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# Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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Chair: Mr. David Sweet





## Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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• (1305)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Good afternoon, colleagues. I want to say a couple of things to open up. In particular, I'll just deal with what Mr. Angus was just talking about.

Yesterday things worked pretty well both with the electronic and with many of you manually putting up your hand. When I see that, I'll put you in line just as I would if you were doing it electronically. I suspect that every time I read the speakers list.... No one objected yesterday, so I think we captured everybody. I know sometimes you have a spontaneous thought and you want to get it out right away. Don't feel that your physical hand won't be noticed; I'm staying glued to the screen.

Second, I want to mention our translators. I will just say that I've heard some colleagues say there's a lot of trouble with regard to the audio, but there have been a number of audiological injuries because of the way the audio can work in the earpiece of the translation staff. I would encourage you to continue to be as patient as possible so that not only do we get a good feed so that they can actually translate but also there are no injuries, which is important.

I'll just go over a couple of things very briefly. We are in a virtual sitting now, and as I already mentioned, you can put your hand up either electronically or manually.

Please speak slowly so that the translation staff can make sure interpretation is done.

Also, make sure that your button is on the language you want to hear, so either the floor or English or French. Also remember when you're speaking that if you have your button on English and you're speaking *en français*, then there's going to be an issue. You have to change that button if you're going to change the language you're speaking.

Of course, make sure you're automatically muted all the time. You will need to use the space bar to unmute.

Thanks for your patience, colleagues, and for coming together today. We didn't finish with any result yesterday, so I am hoping that we might be able to get a result in terms of finishing at least one motion from the whole list of motions we had.

I'm going to begin today by going to Mr. Barrett and having him repeat his motion so that we know what we're dealing with. Hopefully some folks were able to review, as they mentioned yesterday that they wanted to take a look at a previous motion as well as at

our motion now, to make sure that they're well informed, particularly the new members of the committee.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** On a point of order, Chair, I appreciate the explanation that you just gave, but can you just clarify for us where we are in the business of today? Also, with regard to the hand raising, what is the order of speakers? Is there carry-over from yesterday, or is it a brand new list today? Could you clarify that for us?

It was my understanding that the meeting was adjourned, so it would be a fresh start.

**The Chair:** That's correct; it will be a fresh start today.

I'll just have Mr. Barrett read his motion into the record, which we had ended with yesterday, and then we'll begin. I'll give you the list of speakers right now that I have in front of me: Mr. Angus, Madam Shanahan, Mr. Dong, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Fergus, Mr. Warkentin and Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Barrett, please go ahead now, and then we will go to the speakers list.

**Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Chair.

I'm just wondering, since we have a fresh start, if we can check with the clerk whether we are able to move motions.

**The Chair:** I believe there were five motions moved yesterday, so we are going to return to the motion that we were debating yesterday. Then, of course, if we can finish that quickly, we can add some more motions to the list or we can go to the second one that was raised yesterday.

**Mr. Han Dong:** I have a motion to amend the routine motion that we passed yesterday and specifically to add a clause that, in future, if we are going to call meetings, we'll have 24 hours' notice at least, just because I had to cancel a lot of appointments to be here today.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Receiving a notice in the morning and expecting all members to be available at one o'clock, I think, is a little bit of a tall order.

Would you indulge me to allow me to move a motion to change the routine order?

**The Chair:** We'll do that when we come back to the motions on the business of the day, absolutely.

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

Chair, to what my colleague said, I had to change a lot of stuff in my personal life and family life to be at this meeting to deal with a motion that has not been dealt with. It's my understanding that we're not here to carry on ordinary business and go through all the other motions that really belong in a normal day. This is an extraordinary meeting. We're here to deal with something that had to be dealt with because it has to do with the documents, so I'm certainly very uncomfortable with the idea that we'll turn this into a regular meeting and go as long as we want.

As far as changing the standing orders goes, the routine proceedings, that was agreed on yesterday. We don't get to go back and rewrite them every time we don't like something at a committee. That would, I think, turn us into a bit of a monkey show.

• (1310)

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus, first off, I completely respect and appreciate your point. I know that everybody had to reschedule things, so for that you have my sincere regrets.

I wanted to try to finish this motion. I only mentioned the other motions in the sense that I'm the servant of the committee. If a majority of members want to move past that, I'm here to serve. However, the primary pursuit today is what you said: to deal with that motion and hopefully get the request in, because we don't have those documents right now. If we get the request in, some action can be taken while we're gone for Thanksgiving, because right now we have no action going on for the committee.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Chair, I have a comment on this point of order.

I too appreciate the point brought forward by my colleagues Mr. Dong and Mr. Angus. I hear where you're coming from, and I think the idea is that we're all dealing with new circumstances. There's a lot going on. I too had to cancel a number of meetings this afternoon—virtual, in the House and in my constituency—and I'm sure I'm not alone in that regard.

Maybe we could get some clarification from you, Mr. Chair, including the fact that we have restricted resources. I think we started off on a good note, and I was very pleased to hear that you have a sense of humour. You brought us along and I greatly appreciate that, but this seems to be upsetting the apple cart. Mr. Angus has a good point in saying that if this is an extraordinary meeting, the business at hand should be dealt with in a way that respects all members here. I think that's the point we're trying to get across.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fergus, is your comment on the same point of order?

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** No, it's actually on a different one, Mr. Chair.

I hope, if they had noticed, either the clerk or Mr. Angus, or even our analyst—

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** I'm sorry, but I have point of order.

Mr. Fergus, I'm having a little trouble hearing you. I'm not sure if it's—

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I'm sorry. They asked me to move my mike away from my mouth because it was a little too poppy. Is this okay for our interpreters, because I don't want our interpreters to—

**The Chair:** I can hear you now.

Can everybody else hear Mr. Fergus okay?

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I'm certain you can hear me, but I just want to make sure that this is okay for the interpreters. Great. Thank you.

I hope the clerk, the analyst or Mr. Angus may have noticed this. I came on early and noticed that Ms. Shanahan had her hand up. I put my hand up second using the “raise hand” feature. I forget where it was, but someone was asked to test to see if it worked and my hand went off automatically. It wasn't me who did it. I put my hand back up, but I don't know if anybody noticed that I had my hand up second.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fergus, we're wrestling with all those kinds of technical difficulties. If you registered it before I gavelled the meeting, then it probably went back to zero because the meeting hadn't started until we actually gavelled in.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I didn't notice anybody else's flip off. It was just mine.

**The Chair:** Okay. You are number five right now, Mr. Fergus. I don't know how to resolve it other than to leave it as it is.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I guess we can't, but if we could take note, that would be very helpful.

**The Chair:** Yes, we will take note of that.

I know that the clerk, by the way, has been very great. Every time you put up your hand, she has been sending me screenshots, so we try to do that. We try to look at the technology but also try to capture it in a screenshot in case there is any kind of a glitch like that again so that we can correct it. We're going to get a handle on this virtual stuff. For the next meetings, I will be in Ottawa, so it will be a bit smoother.

Colleagues, I have the speakers list.

I'll just get Mr. Barrett to repeat his motion and then we'll go to the speakers list.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Thanks very much, Chair.

Like our colleagues, we all have things to do today. Already having spent quite a bit of time on this yesterday, I don't think there are going to be any surprises where folks vote. If the meeting is 30 minutes or if it ends on Monday morning, my wife said she'll keep the turkey warm for me. She'd be happy to see me later this afternoon, but I am ready to do this until it's resolved because we're into a second meeting dealing with the same motion.

It states:

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(1)(a), an order of the Committee do issue to Speakers' Spotlight for a copy of all records pertaining to speaking appearances arranged, since October 14, 2008, for Justin Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, Margaret Trudeau and Alexandre Trudeau—including, in respect of each speaking appearance, an indication of the fee provided, any expenses that were reimbursed and the name of the company, organization, person or entity booking it—which had been originally ordered to be produced on July 22, 2020, by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, provided that these documents shall be provided to the Clerk of the Committee within 24 hours of the adoption of this motion; and that the documents be reviewed in camera.

• (1315)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I understand. I just want to go to the clerk because we've had to revise the speakers list because, in fact, Mr. Fergus, there were witnesses who said your name was up top and then it was shuffled out.

Just to be clear, Madam Clerk, is it Mr. Fergus and then Madam Gaudreau and Madam Lattanzio? You can give me the list, and I'll just copy it down right now and we'll go from there.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke):** The list that's on the screen right now is what I sent you. Would you like me to read the names?

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead. That would be great. Thank you.

**The Clerk:** The list is Mr. Angus, Ms. Shanahan, Mr. Dong, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Fergus, Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Kurek, Mr. Sorbara, Madame Gaudreau and Ms. Lattanzio.

**The Chair:** All right, so I was wrong. Was Mr. Fergus up top or not?

**The Clerk:** Yes, but then it got cleared at the start of the meeting.

**The Chair:** I see, so it was before the gavel.

That's what we have to be careful of, folks. The gavel has to go before, because it will always clear out.

**Mr. Han Dong:** On a point of order, Chair, I was waiting for the evidence to show, but I was looking at the list because I was ready to raise my hand. I saw that there was a clearance of names and that Mr. Fergus was the first one to speak. Right after the clearance of the name, Mr. Angus raised his hand before the virtual gavel was struck. Can we confirm that? I'm pretty sure that I saw it was first Mr. Angus and then Ms. Shanahan.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I think we just confirmed it. The chair just spoke to that.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, we're going to have to be patient with this. I am going to be as fair as I possibly can working with this technology. Believe me, whenever we can, we'll make the corrections.

Right now Mr. Angus has the floor, and we'll go through and everybody will have an opportunity to speak. You might be out of place one or two places because of this glitch, but you will have the opportunity to speak fulsomely.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Okay. I was just telling everyone what I saw.

I'm sorry, Mr. Angus.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, colleagues.

We are in the second day of discussing a motion that should have moved very smoothly through our first meeting. This is a motion regarding a decision made by this committee last July regarding the obtaining of documents concerning the payments made to the Trudeau family through their work with WE.

Many of the sitting members of this committee were on that last committee and voted for this. We voted for a very clear set of rules around the matter to protect the privacy of the individuals involved. It was based on a duty that we have as parliamentarians to call for evidence when necessary, and it's also recognized that we need to have an agreement to make sure that evidence is protected and that the privacy of individuals is protected.

It was a fairly straightforward motion, yet we've seen nothing but obstruction from the Liberals—an obstruction that began when, on the day we were supposed to receive these documents, the Prime Minister shut Parliament down.

My understanding is that the documents are in the hands of the committee clerk. We have these documents, but we are not able to do our work because of this Liberal obstruction. I think this is very unfortunate.

Why do these documents matter?

The issue is a question of conflict of interest on the part of the Prime Minister, who is under investigation right now, in that the WE group—particularly the Kielburger brothers—had built a close relationship with the Trudeau family that included financial payments. This was highly problematic because, under section 5 of the Conflict of Interest Act, the Prime Minister has the obligation to keep his family business in order so that he does not find himself in a conflict. Everything about this scandal is about that conflict.

Why, then, do these documents matter?

When the Kielburgers were first asked whether Margaret Trudeau and Sacha Trudeau were being paid, they said nobody was paid. We know that many high-profile speakers, such as Jully Black and Theo Fleury, gave their time to WE and were not paid.

It was then shown that what the Kielburgers and the WE group were saying was false. Margaret Trudeau had been paid well over \$300,000 and the payments with Justin Trudeau's brother amounted to over half a million dollars. That discrepancy needs to be accounted for.

When we sat at the finance committee we asked the former chair of WE, Michelle Douglas, who had been fired by the Kielburgers, about why the Trudeau family were being paid this amount of money when nobody else was paid. What Michelle Douglas said was extraordinary. She said that the board of directors specifically asked the Kielburger brothers if these payments were being made to the Trudeaus and they were told that no money was being paid.

That was false.

When the Kielburger brothers were asked to explain this discrepancy, they claimed at the finance hearings that Margaret Trudeau and Sacha Trudeau were not paid for public speaking but were paid for the ancillary events afterwards. Those are the corporate sponsorship events.

The question of hiring the Prime Minister's family to work corporate sponsorship events put the Prime Minister in a pretty clear issue of conflict of interest.

• (1320)

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus, I am sorry to interrupt you. I have some information which may impact your presentation that I don't think was clear to the members before.

We are not actually in possession of these documents. They were requested to be sent on August 19. On August 18, the House was prorogued. We actually have to demand those documents once more.

I just wanted to be clear on that.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you for that clarification. My understanding was that we were in possession of the documents.

However, our committee had given instructions to obtain those documents. The effort to get those documents was interfered with by the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue. I think the issue remains a serious question of interference in the work of our committee.

The other issue that came out from the documents that were received—the 5,000 pages of documents relating to the decision to award upwards of \$900 million of public money to the WE group—was that in the documents we saw, in the pitch to senior ministers and senior government officials, the Kielburger brothers included photographs of the Prime Minister's family [*Technical difficulties—Editor*].

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm sorry, but I'm not hearing Mr. Angus.

**The Chair:** We'll wait to see whether he gets a better connection and then have him just repeat those last couple of sentences.

• (1325)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] serious questions and a conflict of interest that the Prime Minister has been put in, because not only were the family members being paid by the Kielburger [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, please, can Mr. Angus repeat basically the last three minutes?

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus, I don't know whether you're in the position where somebody else is using your Wi-Fi or what, but we just

lost you for about four or five sentences. I want to make sure that your testimony is on the record. It was totally garbled by the glitch in the Internet.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** How is this? Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** I can hear your audio very well, and that's the prime thing. If you want to go back a few sentences and begin over, that would be great.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I'm moving toward my conclusion here.

In the 5,000 pages of documents we received, it was really striking that in the pitch to senior officials the Kielburger brothers included photographs of the Prime Minister's family, which I think is very shocking.

What I think is more shocking is that in those 5,000 pages of documents, nobody said that this was problematic. We know that some civil servants noted the fact that the Prime Minister's family—the people who had been paid—were being included in the pitch to get this contract, but at no point did anyone say that this was a serious conflict of interest and that this breached very obvious rules and limitations.

To my Liberal colleagues who are obstructing access to these documents, I put it in a very simple manner. If the statements the Kielburgers made are true in regard to the payments made, those documents will verify them. If the documents verify them, we have nothing else to say and will move on to other issues.

Given that we have felt, however, through our investigation of WE, that we have not received clear answers, we need to be able to verify whether or not these payments were in the manner that they described. Were there other payments? Were these payments involving other matters? We need to know.

