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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Thank you, Mr. McLean and others, for joining us today, and thank you to all our witnesses.

This is meeting number 15 of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. I'm glad to see we have three witnesses with us today, joining us virtually.

I will just let you know the process. This is a virtual meeting, and they run very smoothly. We have all gotten the hang of these, but there can be little bumps along the way. I believe you've been briefed on the technical aspects of your participation. At the bottom of your screen you should have a little button that says English or French, which you can use for translation. There's a mute button, which you should keep on unless you are speaking or answering questions.

Because we're on Zoom, when someone is talking, please let them finish before you start talking. That will make things easier for all of us, but particularly for the interpreters. I thank everybody in advance for their patience.

To the witnesses, you each have five minutes to make your opening remarks. One of my jobs is to keep track of time, which necessitates my interrupting you sometimes if you're going over the time limit for your initial presentation or with respect to questions and answers after that, so I will apologize for that in advance.

We have three witnesses. We have Professor Coates from the University of Saskatchewan. We have Grand Chief Abel Bosum of the Cree Nation Government. From Rio Tinto, we have Nigel Steward.

Professor Coates, why don't we start with you, sir?

Dr. Ken S. Coates (Joynson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan, As an Individual): Good morning, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, committee members. It's a real privilege to have the chance to speak to you.

The issue of mineral supply and uncertainty in the Canadian mining industry is one of critical importance to the country as a whole. Let me start off with this observation. There's a general perception, as we look at important issues of climate change and economic re-trenchment, that somehow the resource sector is in decline. The reality is very different.

In fact, with the imperatives of 2021, we have solar and wind power installations, mass digitalization, transit development and

electric vehicle production. We're investing billions of dollars in renewing our energy infrastructure. In fact, what we have is a higher priority than ever on rapid, reliable and cost-effective mineral production.

Let me divide my comments into two areas. One is disadvantages and concerns. The other is opportunities and advantages for Canada.

Very quickly, obviously the uncertainty of the Chinese market in terms of mineral production and demand is critical. There is also a very strong disconnect between the environmental movement in Canada and internationally and its anti-development instincts in mineral production, which costs an awful lot of time and energy.

We underestimate the scale and intensity of global mineral demand. I spent a lot of time in Asia, and the escalation in demand is dramatic, particularly in critical mineral sectors, because of computerization and what have you.

We also have to address, in Canada, that we're not alone in this game and that there are many supply options, particularly in the developing world. Those areas have more complex issues and sometimes less favourable environments for human rights protections, environmental protections and what have you.

In Canada, we have some serious shortcomings in northern infrastructure. It's limited and it takes too long to develop. We move very slowly in that regard.

I'm very concerned about the regulatory burden and the time to development. I was talking to some officials in Ottawa who seem to suggest that the length of time it takes to make a decision is a proxy for a good decision and that the longer time frame actually necessitates a better decision. I'm not convinced of that, and I think there's some good evidence running counter to that.

We're also overly sensitive to criticism about resource development. This is a key priority for Canada, and we have to find a middle ground. Let's talk openly about what happens with our current system—the costs of delays, the time required to get permission, the direct expenses involved for companies and how that adds to their total cost structures, and the scale of abandoned and deterred investments. We're losing a lot of opportunity because we're becoming less competitive.

We have to also find a way to stop redrafting our regulations and requirements. We have fairly imprecise guidance from some pieces of our legislation at the federal, territorial and provincial levels.

We also need to reconcile the reality of Canada as a natural resource superpower with the lack of national commitment to the field. We don't see resource development as being particularly attractive or compelling these days. I think it's fair to say that our country's urban areas, which are very powerful and very appropriately powerful, are disconnected from the sector.

What about the other side? What about the advantages and opportunities in the natural resource sector and critical mineral development?

We have some of the best discovered and potential mineral deposits in the world, including in some of the more rare earth minerals and things of that sort. Canada has the minerals that this country needs and wants.

Put aside my comments about the decision-making process—put them in a box for a second—and look at the outcomes. The outcomes are that our regulatory and environmental standards are actually first-rate and very appropriate. How we get to those standards may be questionable. We can do better on the decision-making and the development structure, but we do really well on setting the baseline in terms of environmental protection and socio-cultural protection.

To a degree that we don't talk about enough, Canada has the most impressive mining sector in the world. We have enormous access to capital. We have remarkable technical expertise. There's a global reach for what we do as a sector, and our corporate structures are quite flexible.

Let me deal with one that I think is really important, and I know we're going to have a chief speaking to this more directly than I will.

• (1115)

On the engagement and participation of indigenous peoples, you'll notice I did not put that as a barrier. In contrast to the standard explanation, indigenous communities are not a major barrier. They are simply not. There are hundreds of agreements and some truly impressive partnerships.

In your committee I suspect you've been talking about Voisey's Bay in Labrador, Cameco in northern Saskatchewan, the Tahltan first nation in British Columbia and Tr'ondëk first nation in the Yukon. The country should not blame indigenous communities for delay.

Let me quickly wind up with strategies for where we can go from here. How do we protect the environment, respect indigenous aspirations and encourage investment? How do we do this properly?

Number one, I would invite the Government of Canada to sit down with indigenous communities and mining representatives and review the regulatory regime. We need to be a world leader in appropriate and expeditious project review and approval, and we are not that right now. We can do much better.

Let's focus on creating opportunities for indigenous equity in the mining sector. Provide indigenous communities with a seat at the table, and you will discover that the decision-making process has improved quite dramatically.

Let's talk openly. I would think that the standing committee is an excellent example of this. Let's talk openly about the nature of critical minerals, explain the global market requirements and talk to the country about how important the mineral sector is in the 21st-century economy and the particular value of critical minerals. That's absolutely essential.

Let's also talk about the fact that these resources are absolutely critical—

The Chair: I'm going to have to ask you to wrap up now, Professor Coates.

Dr. Ken S. Coates: I will do that very quickly, and thank you very much.

I would simply say the irony of our times is that the pursuit of rapid technological change and innovation requires the strengthening and empowerment of our nation's resource economy. To do anything slower than that will hold us up economically.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Grand Chief Bosum, how about you go next, sir?

Grand Chief Abel Bosum (Cree Nation Government): Good morning.

I would first of all like to express my appreciation for being asked to participate in this committee hearing. This is certainly a topic that we welcome, as it has important implications for the way in which Canada broadly deals with situations where there is an intersection of resource development proposals and indigenous traditional lands.

As you may know, the territory of Eeyou Istchee in the James Bay region of northern Quebec comprises approximately 400,000 square kilometres. This territory has, over the years, been the object of many resource development projects in the sectors of energy, mining and forestry.

Indeed, it was the announcement of the James Bay hydroelectric project in the 1970s that created the circumstances for negotiating the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, which was signed in 1975. This agreement is our treaty. Over the past 45 years, we have built upon our treaty to gradually expand the role and the jurisdiction of our communities within our traditional territory, while at the same time improving the living conditions of our people.

The Province of Quebec has historically positioned itself to become an investment-friendly province for the mining industry. By and large, the mining industry has found Quebec to have a favourable regulatory and financial landscape. This has been inviting to many mining companies for exploring and developing mines.

Currently, as in many places throughout Canada and elsewhere, there is a significant drive to identify, explore and develop mines to bring to market those metals and minerals that will play a significant role in the production of batteries with very substantial capacity for storage of electricity. Vanadium, which exists in a number of places within our traditional territory, is one such metal.

Within our traditional territory, there are also several very active operations engaged in exploration and development for lithium, which is an element that has widespread use in current battery technology. Because much of the world's deposit of lithium is concentrated in less politically stable countries, there has been particular interest in identifying and exploiting the lithium deposits found in Quebec. There are currently five lithium projects at various stages of review and environmental assessment in our region. There has been significant talk about the potential for our region to actually become the battery of the north.

We are witnessing and we are becoming the focal point of the convergence of a shift to cleaner energy, the greening of industry operations, the growing environmental consciousness of consumers, the search for strategic minerals and the recognition that indigenous peoples may indeed have a serious contribution to make to our collective understanding and thinking about sustainable development.

The Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee has spent many decades struggling with both the province and the federal government to secure acknowledgements of our indigenous rights and our treaty rights. It is now open to serious engagement with resource development proponents wishing to carry out activities on our traditional territory.

We have secured the recognition by Quebec that all resource development projects proposed to take place on our traditional territory must go through the social and environmental impact assessment process outlined in our treaty. It is a process that must take into account our people's environmental and social concerns. It would result in our involvement in such proposed projects, including environmental monitoring, employment, training, contracting and financial benefits.

