

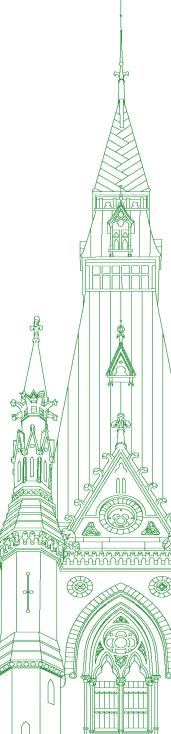
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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1635)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 82 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders, and therefore members are attending in person in the room, as well as remotely using the Zoom application.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and the members. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. Although this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and can cause serious injury. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to a microphone.

With regard to a speaking list, the committee clerk and I will do our best to maintain a consolidated order of speaking for all members, whether they are participating virtually or in person.

In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I'm informing the committee that all witnesses appearing virtually will have completed the required connection tests in advance of speaking. They are actually going through that process, so two speakers have yet to be cleared, but I just thought in the interest of saving time, we would get started.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motions adopted by the committee on Monday, January 31, 2022, and Tuesday, May 30, 2023, the committee resumes its study of the situation at the Russia-Ukraine border and implications for peace and security.

I'd now like to welcome our witnesses. We have Professor Jennifer Clapp, who is appearing as an individual. We have Professor Geoffrey Wood from Western University. We have Mr. Timothy Egan, who is familiar to us having previously appeared here. He is the president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Gas Association. Finally, we're grateful to have Anna Ackermann, who is a policy analyst and specialist on the green reconstruction of Ukraine from the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Egan, given that you are here, you will go first. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

(1640)

Mr. Timothy Egan (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Gas Association): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It has been over 18 months since Russia's illegal and vicious attack on Ukraine. It has been over one month since Hamas's monstrous terrorist assault on Israel. Asia is on high alert, as Communist Chinese rhetoric and actions suggest the integrity of Taiwan is at risk.

Conflicts are raging and more threaten. The world is unstable. It's a grave concern for us all. Its effect on energy means that energy matters more than ever. Energy's the lifeblood of functioning modern societies. It is the foundation of economic well-being, and is essential for national and international security. It always matters, but all the more so in moments of instability.

Canada has energy in abundance, particularly natural gas. My association is the voice of Canada's natural gas industry. Our members are responsible for nearly 40% of our country's energy needs—almost twice that of the electricity industry—serving eight provinces and one territory. Since before Confederation, Canadians have been using gas energy. Over 20 million benefit from it today and more still across the country want access to it. Natural gas is the largest single contributor to our residential, commercial and industrial energy needs.

Canada is home to world-class companies in natural gas production, transmission, distribution and services to the sector. Canada is at record production and consumption levels of natural gas, and the numbers are growing.

Now we have an enormous opportunity to help the world. Canada should commit to making more of its extraordinary energy resources and technologies available to our allies. The world needs and wants energy, and for the most part it isn't discriminating on what kind. There does remain some discrimination as to the source. One source the world would like more energy from is Canada.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, my offices have had meetings with representatives from across Europe and Asia. They have all asked how to get more natural gas, more quickly, from Canada. They know our environmental standards and our our governance standards are high, and that we have an extraordinary abundance of the resource. They know that if they had a comparable abundance then they would be developing it quickly. Yet, they see us as seemingly incapable of delivering in the way they would expect us to deliver.

This needs to change. Canada should step up and do more. In an unstable world, a concerted Canadian strategy to help on energy is both an opportunity and a responsibility. We have hundreds of years of supplies of natural gas, and a producer industry more than willing to get it to market quickly and efficiently. What are we doing to ensure that happens?

We have global expertise in the movement of gaseous fuels across great distances safely and reliably. What are we doing to take this to the world?

We have efficient and transparent regulatory regimes for the distribution of energy. What are we doing to take these to the world?

We have extraordinary innovation in how we manage the resource and its use, including the development of alternative gaseous fuels like renewable natural gas and hydrogen, and are working to develop more. What more can we do to bring this to the world?