We have protections within this committee to make sure that these documents will not just be thrown out to the public, but if there are serious contradictions in testimony, it is incumbent upon us as parliamentarians to find out and get these answers.

The fact that we've already voted to obtain these documents and have already voted to put clear provisions in place to protect the private lives of individuals who may not feel they have done anything wrong but who are very much part of this larger scandal because of their financial connections to the Kielburgers. We need to verify and get these answers.

I know this debate may go on as long as the Liberals want to filibuster and shut us down, but Parliament must be able to return to the Canadian people and say that we did our due diligence, and that we looked into how this massive amount of public money in the middle of the worst economic and financial crisis in memory was going to be hived off and given to a group that has very close personal and financial relations with the Prime Minister's family.

All of us, from all parties, have the obligation to know whether or not the evidence and the claims that have been made at committee are accurate, so that we can in the end provide an accurate report to Parliament.

I'm asking my Liberal colleagues to do the right thing and stop the obstruction they are now carrying on into their second day.

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

Madam Shanahan.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, before I speak to the comments just made by my colleague and others, I have to strenuously object again to the manner in which this meeting was called. I would hope that we would look seriously at a more collaborative way to call meetings, especially on issues as important as this.

In that regard, I would be happy to present a motion when that is possible. It was my understanding this was a fresh start here today, yet the motion was read out, and this is what we are dealing with today when we're in a pandemic.

There are so many things that committees need to be doing with proper collaboration. Committees must have the ability to work together as we have seen during this pandemic. Let me just shout-out to all MPs right from the beginning of the lockdown in March, how important it was that all MPs worked together with members of the government in rolling out the very important emergency measures that were required for Canadians. That was proof positive that everybody understands that it's all about COVID.

It is all about fighting COVID right now. We are in the second wave, the wave that everyone was apprehensive about. We are in it now. I don't have to tell you about the reports that are coming out on a daily basis. Just this morning the public health official was saying that not only is it officially here, but it's very concerning that the spread seems to be happening among young people between the ages of 20 and 40, and that different types of measures will have to be instituted, introduced and communicated, if we're going to get a handle on this COVID.

Canadian public health officials are warning residents to stay home as much as possible, saying the next few weeks will be critical to the country's efforts to contain COVID-19. Last week, in an article dated October 8, the Prime Minister declared that the second wave of the coronavirus was already under way in most of the country. I was concerned, of course, to hear that it was affecting my home province of Quebec. Here in Ontario, it's affecting specific regions.

We need to come together again to address those critical issues. The work of the different committees we have here in Ottawa is important as we are able to meet in a hybrid manner. I commend the House of Commons staff for their ingenuity in pulling this together, so that we can meet. Indeed, when I think of the different committees we have on the Hill, be it health, finance, official languages or PROC, they will have to deal with those issues that are important now.

I think of PROC and the possibility of a federal election. What would that look like? What measures would be necessary? Finance has pre-budget consultations on those support measures that are desperately needed by Canadians. It is all about COVID right now. This is what it's about. This is what is critical for Canadians. To address the comments of my colleague about the documents and what

was done, who did what and so on, it's in the hands of the commissioner.

• (1330)

This has all been placed in the hands of the commissioner of ethics: the independent, non-partisan commissioner of ethics, Mario Dion, whom we have entrusted as parliamentarians. The way that this came about, I think, was to avoid the—how shall I say—inappropriateness, at the very least, of members of Parliament investigating other members of Parliament, and furthermore investigating members of their families. This is why we were very much against this motion this summer, because the matter had been placed in the hands of the commissioner of ethics. We are awaiting, of course, his investigation. He is the one who has been entrusted with this work. It is certainly important for Canadians to know what happened and how it happened, and whether a breach of the code of ethics occurred. I have full confidence that the commissioner of ethics will be able to do his work.

However, the work of this committee needs to circle back. We're talking about the resolutions that we had been looking at earlier, such as on how facial recognition is now an issue, given the awareness of discrimination and profiling done by agents of authority, wherever they may be and in whatever form. I know this is an issue that is close to the heart of my colleague in the NDP. This is something that we can get back to.

I most certainly object to taking up the time of this committee to do work that can be done elsewhere. I most certainly object to the fact that this work can be done.... There are other ideas circulating about how this work can be done, if indeed it's the wish of Parliament that a parliamentary committee be engaged in that. What we need is for his House leader to sit with our House leader. The door is always open. Everyone knows that Mr. Rodriguez is always available. Let's sort this out, and then we can put the work of Parliament where it needs to be. Otherwise, Canadians are counting on us. They are counting on us, colleagues, to get it right about COVID, to do what it takes to support Canadians until we find a treatment or a vaccine and, in the meantime, to support people so that the economy is still operating.

Things change. They change every other day, so I think we need to have our priorities in the right order. This is not to take away from the work that was done this summer, but I think we saw it was being addressed in other committees. To have all of that work now come together in an alternate form is something that I think would serve Canadians well, by allowing Parliament to get back to what it needs to be getting back to.

I must confess that I was against this motion at the beginning. It really touched me, and I could think of any one of us who has family members who are going about their business. Some of you heard me say that I have eight brothers and sisters, and between them there are another 20 to 25 adult children. People are going about their business. They are carrying on their professions. They are doing what they need to do.

• (1335)

I would not necessarily know what that is. I don't think it's the expectation of the Canadian public that members of Parliament are curtailing or auditing the activities of their family members. Chair, I found it very inappropriate right from the beginning to be going after the mother or brother of a member of Parliament. We have an Ethics Commissioner, so if there is a question of a breach of the code of conduct, it would be addressed through his office. We have seen the work that this office has produced. We have confidence in it and we should allow that to continue.

Chair, I believe that the motion before us can be better handled elsewhere. I think that all the members here are experienced, and they know that this is an issue that can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction without taking up the work and the time of multiple committees, including this one.

I would like to understand from the other members why they don't like the alternatives. Why do they think that it would not be better for our committee to be working on other issues more important to Canadians? I'm looking forward to hearing the comments of my colleagues, but I am very perplexed as to why we are back here when there are perfectly open and acceptable ways of handling this topic.

One of the witnesses we heard was the Clerk of the Privy Council, Ian Shugart, who I think we all highly respect. He was a deputy minister in the Harper government. He has certainly provided us with information that clearly shows, to the matter at hand, that there was no impropriety and that the WE Charity contribution agreement was suggested by the public servants. It seems to me this is all for show. I don't understand why we're taking up the time of this committee.

Chair, I do appreciate your patience and your indulgence. I was happy to see that you wanted to discuss other motions that this committee could deal with, and that we could do that in the very near future with meetings that are scheduled with a bit more notice, if you understand what we're all dealing with. I'm sure you do.

I will leave it at that, Chair. Thank you very much.

• (1340)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madam Shanahan.

We'll move on to Mr. Dong.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon, dear colleagues. I've been listening very carefully, not just today but at the previous meeting as well, to the arguments from both sides on whether or not we should support or be against this motion.

You know, I disagree that everything is the same when we compare back to July. Circumstances with COVID have changed everything. I think back in July the numbers were lower. We're slowly recovering from the previous shutdown of business, when everyone was told to stay home. We're slowly coming back to work. Businesses are opening up. It was a different setting.

Now we're watching how the second wave is really threatening the lives of Canadians. On the one hand, we have all three levels of

government discouraging people from going out for non-essential trips and really asking every Canadian to do their part to protect themselves and their loved ones by staying home. On the other hand, we're discussing a motion that has....

I know that the documents are not in our possession. It will trigger a lot of logistics in terms of actually getting the documents and put many people at risk. Then it comes down to whether or not this is essential to the priorities of our electors in this setting. Well, I would argue, just looking at some of the motions adopted in the last session, including Mr. Angus's facial recognition, which allows a very.... Right now, actually, it gives a very unique situation to do a sort of extraordinary study on this topic, because we know that for all indoor activities, people are required to wear masks. This is a very rare opportunity to see how this may impact the study on which we passed a motion in the last session. Another good example is Madam Gaudreau's motion to look at reforming the identity system, speaking to the SIN system that we have right now. That's also very important.

I'll come back to the motion I was going to move, a motion that is still waiting. That's to look at how international students are impacted by COVID. As a previous parliamentary assistant in higher education for the province, I recognize, and I've heard from our local colleges, that it is a major challenge for our public institutions. The government is doing all they can to help them in bringing in new recruits and reopening enrolments when it comes to international students. We're now seen, from how we reacted to COVID, as a top destination for international education.

If we don't seize the moment and provide sound recommendations through the House to the government, I think it's a missed opportunity. My point is that there are a lot of things we ought to be doing right now so that we can bring a positive impact through Parliament with recommendations. Instead, we're talking about this motion. Potentially it's going to put a lot of people in danger. If this motion does get passed, we are accountable. If anyone gets hurt in the process of getting the documents, releasing the documents, managing the documents and whatnot, anywhere in that process, I think we.... Well, maybe there isn't a legal obligation, but we are, in our hearts, accountable for that tragedy. That's my first point.

• (1345)

Also, again, the circumstance has changed. This motion will effectively open it up for staff members and a lot more people to come in physically and risk the chance of interacting and getting infected. In the House, we already have two leaders and a bunch of MPs who have tested positive and have gone through the quarantine period. We know the threat is very real. Back in July, that wasn't the situation.

I have to be honest with everyone here. I'm actually quite worried. I know my trip to Ottawa is coming up in a week and a half. I'll be in Ottawa for two weeks. Ottawa and Toronto are the high breakout cities right now in Ontario. I'm actually a lot more worried than I was back in July. The circumstance definitely has changed. We know the real risks of COVID affecting not just those on Parliament Hill but everyone involved in the process of accessing these documents.



I'm for transparency. I think Mr. Angus made a good argument as to why he sees this as an essential duty of our committee. I understand his point of view, but right now I don't think the priority, in the public's view, is to risk that many people's health and safety to look at these documents.

The other thing is that I want to repeat what my colleague Ms. Shanahan was saying, which is that there is an ongoing investigation by the commissioner. Back then, in July, when a similar motion was discussed, we didn't hear from the witnesses. We have heard from the witnesses, including the former Privacy Commissioner, and repeatedly they've said the committee is running the risk of interfering with the current investigation by running a parallel investigation. Whatever the outcome of our finding or even our discussion is, it will to some degree interfere with the opinions of the commissioner's report. I don't think that's the right thing to do. The system is set up in such a way, in my understanding, that the commissioner will do his investigation without any interference and will come out with a report, and as a committee we'll study that report. I think that's the right way to go.

I want to make a third point. Ms. Shanahan talked about the principle of having members investigating other members and their family members. In the committee I asked repeatedly whether there was any precedent of a committee or of members going to other members' family members' private information to build an argument in the public and their view on government or the leader of the government. I haven't heard that there is a precedent to that, so we are setting a precedent. This is very dangerous, because from this point on, every member and their immediate family members or their friends, because there is no clear boundary, could be on the hook. We could all be targets of the investigation.

Therefore, this is something I disagree with. I didn't have the opportunity to share my thoughts back in July, but I think in principle I can't agree with it. I would have disagreed back in July on this point. I have a lot of respect for elected members. We put our names on the ballot and we go through a very strict scrutiny process, both by the party and after we get the job, and by the electors ultimately. We bear a lot of weight on our shoulders, a lot of expectations, and our family members are affected while we're doing the job we dreamed of. I think it's wrong to have members investigating other members' family members' privacy.

• (1350)

Another point I want to make is that in July, when we talked about the original motion giving MPs access to these documents, I understand we talked about the measures put in place to safeguard privacy, but now this motion on the table would allow access for people or staff beyond members. Do we need to have a discussion about measures put in place to safeguard individuals' privacy now that we know the access is much wider?

To Madame Gaudreau's special committee motion, we potentially will have many people on Parliament Hill having access to these documents. Again, circumstances have changed quite a bit, and as I said, I didn't agree with the principle. For this particular process and the detail of this process, I see that we are running, as a committee, a great risk of being responsible for a leak, and should a leak happen, we all have to bear responsibility for it.

Ultimately, it's a worthy discussion, but there are many priorities in front of us that we should tackle right away. I heard opposition members talking about filibustering by Liberals. Trust me, I don't want filibustering, yet to my previous points, I'm still waiting to be convinced that this is the right thing to do and the absolute priority of this committee. I'm looking for good arguments to be convinced that this is the right way to go, if anyone wants my support as a member of this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1355)

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

Now we'll go to Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Thanks very much, Chair.

We're an hour into the second meeting of this committee to deal with ordering the production of these documents. This committee previously ordered them, and the Speakers' Spotlight group came back to us and said they needed more time. For all the reasons stated, such as COVID and the time it would take, the committee granted the group its request. It was an additional three weeks, so a month in total. On the eve of the deadline requested by the organization, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. He shut down Parliament to avoid accountability. It wasn't for a reset and it wasn't for COVID.

There were all kinds of things that could have been done. All the good things that Liberal members are talking about that this committee could be doing, we could have been doing for the last six weeks. Well, the sitting calendar said we would only have sat the last Monday in September. That's a choice of the government. We could have sat in this format by the will of the House. We could have done that. The committee could have decided that we would continue to meet.

That was all on the table. That all could have been done, but we're dealing with a situation, during a pandemic, where the government tried an extraordinary power grab to be able to tax and spend without parliamentary oversight or approval from March 2020 to December 2021. That was the first real volley from the government in dealing with this pandemic, but it still got support and much-needed help from opposition parties in improving the measures designed to help Canadians.

Here we are, after Parliament was prorogued—shut down—looking to resume the work that we were doing before. These documents were prepared and can be ordered. It is the right of this committee to request them. The motion states that they would be reviewed in camera. I can't speak to the integrity of any other member on this call, but I believe that members will act honourably. If all members on this call agree that they will act honourably, as will I, then there is no problem. If an issue arises, as is the case with any committee, with any dealing on Parliament Hill and with any breach, those issues are investigated and dealt with, and the appropriate rules, policies and laws that are in place are used.

All of that is a distraction. An organization paid members of the Prime Minister's family at least half a million dollars, and then the Prime Minister gave that organization an agreement to administer half a billion dollars. That is half a million for half a billion, while Canadians were worried about paying their bills and choosing whether to heat their homes or feed their families this fall. This is about accountability, and it's the obligation of all members.