We are at a point now where we have built and maintained a relationship with Quebec in the spirit of co-operation and with the objective of creating opportunities for our people and bringing home the benefits. The latest example of this can be found in La Grande Alliance of February 2020. It is an MOU that we signed with Premier Legault that creates a network of Cree and government organizations working together on the design and implementation of protected areas, transportation, communications and energy infrastructure to achieve the balance promised under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

● (1120)

We have much work ahead of us, but this new approach can shift the paradigm that has for too long imposed challenges in balancing development and protecting our traditional territory, which remains essential to the livelihood of our Cree Nation.

As the La Grande Alliance MOU demonstrates, we are open to engaging with the mining industry, an engagement in the context of our treaty and the environmental and social impact assessment

regimes embedded in our treaty. It is through this regime that we assess the social acceptability of the projects. It is through this regime that we give expression to the notion of free, prior and informed consent.

The Chair: Chief, I will have to ask you to wrap up very quickly.

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: Okay.

Since the signing of our treaty in 1975, through our openness to engagement we have concluded over 80 agreements of all natures. We've argued for many years that the full recognition of indigenous rights is not a threat to development. Instead, it is the necessary condition for orderly and sustainable development to take place.

By incorporating our rights into the development equation, and by finding the right mix between rights, development and governance, we have repeatedly created a win-win situation for our people and our communities, for industry, for our region and for Quebec as a whole. This must surely be a way for the future if we are ever to get beyond the dead ends of paternalism and colonialism.

Meegwetch.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Steward, we go over to you, sir, for five minutes.

Dr. Nigel Steward (Head, Group Technical - Processing, Rio Tinto): Thanks.

Good morning, Mr. Chair, members of the committee and fellow witnesses.

My name is Nigel Steward and I am the head of group technical for processing for Rio Tinto worldwide.

Rio Tinto is the second-largest mining company in the world and the largest mining company in Canada, with operations coast to coast to coast, from our world-class aluminum operations in Kitimat in British Columbia and in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint Jean region, to our Diavik Diamond Mine in the Northwest Territories, to our iron ore operations in Labrador. We have a truly national footprint, with exploration activities across the country.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss the important topic of critical minerals with you today. As Pierre Gratton pointed out in his earlier testimony to the committee, Canada's mining and manufacturing sector will be critical to achieving the federal government's 2030 climate change goals and the transition to a zero-carbon future by 2050.

Rio Tinto has climate targets for 2030 in line with the Paris Agreement, and our goal is to reach net-zero emissions in our operations by 2050. We don't know what that path to 2050 looks like yet, but we know it will and must include a secure supply of critical minerals, be they battery metals such as lithium, cobalt and copper, or rare earth metals like scandium or other critical elements like gallium.

Today I would like to focus my remarks on what Rio Tinto likes to call “full-value mining”.

When we think of mining, we immediately think of primary mining or greenfield plays, but increasingly we are discovering that many of the critical minerals we need to facilitate this clean transition can and are being found in existing mining operations, in waste streams and mine tailings. Full-value mining is all about extracting as much value as possible from the ore bodies that we mine.

In our aluminum operations in Quebec, for example, we have invested many years of R and D to create a new process that basically separates out our residues into their component parts. We have been able to monetize what would have been deemed waste in the past, so that there is both an economic and an environmental benefit. Today, in our aluminum business in Quebec, 85% of the 400,000 tonnes of waste is now fully recovered in the form of multiple products that are sent to customers.

Another great example of full-value mining is what we've been able to do with our Rio Tinto Fer et Titane metallurgical facility in Sorel-Tracy, in Quebec, which extracts high-quality titanium dioxide feedstock, iron, steel and metal powders all from ilmenite. Using our processing know-how and R and D capabilities, we have figured out a way to extract scandium, one of the rarest critical minerals. We do this from our waste streams.

In January we announced that Rio Tinto would become the first producer of high-quality scandium oxide in North America, with the construction of a new commercial-scale demonstration plant.

Scandium provides us with an alloying element for aluminum. It creates new possibilities for scandium-aluminum alloyed products in applications like aerospace and defence, because scandium is unique. It's one of the few elements that increases both the strength and toughness of aluminum alloys.

Rio Tinto is investing \$6 million in the construction of a first module in the plant, with an initial capacity to produce three tonnes of scandium oxide per year, or approximately 20% of the current global market.

Those are just two Canadian examples of how we are pushing the boundaries of traditional mining to extract the full value from the mineral stream. We have other examples in the U.S. as well, including a pilot project at our boron mine in California that will extract lithium from a waste stream there.

At the end of the day we need steel, aluminum, copper, cobalt and titanium. All of these elements are necessary for our collective growth and well-being. As miners, our job is not only to find these minerals but to extract them in as sustainable a way as possible. It is this desire, along with the recognition that we cannot address the challenge of climate change without minerals and metals, that push-

es us more and more towards full-value mining with the lowest environmental and carbon footprint possible.

Many thanks for your attention, and I am happy to take any questions you may have.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you to all the witnesses.

We'll start with our first round of questions for six minutes each.

I believe we're starting with Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming today.

My first question is for Professor Coates. You raised a number of really important points. This isn't a critical mineral mine, but there's a mine fairly close to my community and they come under provincial and federal jurisdiction. Recently, the federal jurisdiction has said that if you want to increase by more than 50%, you'll be subject to the federal impact assessment, whereas if it is under 50%, you'll be subject to the Alberta Energy Regulator review. In their case, they sought to expand by about 49%—playing pretty close to the line—and they were subject to a federal review. Lately, this has been compounding and causing temporary job losses and delays.

I wonder if you could talk about the impact you've seen of the new Impact Assessment Agency on getting mining projects going in Canada.

• (1130)

Dr. Ken S. Coates: Thank you, sir.

I guess my first observation would be that, in one sense it's early days. When the mining regime was brought in, it wasn't overly specific. It set out more broad contours, and it's a work-in-progress. Resource companies that I've been talking to in recent years have spoken about the flexibility of the IA process, the fact that federal officials are looking for ways to improve it and to actually see it implemented.

I would lump that process into a 15-year history of what I call “over-regulation” of the industry. We have this idea that if we do more and more regulation, more and more surveys, and more and more evaluations, it will result in somewhat better outcomes. I think that's still a testable proposition and not necessarily one that's been proven yet.

We spend a phenomenal amount of money investigating these opportunities. It takes a lot of time to do it and a lot of the money that goes into it doesn't go to the local community, it doesn't go to the local first nation and it doesn't even go to the province. It goes to broader entities. I'm really concerned, to be honest. I think we should look at expediting the outcomes and focusing on the final product.

Are we actually getting safer and better mines? We do really well in producing safe mines and we do really well in ameliorating some of the social and cultural effects, but I'm not sure those more positive outcomes are due to the length, time and cost of the regulation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Professor. I might come back to you.

My next question is for Mr. Steward from Rio Tinto. I found your testimony regarding the waste—you know, going through the waste and finding new resources like scandium oxide—and I'm wondering if you can comment on any of the regulatory hurdles that might exist in going into waste.

Is there a regulatory advantage to looking at waste or is it easier to get into more greenfield projects?

Dr. Nigel Steward: We just look at the existing environmental legislation that we have in an operating site when we're processing our tailings, and we make sure that we're complying with those regulations, that we're informing the regulatory authorities of what we're doing and that we have permission to do what we're doing. Generally it's quicker because you're already operating within an existing permitting environment. It makes it much easier and much quicker.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Given that Rio Tinto is a global mining company and this waste idea seems to have a great deal of potential in terms of supplying, you said, 20% of the global supply of scandium, if Canada is only or primarily taking the route of going through tailings, are we going to be left behind? Do we need a combination of this tailings idea and new greenfield projects?

What's going to create the supply that's needed to ensure the world is getting Canadian critical minerals?

Dr. Nigel Steward: It's most likely that we're going to have to have both, but the reason.... I mean, three tonnes doesn't seem like very much, but it's still 20% of the global supply when you start talking about rare earths. The issue for us is always about when you bring supply on stream, because you can actually flood the market, depress the price and put yourself out of business.

That's one of the issues we face at the moment with a lot of these critical minerals, because they're growing, the quantities are very small and the pricing of that commodity is very, very volatile. It's matching supply to demand. That's what we have to do: match supply to demand. We have the ability to grow, but we need to start somewhere.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You're talking about getting gallium, scandium and these things from the waste tailings. Is Rio Tinto currently in planning stages to start greenfield projects to find rare earth minerals in Canada? If not, why not?