Parliamentarians should sit down with industry to craft answers to all of these questions.

Consumers of energy care about three things: that energy is reliable, affordable and acceptable. Under the third of these, acceptability, a primary focus for many years has been environmental acceptability, particularly with respect to emissions. Global insecurity has forced a necessary step back from an exclusive focus on environmental acceptability, and a reflection on how all three legs of this energy stool are kept stable.

Natural gas energy, consistently one of the most affordable, reliable and acceptable in countless applications, is particularly well positioned to help address all three for the world, as it continues to do for Canada.

While the CGA is primarily focused on domestic concerns, we represent Canada globally for the gas industry in the International Gas Union. We recently hosted the global industry's biggest liquid natural gas conference, LNG2023, in Vancouver. We're about to host the world's biggest conference on gas technology and innovation, IGRC2024, in Banff next May. All of this speaks to how we are apprised of the role of gas globally. What we see is great promise.

There are reports about how we are trending towards a decline in the use of fossil fuels, but the evidence on the ground suggests anything but that. Moreover, in the course of human history it is rare that we stop the use of any particular fuel or energy technology, rather, we add more and improve the use of all. This is the likely future of natural gas in the world. Canada, given the comparative advantage we have in supply, infrastructure and expertise, should lead on this for Ukraine and for the world at large.

Approximately a decade ago our industry worked with government in Canada and the United States to assist the Ukrainians in strengthening their gas infrastructure, at a time of serious threat from Russia. Those threats have manifested themselves in terrible ways. The help we provided then should be built upon and we should do more now.

● (1645)

In conclusion, I should note that we don't speak about gas to the exclusion of other fuels or technologies. We think all are needed for a more prosperous and more secure world. But we see an enormous opportunity for immediate and profound benefits from natural gas not being realized, and we think it should be.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Egan.

We now go to Professor Clapp. Welcome. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Ms. Jennifer Clapp (Professor, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and the committee for the opportunity to speak today.

I would like to make three points in relation to the global food security consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, drawing on insights from my own research as a professor at the University of Waterloo and in my role as a member of several international expert panels on food security.

The first point I want to make is that world food security has been profoundly affected by the decline of Ukrainian wheat on the world market. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine caused significant turmoil on global grain markets, which resulted in a major price spike that came on top of higher food prices due to disruptions to markets caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The price spikes were due to concern about global grain supplies, because Russia and Ukraine, at the time, together accounted for a quarter of the world's wheat export market and a fifth of the world's maize market. Of course, Russia is also the world's largest fertilizer exporter.

Food import bills rose sharply around the world, hitting developing countries that are dependent on food imports the hardest, especially countries in sub-Saharan African and in the Middle East, many of which relied on grain imports from Ukraine and Russia to meet their food security needs.

The result was a dramatic increase in global hunger. After a decade in which we saw hunger falling—

The Chair: Apologies, Ms. Clapp, but I think there's a point of order.

Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Chair, there's a problem with the interpretation.

[English]

The Chair: Our apologies, Professor Clapp, but we were just advised by the interpreters that the quality of your sound went down. Hopefully that will not happen again. We will now proceed with your testimony again.

Ms. Jennifer Clapp: My apologies, I hope it sounds okay now. As I was saying, the results of these price increases were a dramatic increase in global hunger. After a decade in which we—

The Chair: Professor Clapp, my sincerest apologies. I just had another signal from the interpreters. For some reason things are not okay. Because there are two other witnesses who have to be sound-checked as well, someone will be getting in touch with you right now. We will suspend for a few minutes. Then hopefully we will resume, and you can carry on with your testimony. Our apologies for that.

• (1645) (Pause)_____

• (1715)

The Chair: We will resume our meeting.

Mr. Egan, thank you very much for your patience. We're very grateful. It's important that we all agree on the process going forward

We have had the opportunity to hear your opening remarks. We will now go to the members for questions. Each member is allotted four minutes.

Mr. Chong, you have four minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Egan, for appearing in front of our committee.