The chair spoke yesterday about how committees afford the opportunity for members who aren't in cabinet to drive their agenda, and it is the responsibility of all members who aren't in cabinet to hold the executive accountable. The opposition parties have put forward measures to do that, and the government members, the Liberal members, have indicated they're likely to vote against them. That's fine. Everyone's going to speak. I believe very much that all members should have their say. It's fundamental.

What I expect to see happen is we'll get through this hour and there will be members of the Liberal Party who will have spoken at great length and will seek to talk the clock out. They will look to speak a second time or a third time. Yesterday, I and other members proposed very reasonable amendments. Half a loaf was proposed by Mr. Angus from the NDP. I was only too happy to further that proposal, a proposal that would have checked the boxes that had been laid out by the Liberal members. "Let's suspend, let's discuss." The suspension happened, then we got right back into the same talking points from the Liberal members. If you don't support the motion, vote against it, but have the courage of your convictions.

Now the Liberals do not have a majority on the committee, as was the case during the previous ethical scandals involving corruption and the Liberal government, the Prime Minister twice having been found guilty of breaking ethics laws. During the SNC-Lavalin scandal, it used majorities on committees to shut them down, but now the government doesn't have a majority. Canadians elected a majority opposition, so it's not for the government to use tricks to try to dodge accountability. You have to take your lumps. If you play silly games, you win silly prizes, and that's what the executive has done here: It played fast and loose. Now we've heard testimony that contradicts other testimony that's been provided at this committee, as well as at the finance committee.

We will get the answers. We will see these documents. It's a question of whether Liberal members of this committee are prepared not just to filibuster today, but to filibuster on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of next week, because opposition members have said that we want this information. We hold a majority on this committee. The chair will schedule meetings in accordance with the rules, I'm sure, but opposition members have other procedural tools as well. While a filibuster is a tool that members on this committee can use to avoid accountability for the government and further the cover-up, we also have the means to continue to call this committee to meet to deal with this issue. If you want to, consider the effects of unnecessary engagement, extra hours in the translation booths, extra hours for the clerk, for the technical staff who have to put these meetings on, for all of the analysts, the parliamentary staff, the legislative assistants and for all the members on this call.

• (1400)

There will be an increase in all of that, based on the length of the filibuster offered by the government. If government members want to continue to populate the speakers list and continue to offer the same points, we've heard it. You don't agree with the motion, and that's understood, but we'll have a recorded vote as soon as you've repeated the points you've already asserted, and then Canadians will have an answer. Canadians will know that Parliament still works and that democracy works. It's based on the number of votes, and that's how we're going to help repair some of the damage that has been done to our democratic institutions. That's part of our job here. We can do that and we can do that today. Members will say what members have to say, but what's important is that members also vote. I look forward to the vote.

As I said at the beginning, I don't think there are going to be any surprises. I have heard Liberal members say there are risks, and they have talked about the committee's time. However, it's the lengthy repeated speeches and the multiple meetings to deal with the same issue that would put people at risk and take up more of this committee's time.

Let's get down to business. I'm ready to vote, once members have had their say. It doesn't mean you're going to get your way, but it does mean you get to vote, so let's do that.

• (1405)

**The Chair:** Now we'll move on to Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank my other colleagues, from all political parties, who have had the opportunity to speak today about taking the floor in committee to discuss these important issues.

Before I get to the things I want to say, I must tell you, Mr. Chair, that I am always fascinated by the comments of my colleague Mr. Barrett, who accuses members who do not share his views of wasting the time of the committee and of Parliament, and of wasting resources.

I remember well, when I joined this committee...

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the member's assertion is not something I said. I was responding to comments made by his Liberal colleagues, who contended that this motion was a waste of the committee's time. I do not believe this motion is a waste of the committee's time. I believe it's in the public interest.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Mr. Barrett. It's not a point of order, but I understand that you wanted to make your point.

Mr. Fergus, please continue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I insist, I was not talking about this motion; I hope the interpretation did not reflect that. I said that some members wanted to waste the committee's time.

What is interesting is that when I joined this committee at the beginning of this Parliament, Mr. Barrett himself moved a motion after we had some great discussions about collaboration. And then Mr. Barrett took the floor. He put forward a motion that was dear to his heart and he did not yield the floor to anyone throughout that meeting. Then we finished and adjourned that meeting and reconvened for a second meeting. For much of that second meeting, he repeated the same exercise.

Again, this indicates that when he shares a point of view, he supports the motions, but when he disagrees, all of a sudden the committee is wasting its time. Then we are wasting resources and doing undemocratic things.

My opposition is based on a few very clear points. I would like to take the time to explain my point of view, Mr. Chair. You are a man whom I know well, whom I respect very much and whom I hold in very high esteem, as do all my colleagues around this virtual table.

First of all, with all due respect, I hope that in the future we will be able to organize meetings bringing all the members of the committee around the table. It is your prerogative as chair to call meetings as you see fit. I hope that you can continue to do what comes naturally and instinctively to you, which is to play a collaborative role in organizing meetings.

As you know, usually House of Commons committees rarely meet on Friday afternoons to give people an opportunity to do their work in their constituencies. In my case, since I live so close to Parliament, I don't have to travel like those who have to travel for hours by plane or car. As you know, the meetings that were postponed yesterday have been scheduled today by moving other scheduled meetings. Now we have to do this a second time. That's the life of a parliamentarian. I'm not complaining, but I hope, in a spirit of collaboration, that we can do it differently in the future.

I think it's a very important file. We need to understand where we are at this point. I remember when there was no code of ethics for MPs. That was not so long ago.

Everyone had to use common sense to behave well as an MP. However, because there were abuses, we had to take matters into our own hands. So we developed a code of ethics.

When we created this code of ethics, we also created an officer of Parliament, a third party to look into these situations.

• (1410)

Why? The reason is very simple: MPs should not investigate other MPs. It is not because we are unable to do so, but precisely because we have an interest in the outcome. We are not neutral agents, we are people who have a great interest in the outcome.

I assume that everyone here is acting in good faith. I can bet on that. However, it is well understood that there would be pressure. Some people with perhaps greater responsibilities would want us to push things very hard and see things that don't exist. They would

want us to rub salt into the wounds of others. We would not be able to come to a conclusion that Canadians could trust, one that would reflect adequate objectivity and impartiality. That's why the position of Ethics Commissioner was created.

The position of Ethics Commissioner has evolved over the past 20 years. Initially, he was an independent officer within government, but people realized that this may not be the best system. So it was proposed that it should be a broader, more independent position so that it would be that of a true agent of Parliament. I believe that Canada has one of the best systems in the world in this regard, and I'm proud of it. This officer of Parliament, in this case Mr. Mario Dion, works independently from us. He is responsible for gathering information, asking questions, making inquiries and evaluating the data he receives.

I know full well that [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

• (1415)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. We're not hearing.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** Yes.

[*English*]

We can hear you.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** As I was saying, we created this position to make sure we get the information. The role of the ethics committee was to make sure that the Ethics Commissioner had all the means and tools at his disposal to do his job.

This summer, we made a decision that I am not very supportive of. I'm telling you that sincerely. I am passionate about politics. I love politics. When I was 14, I subscribed to the House of Commons minutes, Hansard. Who does that? I think our system is important.

We made a decision that I'm not comfortable with. We said we were going to gather information. When that decision was made at the time, I told my colleagues around this table that if they wanted to do that, we could do that, but that we would have to take all the necessary steps to ensure that this information would go directly to the Ethics Commissioner, through the clerk. Unfortunately, I was not able to convince my colleagues. I insisted that we ourselves should ensure that this information was protected.

Some people around the table may have realized that they went a little too far. So arrangements have been made so that if you insist on getting this information, only members of Parliament can see it, behind closed doors, and their staff will not have access to it. Just to keep that door closed, members will not be able to bring their electronic devices with them when they need to access information in the presence of the clerk. Mr. Chair, I predict that this could have serious consequences in the future, not necessarily for us, since we may one day find ourselves on the opposition benches—which would be normal, and even healthy—but for other members of Parliament.

Once you are in government and that door is opened, you will see that it makes no sense for MPs to investigate other MPs. You may think that we should have put brakes on or set some benchmarks. I am repeating my plea to my colleagues to stop this while there is still time and let the Ethics Commissioner do his job. Otherwise, let us make sure that we put very strong safeguards in place to limit the release of these documents. I think that's fundamental.

It's like the law that governs the popular financing of politicians and political parties.

• (1420)

It's exactly the same reasoning. That's why we have a Chief Electoral Officer. We must not play with the system or play games in these matters. That would be detrimental to the system and it would not be in the public interest. We do not want to see what we see happening with our neighbours, where anything is acceptable. They have crossed the line in many areas and they are experiencing the fallout from all of this. We need to avoid that.

I think our role is to strengthen the role of the Ethics Commissioner. We can do this in a number of ways, and I would like us to do it unanimously. I sit on another committee, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which is chaired by a member of the official opposition. In the last session, that committee was chaired by a member of Parliament for whom I have a great deal of respect, much like yourself. This committee has always been able to produce unanimous reports. There is a strength behind that, especially since it deals with difficult issues. I hope that, under your chairmanship, we will succeed in doing the same thing here while always respecting standards, in a desirable and healthy context. In this way, we can do a great service to all Canadians.

As I said, and this is the common thread running through my comments, I invite you all to take a step back and see what we can do to strengthen the role of the Ethics Commissioner and see to it that he has all the tools he needs to ensure that Canadians have confidence in his work, that he can review everything, that his findings are his own and that we act accordingly. If we muddy the waters, it's going to take us in a direction that everyone will regret sooner or later.

In conclusion, I think we have demonstrated the importance of letting the commissioner do his job. Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus, Mr. Dong, Ms. Shanahan and all those who spoke before me have made the point that there are much more important things we need to focus on. We talked about the importance of contact tracing in this pandemic.

• (1425)

There is an application that you can use and that is an excellent tool. It is COVID Alert. However, we have to make sure of one thing: that we always respect the personal data of individuals. I think we have done it, but we can verify it.

Ms. Gaudreau, Mr. Angus and I have all talked about the importance of conducting a study on artificial intelligence and, more importantly, facial recognition. Software already exists, but the development of this type of product was interrupted during this crisis because everyone is wearing a mask. This gives us a small opportunity to review this issue and consult with privacy experts.

As a Black Canadian, I can tell you that this type of software has a significant margin of error.

[*English*]

It becomes 10 times more inaccurate when it is trying to identify, frankly, anyone who isn't white.

The system that has been developed for artificial intelligence of facial recognition is not good. I can't think of a single law that I've broken in my life, but it means, Mr. Speaker, that I could be flying somewhere and all of a sudden my name's going to be flagged because of this faulty software. That will affect me and anybody who looks like me. That's just not right.

We need to establish guidelines. We identified this back in February—February 19, if I recall correctly—that this was going to be one of our priority studies for our committee. We should get to that.

We should let the Ethics Commissioner do his work and we should allow ourselves to focus on the areas where we really have an appropriate role to play. To me, that is just so important.

Mr. Speaker, I would like us to get to that point. I would like us to let the person who is charged with the responsibility of examining the affairs of members to be given that responsibility. We could play a supportive role, making sure that he has all the tools and the access to the information that he needs. If he doesn't, we should invite him to our committee to let us know where he needs help, and we could provide that help.

Mr. Speaker, if we go down the route of investigating ourselves, our families, our relatives, investigating our neighbours and friends, we're going down the wrong road. Sincerely, we are going down the wrong road.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Having said that, Mr. Chair, I'll turn the floor over to you.

Thank you for giving me this time to express myself. I know you are new to this committee. I hope that you found my comments relevant and useful, and that they will help you in your deliberations leading to a decision.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Chair, I have a point of order. Could you reiterate the speaking list, please?

**The Chair:** Yes, as I have it now, Madame Shanahan, Mr. Warkentin is next, followed by Mr. Kurek, Mr. Sorbara, Madame Gaudreau, Ms. Lattanzio, Madam Shanahan, Mr. Dong and Mr. Barrett.

Thank you very much, Mr. Ferguson.

We're now on to Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Warkentin, are you available?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** It looks like he stepped away, Chair. I'm sure he'd agree to give up his slot.

**The Chair:** Okay, we'll proceed. Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and it is great to be a substitute on the ethics committee today—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'm sorry to interrupt, but the Liberals have been—I don't know—rather long-winded. Mr. Warkentin might have fallen asleep for a few minutes, but I certainly wouldn't want to rob him of his opportunity—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** I want to raise a point of order.

Unfortunately, you have been asked several times. Bring your microphone closer, speak softly and respect the interpreters. Could you please, Mr. Angus, repeat what you said.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Well, there was a point of order on a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I was just saying, in deference to Mr. Warkentin's spot in the queue, that I wouldn't want him to be robbed of his opportunity to speak because the Liberals speak so long. I'm asking if you would consider keeping him in the slot so that we get to hear from every member and not just from Liberals who are filibustering.

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

I will do what's appropriate and right in that concern. Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It is good to be back in the ethics committee, although it's unfortunate that there was a six-week delay and then another couple of weeks of organization. Certainly I, among many Canadians, was shocked and appalled when, on the day that some documents were meant to be available, the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament as a cover-up.

I've heard many constituents comment on how Liberals dare to continue on that attempt to cover up this scandal. Even yesterday, when the article came out about the happenings on this committee, a number of constituents were texting me, sending me Facebook messages and calling my office. Canadians deserve answers.

I will keep my comments very brief. The point has been made by a number of members of this committee that there is an opportunity to demonstrate where one falls on this question—whether they support it or not—and then Canadians can be the judge.

The ultimate question that needs to be asked is about trust. A number of my colleagues from across the way have mentioned how important it is to focus on COVID. I agree. In many instances, a lot of collaboration has taken place. However, it is very unfortunate that the actions of the Liberal government have taken away the credibility that it has able to operate with, to the point where I hear many constituents asking how can they trust anything the government says. This is an issue of trust, and it is especially relevant at a time when Canadians are faced with the devastating consequences of a pandemic that the world hasn't likely seen in over a century.

Canadians need to be able to trust their government. This is one small step, with appropriate measures in place to ensure that if members are unable to attend in person, they are not deprived of the ability to still do their job. Canadians deserve to be able to trust their government, and this is but a small step that could be taken in that regard.

I have taken fairly extensive notes about a number of the comments my colleagues have made.

Mr. Ferguson, like you, I subscribed to Hansard when I was an early teenager. In fact, I remember a moment when I got in trouble for watching question period during class when I was in grade 7 or 8. Now I get the honour of being on the chamber floor during that time. It certainly is just that, and emphasizes how important the job is that we all do here.

