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Chair: Mr. David Sweet



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• (1440)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC)): Hello, colleagues. I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving. I've often said publicly that no matter how much or how little we agree with the present government, we still live in the greatest country in the world. I hope you gave thanks in that regard over the past weekend.

I have just a few reminders in regard to interpretation. At the bottom of your screen there is a button for interpretation, so make sure you've put it in your preferred language, either English or French. Also, more importantly, remember that if you are switching from English to French, you'll need to switch that button as well for interpretation to work properly.

Colleagues, please make sure that you address your comments through the chair. That's not just to help me guide the meeting successfully, but also to make sure there's accuracy in the blues afterwards. I'll also remind you that when you're speaking, speak slowly. We always have that challenge with interpretation, but doing this over broadband makes it that much more difficult. If any technical problems arise, please put your hand up if we can't hear you and you're muted so we can make sure to pause the meeting to look after whatever the technical problem is with your system.

In our last meeting, Madame Gaudreau moved to adjourn the meeting. I wanted to specify whether it was the meeting or the debate. It was the meeting. In preparation for this meeting, I advised both vice-chairs, as well as Mr. Angus, because he does not have the luxury of having a vice-chair represent him, that we'll be continuing with the attempt to dispose of Mr. Barrett's motion at this meeting.

I'll now open the floor for comments in that regard.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Chair, I'm sorry, but could you clarify what we are opening with now?

The Chair: We're continuing the debate from the last meeting, which was adjourned. Mr. Barrett's motion was on the table at the time. I'm just waiting for folks to put their hands up. I have a picture of all those who have their hand up.

Madam Shanahan, you're the first one up.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I take it that the speakers list is a new one that we have before us now.

As always, thank you, Chair, for your instructions at the beginning of the meeting, and thank you for allowing us to remember

what a privilege it is for us to be here in this hybrid setting. It's the staff, interpreters, clerks and all of the wonderful IT staff who allow us to be here to exercise our parliamentary duties, and indeed to continue on, even under these most difficult circumstances.

Earlier this summer, in the previous session, the committee sat. It was actually in person, under somewhat similar but equally stressful conditions. I'd like to take this opportunity, since we have some new members who have joined us, to talk about some of the issues concerning the spirit and intent of the motion we have before us. Indeed, I'd like to bring the committee's attention to the mandate. I think I will switch to French here because that gives me a chance to practise my French.

[Translation]

It is important to understand how this committee has evolved. I consulted the website to get an idea of the history of the studies it has undertaken.

Initially, the approach was to bring witnesses before parliamentarians during investigations. That meant that parliamentarians were investigating the behaviour of their colleagues. Later on, legislation was rightly enacted and a code of ethics was established to govern the conduct of parliamentarians with respect to conflicts of interest. At the same time, a commissioner position, at arm's length from Parliament, was created to enforce the code, receive complaints, explain members' responsibilities and, of course, render judgments following investigations.

I emphasize that the commissioner is independent of Parliament. I believe we will have an opportunity to talk more about this. This is a key principle of ethics in the institutional environment. If parliamentarians investigate other parliamentarians, the conflict of interest is clear.

In addition, Parliament gave this committee a very important mandate, and it is always helpful for us to review it:

• (1445)

[English]

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics reviews, among other matters, the effectiveness, management and operations as well as the operational and expenditure plans relating to four Officers of Parliament: the Information Commissioner; the Privacy Commissioner; the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner; and the Commissioner of Lobbying. It also reviews their reports, although in the case of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the reports concerned relate to the Commissioner's responsibilities under the Parliament of Canada Act regarding public office holders and reports tabled pursuant to the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act.

I think those are two important elements that we will need to discuss in view of the motion before us today.

The mandate continues:

In cooperation with other standing committees, the Committee also reviews any bill, federal regulation or Standing Order which impacts upon its main areas of responsibility: access to information, privacy and the ethical standards of public office holders. It may also propose initiatives in these areas and promote, monitor and assess such initiatives.

[Translation]

It's very important that we discuss the last two sentences of the mandate. Actually, you might think that this means the committee can study anything in any manner, but it does not. My interpretation is that the committee can look into any legislation or any issue related to access to information, privacy, or the establishment of ethical standards or criteria.

The last sentence talks about proposing initiatives in these areas, and it is here that something is clearly missing. No one would have believed just five years, let alone 10 or 15 years ago, that devices like our telephones would be used to not only do extraordinary things in our day-to-day work, but also collect personal data. Who would have imagined that we could do so many things with computers?

I've been in the workplace for a long time. When I started in the banking sector, nobody had a computer. Only one teller had a small computer, with a green screen, and we could use it to get customer account balances.

Who would have thought that all the personal, financial and confidential data in our smartphones and computers would ever be available, but more importantly, that people we don't know would have access to it? This is an example of an issue that perhaps those who wrote the mandate perhaps did not foresee about 15 years ago.

Thank goodness they included that sentence in the mandate, because that is how this committee was able to form a supercommittee of sorts in the last Parliament with our colleagues in Great Britain. I believe some of my colleagues took part in that. It was truly a source of pride to see Canada able to take the lead on the issue of the tech giants controlling people's personal data. Again, that was really not foreseeable five or 10 years ago, in my opinion.

So that is what I have to say about the mandate itself.

• (1450)

[English]

As we discussed this summer, the committee is studying these matters, which are very sensitive to Canadians, and studying them,

in a large sense, to make recommendations to different government ministers. We are working in conjunction with our four commissioners: the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and the Information Commissioner. This is the work we are doing, I submit to you, Mr. Chair, not studying the private business of individuals who are in no way connected to the work we do here in Parliament other than they happen to be related to a member of Parliament who either happens to be a minister or the Prime Minister. The fact that we have chosen a public life is one thing, but I think we can agree as parliamentarians, as we all have families here, that this is not something we would have expected our families to be subjected to.

I would like to refer the committee to the part of the Conflict of Interest Code, where we have the definition of who is considered a family member for the purposes of this code. It is in the section for definitions. It states:

(4) The following are the members of a member's family for the purposes of this code:

(a) the member's spouse or common-law partner; and

(b) a son or daughter of the member, or a son or daughter of the member's spouse or common-law partner, who has not reached the age of 18 years or who has reached that age but is primarily dependent on the member or the member's spouse or common-law partner for financial support.

That is the definition we have in our code, and members will recognize that. It's in an appendix of our Standing Orders.

I'd also like to point out that any information obtained by members of Parliament should not be used in a way to further their own interests. I take you to "Rules of Conduct", subsection 10(1), which states:

(1) A member shall not use information obtained in his or her position as a member that is not generally available to the public to further the member's private interests or those of a member of his or her family, or to improperly further another person's or entity's private interests.

• (1455)

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Angus, on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm sure Madam Shanahan has read the Conflict of Interest Act, so she wouldn't want to misrepresent the facts. I think she overlooked the definition of "Relatives" in the act, under subsection 2(3):

(3) Persons who are related to a public office holder by birth, marriage, common-law partnership, adoption or affinity are the public office holder's relatives for the purposes of this Act

I think the attempt to deny the fact that the Prime Minister's mother is his relative and his brother is his relative is very spurious. If we're going to be here all night, I would ask the member to at least tell the truth when she—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Chair, this is debate.

The Chair: It is debate. Thank you very much, Mr. Angus.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I will continue, and I would look forward to other members speaking about the definition, but it's clear to me that it is not intended to be a mother or a brother or a sister or any member outside the immediate family.

To continue here, under the “Rules of Conduct”, 10(2), it says:

A member shall not communicate information referred to in subsection (1) to another person if the member knows, or reasonably ought to know, that the information may be used to further the member's private interests or those of a member of his or her family, or to improperly further another person's or entity's private interests.

Where I'm going there, Chair, is that if in this role here, this privileged role on the ethics committee, we were to learn of private and confidential information about a person that would help our own interests, I would find that very serious indeed. I would want to have full legal counsel in that case, which I think is another issue we encountered this summer and was something that was very much welcomed by the members of this committee.

I would like to continue speaking about the role of the commissioner. It's almost as if it's protecting us from ourselves.

There has been some very colourful history in this committee, and I know that my good colleague Mr. Angus was present for many of those sessions, and others may have been as well. Thank goodness that we have a commissioner of ethics, again so that the propriety of what is discussed when we're discussing the conduct of individual members is maintained in a professional and a productive way, shall I say. It's not for political or partisan gain, but indeed looking at the behaviour at hand and how it affects the course of Parliamentary business.

What I'm wondering about what we're debating here is that, when we have a motion like this before us, are we expressing a lack of confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who is well within his powers to order any documents that he sees fit and where we have full confidence that he will handle those documents in a proper manner?