On March 23, 2022, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Prime Minister set up a dedicated working group on two things—the green transition and liquefied natural gas—to develop concrete actions to deepen Canada-European Union co-operation on energy and to end EU dependence on Russian energy.

Since that working group was established, about a year and a half ago, has your industry or have your members had any workings with the Government of Canada and this working group?

Mr. Timothy Egan: No, sir. Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

I note that Russian pipeline flows to Europe have stopped, but Russian liquefied natural gas continues to flow to Europe. The top three LNG suppliers to Europe are the United States, Qatar and Russia.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February of last year, to what extent has the Government of Canada worked with you or your members, or your industry, the natural gas industry, toward the goal of increasing Canadian LNG exports to the European Union?

Mr. Timothy Egan: The Canadian Gas Association has had no direct engagement with the Government of Canada on that. I can't speak for any specific engagement that may have occurred with individual companies.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

Some analysts in Canada have said that Canadian LNG is not the answer to the European Union's short-term energy needs because of a "fundamental mismatch with Canadian supply opportunities". These analysts have also said, "Canada cannot ramp up supply before 2025, while Europe's energy needs will largely be resolved by that time."

In other words, Europe's LNG requirements will be completely solved before 2025—two short years or a mere 24 months. Do you agree with that assessment?

Mr. Timothy Egan: No, I don't. In fact, Canada is a significant supplier of natural gas to the United States in quantities that are roughly comparable to the amount of gas the United States is currently exporting to global markets, much of which is going to Europe. Canadian gas is playing in global markets, and could be playing much more in global markets.

The European crisis continues. Europe continues to look for gas on global markets. I believe there is a significant opportunity for Canada.

● (1720)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Egan, do you follow the International Energy Agency's world energy outlook forecasts at all?

Mr. Timothy Egan: It's one of the variety of international sources that we look at, yes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Would you agree that the IEA's forecasts often have been way off? I remember 10 years ago, in 2013, the International Energy Agency saying that global coal consumption had peaked and that it would decline from 2013 onwards. We smashed through new global coal demand last year, a decade later. All indications are that in 2023, this year, global coal consumption will break new record highs. They have also made similar predictions about oil, but yet oil demand continues to rise globally.

Maybe you could talk a little bit about the accuracy of predicting peak oil and peak natural gas demand that we've often seen in the last decade and that often have proven to be wrong.

Mr. Timothy Egan: I'd say it's not just for the last decade. I'd say since we've been using oil, natural gas and other fossil fuels, we have consistently underestimated the availability of those fuels. In large part, it's because it depends on the price of the fuel and the state of the technology at any one time. What we consistently demonstrate is that there is more product available, and often at more affordable prices, than ever conceived of before.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

The Chair: We now go to Madame Chatel for four minutes.

[Translation]

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

Good afternoon, Mr. Egan. Thank you for being the brave witness appearing in person.

I was reading an OECD report, and I have the English version here in front of me.

[English]

It's about policy responses on the impacts of the war on Ukraine. There are three key recommendations.

First for a bit of a context, it says that "gas prices have significantly increased as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine and are likely to remain elevated in the medium" and even long-term "as European countries increasingly switch to other gas suppliers."

In this very important situation, the report has three recommendations.

The first one is, "Support regions that are specialised in energy intensive sector in order to help them adjust while requiring them to find suitable long-term solutions that fit their local contexts." Specifically, they suggest supporting measures that "include promotion of energy efficiency, investment and alternative energy sources or training or re-employment for displaced workers."

The second recommendation is, "Commit to excluding coal as an alternative energy source in order to remain in line with the vital need to transition to a Net Zero Emissions economy by 2050."

The last recommendation is, "Support manufacturing upgrading, in particular in economically weak regions, in order to bring up the energy efficiency of less efficient companies to that of sectoral best practice."

Could you comment on these three recommendations? Do they align with Canada's energy sector and its interaction with the situation in Ukraine?

Mr. Timothy Egan: I'd say broadly that there are elements of the OECD recommendations that are aligned with actions by our industry in Canada.