Dr. Nigel Steward: We are not at the moment because we're finding a lot of materials that are very important for the future

economy and to support climate change within our existing streams, so we're focusing there first.

One of the big challenges is that, if you go and look for deposits of rare earths, by their very nature they come in very small concentrations, so you end up having to deal with.... You then have to present yourselves with the environmental issue of what to do with all of the waste you generate.

That's why, from our perspective, we're looking at how we keep our footprint very small but still provide these critical minerals and metals for the future.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Steward.

Thanks, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Weiler, we go over to you for six minutes.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining our committee meeting today. It's a really fascinating discussion already.

I'd like to pick up where my colleague left off with Mr. Steward.

I was wondering if you could speak to the critical minerals and metals that you don't currently extract in Canada, whether that's from greenfield development or from existing waste streams, which you see as an opportunity to expand in the future.

Dr. Nigel Steward: There's kind of a long list.

For many of them, fundamentally, we just haven't found viable deposits in Canada yet through our exploration efforts. I think that's one of the reasons some of them aren't extracted here by us. I think the challenge with what we do with all of the waste is becoming more and more of a preoccupation for us, as well as for society.

This is really why we're focusing on looking at what we already have within our portfolio, our ore bodies and within our streams that we can extract. That means that the material is here, but it's not necessarily a new mine; it's within our own processes. We're looking on our own doorstep to see what we can do to solve this problem and to support the economy and the growth of the green economy. That's just the choice we've made at the moment.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Could you also speak a little bit to the challenges of both finding and then extracting these critical minerals from existing...whether that's waste rock or other mine products?

Dr. Nigel Steward: I'm sorry. I don't quite follow your question.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: I was hoping you could speak to—maybe I'll reframe that a little bit—the process of extracting these critical minerals from some of the existing deposits or whether that's waste rock from the existing operations you have.

Dr. Nigel Steward: Sometimes we can find them in the tailings themselves, but more often what we find is that they separate at and become available in the processing of the core mineral that we're trying to extract. For example, you might have a liquor at some point in your process that contains a high amount of gallium or a high amount of scandium. This is what we're doing, for example, in the case of scandium in Rio Tinto Fer et Titane in Sorel-Tracy. It's there in solution in one part of our process, and we're extracting it rather than sending it out to a tailings facility.

Similarly, we can find, in the extraction of aluminum bauxite in our aluminum business in what we call the Bayer liquor.... After we've dissolved all of the alumina into the liquor, we can pick up gallium and vanadium, for example, that are co-dissolved at the same time. We can put processes in place to extract the material then.

We're doing some other things. For example, in the United States in copper at our facility in Salt Lake City, Rio Tinto Kennecott, we're looking at extracting things like rhenium and tellurium above all of the other things that we extract there. Not only do they extract copper, for example, from that ore body, but they also extract gold, silver, molybdenum and lead. It's looking at what more we can extract within our existing processes, rather than sending all of those elements to tailings.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: That's very interesting.

As the second-largest mining company in the world, do you find a similar process happening at Rio Tinto in all of the countries that it operates in, to be able to extract some of these rare earth elements from existing operations?

Dr. Nigel Steward: I think we're leading the way in leading the conversation on this at the moment, but increasingly it's getting attention and for good reason. I think we'll see more and more people doing it.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: You mentioned earlier your project to extract scandium in Quebec. You mentioned that this would be 20% of the world's supply of this. Do you find that for these operations and other operations for rare earth elements that you have that demand really driving this?

What are some of the main drivers to look at some of these new projects you're working on?

• (1140)

Dr. Nigel Steward: At the end of the day it is demand, encouraging the demand for the projects. That's absolutely key. Without demand we won't be extracting these materials. We need to be very cognizant of what's happening in the world, where new applications are coming in place and where future applications might come into play so that we can start to serve those markets going forward.

For us, it's really all about the demand and what society will need for the future to create a greener and more sustainable future for us as a society.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Thank you for that.

My next question is for the grand chief. You mentioned that the Cree nations have put together a specific environmental assessment process, and you've been able to apply for different natural resource

developments within your territories. I was hoping you could speak to how that process works at a high level.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds to answer that question.

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: In the James Bay agreement, section 22 deals with the environmental impact assessment process that involves Quebec, Canada and the Cree in the process. It has a pretty rigorous consultation process. Any project that goes through that is dealt with by the people in the community. They have a chance not only to hear about it but also to recommend ways to improve it if they feel that the project will have a negative impact on the environment. The objective is not only to get approval from an environmental and economic perspective but also to obtain social acceptability by the people.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thanks, Mr. Weiler.

We will go over to Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Steward. However, before I continue, I want to make sure that the interpretation services are working and that he can hear me.

Dr. Nigel Steward: I understand French, Mr. Simard.

Mr. Mario Simard: That's great.

I live a stone's throw from the plant in Arvida, the town next door. My father spent his life there before the Rio Tinto takeover. I know a little about aluminum production, because it's a fairly significant sector in my region.

In your presentation, you spoke about value-added mining. That's an important factor. A number of stakeholders have told us that the key factor for critical minerals is the value chain. You want to be able to do secondary and tertiary processing. It would be unfortunate if the primary resources were extracted and sent to China and if China were the one to create the jobs.

I have a small concern because, for the past 30 years, we've been talking about secondary and tertiary aluminum processing. However, Rio Tinto has never made a firm commitment in this area. On the contrary, Rio Tinto has backed away from it. It had a rolling mill, which is now gone. Rio Tinto has backed away from secondary processing. It's currently just producing primary aluminum without supporting the cluster. I find that troubling.

I want to know how you can ensure that you'll fulfill the commitment to value-added mining. How can you ensure that you'll support the secondary and tertiary processing of critical minerals in Quebec?

Dr. Nigel Steward: Thank you for your question, Mr. Simard.

We do the processing in our aluminum smelters, because we manufacture high value-added products such as extrusion billets and rolling ingots. Unfortunately, in the industry, this type of activity must be carried out close to the customers. All our customers are located mainly in the American Midwest and around Toronto. The processing is done in these areas.

Take scandium, for example. It was created in Sorel-Tracy, but we turned it into a value-added product at the Dubuc plant in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. That's where we created the master alloy, a high value-added product sold on the market.

• (1145)

Mr. Mario Simard: I kept a close eye on this, Mr. Steward. I'm aware of this.

I understand that the processing is mainly done in the United States. Unfortunately, that's partly because our processors must pay the Midwest premium as well. On that note, I believe that Rio Tinto could play a role, at the very least, in lowering the premium and giving a boost to Quebec processors so that they can do secondary and tertiary processing.

Have you given any thought to this approach?

Dr. Nigel Steward: In my opinion, it's the nature of the industry. We need to deal with it.

One thing that we're doing is investing in the primary industry. Take ELYSIS, for example. It's the first facility of its kind in the world. We're setting up the facility in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Last week, we started the next tank for ELYSIS. It's a key part of the aluminum industry.

The project is supported by the governments of Canada and Quebec, as you know. We're working on the project in partnership with Alcoa and Alco. The project is meaningful for the raw materials industry.

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you.

I have a question for Grand Chief Abel Bosum, whose presentation I appreciated earlier.

We often forget that indigenous peoples have a great deal to teach us about the environment. You referred to the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. We also could have talked about the peace of the braves agreement, which created an ecosystem for development in partnership with the Quebec government. You also spoke about five major lithium projects. I've seen the Quebec plan for the development of critical and strategic minerals, in which the government planned to invest \$90 million from 2020 to 2025.

In your opinion, how could the federal government make these five major projects a reality? Thank you.

[*English*]

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: That would be money, of course, certainly. In dealing with these five companies, we've established good co-operation with the people who are occupying the land. That's really important. When we talk about Cree rights, those are the people we're referring to. They have a lot to say in the process. When they get involved right at the beginning of a process, even at the exploration stage, they learn about the exploration activities.

Most of the time they make a contribution by sharing the knowledge they have about the land. You build this trust, at a very early stage in the process, between the people who are occupying the land, the leadership and the industry. This is certainly what has worked for us.

We are now sitting down with the Government of Quebec on trying to design the—

The Chair: Chief, I apologize, but I have to interrupt. We're over time already. We have to move on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you for your response.

[*English*]

The Chair: Maybe you can come back to that in the next round.

Mr. Cannings, we'll go over to you.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Thank you.

I'd like to thank the witnesses today.

Grand Chief Bosum, I'd like to give you a chance to continue on in that vein, but in particular, I'm interested in hearing your comments on the impact assessment process you've developed in the Cree agreement. I guess that dates back to the James Bay agreement. I know that my former colleague Romeo Saganash was involved with that for many years.