I would like to share with the committee some notes I made regarding this rule, because I think it is important, as we are back here again, for this to be on the record.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner administers the Conflict of Interest Act by establishing compliance measures, investigating possible contraventions of the act and providing advice to public office holders on their obligations. The commissioner is an officer of Parliament. Being an officer of Parliament is no small thing. That means that he is responsible.... He reports to Parliament. Officers of Parliament are independent of the government and report directly to Parliament.

The Conflict of Interest Act came into force on July 9, 2007—so it was not all that long ago—and created, for the first time, a legislative regime governing the ethical conduct of public office holders. Prior to this date, public office holders were subject to non-statutory codes of conduct that could be changed on a whim.

● (1500)

At the time, I was a member of the Canadian public. We could see that it was quite under control at that time with the various things that were going on.

Some additional information on the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is that this person “is appointed by the Governor in Council by commission under the Great Seal, after consultation with the leader of every recognized party in the House of Commons and after approval of the appointment by resolution of the House.”

That is very important, that there is consultation among all of the parties, because any one of us and any one of the parties in the House can find themselves in a situation where they would be glad to know that we have an independent commissioner looking at our affairs. He or she holds the office for a seven-year term. Moreover, “under the Conflict of Interest Act, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner must be a former judge of a superior court in Canada or of a provincial court; or a former member of a federal or provincial board, commission or tribunal who has demonstrated expertise in at least one of the following areas: conflict of interest, financial arrangements, professional regulation and discipline or ethics”.

I daresay that is an evolving field. I think we are seeing situations on a regular basis in every sector of our economy and in administrative and institutional life, and I think this committee can contribute to reform and that evolution so that we get to a place where it's more about prevention rather than about hitting people on the head.

The Ethics Commissioner can be “a former Senate Ethics Officer or former Ethics Commissioner. The position was created in 2007 and replaced the Office of the Ethics Commissioner [under the] (Parliament of Canada Act, s.81).”

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner also “provides confidential advice to the prime minister and to public office holders on all matters pertaining to the implementation of the Conflict of Interest Act. In addition, the Commissioner may, at the request of a parliamentarian or on their own initiative, investigate any alleged breach of the Act by a public office holder.”

Again, that's very important, and we know that is indeed what has happened. Members of Parliament have written to the Ethics Commissioner with their complaint as they saw it and have asked for the commissioner to do an investigation. Sometimes he does the investigation and sometimes he does not, but we have the satisfaction that he has looked at it impartially, at all of the facts before him and has made that determination, unless we're going to say that we don't have confidence in that officer of Parliament, which would be a very serious thing to say, although it could happen.

Furthermore, “The Commissioner may, in the course of investigation, consider information provided by the public” —by the public as well, and not just by other members of Parliament—“that is conveyed to the Commissioner by a parliamentarian.”

I think this information, which is publicly available, is important for the Canadian public to understand. The role of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is to undertake any investigation of alleged violations of the Conflict of Interest Act. If the intention is to usurp their role or to carry on a parallel investigation or to somehow override what the commissioner is doing, then I must voice my serious objection to this committee's participating in such an action.

• (1505)

It's clear to me, and I think to other members of this committee, that this is the work of this committee in fulfilling its mandate, in reviewing the work of the four officers of Parliament who report to us, and ensuring that any current or evolving issues... And I can think of one right now, and that's the COVID application. It's being downloaded. I think it has downloaded over four million times, but there are questions about it. Is it efficacious? Is it doing its job? I'm going to switch into French here now.

[*Translation*]

People in my constituency still had concerns about privacy and how the application collected data.

I am so glad that Quebec not only accepted the application, but also studied its effectiveness. It even came up on the TV show *Tout le monde en parle*. People are talking about the application and right now, we can see that, with the measures—

[*English*]

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

The Chair: Mr. Angus, on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, out of respect for our committee, which is actually discussing the refusal of the Liberals to work with us on the WE documents, there has to be a point to the member's comments. The fact that she's trying to talk about a COVID app in Quebec has nothing to do with our committee.

If we're going to be here all night, let's stay focused on the issues at hand. I'd ask the member to keep her remarks focused on the issue, which is the blocking by the Liberals of our access to these WE documents.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Relevance is really a point of order; however, as is the custom in the chamber, we treat that broadly. I would ask all members to try to keep their comments to the motion on the table, so that we can dispose of it as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much for your patience, Mr. Chair.

I only wanted to point out that a study like this falls under our purview. It's a highly relevant and timely subject that is important to people where I am from and across Canada.

I could go on, but I will stop there.

• (1510)

[*English*]

I yield the floor.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Shanahan.

Now we move on to Mr. Angus.

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

This is a very disturbing situation we're in. It's been one week since the ethics committee met to get re-formed after Prime Minister Trudeau prorogued and shut down our investigation. We had a number of motions to get to in order to get on with business, because we have an obligation to the Canadian people to finish the work that was begun on the WE scandal. Part of that was a simple motion to follow through on the documents that our committee agreed to ask for last July. There should have been a very straightforward process of reintroducing the motion, having the documents presented, and then our moving on to many of the other things that all of us would like to talk about.

Ms. Shanahan wants to talk about a COVID app. Well, I don't think it's actually under our purview—it's probably health—but rather than waste our time in an endless filibuster, she could just agree to turn over the documents and then could bring forward a motion. That's how Parliament is supposed to work. We have an obligation to Canadians to get answers.

I find this situation very frustrating, because last week we attempted to work with the Liberals on the documents. On the documents they had agreed to in July, we agreed to put very specific provisions to protect the privacy of individuals. The privacy of individuals is an important principle. We're not here to do naming and shaming. We're here to verify facts. Yet when we responded to the Liberals' demand for all manner of protections in this new motion, and we offered that, then the Liberals changed and wanted to fight about something else.

The reality is that we are going to get those documents, because they're pertinent. Why are they pertinent? One of the unfortunate things we've seen in the WE scandal is that we have been told, time and time again, very conflicting stories about the Trudeau family's very close financial relationship with the Kielburger group. Why does this matter? Well, the Liberals are trying to tell us that family does not include mother and brother. I don't know what kind of family they envision, but in the Conflict of Interest Act, "Persons who are related to a public office holder by birth, marriage, common-law partnership, adoption or affinity are the public office holder's relatives for the purposes of [the] Act".

The reason the issue of family is included in the Conflict of Interest Act is to ensure that family, whether knowingly or unknowingly, cannot be used as a conduit to exert influence on a public office holder. When that public office holder is the Prime Minister of the nation, and when we're talking about a decision by key Liberal ministers to support what would have ended up being a \$900-million plan to transfer money to this organization that has close financial ties, that requires a good deal of scrutiny. It relies on answers being given very clearly.

I would also suggest that under section 5 of the Conflict of Interest Act, which I notice Ms. Shanahan.... All the relevant parts she seemed to be missing. Section 5 is key, because it says, "Every public office holder shall arrange his or her private affairs in a manner that will prevent the public office holder from being in a conflict of interest." So when she's talking about the private affairs of the family and how it's none of our business, well, it actually is our business, because under the Conflict of Interest Act, it is the obligation of the public office holder to protect themselves from being found in a conflict of interest. That's not something that's academic. This is what the Prime Minister of our nation was found guilty of in the very first findings by the Ethics Commissioner, under the first "Trudeau Report", namely, that he breached section 5. It wasn't over illegal lobbying by the Aga Khan. It wasn't about his agreeing to take a trip and then setting up meetings. It was about the connection between his family and his family's decision to go to the island that put the Prime Minister in a conflict of interest.

These documents should simply verify the latest claim we've had from government and from the Kielburger group about the payments that were made to the Trudeau family.

• (1515)

We know that when questions were raised in the beginning, the Prime Minister said he'd never received any money from WE. We do know that the Prime Minister, after becoming the youth critic for the Liberal Party, carried on quite an extensive side business doing public speaking while being a parliamentarian. Was he paid by WE? He said he never was. Those documents will simply verify that. If they verify that, we move on, but what if they don't? What if the Prime Minister was paid? That's a legitimate question and a very serious question. I can't, for the life of me, understand why the Liberals would be filibustering and trying to block access to documents if those documents conform to the Liberal line, which is that the Prime Minister never received payments from the WE group.

Fine. Show us the documents.

In terms of his family, what struck us from the beginning was that we were told that Margaret Trudeau and Sacha Trudeau received no payment because they were volunteers, but we've learned that wasn't true and that upwards of half a million dollars was transferred for their work. We also learned the WE charity board was told explicitly that the Trudeau family was not being paid. What kind of deal is going down when a charity board asks a specific question—whether the Prime Minister's close personal family are being paid—and are told, "Don't worry; they're not being paid" when payments were made?