We are strongly supportive of energy efficiency. We're strongly supportive of alternative gaseous fuels. As I noted in my remarks, we are big supporters of renewable natural gas and development of hydrogen. We have some of the leaders in the development of hydrogen applications in Canada. We're strongly supportive of efforts to reduce emissions overall.

At the end of the day, consumers in any country—be they residential, commercial or industrial—need access to reliable and affordable energy. In times of crisis, they will take any kind of energy they can. That's why we've actually seen forests being depleted in western Europe. That's why we see western European countries suddenly and dramatically changing their policies and importing coal and developing new coal facilities. We see all of those things because fundamentally every citizen and every society needs access to energy.

Canada can play a key role in providing clean, affordable and reliable energy to the world. We should, I think, avoid any effort to pick favourites. We should think about what our strengths are and play to them to try to provide support to our allies however we can. I believe natural gas is part of that.

(1725)

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: We've seen a massive investment in Europe in clean and renewable energy.

In that context, do you think that Canada is a short-term solution to Europe? How do you think this sector plays with the increasing investment in renewable energy in Europe?

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please, because we are over four minutes.

Mr. Timothy Egan: First of all, most renewables cannot be implemented without access to natural gas. It's a core partner for the development of virtually any renewable.

Secondly, as much as there have been significant renewables investments, they're extremely costly. The development of natural gas assets is significantly less costly in virtually every application.

It's an all-of-the-above approach where you look at all of the key factors.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you.

The Chair: We now go to Mr. Bergeron.

You have four minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being with us, Mr. Egan. I, too, sincerely appreciate your patience.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development found that the mitigation measures in the 2030 emissions reduction plan were insufficient to meet Canada's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to at least 40% below the 2005 level by 2030. The oil and gas sector remains Canada's highest-emitting economic sector, accounting for 28% of total emissions in 2021 compared to 23% in 2005.

When you appeared before the committee in November 2022, you said, "[The] Canadian [natural gas] industry should work with government to map out a strategy to move more energy offshore."

How can we reconcile your stated goal to move more energy offshore, on the one hand, with the fact that Canada seems to be incapable of meeting its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, on the other?

Moreover, I believe the war in Ukraine has exposed not only Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuel, but also its extreme dependence on fossil fuels in general.

I know some oil and gas companies have started investing in clean energy. Do you think the oil and gas sector should start heading in that direction as of now?

[English]

Mr. Timothy Egan: I do, and I think that Canada faces a serious challenge. We've set very aggressive targets, which, as you've noted, are unlikely to be met, but we have at our disposal extraordinary resources that could be used to help meet, I would say, broader emission reduction targets at a global level.

In the domestic context, if we're having difficulty, and very recent reports indicate that we are to meet targets that have been set by the Government of Canada for 2030 or 2050, we could be contributing to global efforts to reduce emissions and thereby have a net positive impact around the world if not quite the objective we wanted to achieve within the domestic context.

For instance, we're having conversations with Asian countries that are very interested in bringing in natural gas that could be used to offset higher-emitting resource uses and thereby reduce emissions in those countries. We should be working, I believe, to find ways to ensure that the net emission benefit comes to us and can be counted against our own targets.

Similarly, even within North America, I look at your province, Mr. Bergeron, and I look at the fact that it has one of the most significant hydro assets in North America, which has delivered extraordinary benefit not just to Quebec but, I'd say, to much of northeastern United States. The opportunity to continue to develop those assets in an efficient way often depends on the co-operative development of natural gas assets for the efficient use of energy and for the efficient operation of energy systems.

The concern I have is the suggestion that it is one or the other. I believe that it is an all-of-the-above approach and, similarly, that it's not one or the other in terms of Canadian emission reduction targets and global emission reduction targets. We should be working with our allies around the world to reduce emissions globally in as cooperative a fashion as we possibly can.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Madam McPherson.