I would conclude my comments by saying let's vote. Let Canadians decide. We have the motion before us. I would certainly ask all members, if there is a willingness to cede time, to go forward to the vote and then let Canadians be the judge. You can vote one way or the other. I would encourage the question to be called so that we can move on with the important business that the members opposite and all members of this committee know is at hand.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I cede my time.

● (1435)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Kurek.

I think you've seen in these two days that I'm a chair who hesitates to comment, because my job is really to referee the committee and make sure your voices are heard. With those last two comments, I can't help but make the observation that I thought it was only Speaker Milliken who got the procedure and House rules for his birthday. Obviously, I'm the outlier. Many people have been subscribers to Hansard and have received these books as gifts. Now I'm going to have to go back and do a lot more study. I had no idea you are all my senior.

We will now go to Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):**  
Thank you, Chair.

It's great to see everyone this afternoon and to be with you all. Happy Friday. Obviously we're here to do the good work that the residents of our individual ridings have sent us here to do, and with that we continue.

I would like to add to Mr. Fergus's and Mr. Kurek's comments about our passion for—I don't want to call it politics; I think it's our passion for public service and serving Canadians, and trying to make this country an even better place than it is, which is very hard to do. We must continue to do that. We do live in a blessed country.

I remember the first time I visited Ottawa. For those of you who don't know this, I grew up in northern British Columbia in a small town, Prince Rupert. I went to Ottawa in grade 12 through the Adventure in Citizenship program, sponsored by Rotary. I believe it was 1989, during the Mulroney years. At that time, I sat in the House of Commons and was able to listen to many ministers. It was a wonderful experience, and it inspired me to become even more involved in public life and to volunteer in my community and do the many things that we young political wonks and geeks want to do.

To get back to today, it's obviously great to be here with everyone. I just want to spend a few moments talking about COVID-19. It's here in the province of Ontario. The pandemic has obviously and unfortunately reared its head again, and there are issues with regard to privacy, which, to my understanding, go under the umbrella of this committee and obviously under the umbrella of the motion we're debating today about individuals' privacy, which is very important.

The Premier of Ontario came out today to make some pronouncements that Ottawa, Toronto and Peel will unfortunately go back to stage two for the next three or four weeks. We always need to remember that these decisions are not easy ones to make, because they impact the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of people, including small business owners, parents—you name it. It's unfortunate that we had to go back this way, but the second wave is here, and we need to make people's health and safety a paramount concern and really emphasize that paramount concern.

When it comes to the privacy of Canadians, I want to flag an article I read by an individual named Thomas Daigle. I want to give him credit for this. It's entitled "Misconceptions persist about effectiveness and privacy of Canada's COVID Alert app". It ties into the motion about protecting people's privacy, and we need to always reference that.

According to the article, our government's COVID Alert app "has received positive reviews from privacy advocates, but myths persist about the data it collects". Experts stress that the more people who use it, the more effective it will be. The article notes, "The COVID Alert app is meant to notify users when they've spent time in close proximity to another user who's reported a positive coronavirus test result."

It goes on to say, "After closing his Barrie, Ont., café for the day recently, René Segura checked his smartphone and saw a reassuring message. 'No exposure detected,' the screen read." Like nearly three million, and growing, other Canadians—I think the number is actually four million now—"Segura downloaded the COVID Alert app on the understanding it would notify him if he spent time in close contact with a known coronavirus carrier."

This app was launched by the federal government on July 31, and so far it is not in universal use in all provinces. However, I believe that B.C. and Alberta are the two outliers, although I stand to be corrected. I think *la belle province* also recently adopted it, so I think there are two remaining provinces.

The article continues:

...the app is designed to warn users if they've spent at least 15 minutes in the past two weeks within two metres of another user who later tested positive for the coronavirus.

Having survived a near-death encounter with COVID-19, Segura has extra incentive to use the app.

"I still have my guard up," Segura said. "I don't want to go through the same episode again."

The app, which works on later-model Apple and Android devices, has received positive reviews from privacy advocates

—again, something that our committee needs to be galvanized by—

● (1440)

but myths persist about the data it collects—and doesn't collect.

Experts in both technology and public health stress that the more people who use it, the better it will be. However, they say it doesn't need to be adopted by a majority of the population for it to have a positive impact.

The article goes on:

Using the app does not lessen requirements for public health measures like physical distancing, handwashing and wearing a mask. It's also not meant to replace manual contact tracing—where teams reach out to anyone who's been put at risk of exposure.

So far, there are few ways to measure whether it has been effective, but that appears to be the price for the software's built-in privacy measures.

Many people have indicated on social media that they got an alert from the app and got tested.

When a user of the app is diagnosed...they're given a one-time code to input, which then alerts others with whom the patient has been in close contact recently. The feature is built on a framework jointly developed by Apple and Google.

The COVID Alert app is so far only functional in six provinces—I believe now it's seven or eight—but the federal government is hopeful that all provinces will use this app.

To ensure better privacy, the data is stored on the individual devices, not on a central server. The drawback is there's no way of knowing how many users have received an exposure notification.

What's more, a user isn't told when, where or with whom any potential exposure occurred, so it's impossible to determine whether it's a real threat or the result of a glitch. The alert would direct the—

• (1445)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Mr. Angus has been speaking for several minutes without having turned on his audio channel.

Thank you on behalf of the interpreters.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I apologize, Ms. Gaudreau. I recognize that there is a problem.

[*English*]

I do have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I know that Mr. Sorbara is new here. I know that the Liberals are doing lots of stuff to obstruct our work, but my understanding of this committee is that people have to be speaking to the matter at hand. I'm glad my colleague knows about an app for COVID, but we're not discussing an app. It seems to me that this is not what the issue is.

If we're going to have filibusters, people have to speak to the point, which is about the documents. It's about the WE organization paying the key members of the Trudeau family. It's about whether or not what was in those payments formed attempted influence on the Prime Minister in the awarding of a contract between \$500 million and \$900 million.

I just ask my colleagues to respect our time and respect this committee, and I'll ask Mr. Sorbara to read his notes about what this debate is about and stick to the issues at hand.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, there were two points there.

Madam Gaudreau, was there some issue in regard to audio that you are dealing with? Okay, that's all good.

Colleagues, as chair, I try to give lots of latitude, but to Mr. Angus' point, we are dealing with one specific motion. If you could keep your comments as contained to that motion as possible, it would be to the benefit of all colleagues on this committee. Thank you.

You can go ahead again, Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Sorry about that. It seems as if I have a million documents.

As the motion does relate to individuals' privacy here in Canada....

Perhaps I will just take a step back. I think about this ethics committee. I know we received a backgrounder from the Library of Parliament, "Prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics". With regard to the committee's mandate, it reads as follows:

Under Standing Order 108(3)(h), the Committee's mandate is to study matters related to the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Office of the Lobbying Commissioner and the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, pursuant to the Conflict of Interest Act (matters related to the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons are studied by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs).

My understanding of the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is that it undertakes various studies. Obviously I, like every other Canadian, every other member of Parliament, wish to receive the documents and the findings that the Ethics Commissioner will put forth, and that's fair enough.

I am slightly concerned in terms of the motion's direction for this committee. We had on October 8, 2020, which I believe was yesterday—and I know that tomorrow is my 11th anniversary, so I do need to go shopping sometime today, so please let's not go on until midnight—the "Commissioner's annual report: Pandemic raises privacy concerns highlighting urgency of law reform: Public health crisis has pushed daily activities online, underscoring critical need for change".

As a member of Parliament, as someone who has the privilege to represent the wonderful residents of this riding, and as a first-time member of the ethics committee, when I look at this report, which I briefly perused last night, and some of the messages, including the commissioner's message and so forth, I see that this committee has a lot of work to do. We could do a lot of good work for Canadians in this digital age we're in, with how we've all transitioned as members of Parliament, looking at going from the physical life that we had in Ottawa, which I will admit I miss—it was nice to be back for two weeks—and also the work that we need to do now to protect individuals' privacy. With regard to Mr. Barrett's motion that is in front of us—and I also have Marie-Hélène Gaudreau's motion, so thank you for porting that along, as well—I think we have a lot of work to do.

I think the important work that needs to be done for Canadians is not on this motion. I think the motion that Member of Parliament Barrett put forward is, frankly, nothing more than.... As someone who grew up on the north coast and had many friends whose parents had fishing boats or were seiners, gillnetters or trollers, or who worked at a fish cannery, I think this is nothing more than what I would call a "fishing expedition" in the absolute sense, and nothing more than a waste of...I don't want to say the committee's time, but a waste of our time.

When I say it's a waste of time for members of Parliament, we have very important issues in front of us. We have very important issues we need to deal with, with regard to Canadians and how they participate in the society we are in and how their privacy is protected. I think that should be the nature of the committee.

This motion, to me, is nothing more than a fishing expedition by the opposition, and frankly, in a time when our economy is recovering—again, 370,000 jobs were created in the month of September—we know we have a grind in front of us. We know that a number of programs were introduced today that will benefit a number of our stakeholders, a number of our businesses, whether it's the expansion of the CEBA or the CECRA, or the new rental assistance program. Going back to this motion, to me, it is going after people in an invasion of privacy and so forth.

As I was quoted in, I believe, the iPolitics article that came out over night, and I read.... You get these Google alerts when your name gets mentioned in the press, and your blood pressure always goes up a few notches. You think, “Oh, what did I do here?” or “Did I do well?” I saw that, and I go back to it. I think this is something that the committee is veering to that does not lend itself well to what we should be doing and what our focus should be during this most extraordinary and unique time in not only our country's history but the world's history, and here we are, focusing on something that....

• (1450)

I've heard MP Angus comment about the size of the program that was supposedly introduced. It wasn't \$900 million. It was far from that. It was a much smaller program. Nonetheless, the program was not enacted. We did help students from coast to coast through the Canada emergency student benefit. I think approximately 706,000 or 703,000 students were assisted. So we are here helping Canadians.

I think the committee in its wisdom.... We are the masters of our domain. We move this ship to where we want to move it to, and we put the anchor down in whichever study we wish to embark on. In reading the report yesterday from the Privacy Commissioner, which I have here, I think Canada as a country has work to do. When I see this beautiful infographic, “Privacy Protection: Canada and its trading partners”, I think we have some really good work to do in looking at privacy. I think that should be the direction of the committee.

With regard to the motion at hand, Mr. Barrett, and please correct me if I'm wrong, my understanding is that the motion does change the motion that was in place in July. I just keep wondering why that change—I really do. That concerns me, and also the nature of the motion that was brought forth, going after the Prime Minister and his family.

I'll be honest with you. My constituents...the residents' feedback I got was that they weren't terribly impressed with the direction the opposition was going in. They weren't terribly impressed at all. They were worried about their kids going back to school. They were worried about their businesses surviving. That's what they were worried about. They were ensuring that their kids got safely back into school. We've seen changes this week with some of the school boards, the Peel school board, the York Region Catholic school board. That's what they're concerned about. I wonder sometimes about the direction and the philosophy in terms of where the opposition party wants to go with these types of motions.

Chair, I'll stop there. I believe there are others on the list who wish to speak. If I need to come back and raise my hand again, I'll use that privilege we have as members of Parliament.

Again, it is great to see everybody. It is true, yes: I do celebrate my 11th wedding anniversary tomorrow morning, and if this committee goes all night and I get in trouble, I know whom to blame.

Anyway, I'll leave it at that and let the next—

• (1455)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Justin Trudeau.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** No, we will definitely not blame the Prime Minister. In fact, I'm very happy with the Prime Minister's announcement today. I know that the businesses in my riding, and the citizens of my riding, will be very happy to see that the 13,000 SMEs that exist in the city of Vaughan, the approximately 4,000 businesses that I have in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, will again.... As we said in our throne speech, we have citizens' backs, whether they're businesses or employees. We have the backs of all Canadians.

Actually, I do want to add something before I stop. I do want to address the comment that MP Barrett made about blaming the Prime Minister.

I view life in terms of taking responsibility and being held accountable. We're all accountable for our actions. And the Prime Minister, like all of us, is. If I made an error, my parents taught me an expression in my dialect, *cercio scusa*, which means you own up to what you did and you move forward and you learn from it. That's a lesson that I try to teach my kids. I think it's a lesson that I try to live up to myself, whether as a member of Parliament or in what I did for some 20-odd years working in the private sector in New York City and Toronto, and a little bit in London, England, which I was blessed to do.

I think learning those types of lessons.... MP Barrett, you know that. Also talking about blaming the leader.... I'm just pulling up here the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's “Kusie Report 2018”, from Mario Dion. There are, I guess, about 15 pages here that I would think about looking at. I'd just say that the Ethics Commissioner does provide information in the executive summary, and this pertains to this committee.

Let me just restate it. This is the “Kusie Report 2018”, submitted to members of Parliament in December 2018 by Mario Dion, Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I'll just go to the executive summary, because that tends to be the Coles Notes version.

This report presents the findings of my inquiry under the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons into the conduct of Mrs. Stephanie Kusie, Member of Parliament for Calgary Midnapore, in connection with public comments concerning a request for an inquiry about another Member of Parliament that she made to my Office.

On March 29, 2018, I received a letter from Mrs. Kusie asking me to conduct an inquiry into the conduct of Mr. Raj Grewal, Member of Parliament for Brampton East. That same day, I learned that an article—

**Mr. Han Dong:** Sorry, MP Sorbara, could you slow down so the interpreter can do her job?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Yes.

I will summarize it quickly.

[Translation]

I apologize to the interpreter. I speak a little French, but not very well.

[English]

I'll just switch to French.

[Translation]

I want to say good afternoon to all the interpreters who are helping our committee today.



I am very pleased that we are working together for all Canadians who are listening and watching this meeting.

[English]

Chair, I would like to move an amendment to Mr. Barrett's motion, if possible.

I'll stop on the French and go back.

I'll return to the report:

The evidence showed that the Office of the Leader of the Opposition encouraged Mrs. Kusie, a recently elected Member, to post about her request on social media once it had been made public. In commenting publicly on her request for an inquiry in contravention of subsection 27(2.1) of the Code, Mrs. Kusie was acting on advice that she received from staff at the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and her non-compliance was an error in judgment made in good faith. I therefore recommended that no sanction be imposed.

To me, there is the notion that we, as members of Parliament, want to act in good faith. We want to do what's right for our constituents, but at the same time we need to be accountable. I believe in that accountability. I don't believe in fishing expeditions to look at someone's private matters, especially when they are, frankly—if I can be so blunt—really none of our business.