This isn't to suggest that Mrs. Trudeau or Sacha did anything wrong. That's not the issue here. The issue is that this relationship

that the Kielburgers developed with the Prime Minister put the Prime Minister in a very clear prima facie conflict of interest. These payments were affecting him, because at the end of the day, he was the one who signed off on this deal with WE. We know from the documents we received that the WE group was using photos of his family to show key ministries and key ministers who were going to sign off on this \$900-million deal. That is an obvious conflict of interest, and yet in the 5,000 pages of documents, no one from the Prime Minister's Office raised a red flag and said, "Hey, you cannot use my family to promote your ability to get this \$900-million contract. That cannot be done." Nobody said that.

If the \$500,000 in payments to the Trudeau family was as the WE group finally admitted, then the documents will simply verify that. When we pushed the Kielburgers at the finance committee about how these payments were made and why the Trudeau family was being paid while other illustrious public speakers were doing it for free, what I found really surprising was that they said these payments were not made for public presence. Margaret Trudeau was not paid by WE because of her extraordinary and, I think, very exceptional public presence as a mental health spokesperson. They didn't pay her for that. They paid her to work the after-events. Those after-events were the major corporate sponsorship events. They were paying the Prime Minister's family to do work for them. That's an issue and a conflict of interest. Those documents will either verify what those payments were or show us that there were other payments or other services rendered. We need to know that.

If everything's as straight up as the Liberals say, they don't need to have us go all night. They don't need to derail our work at committee. They need to say that we will set up a process.... We're all professionals here. We understand how these documents have to be treated. We will look at those documents, and if they verify what the Liberal government says and what Mr. Trudeau says about his financial relations with the Kielburger group, then we can move on, but if those documents contradict those statements, then I think this scandal will move into a whole different turf.

I'm only raising that because I cannot understand this obstruction of a motion that had already been passed by committee in July and that we had support for. The only thing that stopped us from getting those reports was the prorogation, the forced shutdown of Parliament by the Prime Minister when we began to get close to getting answers.

I said at the last meeting, and I will repeat it again, that we are trying to work with the other parties to move to a new committee through which we can actually look at all the issues from finance, government operations and official languages to deal with this and to deal with the larger issues of the pandemic spending.

• (1520)

Those issues include, for example, David MacNaughton, a close insider friend of the Prime Minister who got an all-access pass, right up to the Deputy Prime Minister and General Vance's chief of staff, while promoting, I think, a very dubious company. He got it because he's an inside Liberal.

We need to look at the issue of Mr. Rob Silver and the fact that I've had many, many calls from businesses in my region that are barely hanging on because the rent subsidy program was such a debacle, yet a company that was tied closely to the Prime Minister's inner circle was given the mandate. Was that done right, or were there friends involved?

We need answers. Canadians deserve answers because we are in the biggest medical and economic catastrophe in a century. We need to be able to show them that Parliament is focused on making sure that we're getting help out the door in a timely manner and that money is going to people who need it.

At the end of the day, I think the biggest scandal in this deal to help the Kielburger group was that the Prime Minister made a promise to university students—who are suffering massive levels of student debt and massive levels of insecurity—that there would be a billion dollars to help them. Not a dime of that money rolled out the door. As soon as the Kielburger group couldn't get the money, the Prime Minister walked away on the university students of Canada. He left them high and dry. That is the fundamental scandal.

We need to report to Parliament. We need to get this report done. I'm saying if it takes all night, if it takes all week, we will be here until the Liberals stop obstructing and stop interfering with the work of Parliament. Allow us to do our jobs as parliamentarians so we can get on with dealing with the many, many other issues facing Canadians. Our COVID numbers are spiking again. There's more economic insecurity. We see cities like Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto possibly being hit with more lockdown measures. We really need to get focused here, but to do that, we need to clear up the stench of corruption that's been raised around this scandal.

We need to get answers. We need to be able to say to the Canadian people that your parliamentarians went to get you answers and got answers, and this is what the answers tell us. Whatever those answers are, good or bad, we have an obligation to get them.

That is why I'm calling on the Liberals to stop the obstruction. Stop the interference. Stop the game-playing. You have an obligation to Parliament, just as we have. Let's get this job done. This is the role of our committee. We will continue to push until we get these documents.

I will now cede the floor, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order.

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

Madam Shanahan, what is your point of order?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, I'd just like to clarify the speaking list.

Is it possible that it's actually in the order that we see on our participants list—the raised hands—or do you perhaps still need to tell us from time to time what the speaking order is?

The Chair: You read my mind, Madam Shanahan. I was just about to do that.

What I have in front of me right now is Mr. Barrett, Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Dong, Madame Gaudreau, Ms. Lattanzio, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Ferguson.

Now I'll move on to Mr. Barrett.

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

It's incredibly frustrating to find ourselves in the third day of a Liberal filibuster to stop the release of documents that deal with the corruption scandal involving Justin Trudeau.

There's been a theme since 2015, and it's not openness by default; it's that every time Justin Trudeau needs to cover up his actions, he makes Liberal members pay the price. We saw that with all-night voting to block Daniel Jean from testifying. We saw that with all-night voting when the Liberals didn't want Jody Wilson-Raybould to be able to talk about the SNC-Lavalin scandal. Now we're back, and we see the Liberals filibustering to stop Canadians from getting answers in the Prime Minister's latest scandal. He's under investigation for a third time, twice having been found guilty of breaking ethics laws.

Here we are debating a motion that was approved by this committee. The committee debated and voted on receiving these documents, and we were to receive them. However, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament. On that same day, he released illegally redacted documents and then blamed the parliamentary law clerk for having redacted them, which we now know was not true. At the time, the Prime Minister said, "Well, we're proroguing, but there will be lots of time for questions." It seems that was as disingenuous as a lot of things that we hear from the Prime Minister.

Now, across multiple committees.... We had a shutdown of a committee at PROC. We had the finance committee shut down. It was suspended for a week, and it's being filibustered concurrently with this committee. At the immigration committee, the meeting was adjourned—while they were dealing with a motion on COVID, I might add. They adjourned the meeting. The same thing happened at the health committee.

We heard from the Prime Minister this week. He got very upset that the opposition would dare to exercise their constitutional obligation to hold the government to account and said that we need to talk about COVID. The only people stopping parliamentarians from talking about COVID are the Liberals. That's it.

This could have been resolved in 10 minutes at the first meeting, and this is true of multiple meetings. That they filibustered the health committee is I think the supreme irony. It's the biggest tell that the Liberals have no interest in accountability. They have no interest in actually doing for Canadians what they claim they want to do, because if they did, the hours we're pouring into these filibusters could be devoted to all kinds of other things. This was a choice made by them.

Reading newspapers into the record, reading PCO memos into the record, reading the committee mandate and asking for the committee mandate in meeting after meeting does not get results for Canadians. That's being complicit in a cover-up into corruption in Justin Trudeau's government and around his cabinet table.

I've heard from members of the committee that this isn't Main Street, that this is the Ottawa bubble, and this isn't what people want us to focus on. Well, I can tell you that folks of any political stripe don't like corruption and they don't like cover-ups, and that's what this is.

The Ethics Commissioner is investigating the Prime Minister for breaking the law for a third time, but we have the ability, we have the power, to order these documents. This motion is in order; it is consistent with the mandate of this committee.

• (1525)

The individuals involved who are named in the motion are relevant to the matter at hand, and to try to skate around this and say it's some kind of a game that is just meant to delay getting results for Canadians.... We've shown as members and the official opposition and all opposition parties have shown that when the rubber hits the road, we're there. We're there to improve the programs that the government proposes and to pass them into law quickly when it is necessary to do so. To say that is just a shield to try to protect against the scrutiny—the rightful and lawful scrutiny—of what has gone on with this government.

When you talk about the pandemic and about measures to help Canadians, that's how this happened. That's how we got here. When given the opportunity to help students, when given the ability by parliamentarians, by Parliament, to create these programs and to help students, what did the government do? They found friends of the Liberal Party. They found insiders and tried to shovel some cash out the door to them. That's why we're here.

This is specifically about COVID, because instead of doing the right thing, the Liberals did what they always do, just as they did in Adscam. We saw it before under the guise of an altruistic purpose. They were helping out insiders and giving cash to their friends. While I'm sure we are going to be here for a very long time, that choice is one that's being made exclusively by the Liberals. For my part, I'm being consistent with exactly what we said we're going to do when the Prime Minister shut down Parliament, and that's to get these answers for Canadians.

