

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Blackburn, for chairing an excellent session this morning.

Mr. Bouchard, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I want to make just a very few remarks before I have the minister take the floor. I know he has a limited amount of time. The proceedings hereafter will only take a few minutes.

You will know that I am not David MacDonald, who is on the agenda. Unfortunately, David is tied up in the constitutional committee out west. He sends his apologies.

I want to tell you that David was very instrumental in getting this event off the ground. Without his initial support there is no way our committee, working through the agricultural committee, could have staged an environmental forum. He took the position that it was a good idea, that in fact the environmental issue covered all aspects of life in Canada, and that indeed it was not unusual that the environmental committee would lead.

We also of course received great support both from the Speaker of the House and from the leaders of the House. They had to make the special orders to allow this to happen.

Before I go on, I want to thank the staff in my own office, my committee staff, the researchers, the clerks, the whole House staff, who have all worked so well to make this happen. Many new things have occurred. In fact, maybe many of the advantages of what has happened will be in the precedents that were set here today in the new committee structure.

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I want to thank the colleagues who sat around the table, so many of you in and out as we do our other duties, for keeping the meetings on a non-partisan basis. Even some of the partisan things were said on a non-partisan basis. I think that is fair to say this morning.

We have achieved our immediate purpose. Mine, by the way, was simply to have efficiency in committee structure, that we would not be bringing a group of witnesses here to speak to a group of committees separately but we would get together and have one platform where we could set a base. As the idea grew, we knew that we could increase the awareness of Members of Parliament, we could share information across committee structures, and we could demonstrate our concern to the people of Canada through this effort.

Through our joint proceedings and through video recordings, we will have a textbook, shall I say, of global climate change for the moment. Undoubtedly that textbook will get outdated very quickly.

The benefits in the long term of this procedure will be seen through committee work, because it is just a part of what the regular committees do every day in their study of their particular issue in the environmental field. As I said before, maybe other long-term benefits will come about through committee co-operation.

Before I turn the floor over to the minister, I want to say that an environmental fair is going on, a very informative affair, in Room 200 in the West Block. It will continue until 6