This does not pertain directly to any member of Parliament, because I do believe that what members of Parliament do is our business, but going after their families is not. That's fundamentally wrong. That's fundamentally against the values I was raised with and raised on. If anything untoward has been done, there are various agencies in Canada we can all turn to for an investigation to be done, and that's normal, par for the course. In terms of us, as politicians, acting in a very blatant, and I would say irresponsible, manner.... Again, this is my view of the motion that has been put forward. To me, this is something done in a very irresponsible manner.

I look at the report put forward by Mr. Dion. I do believe Mr. Dion is a very honourable person, and he is conducting his investigation, which is ongoing. We look forward to all findings of officers of Parliament. Again, I do believe in accountability and transparency. I just don't believe in fishing expeditions just to do fishing expeditions.

I'm going to continue for another couple of minutes with some ideas that popped into my head, going back to the idea of privacy, Chair and fellow colleagues who have the privilege of sitting on this committee.

• (1500)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Are the interpreters and clerk ready?

I move that Mr. Andrew Scheer, MP for Regina—Qu'Appelle, be ordered to provide all documents, including emails and text messages related to the advice that his then office, the office of the leader of the official opposition, provided to Mrs. Stephanie Kusie, MP for Calgary Midnapore, when she was advised by his office to contravene section 27(2.1) of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, as outlined in the “Kusie Report” published by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commission-

er; and that these documents be provided to the committee within 10 calendar days.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Barrett. I was going to rule on that, but go ahead.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I'm looking for a ruling from the chair on the admissibility of that motion. I expect that if you confer with the clerk and with the rules of this place, you will find that the amendment is not in order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Barrett, I am fortunate to have one of the best clerks on Parliament Hill. Her history goes way back, so I greatly appreciate that. There is no need for me to confer with the clerk on this one. This is quite easy.

It is not germane to the original motion at all. It is not coherent to it, so it's not admissible as an amendment. The amendment has to have something to do with the subject at hand. In this case it does not.

We will continue with the debate on the initial motion.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Do I have the floor again, Chair?

**The Chair:** We need to move on to another speaker. I was expecting that your comments were done. That's why you moved the amendment.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I do respect the chair's decision and obviously will not challenge it.

It's now 3:04, and I'm not finished speaking. I do have some further remarks on Mr. Barrett's motion.

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

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Angus, what's your point of order?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** It's my understanding that, if a member takes up their time and then introduces a motion at the end of their speaking, even if the motion they introduce is ridiculous and completely out of order, that does represent the end of their speaking. They don't then get to say they want to start all over again and talk about everything else.

He brought a motion. It was rejected. That means his turn of speaking is finished and we should now move on so we can at least, if we're going to be here for hours and hours and hours, maintain a modicum of professionalism here. Chair, you're doing an excellent job; you're very patient. I would ask my colleagues to remember how this place is supposed to run.

• (1505)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You're right, Mr. Angus.

Thank you, Mr. Sorbara.

Ms. Gaudreau now has the floor.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Good afternoon.

It's hard to intervene after everything we've heard. I'm going to do it anyway according to my convictions.

You were talking about three points.

The first one I'll talk about is what I heard. The second will be on the motion. As for the third, you'll see. In any case, I think we're going to sleep here. There are some good skaters here. I just want you to know that I've taken part in figure skating competitions. So I'm ready to follow you.

Let me tell you about a few things. Actually, I am deeply embarrassed about us. I am very pleased to be here and to be a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

My children are on holiday, and yours probably are too. They asked me if they could find out what I was doing. I told them "why not" and that they would hear all my colleagues speak. Everyone is coming together and trying to save, secure and help our fellow citizens. I asked them to tell me what they thought after watching the session. They asked me if I was going to speak. I told them we have to give everyone time to speak. They asked me why this was happening again, why we were changing the subject and why we had to finish at 3:00 o'clock. They wrote to me and asked me why it kept happening.

I'm embarrassed. You're going to tell me it works this way and that's how we do things in this federation. However, this does not prevent me from remembering what the Speaker of the House told us. Yes, I will say it again. This is my first experience and it is important for me to express this.

I've been listening to you for an hour and 10 minutes. The Speaker told members of the House of Commons that our children were watching us. Right now there are some who are watching us and wondering where we are going. Some are asking us if this is a joke. They tell us to get to the point, to vote, to discuss things and to be ethical.

We are in a committee that focuses on ethics. What is ethics? Go and read up on it. In any case, I know that you know. Ethics is what's right. What is right? What is right is good judgment, that is, the way we should act in this society.

I'd like to talk to you for half an hour, because I've got a lot on my mind. I respect you. I'm one of those who have been watching you from the beginning without closing the camera and without leaving the meeting. So I hope nothing serious has happened to Mr. Warkentin. I was really worried when it was his turn.

I'm very embarrassed because we're on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I'm trying to understand what each of us is caught up in. Are we elected by a party, by citizens? Anyway, that's really my Friday question and I hope that when we get back, it will come back into the discussion. It felt good to share it with you.

New members of the committee will find that I always raise small questions like this, because that's the very basis of why we're here.

On another occasion we were talking about investigations and wondering if we were going to start investigating everyone. We're not talking about a dollar and you know it. When I arrived in Parliament, I was extremely surprised to see how much information I had to provide. If I received a little privilege over \$200, I had to de-

clare it. It was perfect. I was comfortable providing information about my family as well. You know, for people in the business world or those who manage budgets, there is often an ethical, reasonable and acceptable margin. We're not talking about a dollar or \$200 here. We're talking about numbers with a lot of zeros.

I want to ask you the following question. You can't answer me, so think about it. From an ethical perspective, wouldn't it be normal that people who are suffering, who are short of money, who are dying and who are worried, are wondering at the same time what the government is doing?

• (1510)

The government is taking measures to save our lives, and what's the level of confidence? People told me all summer long that they needed more confidence in us. It's quite worrying. Let me go back to the premise of our first meeting. I proposed that we could finish what we started. I was ready to continue in August, and then, suddenly, I found out what a prorogation was. Well! We'll keep going, won't we? I'm also learning.

That said, some things have progressed. We must look after our constituents. To do so, as you all said, we must focus on privacy and facial recognition, and then review all potential conflicts with a view to preventing them. When we change governments, it will be the same old story. Can we finish this together? Think about the other committees that your colleagues sit on. The smiles are much more plentiful than they are here. I have the impression that we're bored, and that makes me sad. We have great things to accomplish together. I'm holding back.

Regarding the data breaches, the commissioner did indeed tell us about the issue. I encourage the new members to reread his comments. He said that the data of most Canadians and Quebecers is freely available. You know this. Anything can be done with your telephone number, your address and your date of birth. Go on the Internet if you didn't know this. No matter what's kept and what isn't kept, everything is open. We've been told this. We must urgently carry out the work that we're supposed to do. I told you this yesterday and I'll say it again. I'll then wrap things up, because I won't be speaking for 32 minutes, but for six or seven minutes.

I want to talk about conflict of interest again. We must look at the policies in place. We must identify everything wrong and address it. My second motion was tabled and ruled in order. The next motion concerns a study and recommendations regarding the powers of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We keep talking about the commissioner, so let's do this study. Let's get it done!

The following motion simply concerns privacy. We have a long way to go on this issue. When I speak to our colleagues who were here before us, they ask me why nothing has come to fruition yet. I don't know. Elections are called, Parliament is prorogued, and so on. The work is waiting for us, so let's do it.

For the sake of the cause, I want us to finish up today by addressing a topic that we've discussed extensively, which is the request to shed light on the current situation. Not much has changed. Suffice it to say that we'll go all the way. If it turns out that there was nothing to hide, so much the better, confidence will be restored. To do so, we should create a special committee to look at ethics issues. That way, we can shed light on the issues that still require clarification. We were just about to complete our work. This was my third point.

I'm ready to vote on the motion. However, I noticed a typo, Mr. Chair and Madam Clerk. In French, the motion should read "24 heures," so the word "heures" is missing. I'm ready to vote, but I'm also ready to take a 10-minute break for a bite to eat and to then stay here until midnight. I appeal to your conscience. I know that all the recommendations are in place. We could take a few minutes to get back on track and then decide to stay until a certain time. We could stop at 6 p.m. or, on the contrary, leave at 3:30 p.m. with our things and come back with a real open mind, to show that we can work together across party lines. I implore you.

• (1515)

Thank you. That felt good.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Gaudreau.

Now we move on to Ms. Lattanzio.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a few preliminary observations in terms of procedures. I'm going to elaborate more on procedures, because this is the theme that caught my attention yesterday, with the various speakers and the motion we have before us.

For the life of me, I don't understand how we're giving precedence to this motion. I was present at the committee yesterday, and there were other motions to be considered. All of a sudden we called a quasi-important emergency meeting in less than 24 hours to discuss this motion, only because we weren't done with the motion of yesterday. These are my preliminary observations.

The second observation is the fact that we deferred Madame Gaudreau's motion. What is more striking to me is that.... I had the opportunity, being a new member, to finally sit down and look at this motion last night. I wanted to look at the details as to what the considerations were of bringing forward her motion. I glanced at it very quickly yesterday when we took the decision to defer, because there was a lot mentioned in that motion. I understand why my colleagues also were of the opinion that we needed to defer that particular motion.

I want to draw your attention, and the attention of my fellow colleagues, to paragraph 11 of that motion. I'm going to take the time to read it, because I think it's important. The motion has to do with setting up a special committee that would look into issues that were discussed in the previous mandate.

She requests:

That the committee continue all of the business of the following committees: the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics; the Standing Committee on Finance; the Standing Committee on Official Languages....

—by the way, I sit on that committee, and we're sitting next Tuesday—

...and the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates; and that the documents and evidence received by each of these committees be deemed to have been received by the said committee, including the documents provided on August 18 to the members of the Standing Committee on Finance....

Basically, my understanding is that she anticipates we are going to be requesting documents from each and every one of these individual committees, and then that these documents or evidence, or whatever documents or information we're going to get from these committees, will be given to the new committee that's going to be created. Interestingly enough, Conservative members yesterday decided to defer this motion, along with the Liberal members.

Then my colleague MP Barrett presented his motion. I read his motion again very carefully, too. I understand it differs from the motion that had been passed at this committee, of which I was not a member, and it is brought up again today. There seems to be an urgency to do this: why, I still don't understand, but we're pressing on this. When we say Liberal members are taking up time and we're discussing this.... To quote my colleague Mr. Barrett in the House this week, all members should get to speak, because it is an important pillar of democracy. We agree, colleague. We all need to speak.

I'm a new member on this committee. I think I'm more than entitled to look at documents, study documents, and if I have a point of view that differs from his or from any other colleague's, I should be given the opportunity to speak and to express that. It may not be one that he agrees with, but to be accused of speaking for the sake of filibustering.... Well, my response to him is this. He seems to want to be pushing this down our throats, plead that there is an urgency, when he also says, "You can filibuster all you want up until next week at all the meetings." There is a statement being made here that this very same motion, or at least the request for documents or the pursuit of this, is going to continue in the next week's meetings.

• (1520)

I would like to submit the following supposition to my colleagues here today. If the same motion will be presented in each of the meetings that we'll have next week, including the language committee, as per Madame Gaudreau's motion, then why are we presenting the exact same request in all of these committees? What is the point of doing that?

We have a PROC committee that deals with House affairs, which can very simply deal with this request and the forthcoming requests that are going to be coming out next week. Why are we wasting the time of this committee, and possibly all other committees, on this repeated request, when it could be done by one committee that does just that? Why are we not having leaders of every party discuss this issue, come to some sort of an agreement and establish this new standing committee that will be able to look at this carefully and request all the necessary documents, rather than bring this to every committee?

If the motions or requests are not going to be the exact same requests.... By the way, I just want to make a little parenthesis: What if every committee that submitted this request comes out with different results, where there are amendments that are agreed to? Which one will we accept when we create this new standing committee: the motion that will have been passed at the ethics committee, or the motion that will have been passed at the languages committee, or the motion that will—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** On a point of order, Chair, just for the member's information, my statement was that this committee could meet every day next week and continue to debate this very same motion, and not that it would be presented at multiple committees. That wasn't my statement or intention.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Mr. Chair, I'm speaking to Madame Gaudreau's paragraph 11, and I invite my colleague Barrett to read it, because there's a premise here that we're going to be asking that all business continue in the following committees, and she enumerates which ones they are.

To quote my colleague, he said we can filibuster all we want and we can be here until next week and we can bring this up at all the meetings.

I'm sorry—he's gesturing and I don't understand.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I mean all the meetings of this committee.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Okay, yes. We can do this all next week or the week after, but I was referring to Madame Gaudreau's paragraph number 11 and basically questioning how you, colleague, decided to defer her motion and basically continue with your motion.

If we were—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** The committee decided that.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** No, I'm sorry; I mean voted—how you voted, how I voted and how everybody else voted.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** On a point of order, Chair, could we stop the back-and-forth?

**The Chair:** I always like to give a little bit of latitude. I was trying to be a little patient and have one or two comments, but you're right, Madame Shanahan. We should have one speaker at a time. If we're going to have a conversation, we can always suspend and have an individual conversation together.

Go ahead, Ms. Lattanzio.

• (1525)

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Basically, if we bring this to all committee meetings, we could potentially have a different outcome at each committee, and then which one do we decide on, and what do we submit to the standing committee? To me, it would be nonsense. If we say that we're going to come out with different requests at different committee meetings that are circulating the same theme, then what would be the point of doing so?

I'm not sure I understand the way we're proceeding. I think it would be best that all of this be brought before PROC. I do invite respective parties to have their leaders engage in a conversation, maybe even a Zoom call, to be able to evacuate all of these questions and come to some sort of an agreement. It's not because we don't want to vote. We do want to vote, but I think it's incumbent on

all of us to be able to put up our ideas, our preoccupations, for consideration.

My second preoccupation is the issue of privacy. The former committee decided on certain terms and conditions, and now we have it before us again. I'd like to emphasize that I, too, believe that this is a matter of trust, and it's about trusting our Ethics Commissioner. Therein lies the idea of trust. Do we trust our Ethics Commissioner, or do we not? This is the individual who has the task of delving into the very questions that were submitted to him. He will have access to all information and documents that will be able to give him the opportunity to render his decision. If he doesn't have the documents, there's nothing that impedes him from requesting them.