Perhaps you could tell us more about that impact assessment process, maybe with some comment on what Professor Coates was talking about—how some of these impact assessment processes go on needlessly and take too long. Is there some sense that your process in the James Bay area is more.... I don't want to say “streamlined”, but does it save time to speak to the people on the land, or...?

I'll let you answer that. Then I'll probably have some follow-up questions.

Thank you.

• (1150)

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: Thank you very much, Mr. Cannings.

Just to continue, what I was about to say was that recently we signed the memorandum of understanding with Mr. Legault with the objective of trying to balance resource development with some of the traditional Cree concerns related to the environment and lands. Of course, the question is always how you facilitate development in the territory.

What we must understand is that the land and environment are central to Cree people and perhaps indigenous people right across Canada. When we begin discussions, we find that it is always important to talk about the land and environment first. That is one of the reasons that in the memorandum of understanding you will see that our objective was to negotiate protected areas. Once we can identify these and protect them, then it's easier to look at the infrastructure for resource development and, therefore, minimize the impact of resource development regardless of what it may be.

This is really a change in the way that we've been doing things. In the past, we've always been reacting to development. It comes to our door, and then we have to react. The MOU we're looking at is really the design for what northern Quebec could look like over the next 30 years with the Cree people being active participants in it.

While at the moment we're carrying out feasibility studies on the various types of infrastructure needs, both for industry and for our communities, at some point there will be a project. I don't know what kind of project, but once it's defined as a project, then it is subject to the environmental impact assessment. Usually, if the project has been dealt with at the community level for some time, and people understand the project and accept the project, then of course the environmental impact technical process is a little easier to do because the industry leader has reached an agreement with the community or the nation so that there is acceptability.

The regime that we have in section 22 really helps not only with the process for the project but also with defining the project to allow the Cree to participate if there are ways to improve it or to minimize the impact. At the end of the day, it's a win-win for the Cree people, the industries and the governments.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

I think I'll move to Professor Coates.

I'll just follow up on that and talk about your comments regarding how impact assessments involve too long a process without adding value.

These processes, I would say, are probably in reaction to past disasters. We think of the Giant Mine, which was in the news recently. There are other examples of cleanups in the north, especially in Faro.

Can you just comment on how you see improving that process so there is confidence? We have governments that want to create jobs. We have mining companies that want to make money. How do we create that confidence in the public that those concerns are being met, those impacts are being met? Why were we failing in the past?

Dr. Ken S. Coates: You're absolutely right about the historical memory. The indigenous communities remember the very serious problems in the past.

How do you get ahead of this?

I think the grand chief has described something really important. Start the process really early on. In fact, we put a lot of the burden on the mining companies. Governments can play a major role in sort of going through northern Quebec, Yukon or parts of northern Saskatchewan, reviewing the landscape ahead of time and figuring out where those no-go zones are. There are places that are cultural-

ly important, that are critical for harvesting. There's not going to be mining in those locations, places like the Peel River. There are proposals for mining in the Peel River valley. It took decades to figure out that you couldn't go there.

You could actually deal with all of that potential conflict up front. Talk ahead of time with the first nations. Find out where the hunting grounds are and where the cultural sites are. Where are the places we should go? Do that work ahead of time so that the mining companies have a clearer tapestry as to where they can actually operate.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor. I'm going to have to interrupt you and stop you there.

We're into the five-minute rounds now, starting with Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, witnesses.

Grand Chief, thank you for being with us today. I appreciate what you've brought up. We have lots of potential here in Canada, and you talked about the potential investment and potential of indigenous communities benefiting from some of these developments, the mining developments.

I'm up in northern B.C. with oil and gas. It's huge. It dramatically affects our indigenous populations in a positive way, bringing economic activity to really everybody in the north, but we see this challenge. We heard from Mr. Coates, who talked about this endless delay in the regulatory approval process.

I have just a simple question: How can we do better as regulators to make this process better?

There have been other answers given in part to that question, but can I start with Grand Chief Bosum? How can we do better as regulators with these projects, to see us get across the finish line sooner?

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: One is that there needs to be a process where the information gets to the people who will be impacted. We have established what we call "pre-exploration agreements". They are non-binding, but it allows people to understand the project, provide input into the project and build trust with the industry. Then it's a lot easier as you go along. You gain partnership as you do it.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Yes. I think we've come a long way with certain companies in Canada, too. It used to be that first nations weren't consulted until halfway through the process.

To me, it has come a long way. Again, it depends on the company, but in having those conversations with the indigenous communities that are going to be affected right from the start of those negotiations, I have seen the ones that do that have mutual respect for each other and success as a result.

I want to talk to Mr. Coates and Mr. Steward about the same question. We were talking earlier about this. Previously, in about 2011 to 2015, we had a pretty solid approval process that projects would go through, and they had a 24-month period as a timeline to get from start to finish. It was better for certainty, it was better for investment and it was better for everybody around, but we have slipped from that timeline quite a bit.

My simple question to you is this: Where is Canada in the approval process for projects globally? Certainly Canada is not the only country that has resources, but where do we stack up in terms of that timeline?

Mr. Coates, you referred to that first in your statement, so maybe I will ask you.

Dr. Ken S. Coates: Sure. I'll give you a brief answer.

There are some countries that have almost no regulations and controls. In fact, they allow almost a free market type of approach, so that the companies themselves put the limits. In fact, Canadian companies are very good at this. They notionally apply a Canadian standard to their activities and operations, but that's not the government imposing those limits. It's the mining companies doing it.

There are places like Scandinavia that are actually reintroducing their mining sector, and they are coming to Canada to see how we are doing. Australia is a lot faster. Russia is a lot faster, not a bad example. Mongolia and China, these countries are faster. They're not role models.

My point would be that we can do an awful lot better. We can basically do it by starting where you mentioned, letting people know how much it costs for these delays to occur and letting them know how many projects have disappeared because, in fact, the mining company looks at it and says that it is too risky for the kind of time frame they have.

• (1200)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Right.

Mr. Coates, you've talked about it as well, that a more lengthy process isn't necessarily a better one. We've seen this. It has been part of the project history where I'm from, where these projects sometimes go through a 10-year process, and finally, by that particular time, the project is no longer even viable.

Can you explain a bit about what you meant? I believe, as do probably many in this meeting today, the world needs more Canada, not less. Certainly we have the best environmental standards and the best human rights standards in the world. Again, we need to develop our resources here, not only develop them but value-add and do as many parts of that process in Canada as we can before we export that product.

Can you explain the statement you made earlier, that a lengthy process isn't necessarily a better one?

Dr. Ken S. Coates: Yes.

The Chair: I can give you about 30 seconds to answer that.

Dr. Ken S. Coates: Okay.

Go fast. Be solid. Focus on outcomes. Don't focus on the decision-making process. Trust aboriginal folks. The aboriginal folks live on their territories and their land. They will look after it better than any regulatory process will ever do.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Fantastic. You went fast. Thank you.

Mr. Lefebvre, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for appearing before us today.

Mr. Coates, those were interesting comments you made about how we should proceed, certainly when we talk about assessments and regional assessments. I know that's one of the things that our government has brought forward. Actually, one of the initial ones is in the Ring of Fire in northwestern Ontario, where there is a regional assessment being done right now by ECCO to make sure that the baselines are there. Your suggestion is something that has been heard many times by the department federally, and it's certainly a way to move forward.

I know that Mr. Zimmer talked about how we can get indigenous participation up front, not at the tail end. I fully agree with him. That is the way. In any successful project, that's what they've done and that's what we've also tried to integrate into the impact assessment, the new review process. I don't want to get into a debate as to CEAA 2012 and the new impact assessment—as you said, it's early days—because we're here to talk about critical minerals, although this is part of it, certainly.

I'd like to chat with Mr. Steward with respect to Rio Tinto. It's an international company and a very large company. The purpose of the discussion here is how we ensure that the supply chain of our minerals and metals is secured in Canada and how we go about maximizing it, getting all the value added that we can in Canada.

Obviously, as an international company, that's not really your focus. Your focus is obviously on getting the best value for your efforts. Can you give us a sense of what's going on in Australia and maybe in other jurisdictions where they're having these discussions? Can you share that with us? These discussions are not just in Canada right now but all over the world.

We want to protect all of these minerals and metals as much as we can to ensure them for our renewables industry and obviously for our battery industry. As we electrify our world, this is so critical. Can you give us a bit of insight into what's going on elsewhere?

