshore petroleum board. We heard testimony in the committee from Mr. Small that CAPP may be opposed to this legislation. I didn't hear that in your testimony.

Could you clarify for us where CAPP stands on Bill C-49?

Mr. Paul Barnes: Sure. Thank you.

As I mentioned in my comments, most of this bill is directed towards the renewable sector side of the industry, so we're not opposed to the bill. We have some clauses of the bill that we would like to propose some improvements or amendments to, to make the bill even clearer and more predictable for our industry. That's what we plan to do, not only through my testimony today but in a written submission that we'll provide in a few days.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you very much.

I'd like to ask the witnesses who testified from the United States.... I don't know which one you are right now on the screen. I'm sorry.

Okay. Thank you for waving.

Can you tell me how familiar you are with the environmental assessment process in Canada and what the regulatory process would be to see any offshore wind developed in our country? It's very different from the legislation that exists in the United States.

Ms. Bonnie Brady: I do know—you were speaking about that before—that for all of the wind lease areas they do only an environmental assessment and they do only an individual assessment. They don't do any sort cumulative study.

That's different from the environmental impact statement. That goes through a full EIS process with a draft and comments throughout and involves an act that we call the NEPA, which is the national environmental protection act. They do the leases with only an EA, with only basically the idea that "we're going to put a buoy out there and we're going to do some work here and we'll let you know". There's no point in the process where as fishermen we can say, "Wait a minute—these are active grounds."

BOEM is the lead on any of this regulatory environment, so even if the National Marine Fisheries Service said, "Don't do this here because it's important, because it's a central fish habitat", or whatever, they would not allow it.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you.

Obviously, it's a different environmental assessment process that we go through. I think Ms. Northrup mentioned this in her testimony and how different planning and procedure pieces could be better informed through the legislation or at different stages of the project.

I'd like to go to you, Ms. Northrup, to fill that out for us in terms of how that can appear in the bill. We know you support the legislation, but we want to make it as good as we possibly can to service the people of Atlantic Canada.

● (1815)

The Chair: Ms. Northrup, I'd ask you to be very brief, please, because our time is at the end of the questioning.

Ms. Kostantina Northrup: If it has to be brief, I can say only that it is a question requiring a few seconds to answer. I might ask if somebody agreeable to hearing a more fulsome answer might rephrase or reform the question, because I don't think I could answer that quickly.

I'd just say that we support the bill in principle, but we actually think better assessment processes need to be built into it to address some of the issues that witnesses like Ms. Brady and Ms. Inniss have been raising tonight.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to Monsieur Simard from the Bloc Québécois for six minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being with us today. I especially thank them for their patience.

Generally, the work done at committee aims to improve bills and hear from experts, who have prepared testimony. Sometimes, unfortunately, following a skewed idea of common sense, certain people foster cynicism in politics. That's what we witnessed today. I hope you won't hold it against parliamentarians who want to do their job constructively. Those at home following committee work are able to ascertain various people's good faith.

Ms. Northrup, during your speech, you spoke at length about impact studies. Personally, I know a little about how things work in Quebec. In fact, the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement is the organization that carries out impact studies for the majority of economic development projects. However, in the context of the agreement in question, that remains a little more nebulous for me.

You mentioned the possibility of minimizing user conflicts, which could be done through better consultation.

Do you have any possible solutions for the Committee regarding the implementation of useful impact studies and the reduction of these conflicts?

[*English*]

Ms. Kostantina Northrup: Thank you for that question.

What I would say in response—and I think this picks up on a comment Ms. Brady was making a few moments ago—is that there is a need for consistent high-level assessment and project-specific assessment.

There should be thorough assessment at the high level to take into account not only necessary assessments, such as the assessment of cumulative effects, which is more easily, efficiently and meaningfully done at the high level. There should also be the kind of assessment that allows for a big-picture view of competing uses of an area. What exists in an area already? What is desired or is at least being envisioned for introduction into the area? Then we can look at these things and ask whether these activities could coexist.

If not—if there are conflicts—how are we going to make decisions about the best places to balance and to site? You need that high-level assessment process to be done consistently for every relevant area before you go in and just start doing project-specific impact assessments, but you also then need the project-specific impact assessment as well so you can look at the specifics of any site.

That is our position and what we recommend be built into this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

Ms. Northrup, I invite you to provide us with documents and suggested amendments, should you have any. We would be pleased to receive them.