It's surprising to me that the Liberals are taking it in such great stride across many committees with the coordinated cover-up efforts, and I'm certain that I'm going to hear I'm being partisan, that the Liberal members on the committee would never do such a thing and that this is about doing what's right. I have to say that if the

shoe were on the other foot, I can guarantee you that Liberal members would be looking for accountability. I guarantee you that if across the border members of the President's family received half a million dollars in payments and then the company that paid them was asked to administer an agreement worth half a billion dollars, we would hear a lot of commentary. Those same members would be saying that we're certainly not like that. They'd say we have moral superiority, and never would that happen here, but it is happening here. It's happening inside the Liberal cabinet room. Now it's spreading into the Liberal caucus room and into the committee rooms.

The power to stop it is with the people who are sitting in on this call right now. I will cede the floor, Mr. Chair, and let all of the members of the committee make their contributions. Then, I'm sure, we'll hear supplementary contributions and then tertiary contributions.

We're here to get results for Canadians. Once this matter is disposed of, we can move on to other business, but the decision to travel this circular path is one that has been made by the Liberal members.

• (1530)

Like many people, I'm here in search of answers and accountability. We find ourselves here because of one person, and that person has twice been found guilty of breaking ethics laws and is under investigation for a third time. That person is Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In the same way that he had members vote for hours and hours and days and days to stop accountability in the past, it seems that history is repeating itself.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Now we will go on to Mr. Warkentin.

• (1535)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think some history is important here, because it is important for Canadians to understand that this motion was passed. A decision by this committee was made to request these documents. There had been a considerable amount of discussion at that point and there was a considerable amount of filibustering by the Liberals to try to delay the release of those documents. In the end, the ethics committee voted to have these documents brought to committee. It was just hours before those documents would have been available to committee members that the Prime Minister shut down Parliament, shutting down all investigations into the Prime Minister with regard to these documents and this scandal.

The national media are now reporting that Liberal members, Liberal MPs, are afraid of what these documents will show. They have been quoted as saying that they are afraid of what's included in these documents. As a matter of fact, I think it's telling that we have members of this committee who, I would say, are respected members of the Liberal Party and who would rather humiliate themselves than allow these documents to see the light of day. I think that says something about the severity of the contents of these documents.

If these documents were going to exonerate the Prime Minister, I don't think there would be a single member of the Liberal Party who would be fighting to see that we would not have access to them. I believe that if these documents were going to exonerate the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister would work day and night to ensure these documents would be released to the committee members, and I do not believe that any members of the Liberal Party who are members of this committee would humiliate themselves the way they are doing by going on for hours and hours and reading documents into the record. We all have access to those documents. This is simply a decision by those members to humiliate themselves rather than have these documents see the light of day.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau used to say that "sunlight is the best disinfectant". Well, Mr. Chair, I believe that the spreading infection of Liberal corruption desperately needs the disinfectant of sunlight right now. I strongly believe that it is time for this committee to have access to these documents in the way that this committee has voted in the past to have these documents brought forward. I believe now more than ever that we need to see these documents so that we can put this matter to rest. If in fact there is nothing to be seen in the documents, then Canadians will never see the contents of these documents, because regardless of what happens, these documents will be held in the clerk's office and will not be readily available to Canadians. They will simply be accessed by members of this committee to ensure that we can verify the evidence.

Mr. Chair, I believe that how desperate the Liberals are to ensure that these documents do not come to committee demonstrates just how damning the evidence within them must be.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warkentin.

I said that I would remind the committee on occasion of what the speakers list is. Next will be Mr. Dong, and then we have Madam Gaudreau, Ms. Lattanzio, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Fergus and Ms. Shanahan.

Now we have Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Good afternoon, colleagues, and thank you very much, Chair. I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving long weekend and relaxed a moment with their family.

I have been listening carefully to all members of the committee, not just today but last week as well, and I want to clarify something. I heard the opposition members accusing the Liberals of playing political games, going back and forth. I think I remember Mr. Barrett saying last week that this is a tactic we use and that they have tactics too.

For the record, I take my committee work very seriously. I was elected by my constituents and I was sent to Ottawa to do a good job. You have my 100% commitment to at least try to do a good job. I'm not gaming or anything like that. I take my job quite seriously.

We heard the opposition, both in this committee and also out there through press conferences over the weekend, trying to portray that we are delaying, but I think many good questions have been put forward on this side to Mr. Barrett, and they weren't answered. They tried to portray that the same motion was passed in July. What changed now, and why are we delaying on this?

For the record, let me just remind my good colleagues on this committee what the motion was back then, and the motion we are facing right now.

The motion back in July was put in writing on July 13 from Mr. Barrett to the clerk:

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(3)(h), the Committee review the safeguards which are in place to avoid and prevent conflicts of interest in federal government procurement, contracting, granting, contribution and other expenditure policies; and that, to provide a case study for this review, 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 — provided that these records shall be provided to the Clerk of Committee within one week of the adoption of this Order.

What we are seeing today, or saw last week moved by Mr. Barrett, is somewhat different. It was much broader. That includes allowing staff members to access these documents. There was no mention of government operations, no mention of WE. They tried to tie these things together. If you want to compare apple to apple to make an argument, I get that, but in my view it's not apple to apple.

In my view, an investigation by the Integrity Commissioner is ongoing right now. He's trying to do his best to find out the truth for Canadians. I think for committee members to try to start a parallel investigation runs a risk of interfering with this investigation the commissioner is doing and potentially contaminating it, and that is not very helpful. I don't think we were elected to do that.

Then we heard Ms. Shanahan's argument about how inappropriate it would be and how intrusive it is to investigate a member of Parliament's relative, and I wholeheartedly agree with her. I think many members of this committee would agree.

● (1540)

We put our name on the ballot and put ourselves under public scrutiny. Our relatives should not have to be ordered to open their finances and all these privacy matters for the public to judge. The lack of protection around these documents was another concern I brought forward last week. Again, it has not been addressed.

I heard some comment was made that we'll make it accountable. If anyone believes measures of accountability will take place, I don't know what they are. As members of Parliament we are all sworn by an oath, but that's it. I don't think everyone has access to these documents. In principle, having MPs investigating another MP's relative is wrong. First of all, I don't understand the changes since the last motion, and how these protections are being put in place to safeguard the privacy of individuals related to a member of Parliament.

I also heard mention that a lot of events are taking place. There's an urgency to matters on hand. We talked about the risk of COVID-19 over the weekend. Ontario is still seeing high numbers, and I think it's the same for the rest of the country. We're seeing extremely high numbers regarding COVID and we ought to do our work to help that situation.

I would like to bring other things to the committee's attention as urgent matters that should take priority in the committee. The discussion of COVID-19 has resulted in a drastic rise in anti-Asian racism. That is of serious concern to me and my family, and I'm sure to all Canadians. I'm sure you've read on social media and seen reported numerous times on TV how Asian Canadians are being attacked and insulted. I remember one very recent case of a supermarket staffer who was just doing his job by telling an individual who wasn't wearing a mask, a face covering, to put a mask on or, for the protection of their clients, he would have to leave the store. In that exchange, he was told to go home. He said he is a Canadian and this is his home, but it didn't matter. The attack continued. Luckily, the instigator was surrounded by a group of people with the right mindset, who insisted that he should follow the rules or leave the store.

These stories are not new; there are hundreds of them around the GTA—

• (1545)

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

Mr. Han Dong: I think it's a very important issue—

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

The Chair: Mr. Dong, we need to address the point of order from Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We are talking about the documents that were ordered by our committee that relate to the WE scandal. I would ask my colleague not to divert us. There are many disturbing stories about COVID-19 right now, but it's not the work of this committee at this time. If we're going to be here all night, we should be focused on the question of Liberal interference and whether or not they will agree to go to a vote. If we could just stick to relevance, it would make it a lot easier for the rest of us.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong, but please try to keep comments to the issue at hand.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his interjection, but I am making a point.

A lot of important stuff needs to be done, and unfortunately we're debating this motion. Otherwise I could have had this opportunity

to talk about these important issues and try to convince my colleagues—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Then end the filibuster.

Mr. Han Dong: Chair, that was uncalled for.

The Chair: Please keep your comments to the chair, colleagues.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

This is an important issue that must be addressed and discussed by this committee, in my view, as are the concerns about racism in Canada more generally. We have all seen this coming up, not just in the past few months but for years. Racialized citizens in this country understand that acts of racism happen in this country. For too many Canadians, systemic racism is a lived reality. That is why I'm extremely proud of what the government has invested in the economic empowerment of racialized communities—including through the Black entrepreneurship program—while working to close the gaps for indigenous communities.