Dr. Nigel Steward: Sure.

As you've said, there's activity everywhere. I think there's quite a big rare earths play in Australia at the moment. Also, there's been a lot of interest in lithium there as well.

When you look around the world, you can see that the world's geological deposits aren't evenly distributed. We go to the countries where the minerals are, and every country has its comparative advantages because of that.

When I look at Canada, I think Canada has some unique advantages when you think about the future. We are finding a lot of these critical minerals within our ore bodies that we're exploiting already, so I think just continuing with that type of work, as I've explained... Also, when we start to think about steel-making for the future, for example, and the zero-carbon steel-making process, this is something that's of big interest to us as a company, because we provide a lot of iron ore. One of the best iron ore deposits that's best suited to those future steel-making technologies exists in Newfoundland and Labrador at Iron Ore of Canada.

You can see that there are these sorts of relative comparative advantages, and they're geological in nature.

• (1205)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: We've heard that from many witnesses. I think what it boils down to—and we have unanimous consent here, I think—is how we make sure that critical mineral processing and manufacturing capacity is increased in Canada. Certainly, we don't like it when we see certain of our minerals or certain of our natural resources exported and then manufactured elsewhere. Again, how can we increase that supply chain?

From your lens, what can we do or what should we do to ensure that processing? We have some, obviously. I'm the MP from Sudbury. We have two smelters in my riding, which is kind of rare. As well as the whole manufacturing process, there is all the upstream stuff. What are your thoughts?

Dr. Nigel Steward: The key thing is that, especially with the critical minerals, as I mentioned earlier, there's a lot of price volatility because these are new industries. We see the same thing with lithium. There is a lot of price volatility in lithium.

The only way you can ensure production at a particular mine site is to make sure you have the ability to absorb all of those fluctuations in price. In other words, it means being a low-cost producer. If you can be a low-cost producer in a country, in a commodity that

has quite volatile pricing due to the supply-oversupply issues as demand grows, then you'll be a player in the long term.

Really, the key thing in the mining industry, if you're going to enter a particular market that you know will be volatile as it starts up—which is what we're talking about with these critical minerals in all of these new applications for a low-carbon future—is that you're going to need to make sure you're at the bottom of the cost curve.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Steward and Mr. Lefebvre.

We will go back to Mr. Simard for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I'll continue along the same lines as my colleague, Mr. Lefebvre.

I have a question for you, Mr. Steward.

You said earlier that you can't do secondary or tertiary processing because of the ecosystem, which is mostly based in the United States. My concern, in terms of critical minerals, is that the same ecosystem will be established again, where the transformation won't take place here. As a large company, you also have a responsibility. As a member of Parliament, when it comes to aluminum and critical minerals, I'm interested in the creation of jobs here.

You spoke about ELYSIS earlier. As we know, the new technology will require fewer employees. It's annoying for a member to make announcements that mean fewer jobs in the region. I imagine that you agree with me.

In your view, how can Rio Tinto ensure that, in clusters such as the aluminum or critical metals cluster, there are jobs in the communities where the industries are located?

Dr. Nigel Steward: Take ELYSIS, for example. It's a large collective investment of about \$167 million. We're currently proposing something in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

First, I'm not sure that there will be fewer jobs, since we need to create something new. We need to manufacture a new type of high-tech ceramic and high-quality sensors. These are completely different technologies. We have all these opportunities ahead of us.

Also, rare earths are used in very complex applications. However, the people who need them are already our customers. We supply these raw materials to our customers, who are often in the United States. We would like to encourage the manufacturing of this type of material or high-tech application in Canada, but most of our customers who want this type of product are currently in the United States.

• (1210)

Mr. Mario Simard: Yes, exactly.

I just want to point out—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay, thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Cannings, we'll go over to you, sir.

Mr. Richard Cannings: I think I will continue with Mr. Steward.

Unlike Mr. Lefebvre, I have only one big smelter in my riding, and that's the Teck smelter at Trail, a big lead and zinc smelter. It produces some rare elements in the same way that you were mentioning, Mr. Steward. I think it's mainly germanium and indium that they produce. They're one of the world's top producers of those commodities. Again, it's small amounts, but they're very important, very valuable commodities.

Rio Tinto is a big worldwide company—one of the biggest. I'm wondering if you have any examples elsewhere in the world that Canada could follow.

How does Canada's strategy around critical minerals, critical metals, compare with, let's say, Australia's strategy? What could the federal government be doing to make it easier for us to find these materials and to create those value chains, as you seem to be doing with scandium in Quebec?

Dr. Nigel Steward: From our perspective, there were conversations earlier about permitting and getting projects going, I think, at the very beginning. We're finding that actually Canada is very good relative to other parts of the world. What's particularly important in the speed is not so much the structure of the legislation, on which Canada is actually very good and very thorough. It is about building trust with all of the stakeholders involved and moving quickly there.

Building that trust and working collectively together, particularly with first nations in the case of Canada, is very critical. It's all about trust. It's the trust that actually builds the speed. This is why, when there are failures of trust, you have to go back and redo things, and that forms the delays.

I also think that one useful thing Canada has, which is pretty unique—and we applied it in Diavik mine—is that the operating permit right from the very beginning not only looked at the development of the mine itself, to get it operating, but also had to include what the plans were for the closure at the end. We're looking at the

environment in a holistic way. I think that's the other unique thing we see in Canada.

In terms of encouraging the industry, really what it comes down to is the quality of the ore bodies. That means good exploration. Canada is very open to exploration. We find Canada to be very open and very good when it comes to exploration. We have many ongoing exploration activities in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Steward. I'm going to have to interrupt you again. You can't say that I didn't warn you at the beginning that I'd be doing this a lot. I apologize.

Thanks, Mr. Cannings.

Mr. Patzer, it's over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Thank you very much.

I'll start with Mr. Steward as well. In looking at the underdevelopment of critical minerals in Canada. In your opinion, how long will it take for us to have everything in place for developing our own battery industry?

Dr. Nigel Steward: I'm really not a battery expert or a manufacturer of batteries, so I really couldn't say.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: As far as the development of the minerals that are required, though, how long is it going to take to have the production in place, specifically for these critical minerals? How much of it currently exists? Where are we in terms of that framework?

Dr. Nigel Steward: There's very little in the lithium space at the moment, but there's a lot of talk about many projects in Quebec and Alberta.

Phosphorous and phosphate mining is also a very interesting area. A lot of the batteries are lithium iron phosphate, and they're thermally a lot more stable. The phosphate side of the business is very good. It's an interesting area.

We just need to get these projects going. I think one key thing I mentioned earlier about being successful in the mining industry is finding an ore body that's large and has a low cost to exploit. As these markets take off, because they're new, they're very volatile. To withstand those ups and downs in price volatility you need to ensure that you're on the low end of the cost curve. That means adding an ore body with a low strip ratio, that's near the surface, that requires relatively low cost processing to extract and that is a large ore body that will last you for a long time. Those are the key elements of mining.

• (1215)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Okay.

Partly why I'm wondering about the timelines here is that there appears to be a three-year window within the new CUSMA deal to source about 75% of lithium regionally before tariffs will hit. Are we at risk of missing that window to get that production here in Canada?

Dr. Nigel Steward: The way we see it, lithium is definitely going to be required in the longer term. Lithium's around to stay. It's about building something for the long term, which means, as I mentioned, the large ore bodies, the low-cost ore bodies. Those are things that Canada should be focusing on.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Yes, but will we have those mines, though? Again, the capacity we need is 75% regionally. Are we going to be able to hit that in two or three years, or are we going to be caught up in the regulatory limbo here that's going to cause us to miss that three-year window set out by the CUSMA deal?

Dr. Nigel Steward: Two to three years is a short time to bring a mine on stream, with all of its processing plants and facilities, which you'll need for something like lithium.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Coates, I have a few questions for you. You recently co-wrote an article with Stephen Buffalo, president of the Indian Resource Council, stating that the Liberal government's approach for a green economy "could undo one of the most important examples of Indigenous engagement."

Is it fair to say that the government pushes a false dichotomy between developing clean technology and fossil fuels?

Dr. Ken S. Coates: You've asked me a sensitive question, sir.

Let me put it this way. It's the main point of that article. Indigenous folks were on the outside looking in on resource development for 150 years. In fact, devastating results followed. Some of the situations were horrible with mines that were developed on indigenous territories.

Over the last 15 years, through duty to consult and accommodate legislation, treaty rights and things of that sort, indigenous folks have emerged as a major part of the natural resource economy. You get a situation in Canada right now where we're seeing these things in very stark terms. They're the wrong terms, saying that while resource development is bad, we're going to have some new economies that are good. Well, the new economy requires resource development. You know in this committee this is absolutely essential.