It is not via this committee that we ensure that his work is done. It is not via this committee, amongst colleagues, that we judge our colleagues, or even worse yet, that we lay burdens or we dictate what we want from members or elected officials. This is not part of our mandate.

I looked at the mandate. I requested the mandate and I looked at what the mandate of this committee is. There's nothing in that mandate that indicates to me that we have the power to go into that venue.

Now if something has been deemed receivable or voted on—

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This aspect of the argument was dealt with extensively in the last session of Parliament. It is clear in the last sentence of the mandate of this committee that the committee has the ability to propose initiatives that relate to access to information and privacy, and to ethical standards relating to public office holders.

That's just to clarify for the member. I know she is a new member of this committee, and ironically I'm no longer a regular member of this committee, but certainly this was dealt with extensively in the previous session. I wanted for information's sake to clarify for the member the mandate.

**The Chair:** Is this on the same point, Mr. Fergus?

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Yes, it is on the same point, Mr. Chair.

Just to add further clarification, Mr. Kurek will remember when we had the head legal counsel in to speak to us. He made clear in his testimony that there's a larger grab bag than what's in that last part of our mandate, but it does not extend to anything the committee wants to do, in fact. There are many limitations, just to add clarification to what Mr. Kurek said.

I don't want Canadians or other members to have the impression that this is a grab bag or grab-all, an "anything goes" type of clause; that isn't the case at all. We had that testimony from no less an authority than the fellow who makes sure that the legal advice that all committees have is consistent.

• (1530)

**The Chair:** Thank you, colleagues.

I'm very patient in this regard, but points of order are for procedure. I understand that we all are bubbling over to give information to our colleagues to make sure they get things right, but let's try to keep our points to procedure and not to points of debate on information.

Madame Lattanzio.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to see that my intervention is stimulating discussion among our peers. I understand and deduce from this that the motion today merits the time it takes to consider the serious repercussions of adopting such a motion.

My preliminary feeling, when this meeting was called this morning, was that we want to ram this through, that it doesn't matter what we think and we are going to vote on this. It doesn't matter what Ms. Lattanzio may or may not think; we are going to vote. If we do not go to a vote today and we stay here later, so be it. If we need to come back next week and keep discussing it, we will.

As I mentioned yesterday, this is not, I would say, a serious breach, but it is a serious consideration that we need to look at. It's a motion whereby we're asking for documents from individuals who are related to an elected official. We're dodging the individual who has the responsibility to do this type of work. Not only that, my understanding is that we will continue to hammer on this issue: It doesn't matter, as long as we get to a vote on this.

Colleagues have made interventions about other motions that could be decided at this particular committee, but they are being sidelined for a question that could be easily considered outside of this committee. We are talking about this going forward and are persisting, regardless of the seriousness of what's being presented and without the opportunity to perhaps get legal opinions as to whether we can even go down this avenue. There's nothing else: We're just going to a vote whether we like it or not, and if we're not ready to vote, well, we'll just keep going.

These reasons and the reasons I mentioned before with regard to bringing up, at various committees, the same issue again and again—and Madame Gaudreau's motion clearly had that intent, with paragraph 11—lead me to conclude that this is where the focus is. The focus is on the Conservatives' pushing an issue through regardless...that we think things through or consider the repercussions of what we are being asked to consider in this motion.

We want to interject and we want to intervene, so, Mr. Chair, through you I ask this: What is the basis for having this motion, the urgency of this motion, and why are we submitting it in this committee if the intent is to present it in other committees?

• (1535)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lattanzio.

We've gone through one rotation of every member on the committee, excluding Mr. Warkentin, who has not appeared again on the screen. It is 3:30, so I am going to offer committee members the opportunity to consider the question. If you don't want to, that's fine, but I think at this time I should offer whether members want to consider the question now or continue on.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Madame Shanahan.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I would like to raise a point of order about something that has been concerning us from the beginning of this meeting and, indeed, since this meeting was called.

The notice for this meeting went out today at 9:32 a.m. for a meeting at 1 p.m. This means that members have had to rearrange their schedules to participate today. In explaining why the committee is meeting today, you as the chair indicated that you hoped to get Mr. Barrett's motion disposed of.

In addition to Mr. Barrett's motion, there are a number of other motions before the committee at this time. With all respect, and as vice-chair, I feel it is my role to point this out.

Do you as chair get to decide which motions are more important than others? Do you as a chair have the right to call last-minute meetings based on motions that you have decided are more important than other motions? Should this not be a decision of the committee?

It is the chair's role to be the servant of the committee, and one that you have been serving ably, but on this one issue I beg to differ. I do not believe it's the role of the chair to pick favourite motions and schedule last-minute meetings that cause everyone to scramble and change their schedules to attend, and I would suggest that doing so is not appropriate.

I'd like to point to a statement from Speaker Lucien Lamoureux from March 3, 1967, which cited citation 303(3) of Beauchesne's fourth edition, which reads as follows:

Committees should be regularly adjourned from day to day, though the Chairman is frequently allowed to arrange the day and hour of sitting, but this can be done only with the general consent of the committee.

The key words here are “can be done only with the general consent of the committee”. As the vice-chair on the Liberal side, I was not consulted on the timing of today's meeting, and I believe that proper procedure was not followed in calling this meeting.

I would like the chair to comment on this.

**The Chair:** I'll be glad to comment on it, Madame Shanahan. Thank you very much for your intervention.

We were dealing with the debate on the motion yesterday. There was a call for an adjournment of the meeting, and it was specifically stated that it was not an adjournment on the motion.

We're moving to a time when the House is going to rise for a Thanksgiving break. I felt it was the will of the committee—and certainly, we can put this to a vote, if you want—to continue the debate on this motion, as many members in the committee felt that it was of very significant importance, considering that the motion in the past session, which was very similar to the spirit of this motion, had already been passed by this committee.

That was the basis of my decision and ruling in that regard, and that's why we're continuing this debate now.

Whenever we deal with the disposition of this motion, either for or against, we'll definitely move on to other motions that the committee wants to consider, whether that be just a motion for a recommendation to the House or for a full-blown study where we would call witnesses. I'm certainly open to serving the committee in that regard.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

I would ask that we continue with the speakers list. I believe I'm next.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I did not get an indication, but I assume that in that regard there's at least one member, Madame Shanahan, who is not prepared to deal with the question.

We'll move, then, to Madame Shanahan.

• (1540)

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

I would move that the committee do now adjourn.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** I'd like a recorded vote, please, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I will move to the clerk now, who will do the recorded vote.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, the vote is five to five.

**The Chair:** That being said, the chair's normal response to business at hand is to continue the status quo.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We'll now move to Mr. Dong.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** On a point or order, Chair, may we have a 10-minute suspension for all members?

**The Chair:** I think that would probably be appropriate, for nature and other such things. Let's suspend for 10 minutes, and we'll get back.

Mr. Dong, you'll be first on the speakers list.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Mr. Chair, will we return at 3:52?

**The Chair:** That is correct. It's 3:42 now, so we'll reconvene at 3:52.

Thank you, Mr. Fergus, for that specificity.

• (1540)

(Pause)

• (1555)

**The Chair:** We'll go back to the speakers list and Mr. Dong.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I listened to all the members during the first round. I really appreciate the opportunity to be on this committee and the in-depth talks. I listened carefully to Madame Gaudreau's very passionate remarks. I just hope that, however this debate ends, it won't lessen my

respect for any of the members of this committee, and I hope that's mutual. We all have a job to do; we've been elected to do that.

I can't agree with some of the points I heard earlier, especially from Conservative members talking about the government's interest in grabbing power and whatnot. It was Conservative MPs who came out right after the throne speech was presented and indicated they would not vote for it, without taking the time to really study it and see how it would impact their constituents' lives, and on a grander scale, Canadian citizens' lives. You talk about grabbing power.

I accept the reality that, although we've formed a government, it's a minority government. I accept that reality. I hope my points are being addressed in this process, but I'm still looking for answers to my earlier concerns, such as the safety for individuals to produce these documents, now that we know they're not in the committee's possession.

I also want to highlight the fact that the Province of Ontario has targeted three cities to move to a modified stage 2 alert, which means many venues will be ordered closed or to operate in a very limited capacity. The message is very clear to everyone in Ontario to exclude any non-essential outings. At the same time that we're talking about protecting Canadians' lives and limiting their risk of getting COVID, committee members are considering ordering a gathering of documents and accessing documents in person. I just don't think that's a very responsible way to go forward.

Also, I heard MP Barrett mention how on this side we are using all the small techniques and that they have their arsenal to conquer that. For example, he mentioned having emergency meetings such as the one we're having today. I heard the chair weighing in on that; he has his own view. I understand he might not agree with Mr. Barrett, who implied that the fact that we're meeting today is a form of retaliation for not getting his motion voted on yesterday.

I want to get away from all these political games, and I'm still looking for an answer. Ultimately, we're talking about a fabricated narrative that the Prime Minister designed a program to fund an organization in exchange for his family members getting a job. That's just completely bizarre, especially in the context of COVID. We've seen how quickly the federal government and all levels of government react to COVID. The leaders of the three levels of government are appearing in front of the cameras and talking to Canadians every day to address various issues.

• (1600)

I remember having meetings in the late afternoon to provide the suggestions and feedback we heard on the ground, and the government reacted very quickly to fine-tune its policies, whether with respect to the CERB, the wage subsidy or the commercial rent assistance program. That is what people care about.

I heard Madame Gaudreau's point that her children are watching this. They are not alone. There are other Canadians watching this as well. Some, I'm sure, can't help but wonder what we MPs are talking about and how the conversation is going to benefit them, especially those who just lost their jobs or whose loved ones are infected with COVID-19. How is this conversation helping them?

I heard the notion that Canadians want the truth regarding the whole WE incident. We have a mechanism to investigate and find out the truth about what happened. I remember the former integrity commissioner said that we are among the best in the world when it comes to the parliamentary infrastructure we have for integrity. I have a lot of faith in that infrastructure, as I do in our commissioner, who will do a fine job of finding the truth.

Here we are talking about allowing MPs and their staff to look at the private information of another MP and his family without the proper limitations and boundaries or safeguarding of that privacy. I think that steps way over the line and that we are setting a very dangerous precedent. I can't stress this enough. Earlier there was a motion put on the floor, which I know was ruled out of order, but from this point on members are free in this committee to bring motions forward to talk about other members and the privacy of their families. That is not where we want to go, in my opinion.

We have a lot of priorities right now. In the past, I mentioned Seneca College in my riding, which is faced with a major challenge because the majority of its revenue depends on international revenue, and it is not looking good right now, especially with the border restrictions. I know the government is moving quickly, working with the provincial government to ease that up, but it still does not change the fact that it is saddled with fixed costs and does not know what the remainder of this year or what next year will look like.

As well, small business owners are seeing that the wage subsidy is coming to an end, and even with the help of the wage subsidy, they are still not getting enough support. I'm sure there are mom-and-pop shops in every member's riding that are facing closure or the pressure of taking on huge debt from which they will never recover and are thinking about bankruptcy.

These are the matters at hand right now. I really hope that all members of this committee will see through the politics and partisanship that have been talked about for two days now and really focus on how to help Canadians. We have a lot of work to do, so let's let the investigator, in this case the commissioner, do his job.

We heard the motion by Madame Gaudreau to create another special committee. There are multiple venues to get to the truth, and we don't need to be here. I'm sure everyone cancelled a lot of meetings in their constituencies and may have to cancel a few more, as well as outings with the family this Thanksgiving weekend. I just don't think it's a very good use of our time.

I posed a whole bunch of concerns in my first round of speaking, and now I am speaking to a few more issues, given that the cities of Ottawa and Toronto are entering a modified stage two.

• (1605)

I haven't heard any answer to that. I have not been convinced that this is an absolute priority of our committee. We need to move on this.

I think it is a play of partisanship. The Prime Minister went to the finance committee and testified and answered questions. That was never done before by any sitting prime minister. There were a lot of questions asked and a lot of answers given. Based on those testimonies, the media had a chance to report on what happened with WE, which was quite unfortunate, in my mind, because thousands of young people who had a chance of getting a job and being helped during COVID, just because of the fabricated narrative—and that's what it was—lost an opportunity.

The not-for-profit sectors are chilled by how far this thing went. Now we're going into a model allowing members and staff to look at and access other members' privacy and their families' privacy. I just think that's way over the top. It doesn't give us any additional benefit, considering that there is an ongoing investigation. Also, a special committee is being considered.

Chair, I'm still waiting to be convinced whether these concerns, plus the public safety concerns, will be addressed, as well as the safety of our staff.

Thank you.

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

Now we move on to Mr. Barrett.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Chair, excuse me; I have a point of order. Could you list the speaking order?

**The Chair:** Presently, right now, I just have two speakers left, Mr. Barrett and Mr. Kurek.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** My hand is up. I think the clerk is....

**The Chair:** He may be updating me right now.

Now I have Madam Shanahan and Mr. Fergus.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Could I hear the order again, please?

**The Chair:** As I just stated, we have Mr. Barrett, Mr. Kurek, Mr. Fergus, Madam Shanahan and Ms. Gaudreau.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Thanks very much, Chair.

I would just like to take this opportunity to cede my time, having heard from all members. As was stated, it's important that members have the opportunity to speak to the motion. All members have spoken to the motion. I'll cede my time and encourage all members to let this matter come to a vote at the end of the second day of meetings on the same motion.

Thank you.

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

Now we will go to—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I wasn't clear from Mr. Barrett if he's asking for the vote and calling for a vote now.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'm sorry if I missed that detail.

Mr. Barrett, were you calling for a vote now?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Yes, Chair.

**The Chair:** I apologize, Mr. Barrett. All I heard was that you were ceding your time.

Colleagues, are we ready for the vote?

**An hon. member:** Yes.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Mr. Chair, I don't think the speaking list has been exhausted. Are there more speakers waiting on your list?

**The Chair:** There are, but when any member, no matter what party they are from, asks me to check and see if there's a willingness of the committee for some aspect, then I always look for consensus. However, there's no consensus, Mr. Barrett.

We'll move on to Mr. Kurek.

• (1610)

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I find that unfortunate. Certainly I've appreciated some of the comments and listened with interest to all the other comments, and I won't take long. There is just one brief thing that I did want to put on the record, especially for our friends from the media and Canadians who might be watching.

One of my colleagues across the floor had mentioned that when the Clerk of the Privy Council came to give testimony before committee, I did ask the question as to whether the Prime Minister reads his briefing notes. The clerk responded that he understood that he did.