Mr. Crosbie, can you hear me?

[*English*]

Mr. Ches Crosbie: It could be louder actually.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: You made a statement that surprised me somewhat. You spoke about a radical anti-carbon ideology.

I have a very simple question for you: do you believe in climate change?

● (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Ches Crosbie: This is my personal view, my own opinion: The climate changes all the time.

Personally, having looked into the whole subject matter, I think that the theory that carbon output caused by humans is causing catastrophic climate change is bogus. That's my answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: All right.

If we follow that line of logic, the energy transition, in your opinion, is all smoke and mirrors.

Is that so?

[*English*]

Mr. Ches Crosbie: It's a heavily government-subsidized program to cure a problem that doesn't exist.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you very much, Mr. Crosbie.

That makes me laugh.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Simard.

You had time left on the clock, so that's very generous of you.

Mr. Angus from the New Democratic Party, the floor is yours for six minutes. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you very much.

It's certainly interesting to see the Conservative witnesses who come forward. Climate change deniers, I think, fit very well with Mr. Poilievre's caucus.

Ms. Northrup, I want to speak with you.

To put this in context, I noticed that a group of scientists just warned us after the hottest temperatures in memory in the North Atlantic at the beginning of the year. Those numbers were literally said to be off the charts in terms of temperature. They've never seen anything like that.

How important is it that we get legislation that puts in a renewable energy strategy to deal with the increasing impacts on our oceans, while also protecting them? How do we do that?

Ms. Kostantina Northrup: I think it's vital to have legislation come in that will enable a sustainable, renewable energy transition, certainly. It's also vital to have good laws in place that allow for meaningful protection of marine environments. I would just say that.

I think I've made it clear in my comments already tonight that we support the government bringing in a bill that's going to open doors to renewable energy development in the marine spaces in Atlantic Canada. However, we want to see those processes be good processes that are going to allow for genuine good governance in the space.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

The last oil permitting attempt off Nova Scotia was for Sable Island. It received a huge outpouring of public opposition, because this is such a fragile, world-renowned heritage area. The oil companies were trying to get their hands on it.

Do you believe this legislation between the federal government and the provincial government will give them the tools necessary to protect marine spaces from either offshore oil and gas or offshore wind? Is there an ability, based on what came out of the Sable Island fiasco? How do we make sure we reassure the public that areas are being protected?

Ms. Kostantina Northrup: If you're speaking about the Inceptio licence that was set aside in the autumn, those set-aside powers exist already under the accord acts as they stand now. They certainly are important powers, but they're not powers that exist specifically to deal with marine conservation and protection issues. Certainly, new powers being brought in through Bill C-49 are important in that regard.

However, I would say that powers to prohibit licensing in certain areas, or powers to cancel licences, although important, cannot do the full job of marine conservation and protection if you don't also have, built into the law, good processes for informed decision-making and informed planning at a high level, with public participation and the participation of all stakeholders who can bring the information and knowledge needed to help make good decisions in the space.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you for that.

Mr. Barnes, what we were told by officials from the provincial government of Nova Scotia is that, since Sable Island, there have been no other oil permits put forward off of Nova Scotia.

Is that correct?

● (1825)

Mr. Paul Barnes: I'm assuming that, when you say “since Sable Island”, you mean after the last offshore land sale.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes.

Mr. Paul Barnes: To my knowledge, industry has not put forward any additional land parcels.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Bay du Nord was approved. It's a big thing getting a project approved—300 million barrels—yet, after the approval, the company walked away. They said the economics weren't there.

What does that mean for your industry?

Mr. Paul Barnes: It certainly caused us concern and still does. On this project—while not cancelled outright—there is a three-year delay. Any time there is a delay when it comes to new developments, especially for offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, it means a delay in economic benefits that can come from our industry.

The very reason there is a delay and the very issue there is a delay certainly are concerning to us.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I see.

As you know, the International Energy Agency's latest report is that they see oil demand dropping by 25% in the next six years, leading to a potential 80% drop by 2050. If the markets are shifting that dramatically, three years from now would make it even more difficult. Do you recognize the importance, then, of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia being able to diversify? If the IEA analysis is correct, we're going to need to start to diversify so that we're not losing those jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.