However, for goodness' sake—and this is my strongest observation—indigenous people are active and enthusiastic participants in carefully done resource development. They want to be part of the process. They're desperate for own-source revenues. They want the jobs. They want the commercial opportunities, and they want to protect the environment. We must be really careful to protect that.

The oil and gas industry has sort of moved off-line. The indigenous involvement in the oil and gas industry has been spectacular over the last 10 to 15 years, and now it's going to become at risk because the country as a whole is underestimating the long-term economic value of oil and gas.

Let's make sure we listen to indigenous people, and not just those indigenous people who favour a very strong environmentalist agenda.

The Chair: Mr. Sidhu, you are next.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for being with us today.

Today, being International Women's Day, we continue to push for gender equality and celebrate the achievements and successes of so many women.

Dr. Steward, there are very few women working in the mining sector. One of the goals, under the the Canadian minerals and metals plan, is to have a workplace consisting of at least 30% women, hopefully more, in the mining sector by 2030, including indigenous women.

How many women currently work for Rio Tinto as labourers and in management positions? What is your plan to hire more?

Dr. Nigel Steward: That is a very important question for us. When we talk about the main workers, I'm not sure of the actual figures, so I apologize for that, but this is something we're very actively involved with—building, encouraging and keeping women, and anyone from a diverse background, in the company and making them feel included and respected every day.

We've actually created an officer position to do this. We're also setting the tone right from the very top. If you look at the recent announcements we've made, we have a new CEO, and in the executive committee at the company, you'll see that—and I'm pretty sure of this, although I'd have to do the math—over 30% of the participants on the executive committee of the company are now women. We've also introduced more women at the board level of the company.

This is something that we're passionate about as a company, inclusion and diversity, and something we're strongly engaged toward changing.

● (1220)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: That's very promising to hear.

Our government launched a [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. It would be nice to see your company part of that challenge as well.

You mentioned, in your opening remarks, that you guys are the largest mining operation across Canada and the second-largest in the world. What's important to me.... I know you operate in a few provinces across the country. I want to know about your relationships with the local indigenous populations and how could they be better.

Dr. Nigel Steward: You're always best asking the first nations people their opinions about this, but we strive to be trusted to work collaboratively with the first nations people across the country. We've signed many agreements across the country in the last two years, working with first nations people in all the territories in which we operate. We see them as being incredibly important partners in the work we do.

We strive to continue to improve our ESG credentials and work in a very respectful way, not only with the first nations people but with all of our stakeholders in the communities in which we operate.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Thank you, Mr. Steward.

My colleague touched earlier on the demand for scandium, and in your opening remarks you spoke about producing scandium in Sorel-Tracy, Quebec.

Could you explain to this committee why you decided to extract this metal? What are the potential uses? You touched on the issue briefly, but I'd like to know more about it. Also, would you consider this a critical mineral?

Dr. Nigel Steward: First, yes, it is a critical mineral. Scandium is a rare earth—one of the 22 rare earth elements. The reason we were looking into it is that we were going through a sort of creative process to see what else we could do to beat the critical minerals challenge.

There are two big applications for scandium in the world. One of the largest is for fuel cells. It's an alloying element for the main ceramic used as a solid oxide electrolyte in fuel cells. This is all part of the green economy. That is the biggest use at the moment.

The second is in aluminum. The key with aluminum is that it helps to lighten structures so that less energy is required to move those structures, such as cars. The issue was that scandium was very expensive and there wasn't stability of supply. Many people wouldn't get into the manufacture of aluminum-scandium alloys because there was uncertainty about the long-term stability of supply, which is particularly important if you are a car company or are dealing with something in defence.

What we do is bring stability of supply now.

The Chair: Thank you. You are right on time, Mr. Sidhu. I didn't have to interrupt you. I feel much better myself.

Mr. McLean, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The first question will go to Mr. Steward.

Mr. Steward, can you give us a bit of a briefing on when these mines are profitable for your company and what you do when the commodity price makes their future tenability unprofitable and, therefore, undevelopable?

Dr. Nigel Steward: We really don't invest in mines unless we know that we have a mine with a long life and a low cost—and that position in the first quartile of the cost curve. That is absolutely key. We won't invest if we don't have that assurance, because we know that fundamentally it wouldn't survive during any trough in

commodity prices. That's one of the key things that we always need to do.

If we work that way, we can plan a lot better for the full life cycle of the mine, from creation to closure. As a mining company, we always try to work that way.

• (1225)

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you.

The world market in rare earths is right now cornered by Chinese government-owned entities. They generally act as a cartel. When foreign mines seem to be coming on and taking market share, they usually flood the market from the mines they own.

Does that affect your development at all?

Dr. Nigel Steward: It makes us wary, for sure, of investing in a brand new mine that would produce rare earths, because of that level of volatility. This is why we have looked at being creative and looked at what rare earths sit within our ore bodies today and whether we can extract them already.

Fundamentally, the main metal or mineral we are extracting in our mines today is what keeps the mine going and surviving, and it has that low-cost position. Basically, we are creating the extraction of these additional rare earths within a fundamentally stable business. That's the way we can guard against that.

You raise a very interesting point: Is there something that governments can do to create stability of price and stability of demand, given that these minerals are so critical for countries?

For example, Canada, the U.S. and Australia are working together in the critical mineral space to try to create a sort of geopolitical stability in supply, an indigenous supply of critical minerals. Is there something that governments can do to create this stability and encourage and favour more indigenous production of these critical minerals going forward?

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you.

I also have one last question for you, Mr. Steward. You talk about the environment in a holistic way. The cost of the development once these elements become more rare, once they're mined a little bit, is going to obviously change the dynamics of battery production to the point where the CO2 emissions involved in mining these elements are going to be greater, perhaps, than the CO2 they replace in the transportation chain, if you will.

Do you have any comments on that?

Dr. Nigel Steward: What we have to do as a society is to find ways to extract minerals with a zero-carbon footprint going forward. There's not a lot of point in creating a lot of emissions, a lot of CO2, to save something elsewhere. We have to do both together. The commitment that we've taken as a company at Rio Tinto is to stay in line with our commitment to reduce our emissions by 2030 in line with the Paris Agreement, and also to be net zero in 2050.

That is going to require an awful lot of innovation. We will need to partner with people outside of our company because we don't have the ability to do all that.

Mr. Greg McLean: Okay.

I have one question here for Grand Chief Bosum.

Grand Chief, can you tell us about the actual setbacks you see right now, as far as the development of resources and the involvement of the indigenous community goes, in your experience?

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: In our area, I think what's really lacking is infrastructure. We see that the infrastructure of the roads tends to.... Mining exploration operations tend to follow the roads. Some of the roads, of course, could lead right into the heart of areas that are culturally sensitive.

Our objective right now is to work with the government to design the infrastructure network, building for transportation, communications and electrification. I think if we could do that, then at least our people will know where mining will be taking place. I think that provides stability and predictability.

Mr. Greg McLean: Thank you, Grand Chief.

I have one final question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. McLean, you're over time a bit, but we will have time to get back to you or your colleagues, so don't worry.

Next is Mr. May for five minutes.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here.

One of the challenges with going a little later in the order is that a lot of the questions I had have been answered, so I wanted to circle back on a couple of things to maybe give the witnesses a few more moments to elaborate on some of the things they maybe got cut off on a little too early by our fantastic chair.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I mean no offence.

I want to maybe start with Grand Chief Bosum. You talked in your opening remarks about being the battery of the north. I want to

continue a little with that theme. MP McLean just talked about things like what is stopping this from happening and what some of the challenges are.

Really boiling it down, what is your greatest headache with this? What are the biggest challenges right now that you have that are getting in the way of this?

• (1230)

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: I would say it's the unknown. Our experience has been that resource development has come to our doorstep sort of at the last minute, so we're unprepared. At the end of the day, we don't necessarily pick up all the benefits that we could. That's why we want to change the approach.

We want to work together with the government to develop a 30-year infrastructure plan so that our people will know exactly what's likely to happen. We see the maps. We see the geology. We see all these explorations. We have over 300 explorations [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] territory, but we don't know when a project is going to happen.

Even these lithium mines.... There are five of them, and if you ask all of them how they're going to transport the material out, they have five different answers. There's no coordination, as we say, in transportation. That creates concerns and confusion. If we can plan better, have a better plan together that includes first nations people, then we'll see more projects and partner projects where benefits will be shared.