The government also took important steps to address racism with the release of Canada's anti-racism strategy 2019-22. It's a three-year strategy involving the creation of an anti-racism secretariat and the appointment of the first-ever minister focused specifically on diversity and inclusion.

In the throne speech—which the Conservatives and the Bloc voted against, by the way—the government committed to redoubling its effort by taking action on online hate. We've seen lots of that over the weekend. A gentleman named Justin Tang got quite a bit of support on Twitter about his experience facing racism. He spoke up in protection of himself and all Asian Canadians. I applaud that.

Going further on economic empowerment for specific communities and increasing diversity on procurement, the government is building a whole-of-government federal approach around better collection of disaggregated data throughout the government.

I don't know how many members realize that if you look at the data on the number of Asian Canadians currently in the senior levels of our public service at the federal level, you will be shocked to find there are very few—maybe just a handful or maybe none, actually. Canada is a country that embraces multiculturalism. Every year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants come to this country, and tens of thousands of permanent residents become Canadian citizens, only to learn that Canada's own public service is not reflecting the diversity of its society. That is truly troubling. I hope this committee will make it a priority to study and provide recommendations through the House to the government to change this prolonged symptom in our society.

We are also implementing an action plan to increase representation through hiring, through public appointments and through leadership development within the public service.

Also from the throne speech, the government will introduce legislation and make investments that take action to address—

• (1550)

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, I'm wondering if there's going to be a call for relevance on this. We're just hearing the throne speech read into the record. It's not germane to the motion to detail every project that the government is undertaking during its mandate, unless it's speaking to corruption in the Liberal government and the repeated findings of guilt by the Ethics Commissioner for Justin Trudeau, specifically on the release of these documents—

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Let me deal with this one first, Mr. Fergus. I'll come back to you.

Colleagues, I have made every effort to give you broad latitude, but it is important to try to stay on subject. That's what we're here to debate, whether we like to debate or not.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, I appreciate what you just said, and I also appreciate the way you've been chairing the meeting since you assumed presidency of this committee. I find that you have been very fair-minded in allowing some flexibility for people to raise issues.

I think my colleague has been raising important issues that we should be focused on. I pay particular attention to the issue of the whole notion of combatting racism. I think it's important for us to have the ability to talk about this. The constant interruption to talking about this issue—I know it's not the intent of my honourable colleagues—reminds me of the microaggressions that a lot of Canadians of colour face.

I don't hear other members being interrupted, so I know that is not the intention. That is far from it. I've worked with these members for a long time, and they're honourable people. But I would ask that they exercise a bit more politeness and allow my honourable colleague from Toronto to continue with his comments.

• (1555)

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. In response to the member's comments, my call for relevance has to do with the immateriality of the topic to the motion.

Discussing racism and measures by the government to combat racism is, indeed, very important, and it is the purview of Parliament and parliamentarians. So on that, we certainly agree. However, the matter at hand is not that issue. We are talking about the release of documents related to the WE scandal and corruption in the Prime Minister's Office.

I would relish the opportunity to hear from the member opposite, at a time when it is appropriate, to discuss government action to combat racism, but at this time, that is not germane to the matter at hand.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus and Mr. Barrett.

Please go ahead now, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair. I was again listening carefully to what my colleague had to say. As I said, many questions have been raised last week and this week about the motion, and I have not heard a clear answer to those questions.

It is important for me to talk about anti-racism at every opportunity I get, not just here at committee, but on social media or in front of a mike. Every chance I get, I will talk about that.

Unfortunately, we are going back and forth debating a motion that clearly is a fishing expedition. The opposition has cast a broad net, much broader than the motion they moved back in July. I just don't understand what has changed in the last few months for them to think that investigating an MP's relative is appropriate.

It doesn't matter what the subject is; they just want to see all the records, going back to 2008, I think, and want access to these documents. Those questions have been answered. It doesn't matter what.... Opposition members are saying how simple it is. I don't think we should take it too lightly. We had the Prime Minister and chief of staff testifying for hours before the finance committee. There were a lot of truthful testimonies already given to the public. This shows the willingness of the government to present its argument, to present the facts to opposition members as well as to the public.

As to the whole notion of us trying to hide something, or why we are not supporting this motion that was supported back in July, I don't think that's true. Until my concerns and my questions are answered, I will continue to take every opportunity to raise issues that are important to me, my constituents, Canadians and future Canadians. I will continue to talk about how important it is and why the committee is not looking into the matter of anti-Asian racism happening during COVID. This is a big problem.

I applaud the government for what it announced in the throne speech. I remember that the Conservative Party dismissed it and decided to vote against it right away, without even taking the time to investigate and consider the content and extensiveness of the throne speech.

I take this opportunity to share something I picked out from the throne speech that might be of interest to all members of this committee: "Move forward on enhanced civilian oversight of our law enforcement agencies", "Modernize training for police and law enforcement", "Move forward on RCMP reforms" and "accelerate work to co-develop a legislative framework for First Nations policing as an essential service."

These actions are not just reserved for the throne speech and the floor of the House of Commons. In fact, there was a motion adopted in the last Parliament, put forward by Mr. Angus, to study facial recognition technology in Canada and its use. The motion adopted by the committee read:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h)(vii), the committee study the use or possible use of facial recognition technology by various levels of government in Canada, law enforcement agencies, private corporations and individuals; that the committee investigate how this technology will impact the privacy, security and safety of children, seniors and vulnerable populations; that the committee examine the impact of facial recognition technology on racialized communities; and that the study include how this technology may be used nefariously, such as a tool for criminal harassment or for other unlawful surveillance purposes....

I think it's a very good motion. I would support it right away. We are in a very unique situation with COVID, where a lot of people are required to wear masks. It presents a very unique situation for us to understand other important aspects of this technology. This is very important work. In many ways, the pandemic has been a good thing to reduce the uptake of facial recognition technology. Now that everyone is wearing masks, these companies have not been able to move their technology forward.

Speaking of wearing masks, I remember a story my wife told me at the beginning of COVID. I was outraged after hearing it. She was supposed to meet up with a friend. Her friend was taking a ride on the red rocket, which, as you know, is what we call the subway here in Toronto. She was wearing a mask. At that time, there were a lot of negative views toward people wearing masks, at the start of COVID. She was called the B-word, and it was very offensive. She was shocked and hurt; worse, nobody stood up for her. She just moved to the other end of the car. She told my wife, who shared it with me, and I shared it with my colleagues in the caucus.

I applaud the Prime Minister, Minister Ng and many of my colleagues who spoke up on that point, and on any incidents where Asian Canadians wearing masks became targets of hate and racial attacks. It's not getting any better. We've seen hundreds, if not thousands of incidents throughout COVID where Asian Canadians are getting attacked. Some of their families have been here for generations. They're Canadians. We heard from the Prime Minister that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We all need to stand together in the face of COVID, and also in the face of these exposures of racism happening in our society.

I mentioned earlier Justin Tang's recent experience. He was in Ottawa, at the Rideau Centre, and someone not wearing a mask held the door open for him and his friend. He walked by and was told that it was his fault that we're in a COVID situation. There was a death threat following the comment. That is completely unacceptable.

• (1600)

That's why I am taking every opportunity to raise these issues. I hope this will change the minds of my colleagues and we'll study these important issues and provide some recommendations to the government through the House, so we can change these things. We can at least slow the pace, because these incidents are happening so often and they are not slowing down.

In addition to the work of the House—

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau, go ahead with your point of order.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: With all due respect, I would very much appreciate getting back to the original subject, as you suggested, Mr. Chair. The notice of this meeting dealt specifically with the motion. I would therefore urge all members to follow the instruction.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gaudreau. As I mentioned before, relevance is key and to broaden it too much means that the efficacy of our debate would be diminished, so thank you for that point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

To me, it's quite important. I understand where my colleagues are coming from in questioning why I am speaking of anti-racism, but as I said, I'll use every platform possible to talk about racism.

In my mind, our committee is a very powerful committee. We can call witnesses and examine evidence and provide recommendations, so I think we should use our power to do the right thing. I don't believe that the fact that the opposition members are trying to rush to a vote without addressing my concerns about the changes to the scope of the motion.... We should be talking about something important, and if they choose to talk about the privacy of other members' relatives, I choose to talk about anti-racism.

That's why I think, in my mind, it's quite relevant. But just to—

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I think the issue of anti-racism is so important, but I've been very concerned that my Liberal colleagues seem to be using it to insinuate that members of this committee don't share that concern. The issue is that if the member wants to talk about anti-racism, if he has a bill or a motion to bring, we will discuss it.