In previous comments, the Prime Minister indicated that he had only found out about this whole situation, on which there are so many questions around the WE scandal, as it has been referred to in the media, the day that it was briefed, the day of the cabinet meeting. I didn't have time during the meeting this summer to ask the clerk, but if the Prime Minister received his briefing notes that morning, that would be a perfectly valid answer. However, there are further questions that need to be asked there. It's something that has been on my mind over the summer, and I've talked to a few people about it, and certainly all those listening might be interested.

I stand by what I said earlier. I certainly will be supporting the motion at hand and I would go further to see if there is a willingness to go to a vote.

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Kurek. I'll check once more whether there's a willingness to move to a vote at this time.

No, I don't see any consensus. Thank you for checking.

Now we'll continue on to Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is my second time speaking to you. I want to begin by congratulating you for your patience. I'd like to acknowledge your impartiality in all this. I don't always agree with your decisions, but that's fine. I never completely agree with anyone. I appreciate the fact that you're bringing up key considerations.

I want to come back to the comments made by my colleague Ms. Gaudreau. Ms. Lattanzio asked some questions regarding Ms. Gaudreau's comments.

It's interesting. Ms. Gaudreau and her political party have presented virtually the same items and motions to every House of Commons committee. Ms. Lattanzio asked a relevant question. If this motion has been moved in every committee, why should we accept it here? What will we do if two, three or four of the twelve standing committees that decide to vote to create this type of committee come forward at the same time? How will we pick and choose?

This is a relevant question. As you said, Ms. Gaudreau will be speaking to us shortly. I hope that she'll be kind enough to explain her proposal.

I don't want to waste too much of the committee's time. I move

[*English*]

that the committee do now adjourn.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** Mr. Fergus, are you still speaking? I'm not hearing anything.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Mr. Sweet, I said that I propose that the committee do now adjourn.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I request a recorded vote, please, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, we will record the vote.

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, the vote is yeas 5, nays 5.

**The Chair:** Thank you, colleagues. As previously, I will go with the status quo and vote to continue the debate.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** I will move now to Madam Shanahan.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Mr. Chair, may I ask a point of information?

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, Mr. Fergus.



**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I just don't know what the rules are in this hybrid Parliament. In the House of Commons hybrid, the camera has to be on for us to see the person who is voting. I'm sorry, but I did not see Mr. Blaikie's camera come on.

**The Chair:** He's in the committee room. Mr. Blaikie is seated down the desk from the clerk. It's just that the camera did not pan out to see him.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**The Chair:** Madam Shanahan, you're next on the speakers list.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Chair.

Chair, you know and I know that the members are prepared to take this to the limit here, but this is not the only venue. We know that NDP members and Bloc members have given notice for a special committee motion at multiple committees. This includes Mr. Angus, an experienced MP, as well as Mr. Blaikie.

I would like to hear from the NDP, from an experienced member, about how often special committees are created by a committee motion and what the reasoning is behind going that route and then going this route. This is what's taking up so much time.

My experience as an MP has been that these special committees are normally discussed and negotiated by House leaders and whips, and then presented in the House of Commons in a motion for unanimous consent for their creation. The government House leader has said his door is always open. Have the House leaders, Peter Julian and Alain Thérien, sat down with Pablo Rodriguez to discuss the special committee motion?

If you truly want this special committee, which will be empowered with everything that the members here are seeking to have done, then why are you pushing so hard on this motion? This motion would take up the valuable time of this committee, time that could be spent on other important motions that members have brought up in the short time we've been together. If you are truly serious about this special committee, why are you trying to adopt these production of document motions now, instead of at that special committee? It will happen. If everybody collaborates, it will be done.

Maybe you're not serious about the special committee. That seems surprising to me, since in my time as an MP, I've seen special committees do tremendous work. They did tremendous work in assisted dying, which we have now come back to again. How valued that work was when it was received, not only by members of Parliament for legislative purposes but also by the Canadian population, which was waiting so eagerly.... That's maybe not the word to use, but let us remember how important that work was to the day-to-day lives of so many Canadians.

Other special committees have also been in operation from time to time. I implore my colleagues of the NDP to please ask Mr. Julian. to pick up the phone and call Pablo, and the same goes for the Bloc.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

We understand that there's a whole process and that we must do certain things to show that we're serious. There's no one here. I'm speaking for myself and my colleagues—

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Madam Shanahan.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Chair, after listening at great length, I can't imagine that discussing at length a motion that we adjourned debate on is germane to the motion that's on the table.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Barrett. That isn't a point of procedure, but thank you for your input.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Chair, it is indeed germane to the motion at hand, because one principle we have in parliamentary debate is to avoid redundancy of our work. We are very mindful of the importance of the resources and the cost of the resources that we have available to us here at the House.

Again, I am not speaking to my Conservative colleagues, with all due respect; I am speaking to my colleagues in the NDP and the Bloc, because we know that there is a genuine concern for this work to be done, this full investigation of the costs and of how all of this came together, how the different programs were developed. While I think we did quite a lot of work on this during the summer, when a number of different committees were seized with this investigation, I think the House leaders could easily come to an agreement on having this go to a special committee with a Zoom call. Quite frankly, not only would we not be here, but Canadians would get what they need, which is a special investigation to the satisfaction of everyone.

I want to remind everyone of what that investigation this summer resulted in. I think it was quite special to see how the resources of our government and the various ministries were deployed during a time when people were working from home, [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] in the office where quarantine and isolation can happen at a drop of a hat because somebody's kid went to school and the teacher was sick. Public servants produced over 5,000 documents at the request, notably, of the finance committee, and this was made public and was certainly readily available.

I'd like to put on the record here and now, Chair, what that response was from the government resources, because Canadians should not think for a moment about a cover-up, as I've heard some of my colleagues talking about. What cover-up?

• (1625)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** This cover-up.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Canadians should not think for a moment that anything was taken back. With all due respect, the redaction is done for the sake of national security, for the sake of confidentiality, cabinet confidentiality, which, for the record, can affect any government, and if you start opening up that can of worms, well....

My gosh, I remember when I was sitting on the public accounts committee—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** On a point of order, Chair, relevance—relevance, Chair.

**The Chair:** I've got it, Mr. Barrett, but Madam Shanahan's just trying to demonstrate a point.

Please try to keep to the subject at hand and the motion. Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much, but if someone's going to heckle, they have to appreciate that it will be heard and it will be responded to.

The production of documents did happen. They were made available, and I would like to put on the record where they came from.

I think I will switch to French here.

[*Translation*]

I'll quote from a letter from August 7, 2020 from the Office of the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Secretary to the Cabinet. It is addressed to David Gagnon, then clerk of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

Dear Mr. Gagnon:

I am pleased to provide records from the Privy Council Office (PCO) that were requested under the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Finance ("the committee") on July 7, 2020 in relation to the committee's study on the WE Charity and the Canada Student Services Grant (CSSG) (Annex 1).

I am also pleased to provide information related to the undertakings that I agreed to at my appearance before the committee on July 21, 2020, which were as follows:

1. A detailed timeline of events.

Attached at Annex 2 is a timeline describing PCO's knowledge of and involvement with the file.

2. A full list of organizations that were consulted on program development.

On Friday, July 24, 2020, the Department of Employment and Social Development (ESDC) provided the committee with a list of the national coalition member organizations of the Canada Service Corps (CSC) who ESDC spoke with in March and April of 2020.

I am told that on April 9, 2020, Department of Finance officials were provided with a report on stakeholder outreach regarding support for students during the COVID-19 context (See Annex 3 for a list of those organizations).

3. PCO media monitoring from the dates when Margaret and Alexandre Trudeau had speaking engagements for WE Charity.

I can confirm that PCO Media Monitoring does not have any media content of the public appearances for either Margaret Trudeau or Alexandre Trudeau.

The PCO media centre monitors coverage of the Government of Canada priorities, programs and services and does not monitor media coverage related to the relatives of the Prime Minister or their public appearances.

4. All communications between PMO staff and PCO staff; the Finance Minister's Office and PCO; and the Finance Minister's Office and the Finance Department relating to WE Charity contribution agreement and the CSSG.

These communications are included in Annex 1 and in the package from the Department of Finance.

5. Names of participants, notes, and recording of mid-April meeting between Rachel Wernick, Michelle Kovacevic (and whether PCO personnel were aware of the meeting taking place and participated).

I am told that a teleconference between officials with the Department of Finance and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) was held on the evening of April 18, 2020.

● (1630)

Participants:

Michelle Kovacevic, Assistant Deputy Minister, Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy Branch, Department of Finance.

Suzy McDonald, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy Branch, Department of Finance.

Benoît Robidoux, Associate Deputy Minister, Employment and Social Development Canada.

Rachel Wernick, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch, Employment and Social Development Canada.

Annik Beaudry, Director General, Learning Policy, Partnerships and Service, Employment and Social Development Canada.

No officials from PCO participated in the call or were aware of the meeting.

There is no recording of the meeting.

Meeting notes that were taken by Rachel Wernick and an email thread about setting up the call are attached at Annex 4.

6. Due diligence analysis of any financial scrutiny undertaken with regard to the WE Charity during this process.

Attached at Annex 5, you will find the detailed explanation prepared by ESDC of the controls embedded in the contribution agreement to ensure stewardship and appropriate use of funds, as well as a brief overview of the typical process used to evaluate projects and recipients.

Further information relating to due diligence that was done by officials in relation to the Canada Student Service Grant is provided in Annex 1 and in the packages that other relevant departments are providing to this committee.

7. The full text of contribution agreement.

This document was provided to the committee by ESDC on Friday, July 24, 2020.

As I noted when I appeared at committee on July 21, 2020, my intent has been to be as expansive as possible in relation to the information that I provide.

The committee's motion stipulates that Cabinet confidences and national security information are to be excluded from the package. No information is being withheld on the grounds of national security, since the information does not so pertain. With respect to Cabinet confidences, you will note that considerable information on the Canada Student Service Grant that were Cabinet confidences is being provided to the committee. This is in keeping with the public disclosures of information on this matter made by members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. A principled approach was adopted to this information to ensure a non-selective application of the protection afforded by Cabinet confidentiality. As a result, considerable information on the Canada Student Service Grant that would otherwise constitute Cabinet confidences is being released. Information not related to the Canada Student Service Grant that constitute Cabinet confidences is withheld and identified as not relevant to the request.

● (1635)

In this package, I have also chosen to disclose certain personal information contained in the Privy Council records relating to individuals working in ministers' offices as well as personal information of individuals who work for WE. I have decided to disclose this information because in my view the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy. I have notified the Privacy Commissioner of my intention to disclose this personal information, as I am required to do under the Privacy Act.

I have decided to protect the phone number and email addresses of WE employees other than Craig and Mark Kielburger. In addition, there are a few references to the family members of a public servant, and I have chosen to protect that information. In my opinion, the public interest in disclosing this type of personal information does not clearly outweigh the invasion of privacy.

Similarly, because I believe that it is in the public interest to do so, I am prepared to issue a limited waiver of solicitor client privilege as it relates to the information that is being provided by departments in response to this motion and my undertakings.

Lastly, I wish to draw the committee's attention to a Note to File, prepared by Christiane Fox, the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs at the Privy Council Office. In that Note to File, Ms. Fox provides a clarification regarding references in two email exchanges (Annex 6).

I trust that the Committee will find the above explanations helpful in its consideration of the enclosed materials.

Sincerely,

This letter was signed by Ian Shugart, Clerk of the Privy Council Office.

The heart of our job is ensuring privacy, and I think Mr. Shugart, who worked for Mr. Harper's cabinet, put it very well. I'm glad I had the chance to read this important letter to our committee because, apparently, the desire is that committees work on all the business of all committees.

I'll continue because there is also—

● (1640)

[English]

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I know Mrs. Shanahan said she would like to hear from me, but I'm beginning to doubt that she knows she has to cede the floor in order for me to respond.

**The Chair:** Madame Shanahan, are you—

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I'll continue.

There was also a call for documents from the Department of Finance, again addressed to David Gagnon, the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance. It was part of the July 7, 2020, request.

Dear Mr. Gagnon:

On behalf of the Department of Finance, I am transmitting the attached documents to you in response to the motion adopted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance on July 7, 2020 (Standing Order 108(1)(a)):

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the Committee order that any contracts concluded with We Charity and ME to WE, all briefing notes, memos and emails, including the contribution agreement between the department and WE Charity, from senior officials prepared for or sent to any Minister regarding the design and creation of the Canada Student Service Grant, as well as any written correspondence and records of other correspondence with We Charity and ME to WE from March 2020 be provided to the Committee no later than August 8, 2020; that matters of Cabinet confidence and national security be excluded from the request; and that any redactions necessary, including to protect the privacy of Canadian citizens and permanent residents whose names and personal information may be included in the documents, as well as public servants who have been providing assistance on this matter, be made by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons.

Documents are also enclosed as part of this package related to the undertakings of the Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to Cabinet, Mr. Ian Shugart, further to his testimony to the committee on July 21, 2020.

The committee's motion stipulates that Cabinet confidences and national security information are to be excluded from the package. No information is being withheld on the grounds of national security, since the information does not so pertain. With respect to Cabinet confidences, you will note that considerable information on the

Canada Student Service Grant contained in Cabinet confidences is being provided to the committee. This is in keeping with the public disclosure of information on this matter made by members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. A principled approach was taken with respect to this information to ensure a non-selective application of the protection afforded by Cabinet confidentiality. As a result, considerable information on the Canada Student Service Grant that would otherwise be protected as Cabinet confidence is being released. Information not related to the Canada Student Service Grant that is contained in Cabinet confidences is withheld and identified as not relevant to the request.

● (1645)

With respect to personal information, the department is obliged to protect such information under the Privacy Act unless the individuals to whom it relates consent to its disclosure, or disclosure is otherwise authorized in certain specified circumstances or the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs any resulting invasion of privacy.

Reasonable efforts were made by the department to obtain consent. Where consent was not given, the department found that the public interest in sharing the information with the committee outweighed any invasion of the individual's privacy. As such, disclosure is being made pursuant to subparagraph 8(2)(m)(i) of the Privacy Act. As required by the Act, the Privacy Commissioner was informed of our decision. In very limited cases, personal information was redacted from these records as consent was not obtained from the individuals concerned nor was the department able to conclude that the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighed the invasion of the individuals' privacy. The type of personal information that remains protected consists of the identity of unrelated third parties where their opinion or view relates to an unrelated matter to this inquiry, as well as personal email addresses and phone numbers.