Mr. Bryan May: In addition to extracting and shipping the materials, we've heard a lot today about the need to be processed before going into finished products like electronics and batteries. Do you believe that your band has the process capacity, or would you be able to provide that capacity in the medium or long term?

You talked about not being prepared. Is that something that, if given support, you think could exist?

Grand Chief Abel Bosum: Definitely. We're the population that's here to stay even after the mine is closed. It's in our interest to see not only the short-term impact but the long-term impact. We also have the need to develop our economies and create jobs, and if we know ahead of time and work together to plan better, then of course we can put in place the necessary training programs or encourage our students to pursue professional careers. We see that the future can be bright if we start working together.

Mr. Bryan May: Quickly, Mr. Steward, if that were to happen, if we were to see those resources being put into place to create some added value and sort of control the supply chain a little bit, do you see that having an impact on that volatility you talked about with regard to prices?

Dr. Nigel Steward: I think the more manufacturing, demand and use within Canada for some of these products, the more this would greatly help to reduce the volatility in price. I think as the markets mature and there becomes more of a manufacturing base in Canada, that will help.

Mr. Bryan May: Excellent. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. May.

Mr. Simard, we go back to you, sir, for two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

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

I tabled three motions three weeks ago. I want to go over them quickly. They have already been discussed by the Board of Internal Economy and the Liaison Committee.

The first motion concerns translated documents. I'll read it quickly:

That all documents submitted for Committee business that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

The goal is quite simple—

• (1235)

[English]

The Chair: Can I just interrupt you for one second, Mr. Simard? Which motion are you introducing?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: The three motions were tabled.

The first concerns documents translated by the Translation Bureau.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry. The interpretation is not working again.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Is it working right now? This is where we see the importance of interpretation.

[English]

The Chair: If for no other reason than to make it easier for the members, I think we should do them one at a time.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay.

I read you the first motion, which concerns the documents translated by the Translation Bureau.

May I go ahead and read the second motion, which concerns technical tests for witnesses?

Is the interpretation working, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: It seems to be working, yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay.

Here's the second motion:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House Administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advises the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

I just want to say that this motion has been passed in every other committee where it was introduced.

I'll now read the third motion, which concerns substantive motions. "That the text of any substantive motion or any motion—

[English]

The Chair: Hold on, Mr. Simard. I would suggest that we deal with one motion at a time.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay.

[English]

The Chair: I may be wrong, because the translation wasn't working perfectly, but I think you've read the text of two motions. I would ask that you pick one and we'll deal with it, and then move on. Which motion would you like to deal with first?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: We can start with the first motion, which concerns the documents translated by the Translation Bureau.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

I have the English text here, and, Mr. Simard, perhaps you can just verify this is the right motion. It says:

That all documents submitted for Committee business that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: That's right.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Would anybody like to speak to this motion?

Mr. May, you have your hand up.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do have something to add to this debate, but this may take a bit and we have about 20 minutes left before the committee wraps up here.

Mr. Chair, do we think we'll be getting back to the witnesses, or should we maybe thank them for their time and allow them to be dismissed at this point?

The Chair: Yes, I was going to get to that, Mr. May. The answer to that question depends entirely on how many hands go up and how long people choose to talk. I don't have a crystal ball to determine that right now.

For the witnesses, we have about 25 minutes left in the meeting. Just so you're aware, what's happening right now is that Mr. Simard has—and he's within his rights to do so—introduced a motion to the committee for consideration, which we will discuss right now, which means we're going to delay further questions to you. To Mr. May's point, I don't know how long that delay is going to take, so I don't know if we'll get back to you or not. I just ask you, for a few minutes, anyway, to bear with us and patiently watch us discuss this.

Mr. May, was that your only submission, or did you have other comments?

• (1240)

Mr. Bryan May: Yes, I'd like to further comment.

Just to clarify which motion we're talking about here, this is the motion regarding the translation bureau specifically.

First of all, I want to thank Mr. Simard for bringing these forward. As a chair myself, I think it's incredibly important that we hold ourselves to an incredibly high standard when it comes to documents and motions being able to be understood in both official languages. I think it's a very important part of this process, and we need to make sure that if there are ways to improve it we make those changes.

That being said, I do have a question that maybe the clerk and the analysts can weigh in on in terms of whether this is being done right now. I know that many offices, not just those of members of Parliament but also the analysts and the clerk, have the ability to translate documents themselves. I'm wondering if this motion would stop that from happening or, in other words, create a really big logjam at the translation bureau. We've all had to send documents over to be translated, and there are delays in that.

A lot of MPs and the folks who help us, whether it's the clerk or the analysts, do a lot of their own translation. The way the motion is written right now would suggest to me that this can't happen anymore, and I would argue that it would be an unintended consequence of this motion. I'm wondering if Mr. Simard could maybe comment on that, and maybe the analysts or the clerk could comment on it as well.

The Chair: Why don't we do this? We have a speaking list. If the clerk or the analysts have a response to that, we'll hear from them now and then I can move to Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sophie Leduc (Committee Researcher): Mr. Chair, I'd like to make a comment.

All our documents are translated by professional translators from the Translation Bureau. This wouldn't affect the translation of our documents, such as the briefing notes provided to the committee, for example.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I largely agree with my colleague Mr. May's intervention on this, but to condense it. Other committees have accepted an amendment, which I will move right now, that after the words "federal department", we add "members' offices", so that if members' offices provide things they translate, that it will also be reflected.

The Chair: Just so I'm clear, would it say "do not come from a federal department or members' offices" or "and"?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Yes. It would be "from a federal department, members' offices, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau".

The Chair: That's perfect. Thank you.

Do you have anything else to add to that, Mr. Lloyd?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I guess we would have debate on this amendment, and then we have to vote on that.

The Chair: We'll debate this amendment, but I wanted to make sure you were finished making your submission on the amendment. That's all.

If you guys don't mind taking your hands down when you're finished making your point, it's easier for me. Thank you.

The next person to speak is Mr. Simard, but we're now discussing Mr. Lloyd's amendment.

Mr. Simard, it's appropriate that we move to you next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I fully support this amendment, which has also been adopted in other committees. I have no issue with it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Lefebvre and then Mr. May, I believe.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't have any issue with Mr. Lloyd's amendment either. However, I want to ask the analyst whether this isn't already common practice. I just want to know whether we're adding something new. I don't think so.

Isn't this already common practice?

Ms. Sophie Leduc: Mr. Chair, I can confirm that this is the usual practice.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: I have no issue with the amendment then.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. May, we'll move over to you on the amendment.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My hand is up for the greater debate. I would suggest that you move on from me and maybe come back to me after we've dealt with the amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Does anybody else have any comments, questions or input on Mr. Lloyd's amendment?

I see none.

Madam Clerk, can we then vote on the amendment?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I haven't heard anyone say anything against the amendment. I'm wondering if we can just pass the amendment. I believe it would pass on division without having to have a roll call.

The Chair: Madam Clerk, can we proceed that way?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Hilary Jane Powell): I believe we can. Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

There's no need for a recorded vote.

(Amendment agreed to on division)

The Chair: Let's go back to our discussion on the motion as amended.

Mr. May, you are next, and then we have Mr. Simard.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

My next concern with this has actually just been demonstrated. We just had a substantive amendment. It was friendly and it was agreed upon. Again, the way I'm reading this—maybe Mr. Simard can correct me if this isn't the intention—that would no longer be possible and we would have to stop. Mr. Lloyd would have to submit his motion. Somehow it would be translated quickly. Normally, we are able to do that through the translation that is provided on these calls.

I just want to be very clear that, again, we're not seeing an unintended consequence here and all of a sudden the committee's grinding to a halt every time we have a motion. Motions, of course, are part of our privilege as members. I'm just concerned that if there's a motion, a substantive motion, based on something that is being discussed in that particular meeting, we as members have the right to move that motion in real time. There is no 48-hour rule in that regard. I'm a little concerned that this would butt up against the rules of the House, which of course we follow here in committee.

If I'm misinterpreting this, please forgive me. When I read this, that jumped out at me as a concern. I don't know how we could word it to allow for motions coming from the floor and their being interpreted through the translation services that we have on these calls, which has been the practice up until now.

The Chair: Mr. May, is it possible that your comments are more aptly directed to the other motion, which we're not discussing?

Mr. Bryan May: That may very well be. I'm sorry. Am I getting ahead of myself?

The Chair: You're ahead of us all, as usual.

Mr. Bryan May: You have my apologies.

The Chair: Okay. We'll leave that there.

I gather that Mr. Lefebvre was going to make the same point.

Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

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

I wanted to tell my colleague that his comment actually applies to the motion regarding substantive motions.

I also want to point out that it isn't mandatory to translate texts that don't come from a department, although it's common practice to do so. However, the motion would make this a requirement. There have been examples, such as in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, where the meaning of the texts submitted was completely different from the meaning of the original wording.

In fact, the motion seeks to ensure respect for the meaning of the documents submitted, whether the documents are in English or French, so that we can deliberate with a clear understanding of the texts before us.

• (1250)

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any further comments on the motion as amended?

Do we need a recorded vote? Okay.

Madam Clerk, we can deem the motion passed as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Can we move back to our witnesses?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: There's also the second motion, which concerns technical tests.

[*English*]

The Chair: Perhaps I should let our witnesses go for the day, Mr. Simard. I don't want to take up any of their time unnecessarily if we're not going to get back to them, and it doesn't look like we will. You have this motion and one more, if I'm not mistaken.

To our witnesses, let me just say thank you on behalf of all the committee. As one of our colleagues said earlier, this was a very interesting discussion and very informative. I apologize that your time was cut short a bit, but sometimes we need to deal with matters that prevent us from finishing the meeting and finishing the rounds of questions.

Again, thank you for taking the time to join us. We appreciate it and are very grateful. You are now free to go while we carry on with the rest of our business at this meeting.

Thank you.

Dr. Nigel Steward: Thank you. It was a pleasure to be with you.

The Chair: Mr. Simard, we will go back to you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Do you want me to read the second motion, which concerns technical tests for witnesses?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, if you don't mind, because I'm not sure people know which is the first motion, which is the second and which is the third.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Okay. The motion reads as follows:

That the clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the committee that the House Administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advises the committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

I just want to point out that this motion has been passed in every other committee where it was introduced.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. May.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will simply say that I believe this is in fact the practice, and to simply formalize it, I think we'd be in favour of it.

The Chair: It's the practice as I understand it too.

Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I think you'll find no trouble with us on this one. I would just move that we move to a vote.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

All right. Let's do that.

Madam Clerk, do we need a recorded vote on this one? No. Okay.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Simard, I think that brings us back to you. Now we know what the third motion is.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: The motion reads as follows:

That the text of any substantive motion or any motion in amendment of a substantive motion be distributed in writing in both official languages to all committee members before the committee begins debate on such a motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Mr. May, you have your hand up. I have a hunch that I know what you're going to say.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I trumped myself a bit there in terms of this one. Again, I think I have to reiterate that it's a priority for all of us—I hope it's a priority for all of us—to ensure that we can all be understood. We want to strengthen our ability to be understood at all times. Where I run into an issue with this particular motion is, again, that the na-

ture of committees is often on the fly. There are amendments to substantive motions that happen during these conversations and these debates.

I can only imagine what it would be like to follow this while doing a report where there are amendments upon amendments and where, based on how certain things are amended, there could be additional amendments.

I'd just be very concerned that if this were adopted as is we'd really be grinding to a halt and also, potentially, breaching privilege. I'm open to a discussion on this one, if it can be amended in some way or clarified. Maybe Mr. Simard could speak to maybe my misinterpretation of what is being said.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thanks.

Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to echo Mr. May's comments, but to add something novel, even if we were to amend something on this, if this were to be passed we wouldn't be able to amend anything on the fly. I also think it does potentially infringe on our parliamentary privilege. I would just say that, generally, unless Mr. Simard has some sort of substantive amendment to his own motion that can address these issues.... For example, because you have to present the translated amendment before the committee even begins, that would negate any ability for the committee to deal with this in real time. I'll leave it at that.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: We need to look again at the definition of “substantive motion.” We must fully understand this here.

The motion before you, as it stands, doesn't prevent us from moving a motion on the spot. We're talking here only about substantive motions. This also doesn't prevent us from introducing amendments when we proceed to a clause-by-clause consideration of a bill.

The purpose of this motion is quite simple. Before voting, all parliamentarians must be able to make an informed decision. If we don't have guidance in our own language, it's hard for us to make an informed judgment. I urge you to focus on the definition of “substantive motion.” My understanding is that the motion doesn't prevent us from moving motions on the spot.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Simard, everybody agrees with the spirit of your motion. Everybody agrees that translation is essential, whether it's from French to English or English to French. The concern, which, frankly, I share, is that the way this is worded, if this motion were passed, and Mr. Lloyd or Mr. May, for example, wanted to make an amendment to this motion, they couldn't, because we'd have to stop and have it translated by translation services. Nobody's opposed to the spirit of the motion. It's a technical glitch, I think, that we're really talking about.

Mr. Lloyd, you have your hand raised.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Something, Mr. Simard, that is confusing is that you're saying that this really applies only to substantive motions. I would say that a substantive motion requires 48 hours' advance notice and translation, so that should be ample protection for your concerns about informed consent. I would say that maybe this motion of yours has already been dealt with. I'm not sure if there's any more discussion on this, but I'd be happy....

Do you think we need a vote on this? Mr. Simard, what do you think?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: I'll simply point out that, if there's already a requirement to submit the text two days in advance, I don't see why we would vote against this motion. It just makes this measure mandatory. I don't see how this creates any issues.

[English]

The Chair: Perhaps we can—

I'm sorry, Mr. May. I didn't see your hand up there. Go ahead.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with MP Lloyd, but just to clarify, you don't need to give 48 hours' notice, as per the rules of the House, as long as the motion is germane to the topic you're discussing. Again, this would be a breach of privilege. You would be taking away a member's privilege to move a motion based on the debate that we're seeing in front of us, and I think that is a dangerous precedent.

I don't think that's what's intended. I really don't. I think the intent of this motion is to ensure that we are understood and that we respect the bilingual nature of this country, but in doing so, we wouldn't be able to hear something in a committee, for example, and be able to move a motion based on that, which, of course, is a privilege we have right now.

I won't be voting in favour of this on those grounds unless it's amended because the actual motion, from what I understand, doesn't say just substantive motions. It says the text of any substantive motion or any motion in amendment of that substantive motion. You would have to know, even before we debate these issues, what your amendment would be or what your thought process would be, which I think really disregards the process of the debate in and of itself.

Thank you.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. May.

Mr. Simard, perhaps we could hear from the clerk. I think we all agree that what we're talking about is amendments on the fly during the course of a debate on a motion. To Mr. May's point and to Mr. Lloyd's point, which I share, the concern is that there would be a breach of our privilege if we had to stop and we couldn't amend a motion during the course of a meeting. Perhaps it might be helpful if the clerk could just confirm, in fact, that is the correct interpretation, and then I will give what appears to be the last word to Mr. Simard.

The Clerk: What Mr. May recently outlined is in fact correct. Committee members can move substantive motions without notice if they pertain to the topic at hand. The committee would need to decide whether or not what Mr. Simard is proposing goes against that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Simard.

[Translation]

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

In my opinion, there's also a breach of privilege when I must vote on a motion that I don't understand because it hasn't been translated into my own language. There's also a breach of privilege. How do you expect a person to vote on a motion if they don't understand it?

The text before you addresses this shortcoming. Sometimes, for francophones, things become difficult when a motion is tabled without being translated. The same would be true for anglophones if a motion were tabled only in French. It becomes difficult to make a decision at that point.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Simard, again, I don't think anybody disagrees with anything you just said. It's the technical requirement to have it in writing and for it go through translation services before it can be considered by the committee. That prevents amendments being put forward during the course of a debate.

That's the challenge we face. Nobody disagrees with you, but the amendment would result in a technical breach resulting in a violation of members' privilege.

Mr. Lefebvre, I—

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Simard, the interpreters play a key role in this area. This has always been the usual practice when we receive and discuss these amendments. Sometimes, we discuss several subamendments that come one after the other. If we need to have all this in writing, it will make the committee's work almost impossible.

I completely understand what you're saying. However, I think that we should rely on the expertise of the interpreters for support in this area.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Simard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I understand. However, in certain cases, members have been forced to vote when they hadn't had any interpretation. This has happened to members of my party. They were forced to vote blindly on motions tabled in committee.

The interpretation is fine. However, in the current pandemic situation, when certain technological tools don't always work, I feel that the shortcoming is quite significant and that it may infringe on our privilege to receive information in our mother tongue.

● (1305)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. I don't see any other hands. The motion is on the table.

Madam Clerk, it looks like we're going to have to have a vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 10; yeas 1)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Our witnesses have been released. That's all our business for today.

I will adjourn the meeting, and I look forward to seeing everybody on Friday. Thank you, all.

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