Rather than this continuation of what I think Mr. Fergus referred to as microaggressions that are being used against us when we're just trying to get answers, I would ask the member that if he wants to talk about anti-racism then he can vote on this motion and we can get to work. All of us have taken a week out of our lives to listen to the Liberals talk about anything at all other than the fact that documents were requested by this committee and the access to those documents is being interfered with.

If the member has something relevant to talk about on any other subject, he can bring a motion. It may get ruled out of order but he has a right to do that. I'm asking him not to play games, not to throw these heavily loaded insinuations at my colleagues, whose work I respect, and I respect his work. If he wants to talk about something, then just let's bring this to a vote so we can get this thing done.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

As I said, I take this very seriously. There is no game being played here. The concerns are that the questions are not being answered. If you want, I will point to something on the record. Back in 2003, an investigation was done by this committee, when Mr. Chris Warkentin said:

It's unfortunate, Mr. Chair, that my colleague has undertaken to bring this forward now, simply because we do have important witnesses we should be hearing from. I do apologize on behalf of this side of the table for dismissing our previous witnesses much earlier. Obviously, they have important subject material that didn't get covered because of the choice of Mr. Andrews not to wait until committee business later on in the meeting.

Having said that, this is before committee now, and we'll have to undertake to review this.

You know, Mr. Chair, the Ethics Commissioner is currently reviewing the circumstances and the submission that has been brought forward. We also know that the Senate ethics commissioner is reviewing this. We also know that the Prime Minister has answered the questions in regard to this, and has said he knew nothing of it.

I can go on and on. I can read more if you want me to. It's just to prove a point that the accusation coming from the opposition members, especially from the Conservative members, that we are trying to stall this unveiling of documents or secrets, that we are trying to cover it up.... Just a few years ago, they were making the same argument, that a parallel investigation is taking place and there is no need for the committee to do the investigation. I wasn't there, but many members were. You will remember this; you debated it at this very committee. What's the difference? Why are you taking such a different position now and arguing that there is a need for a parallel investigation?

It's pretty relevant to what we are talking about today. That's another question. I see Mr. Barrett is super happy about this, and I look forward to hearing his answer. That's another question I put forward with regard to this motion. I was elected by constituents to ask questions. I won't vote blindly. I need to be convinced that there is a need for a parallel investigation, and I need to be convinced that you will not run the risk of contaminating the current investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. Again, there is an investigation happening right now.

Also, why take away all the safeguards of the privacy of these documents and broaden access as to who may see these documents? I think there are legitimate concerns, and I have not heard in the last week, including today, how they are being looked after.

With that, I'll pause my speech and I look forward to contributing at a later opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dong.

Now we'll move on to Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, my dear colleagues, good afternoon.

After almost two hours already of long speeches packed with information, it is now my turn to raise a few points.

We started out saying that we would try to maintain trust, that we did not want to go too far, that we wanted to do things right, and that we were in a democratic environment. Actually, I have a question for you to ponder: really, what is going on here?

A group like ours has three functions.

The first function relates to the topic. I have held my tongue on this matter, and I thank my colleagues for raising points of order. When we hold a meeting, it's very important that we stay on topic, that is, that we complete the task at hand. I respectfully submit to you that, as representatives of our fellow constituents, we owe it to ourselves to maintain trust. However, I hope not too many people are watching us right now, as I told you last time, because this is no way to maintain their trust.

Next, we have a process, and it's also very important that we follow it. Everyone legitimately has the right to speak. Some decisions made in the past were good, while others need to change.

Finally, the atmosphere. We first met only a few months ago. By the way, I cannot wait to see my new colleagues in person and in the flesh. Back then, you could sense a palpable desire to improve the lives of our constituents or to solve their problems. Today I see my colleagues on the screen working with their heads down, and that says a lot. I am no longer hearing stories or seeing smiles. At the end of the day, we have an objective and a role to play, and that is to improve living conditions for our constituents. We are parliamentarians and we are trustworthy.

The first time, I told myself that I had just arrived here and I would figure out how things work. I agree that we have a culture and it cannot be broken down. However, remember what was said in all the speeches: they spoke of how rapidly technology has advanced and how quickly we, as human beings, need to adapt to it.

So, what I have to say today is directly related to the motion. Why are we moving in opposite directions? When someone says one thing, someone else says they have done that themselves before, and they are not obstructing.

It's true, we can blame the pandemic for a lot of things. We can come up with a bunch of reasons why. The fact remains that we have a job to do.

I have said it before: we set an example, but we must be accountable. However, there are different levels of accountability. If we make a mistake once, we correct it and learn from it. If we do it twice, we begin to wonder what we might have done differently. When we do it a third time, we have to question our vigilance. Are we acting like professionals, to use a word that I have heard here?

We all know what we must do. What we need to determine today, now that we have established certain facts, is what should we have done and what did we fail to do. We need to get to the bottom of it; it's our responsibility to do so.

• (1615)

So I am appealing to your conscience. My dear colleagues, we are on an ethics committee, where we need to reflect on how we behave and live our lives, on what is good, what is bad, what is right.

At the moment, I see several things that are not right. For example, we have taken all this time to finally say that we really have to vote. I feel as though it is 4:29 p.m. and I haven't had the chance to speak. I feel we have all had plenty of time for debate, and we are realizing that we are already in another place. We know the matters we must deal with. Several motions have already been moved. We know what our constituents need, not only as a result of the pandemic, but also because of the changes in our society.

I would really like us to challenge ourselves to be watchdogs for what feels morally right. In theory, when we want to hide things, we can do that in various ways. Mr. Chair, I am not passing judgment on this; I have noticed a change in behaviour and language used on this committee. People may say it's because we are in a hybrid meeting; they may remind us that we work very well together in person. In any event, it saddens me. We are capable of doing better and getting it done. However, it's a minute to midnight in all respects.

I agree, Mr. Chair, people would still like to speak to us. I am one of the first to take as little time as possible and try to be as constructive as possible. That is my conscience speaking. I am not saying you don't have one, but I am trying to state facts that might help us work better together. We have matters to attend to now, but I feel we are showing people that our committee doesn't have much to do. Based on what has been said at the last few meetings, you certainly see no urgency.

According to my constituents and some journalists, we are doing ourselves no credit at all. They do not know whether they can trust us, their elected officials. They believe that, with our actions, we are shooting ourselves in the foot. So it is time to walk the walk. At the very least, we need to listen to our conscience, if only because we are a committee on ethics.

I, too, could speak for 45 minutes, for an hour and a quarter. However, I am stopping after four minutes, and I encourage all my colleagues to be concise when they exercise their right to speak. Our community will be the better for it. We are ready to vote. We must maintain democracy. Democracy is about speaking out. People elected us. We are who we are, with the government we have. So let us get on with it.

I am ready to vote, Mr. Chair. I know there are still some hands up, and I would like my colleagues to speak briefly. I can raise my hand too, and I want you to know that I will always be available.

• (1620)

[*English*]

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I listened very closely and I thank my colleague for being very relevant after the last hour, which felt like a time in the wilderness. When she said she's ready to vote, is she calling for the vote, because I think that would be a good opportunity for us to test the floor?

I'm certainly willing to vote after what we've been through, so I'm asking her if she's ready to call the vote.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Hear, hear!

Mr. Han Dong: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I see that we have a pretty extensive list of speakers who have raised their hands already to chime in. I just want to point that out.

Also, I take this opportunity to correct the record that, when I read the evidence from Monday, May 27, of what Mr. Warkentin said, I meant 2013, not 2003.

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

Mr. Han Dong: I just want to correct my record.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Angus, go ahead.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes. I think my colleagues need to show some respect. The question was whether Madame Gaudreau was calling the question.

I'm not interested in whether the Liberals want to hear the question; I want to hear Madame Gaudreau. She's a member of our committee and she has a right to say if she's ready to vote. I wanted to hear from her.

The Liberals can vote against her if they want, but they shouldn't be interrupting her ability to answer a question.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Just to be clear, I want to go to Madame Gaudreau because you've addressed your...

To be clear, colleagues, there's really no action that can be taken to call a vote. However, I think any member can address the chair and ask the chair to canvas the membership if they're willing to go to a vote, and in this case, as Mr. Dong pointed out, there are other members who are on the speakers list. They can certainly surrender their position on the speakers list and be willing to go to a vote.

That's just to be clear as to how that process would work.

Madame Gaudreau, do you have a comment in regards to Mr. Angus's intervention?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Absolutely, Mr. Chair.