With respect to pages 190 and 194-213, further to consultation with the originating stakeholder, authorization to disclose this information was not given as it constitutes personal information as defined under the Privacy Act. Furthermore, this information is considered proprietary to the third party. The contents of this information is not relevant to the funding agreement or the Student Grant Program, therefore it has been severed in its entirety.

For clarity, note that there were a series of emails between Finance officials and staff in the Minister of Finance's Office regarding next steps. Of note, an email from the Minister's Office to Michelle Kovacevic on April 18 lists a series of items for the department to follow up on as well as some items "WE" will address. In this instance, "WE" is a typographical error and refers to the Minister's Office, not WE Charity.

Also of note, the Annex 4 dated April 19 contains an error that was corrected verbally in an April 21 briefing with the Minister of Finance. While page 6 of the note references a cost estimate of \$0.8 billion for the proposal plus potential administration costs, pages 7, 8, and 9 recommend setting aside up to \$1 billion (\$900 million for the initiative and an additional \$100 million for implementation and associated costs). The correct recommendation (\$900 million) is reflected in the April 21 version of the note, also enclosed in the package.

● (1650)

Finally, following the April 21 briefing, a draft Ministerial Decision Page (enclosed as the first page of the April 21, 2020 version of the note) was prepared and routed to the Finance Minister's Office for review and approval by the Minister of Finance. This Ministerial Decision Page was not formally approved by the Minister of Finance. A formal decision was later made by the Prime Minister and is reflected in the package.

This letter is signed by Paul Rochon, Deputy Minister of the Department of Finance.

It also shows how important it was for the Department of Finance to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of individuals, while at the same time ensuring that the situation was corrected and that the committee in question had the right information.

The same is true for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. I have a letter addressed to David Gagnon, from the Treasury Board Secretariat, which states the following:

In response to the motion adopted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) on July 7, 2020 concerning any contracts concluded with WE Charity and ME to WE, all briefing notes, memos and emails, including the contribution agreement between the government and the organization, from senior officials prepared for or sent to any Minister regarding the design and creation of the Canada Student Service Grant, as well as any written correspondence and records of other correspondence with WE Charity and ME to WE from March 2020, please find enclosed bilingual copies of Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat records.

It should be noted, that in the preparation of this package, care was taken to obtain consent—

[English]

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm finding the breadth of documentation that's being read into to the record to be fascinating, absolutely fascinating, and it's certainly what I would call the definition of a filibuster. However, if the member would be amenable, I would be comfortable with her tabling these documents for the committee's review. I would have more questions going forward, but reading them into the record certainly brings back her comment about resources and committee time. A more efficient use of that time would be to table these documents for the reference of the committee and all Canadians.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Kurek.

I certainly would invite Madam Shanahan to do just that, but I have the suspicion she may want to continue on.

I would invite you to do either one, Madam Shanahan. If you'd like to table the documents, you can do that.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I still think it is interesting to see that

[English]

I'm often interrupted by the member. I hope it's not because he doesn't like the sound of my voice. I will continue.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Mr. Kurek, you have another point of order?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Yes.

I certainly would not ever impugn any member for the sound of their voice, but keeping in mind the full context of her comments when she talked about resources related to the committee, I note that she is reading documents into the public record. I would not and did not intend any association that meant I didn't appreciate the member and her interventions. However, keeping in mind the full scope of what's been shared here today, I thought that would be helpful in the discussion. Certainly I don't mind the sound of the member's voice. That's not what was intended whatsoever.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kurek. I'm certain that would be comforting.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It shows that the important work of producing documents had already been done and that the officials acted with care, to their great credit. It also shows that we can have confidence in their work and in the work of the potential special committee.

I will continue to read the letter.

It should be noted, that in the preparation of this package, care was taken to obtain consent to disclose certain personal information from relevant exempt staff referenced in the material.

The Committee's motion stipulates that Cabinet confidences and national security information are to be excluded from the package. No information is being withheld on the grounds of national security, since the information does not so pertain. With respect to Cabinet confidences, you will note that considerable information on the Canada Student Service Grant that were Cabinet confidences is being provided to the Committee. This is in keeping with the public disclosures of information on this matter made by members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. A principled approach was adopted to this information to ensure a non-selective application of the protection afforded by Cabinet confidentiality. As a result, considerable information on the Canada Student Service Grant that would otherwise constitute Cabinet confidences is being released. Information not related to the Canada Student Service Grant that constitutes Cabinet confidences is withheld and identified as not relevant to the request.

This same principled approach was also applied to the second enclosed package of TBS documents, which is provided in support of the commitment by the Clerk of the Privy Council to provide additional information on due diligence on the Canada Student Service Grant subsequent to his appearance on July 21, 2020. Additionally, because I believe that it is in the public interest to do so, this package includes information being made available as a result of a limited waiver of solicitor client privilege as it relates to the information that is being provided by Employment and Social Development Canada.

While many TBS employees continue to work virtually, guided by public health measures and focused on curbing the spread of COVID-19, these two packages provide, to the best of my knowledge, as of August 7, 2020, the TBS documents in response to the above-noted request for production of papers and due diligence line of inquiry.

The letter is signed by Peter Wallace, from the Treasury Board.

For the benefit of committee members, I would now like to read one final letter from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

• (1700)

[English]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** On a point of order, sir—

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** He's outraged as well, I guess, eh?

Are you going to do the right thing now, Greg?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Warkentin.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have undertaken to work together to get these documents released, and obviously, it has become abundantly clear that the Liberals have only one intent, and that is to string this meeting on as long as they possibly can, until such time as they wear us down. As a matter of fact, they've now brought in additional Liberal members to engage in what is a cover-up. I think Canadians would know a cover-up.

I would ask that you poll the members to see if there would be a willingness to move to the vote. If the Liberals consistently vote against the clear will of this committee to move forward, then it will be a demonstration that they have been sent in to engage in this cover-up and that they have acquiesced to the folks in PMO, who have said that they have one responsibility, and that's to ensure that no Canadians ever find the political bombshell that's clearly included in these documents.

If they desire to continue to engage in this cover-up, we'll sit here all night and listen to them read letters from whomever, including their relatives, if that's what they decide. Quite frankly, I would suggest to these Liberal members that they say no to the PMO and to the Prime Minister, end the cover-up and allow Canadians to truly know what has gone on.

This is getting to the point of being a farce. Canadians deserve better.

These Liberal members who have agreed to engage in this type of activity.... Folks, I've been here a long time, 15 years, and I have, from time to time, been sent down folks from PMO to tell me to do something. I may have limited my advancement in my career for a short period of time by saying no to staffers from PMO, but I can tell you that I can live with myself, knowing that I served my constituents and served Canadians.

I would implore Liberal members—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I'm sorry, Chair. Is this a point of order?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You should be sorry.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** My point of order is that I believe it's time for us to move to a vote.

Mr. Chair, I would ask to see if there would be support from the committee members to move to the vote, simply to move on from this motion so that we can move on to other motions.

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

**Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, on that point of order, just very briefly, I can answer that question very quickly.

Mr. Warkentin would like to know whether if you do a poll you'll find a vote, but you'll notice that, to the right hand of the screen, there are a whole bunch of hands being held up. That, in and of itself, should tell you that we'd like to speak before we go to that vote.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** I'm sure you have some very important letters to read.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** You have no idea, sir, but I hope you hang on in the next few hours to let me read them—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** You should start reading letters from your constituents—

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Scott, you've been here a long time. I'm sure PMO—

**The Chair:** Colleagues, please, I've been patient and allowed points of order from both sides that really weren't points of order, and some cross-dialogue. I understand that we're going on four hours, and there will be a little bit of an edge on everything, but let's keep the decorum so that I can at least manage the meeting.

We do have, as Mr. Simms pointed out, quite a lengthy speakers list. For those who do have the floor, if you could, maybe keep in mind that we now have about nine people on the speakers list. Some are subbing in for others who have now taken a break, etc. That would be good to keep in mind.

Now, Mr. Fergus, are you speaking to a point of order?

• (1705)

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Actually, Mr. Chair, it was my voice that had called out first, and then Mr. Warkentin slipped in to make his point of order, which really wasn't a point of order because—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** This doesn't feel like a point of order either.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** —as he knows, there were two substitutions for the Conservatives as well, so far, for the night, so I don't see why that—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes, because you guys are filibustering to cover up the unethical actions of your Prime Minister—

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I'm sorry, Chair, please.

**The Chair:** Colleagues—

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Could I raise my point of information, Mr. Chair?

I just wanted to ask Mrs. Shanahan if she might want to correct the record that she just read, because she indicated that Mr. Peter Wallace was from the “*cabinet du trésor*”.

[*Translation*]

He is at the Treasury Board Secretariat.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I stand corrected by my good friend and colleague. It is the *Conseil du Trésor du Canada*.

Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** Madame Shanahan, before you continue, I was also advised that Mr. Genuis had a point of order. Apparently his sound is.... I haven't been able to hear him, but I did hear him chime in, so it may be consistent that we now hear his point of order.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** My comments were consistent with those made by Mr. Warkentin.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Continue on, Madame Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much.

The last letter I have is from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and it is dated August 7, 2020. It is also addressed to David Gagnon, the clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Dear Mr. Gagnon:

On July 7, 2020, the Standing Committee on Finance adopted the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the Committee order that any contracts concluded with WE Charity and ME to WE, all briefing notes, memos and emails [including the contribution agreement between the department and WE Charity] from senior officials prepared for or sent to any Minister regarding the design and creation of the Canada Student Service Grant, as well as any written correspondence and records of other correspondence with WE Charity and ME to WE from March 2020 be provided to the Committee no later than August 8, 2020; that matters of Cabinet confidence and national security be excluded from the request; and that any redactions necessary, including to protect the privacy of Canadian citizens and permanent residents whose names and personal information may be included in the documents, as well as public servants who have been providing assistance on this matter, be made by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel of the House of Commons.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada has retrieved all records from within the Department that respond to the Committee's motion. You will find the results of that search enclosed for the Committee's consideration.

It should be noted, however, that in the preparation of this package, care was taken to obtain consent to disclose certain personal information from exempt staff referenced in the material and, in collaboration with other government departments, the staff from WE Charity in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act.

In addition, the Committee's motion stipulates that Cabinet confidences and national security information are to be excluded from the package. No information is being withheld on the grounds of national security, since the information does not so pertain. With respect to Cabinet confidences, you will note that information on the Canada Student Service Grant that was a Cabinet confidence is being provided to the Committee. This is in keeping with the public disclosures of information on this matter made by members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. A principled approach was adopted to this information to ensure a non-selective application of the protection afforded by Cabinet confidentiality. Information not related to the Canada Student Service Grant that constitutes a Cabinet confidence is withheld and identified as not relevant to the request.

This letter is signed by Simon Kennedy, from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

• (1710)

I took the time to read these letters, which were written with precision. This shows the care taken by these departments to produce the documents requested by the Standing Committee on Finance. Those details include not only the responses to the request, but also the protection of the confidentiality and privacy of the individuals involved in the project. I have seen no redactions for reasons of national security.

It is precisely because of this sort of care that we are placing our confidence in a special committee. I again appeal to my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. I know that you want to have a special committee, I agree with you. This is very important work and we can study all the elements that are related to WE Charity and the way programs are produced—

[*English*]

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** I have a point of order.

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

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Just to clarify, is Mrs. Shanahan suggesting there should be a national security study on the Trudeau family's relationship with WE Charity? Is that what she's suggesting by her comments?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Wow, a Freudian slip....

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** We don't hear you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madame Shanahan. You have the floor.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, I repeat the appeal I made at the beginning of my speech to my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and the NDP.

If they want to set up a special committee—we know that there is a motion circulating in this regard—then let their House leaders, Mr. Therrien and Mr. Julian, sit down with Mr. Rodriguez. I am confident that together they can come to a decision. This can ensure that committees like ours will be able to work on other priorities, such as those related to COVID-19, the well-being of Canadians, and concerns about the resources of the House. As a result, Canadians could be confident that we are working on a number of issues.

I fail to see how Canadians can be well served by this obsession to focus the work of all committees on the same subject that has been amply covered this summer, when there is other work to be done.

I appeal to them to drop the motion before us and let the leaders work together as usual to come up with a solution that will be satisfactory to everyone.

With that said, I will conclude my speech. Thank you for your patience, Mr. Chair.

• (1715)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Shanahan.

Now on to Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Good afternoon, colleagues. You missed my speech earlier, but don't worry, I won't repeat it.

Considering all of the deliberations and the fact that we have been wondering about the motion to adjourn the meeting, I think there is one question that is important to answer.

Why deal with all four committees that were working on WE?

Actually, the reason is quite simple. The reason is that, just before prorogation, all of these committees were working on this file. It is therefore perfectly normal and legitimate that, from the very first meeting, for the sake of efficiency and to maintain the confidence of our constituents, we wondered whether we could continue the work in a specific place where we could reach agreement. Good proposals are already on the table. They are exactly in line with what we already know as parliamentarians. There are four committees dealing with the same subject. That is one of the reasons why, right from the first meeting, once the chairs of the committees are elected, this motion should be submitted to all the committees.

Given the broad scope of the discussion, the new members and the fact that the meeting has been going on for several hours, I am not sure, in good conscience, that we will come to an agreement tonight.

That is why I would like to reintroduce my motion at the next meeting. I therefore ask that we vote to adjourn this meeting.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Madame Gaudreau, was that a motion to adjourn the meeting?

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** That's right.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Madam Clerk, it's a dilatory motion. I will leave that to you now.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Can I request a recorded division on that?

**The Clerk:** Certainly.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would just note that Mrs. Shanahan had asked me to speak and express an opinion. I know that she voted to adjourn the meeting before I had the opportunity. I'm very disappointed in that fact. I just wanted to put that on the record.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Her PMO instructions changed.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Blaikie.

Is everybody getting Mr. Blaikie okay? I'm noticing that the feed from the House is actually very flawed.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Can you hear me now, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, I can. Thank you very much, Mr. Blaikie.

Go ahead now.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** I just wanted to say that Mrs. Shanahan had exhorted me to explain the NDP position to her and then voted to adjourn the meeting before I had the opportunity. I just wanted the chance to express my disappointment in that fact on the record.

**A voice:** Evidence of a cover-up.

**The Chair:** The meeting will now be adjourned and will be reconvened at the call of the chair.







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