Mr. Paul Barnes: Yes, certainly. I know that the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia are trying to diversify their economies for such time as when oil and gas, especially in Newfoundland and Labrador, may no longer be bringing in the benefits or revenues that it brings in now, but our industry still believes in the prospectivity of the offshore, still believes in investment opportunities and, hopefully, will invest there for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Charlie Angus: You have an incredibly skilled workforce, certainly, in the offshore. Argentia has done a lot of great work. It's really important for us as Canadians to make sure those skills are able and are transferable. Are you looking at whether or not some of your operations could help—certainly in the construction projects and that—if offshore wind is happening? That's what we're seeing happen in Aberdeen off the North Sea, that there is a lot of transference of skill and expertise.

Mr. Paul Barnes: Most definitely. I've had the opportunity to visit the Argentia construction facility that's now constructing the west white rose project, and the labourers involved in that are doing an excellent job. Many of the skills being used to construct that offshore facility I'm sure can be transferable to other renewable sectors.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you very much for that.

Ms. Inniss, for my final question, I've been asking because the issue of the fisheries—

The Chair: Mr. Angus, we are—

Mr. Charlie Angus: You've giving me a red card? Come on, boss, after all how polite I've been...? Come on.

The Chair: Yes, you've been great, but the time is up.

Thank you for your questions.

I want to thank all the witnesses for coming to committee today.

Mr. Clifford Small: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You can provide testimony through a brief. If something was missed, you can provide additional information through a brief.

We have a point of order from Mr. Small.

Mr. Clifford Small: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When the notice of meeting came out, it was laid out that we would have three hours in total for this session. We started at four o'clock, so we should be going till seven to make up our full three hours.

The Chair: Thank you for your point of order, Mr. Small. The allotted time was until 6:30, based on the schedule and our two panels. As you know, the first panel was—

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we would support going for another half-hour.

The Chair: The panel—

Mr. Clifford Small: It's a half an hour to voting.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Small. This is not a debate.

Mr. Clifford Small: It's not a debate.

The Chair: You had a point of order. I'm giving you an answer to your point of order.

We had a time allotment until 6:30. If a member would like to continue, they can ask for the consent of the committee to continue further. Otherwise, we are at our allotted time of 6:30, and I would like to let the panel members, our witnesses who have waited very patiently have an opportunity to go.

If there is unanimous consent—

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move a motion to have unanimous consent to extend our meeting until seven o'clock.

● (1830)

The Chair: Okay. We do have an ask for unanimous consent to continue.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Ted Falk: The Liberal-NDP don't want to continue this important discussion. We have witnesses here—

The Chair: Mr. Falk, I will ask you to....

Once again, you had a point of order, and you were recognized. There was not unanimous consent to continue this evening.

We have another point of order.

Go ahead, Ms. Jones.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Normally we would be very co-operative, but the Conservatives delayed the committee by two hours today, so they can't have it both ways. They've had two and a half hours to ask questions of what this—

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Chair, I wouldn't talk about indigenous-led initiatives as delaying the committee.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Could you please turn off your microphone? I'm speaking. It's so rude, and the translators can't hear both of us.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: I know. It's horrible when someone does back to you what you did.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Chair, my point of order is this, and I want it acknowledged for the record—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Good night, everyone.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: The Conservatives delayed the committee. They held us here in filibusters for two hours while witnesses sat in the committee room and sat on the television screen. They did not get an opportunity to participate.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: I have a point of order, Chair.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Now they want to delay the hearings even further. Probably they have another motion, and maybe they want to filibuster again for two hours.

No. The answer is no.

The Chair: Mr. Patzer, procedurally go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Just to clarify, Mr. Chair, we actually offered to extend the meeting, so the ones who are ending the meeting prematurely are the Liberals, not the Conservatives. Every member of this committee has the right to move a motion, as my colleague did. She was standing up for indigenous people to advance the cause of economic reconciliation, which I hope everybody will take seriously around this table rather than disparaging them.

I know that Charlie called that initiative a gong show earlier—

The Chair: Mr. Patzer, we have ruled on this. I'm going to have to cut you off there.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: —so I'm just a little bit concerned about the tone around this table.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, could you rule on that and end this meeting?

The Chair: We ruled on that point of order before. We were delayed in the first panel, which delayed the second panel. Our time is up.

Thank you so much to the witnesses for coming and attending today. Please provide additional briefs if you have anything else to provide to the clerk.

Thank you and have a good evening. The meeting is adjourned.