I was saying that we have an allotted time for this meeting, which should end in the next few minutes. We know very well that we can deliberate as long as we want. Earlier, I respectfully said that it would be nice to hear what all members have to say. However, some have taken up an enormous amount of time, leaving less room for others. Having said that, we have a process, a topic and an atmosphere to maintain.

Mr. Chair, I appeal to everyone to move to a vote.

[*English*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, there is still a speakers list, and I'd like you to name the speakers on that list.

The Chair: Presently we have Madame Lattanzio, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Housefather, you and Mr. Warkentin.

As I mentioned before, colleagues, anybody can ask if there is a willingness in the room to vote, so you should give me some indication if there's a willingness in the room to go to a vote.

I see lots of shaking heads. That would indicate to me that there's no willingness to go to a vote now.

I will move to Madame Lattanzio.

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

I listened to my colleague's comments very attentively and I want to come back very swiftly on Madame Gaudreau's intervention.

[*Translation*]

I agree with my colleague that we have a process to follow. The process requires us to formulate our opinions and have a solid grasp on what we are talking about. I am a new member of this committee, but I think I speak for most of us when I say that it's essential—

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Lattanzio, just one moment, please.

Clerk, Ms. Lattanzio's audio is louder than the translation, so it's almost impossible to hear the translation because of the audio and the way it's tuned. Is there somebody in IT who can handle that?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): I'll get somebody to look into that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Do you want me to wait until it gets fixed, or how shall we proceed?

The Chair: I think you can proceed.

Madame Gaudreau, did you have a point of order?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: It is not a point of order. I would just like to point out that sometimes, when you use the function that switches from French to English, things can go haywire.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for that input.

Ms. Lattanzio, do you have your interpretation channel on French?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I do.

The Chair: Please continue, and the technical crew will do what they can.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Okay, I'm just going to say a few more words in French, and then I'll switch back to English.

[*Translation*]

So I was saying that I'm a new member of this committee. I know that it has had discussions and made decisions about this before. Clearly, it's only fair that this newly formed committee be given the opportunity to address issues like this. In addition, I believe the motion has been amended since the summer. It's therefore only fair that all members of this committee have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the new information and documents and to study them so that they can make sound decisions, let us put it that way. I—

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: On a point of order, Chair, I hate to interrupt my colleague but I feel that the interpretation is having trouble because of the speed at which she's speaking.

The Chair: Thank you for your intervention, Mrs. Shanahan.

Ms. Lattanzio, if you keep your cadence just a little bit slower, that would be better.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I'm going to start speaking English.

As I was saying—and this was my intervention last week—as a new member on this committee, I understand that discussions were had and information and documents were shared in the previous committee. But I think it is incumbent upon this committee, which has been reconstituted, that the members have all of the information and all possibilities to be able to gain all of the necessary information and documents, so that the motions before us be disposed of with the information we have today.

That said, I also understand—and that's what I understood last week—that the motion presented by my colleague Barrett differs from the one that had been presented in the course of the summer. Though I understand that the majority of it is the same, but for the reasons that are being discussed here in this committee, I think we owe it to ourselves to be able to look very carefully at this motion that has changed.

I'd like to focus on two things: one, the nature of the motion itself; and two—and I'm going to stick to the motion—elements that derive from this motion.

I'd like to point out the following, and I'm going to read again the motion that was submitted by my colleague Barrett:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), an order...[for] the Committee do issue...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...the documents be reviewed in camera.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to speak on two very important elements. Why are we going back to October 14, 2008? As a new member of this committee, I have no idea why October 14, 2008 is a chosen target date. We are talking about going back 12 years. As well, why are we making it so general as to name the company, organization, person or entity booking it?

I have colleagues Barrett and Angus, who have, time and time again, said—

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

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I'm sorry. Let me finish and then I'll let you—

• (1635)

The Chair: There's a point of order. Hang on for a second, Madame Lattanzio.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, for the information of members of the committee, my first name is Michael, so if they want to address me by my first name, it's Michael, not just Barrett. It's a bit unconventional to call me by my last name with no prefix or suffix.

We haven't had a chance to get to know each other, Ms. Lattanzio, so that's generally how I'll address you. If you want to abbreviate it, Michael is just fine with me.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Go ahead, Madame Lattanzio.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Okay, MP Barrett, Michael.

Both colleagues, MPs Angus and Michael, have stated time and time again that the basis of this motion is the release of documents of the WE scandal. Correct me if I'm wrong, but there's nothing in this motion that pertains to the WE organization. It's very broad and general in its scope. Basically, all I can conclude from this is that it's purely a fishing expedition into any company, organization or person. The scope of this motion is way too large.

One, again, the question of the date; two, the scope of the motion; and three, of course, the individuals who are specifically named within the motion.... One can only question.... If we are to go back to October 14, 2008, we have had many, both past and present, sitting members who have had exchanges with companies, organizations and persons or entities booking events. Why were they excluded?

Really, I don't understand why we would include the mother and the brother of the Prime Minister. I'm going to go back to the Con-

flict of Interest Act, because I know that MP Angus made a point with regard to who was included and who was not after my colleague Shanahan read out the act. I'd like us to look at it again, because MP Angus made a very interesting remark in saying that colleague Shanahan had read only one part of the act.

If we go to the act, we have definitions as to who it includes. The following definitions are in this act: the commissioner, the common-law partner, common-law partnership, dependent child, former reporting public office holder—we can go back to former office holders—gift or other advantage, ministerial staff, private interest, public officer holder, public sector entity, public service, reporting public officer holder, spouse and family members.

If we go to the definition of dependent child, again, we're talking about “a child of a public office holder, or a child of the public office holder's spouse or common-law partner, who has not reached the age of 18 years or who has reached that age but is primarily dependent on the public office holder or public office holder's spouse or common-law partner for financial support”—also known as *enfant à charge*.

When we go down to the definition of family members and relatives, we read, under family members, that “The following are the members of a public office holder's family for the purposes of this Act: his or her spouse or common-law partner; and his or her dependent children and the dependent children of his or her spouse or common-law partner.”

Subsection 3, in regard to relatives, states that “Persons who are related to a public office holder by birth, marriage, common-law partnership, adoption or affinity are the public office holder's relatives for the purposes of this Act unless the Commissioner”. Here we're talking about the Ethics Commissioner, who “determines, either generally or in relation to a particular public office holder, that it is not necessary for the purposes of this Act that a person or a class of persons be considered a relative of a public office holder.”

• (1640)

That said, we are asking this committee to determine that the mother and the brother of the Prime Minister be considered relatives when the Ethics Commissioner has the power to do that. He can decide which class of....

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have heard many things from my Liberal colleagues.

Are they telling us that the definition of the Prime Minister's mother can only be done by the Ethics Commissioner, that she would not be so clearly understood under the Conflict of Interest Act as a relative, as someone related by birth?

If the Liberals are having to go down that road, I think there must be something in those documents they are desperate to avoid our getting if they are trying to tell us and tell the Canadian people that only the Ethics Commissioner could figure out something as complex as the Prime Minister's family. The Prime Minister has a mother and a brother, and they were paid half a million dollars, but the Liberals are saying that we can't call them "relatives" until the Ethics Commissioner has ruled on that. If they are going down that road, then there's got to be something juicy in those documents.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

That's not a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It wasn't?

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Lattanzio.

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

I find it almost appalling how our colleagues are using terms like filibustering and saying that we are going in a certain direction, and making all kinds of innuendos and casting aspersions about our wanting to do our work and to try to understand the matters are on hand.

All I'm saying to colleague Angus is that there are definitions within this act. I think we owe it to ourselves to be able to look at these definitions in light of the nature of the motion.

Do we really have the authority to be able to accept this motion as is?

Therefore, Mr. Chair, I'm going to turn to you and ask you to render a judgment call based on the interventions that were made. We have yet to get answers to the questions raised by most of our colleagues since last Thursday. Colleagues around this table have been quick to call this filibustering and to use sound bites. I get that, but, Mr. Chair, I think the time has come for me to ask you to consider if this motion before us, for all the questions that my colleagues and I have raised up until now, is receivable.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lattanzio.

If you're asking the chair to judge whether the motion is in order, it absolutely is. Whether we like the wording or not is another story. That's why we've continued to debate it for hours.

I take it that you are ceding the floor.

Is that correct, Ms. Lattanzio?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I have one final comment.

Based on what Ms. Shanahan and I have read in the act, how are we to control the actions of the mother or brother of a sitting MP? How far do we go, if it is within the purview of this committee?