You have four minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was eager to hear from our witnesses about the food insecurity that's been caused around the world because of the conflict, the illegal war in Ukraine. Unfortunately, we're not able to do that right now

I'm sorry, I don't have any questions for you, Mr. Egan, but I did want to take my four minutes because there is a concurrence motion happening in the House right now on a report that was tabled in February of last year. We know that our natural resources committee is being filibustered by the Conservatives because they also don't want us to be able to get anything done there.

They also blocked a unanimous consent motion I asked for today in the House, for a ceasefire for the people of Gaza. I thought I would use my four minutes to read the press release from leading Canadian humanitarian organizations that marked the one month of violence in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank. It called for an immediate ceasefire—

The Chair: There's a point of order, Madame McPherson.

Hon. Michael Chong: What's the relevance, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Could you speak to the relevance?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Of course. The relevance is that food insecurity around the world is caused by what is happening in Ukraine. That's very clear.

One of the places where it is happening most right now is in Gaza. We are seeing food insecurity in the Middle East. We know that it has huge implications on Lebanon and Palestine, so I think there is clear relevance.

Obviously, right now-

The Chair: Can I ask that you make it as relevant as possible and make every effort to do so?

Ms. Heather McPherson: The Conservative Party doesn't want me to talk about the 4,324 Palestinian children who have lost their lives. They don't want me to talk about the 1,350 missing children under the rubble in Gaza right now.

Unfortunately, this is my time to talk about food insecurity, so I will be talking about that in Gaza.

"Since October 7, unprecedented violence"-

The Chair: In relation to Ukraine please.

Ms. Heather McPherson:

in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe.

Thousands of civilians—including children—are being killed, and with millions more suffering as a result of countless attacks, relentless bombing, hunger, dehydration, sickness and the absence of clean water, fuel, healthcare and humanitarian assistance

While the organizations and local partners are providing some immediate assistance to civilians on the ground—

The Chair: Madame McPherson, I will once again remind you that there should be some relevance to the study of Ukraine.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): I have a point of order on that same point.

I would be supportive of Ms. McPherson's continuing. There's a long tradition of members' being able to use their four minutes as they wish. The relevance is somewhat tangential at times, and I've heard that many times; however, I think it is the member's right to take that four minutes.

I hope that the clock is stopped right now so it doesn't interfere with her four minutes.

I would say that I'm supportive of it because, as she mentioned, there's a concurrence motion that the Conservatives have presented in the House of Commons that stopped the debate on Bill S-9. I thought we had agreement that it would be an important bill to get through the House quickly. We are now stopped on Bill S-9, which is about chemical weapons, warfare and updating the list to try to keep our planet safe.

As Ms. McPherson said, we have interrupted the House. It is a piece of business that was to come to this committee, so it is, I think, of interest to all of us. I would like to hear Ms. McPherson.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Oliphant.

Ms. McPherson, I would ask that you try to make it as relevant as possible to the study that we're doing.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I was speaking about food, fuel and the impacts on the citizens of Gaza.

One thing I would also like to highlight is that currently the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is filibustering the natural resources committee, where we are trying to get a piece of legislation through that would help Albertans with jobs, and perhaps the energy sector would be more applicable in that particular circumstance.

Day by day, hundreds of innocent civilians are being killed in ongoing violence. The following organizations urge the government of Canada to take a strong and resolute stance in demanding a ceasefire in order to prevent further loss of civilian life and allow for the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance: CARE Canada, Cooperation Canada, Development and Peace, Human Concern International, Humanity & Inclusion, Islamic Relief Canada, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam-Québec, Médecins du Monde Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and Save the Children.

The lives of two million people are at stake. The healthcare system in Gaza is collapsing, hospitals are devastated and lack the capacity to treat the tens of thousands...wounded.

Mr. Chair, Canada should be calling for a ceasefire. I'm disappointed that both the Liberals and the Conservatives refuse to give consent for that ceasefire motion in the House of Commons.

Thank you very much.

• (1735

The Chair: Thank you, Madame McPherson.

Mr. Egan, thank you very much. We're all very grateful that you're here in person and that you had an opportunity to share your expertise and insights with us.

I will now suspend for a few minutes, because we have to go in camera to do committee business. It should take about three or four minutes.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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