Many interesting and, I think, valid questions have been raised since last week. We have yet to get answers to these questions. Yet we have colleagues who say nothing but "let's vote". They say it doesn't matter if we have questions; it doesn't matter if we have concerns. We've just got to get to a vote here, they say. They say they've got other business to take care of and that if we want them to deal with other matters, we've got to get this thing done.

Well, I'm sorry. I think we are parliamentarians. We have a job to do. As Madame Gaudreau said, we have very important work to do, especially on this committee. I think we need to get all the answers and information that we've requested before we make a decision.

I'm ready to cede the floor.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Lattanzio.

Just to refresh everybody's memory, and because there are some additions as well, the next speakers are Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Housefather, Mrs. Shanahan, and Mr. Warkentin.

We're now at 4:45. We've been in debate for two hours and 15 minutes, so we'll suspend now for about seven and a half minutes. How is that, folks?

A voice: Can we make it 10 minutes, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sure, 10 minutes. It's 4:46, so we'll resume at 4:56.

• (1645)

(Pause)

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Clerk.

Colleagues, I think I've demonstrated my style of chairing enough now that you realize that my main concern, as I mentioned when I introduced myself, is that everyone has a right to speak. That's very important. You're representing constituents, and you've all made an oath to Her Majesty to do that, and do that effectively.

I did want to point out two things that I think go to the reputation of our committee, and also the way that we can operate in a very effective and collegial way.

The first is that I'm fully fine with your pointing out the actions of your colleagues. I think that to point out the actions and the consequences of those actions is quite permissible, but just be careful not to impugn the motives of your colleagues, unless you have a great ability beyond mine to actually read the minds of individuals. That will also ensure that we can work together in the future. This is only one motion and we want to make sure that we have a collegial representation of each other, as it's never fair to assume what the motives of someone are when they make their comments.

Also, I want to mention another thing that I think is important for our reputation as a committee. I've chaired the veterans affairs committee in the past, as well as the industry committee, and been the vice-chair of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. On several occasions, and certainly with veterans affairs in regard to PTSD and the sensitivity around that and a number of people who came to testify in confidence, as well at the subcommittee on human rights where people testified against very evil regimes at risk of their own lives, the testimony was guarded by the clerk of those committees. I never recall a leak endangering anyone.

I just want to be clear that if there's a procedure, whether it's a result of this motion or any other, where we have to protect the information of individuals, the clerk and I will do that with the utmost of integrity and utmost care to make sure that those people are not endangered in any way, either to their reputation or from some other harm.

That said, let me go over the speakers list once more. Up next are Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Housefather, Madam Shanahan, Mr. Warkentin, and Mr. Dong.

Now we will go to Mr. Sorbara.

• (1700)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and for those wise words.

We were all elected to represent a number of residents in our ridings, all 338 of us. If we consider all the colleagues here and those not in this meeting, we have the right not to be questioning the reasons for wanting to do things other than to represent the interests of our residents, and to ask questions from all sides of the House. That's what governing is about, and that's what being a member of Parliament is about.

Before I begin, I want to highlight one thing. It's not relevant to the actual study, but I would encourage all MPs to go online to the Royal Canadian Legion and spend a few dollars to get these wonderful masks to wear in their community. They're \$10 each. I ordered 10 of them, and they just arrived, literally yesterday, and I wear them with much pride. We're going to be having virtual Remembrance Day ceremonies—and I'll stop in a second and move on to the actual motion, Chair—but it's one way of showing a lot of respect for our veterans by ordering these masks, supporting our Legions, and wearing them for the next few weeks. I'm going to give some away to some residents.

Onto the motion at hand today, there was much excitement. I got to sit on the public accounts committee this morning with Mr. Green, so again, Matthew, it's nice to see you here today. You're doing a great job of representing the wonderful hard-working residents of one of the Hamilton ridings where I have many friends.

I was thinking about the motion at hand today. I looked directly not at the wording of the motion, and not the intent, but the mentioning of someone's family. We are all in politics, and we all have loved ones who support us. That's the reason we're allowed to do this wonderful job. I don't think I could be here without the support of my wife, my children, and many friends and relatives. I also don't enjoy the fact of having to drag people in, in the sense that

they have nothing to do with the matter. They're not in elected office, they're not political office-holders, or anything to that extent.

When I see someone's mother or someone's brother brought into the discussion, it does concern me in many ways, because it raises a number of questions for me regarding privacy. I'm not a lawyer. If the story were that my mother—who worked her entire life, raised three boys—were in this sort of situation, I wouldn't be very happy with this motion.

I'm not going to question the intent of the motion. Mr. Barrett. You're a member of Parliament and you have your job to do. I am looking at it from my view and saying, "Bringing someone's mother in, I just don't like it." I'm going to be frank. That's my opinion. You don't have to agree with it, and you probably won't, but personally, I really don't like it.

When I speak to my residents, I speak to the job I'm doing as an MP, first and foremost. We were elected to represent all the residents of all of our ridings, so whether they voted for us or not, whether they supported us or not, we listen to them, we answer their questions, and we help them out. That's our job. We try to make this country better than it is, and it's a pretty great place to be. We're blessed to have been born here. It's like we won the lottery.

When I see this motion, it concerns me. It concerns me not only from the point of view of privacy, but also of smearing, if I can use that word. Maybe that word is too strong for some, but it concerns me from that point of view.

When I speak to my residents and say, "What happens if I were going after your mom and your brother, as a response of the government, and they had nothing to do with the program?", that raises a lot of questions. I've heard that feedback, and it gets to my gut. After six or seven months of COVID, I've probably eaten too many pastries, but it really gets to the point of asking, "Where are we going as a committee, but where are we going as parliamentarians?"

• (1705)

When I think back, in my humble view, looking at this motion and understanding where it originated from, for me COVID really hit home in the month of March. We have a lot of friends and family back in our home country. My parents...I'm a Canadian of Italian heritage. COVID hit really, really hard in certain parts of Europe. For me, COVID hit really hard around the March period because we were going to do a spring break vacation and it got cancelled. We stopped it, of course. Then our government had to respond with a number of programs. The program, which this motion doesn't even reference but wants documents pertaining to it in a round-about way, is one of those responses where we actually, as a government, asked a lot of questions. Because this has been a unique and extraordinary period of time in our country's history and in the world's history, we had to, as a government, listen, consult and respond. Some of our responses were improved after consulting and listening more. That's what a government should do. That's what people elected us to do: they elected us to respond and to listen, too.

I ask myself, as a member of this Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, or if I'm a citizen out there listening, what has the government done? It's done the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, the regional relief and recovery fund and the Canada emergency business account. And I'm glad to see the unanimous support in the House for the extension of a number of programs that are helping Canadians today, as we speak, whose lives were impacted, are being impacted and continue to be impacted by COVID-19. That's a fact. We know it. We can debate this motion, whether I like it or Mr. Barrett likes it, or I don't like points of it, but right now we know Canadians at home are being impacted, and continue to be impacted by COVID-19. This motion is in response to a program that we put forth, which we then, when we looked at it, said, "No, there's a number of questions that came out from the intention of the program", so we continued with the Canada emergency student benefit, which I believe over 703,000 students benefited from.

This motion with regard to these documents naming the individuals here concerned me. If it were my family, my brother and my mom, from a privacy point of view it would concern me. On a really straight gut point of view, I wouldn't be happy, and I'm not happy. I'm not happy that we have to sit here and debate such a motion, which, in full frankness, is for me, Chair, if I can use the term, a fishing expedition.

For me, that does not in any way assist any of those individuals in my riding and across this country from coast to coast to coast who continue to be impacted by COVID-19, and it does not deal with the issues of privacy at all. In fact, I spent some time reading the commissioners' annual report, described by the news release as, "Pandemic raises privacy concerns highlighting urgency of law reform. Public health crisis has pushed daily activities online, underscoring critical need for change". I tie that privacy to the commissioner's annual report back into this motion, where we will dig into, potentially—and I hope not, for many reasons—people's privacy, unelected individuals' privacy. It's nothing more than what I call a fishing expedition.

When I see the response from March, and I see our government's introduction of so many programs, so many initiatives, with help, I will more than gladly admit and say that a number of opposition members have contacted me, have contacted ministers, have spoken out publicly, and said, "How do we strengthen things? How do we improve things?"

● (1710)

And that's what Canadians expect. They expect us to work for the betterment of themselves and their families. They expect us to work for the betterment of Canadians who have been impacted. They expect us to work together, and we've seen that at all levels of government. Here in Ontario, between the provincial government and the federal government, on a regional basis and in our cities, everybody's working together.

You know what? We have to step back and do what's in the best interest.... Yes, Mr. Barrett and other opposition members, yes, we must always hold government to account. We must always ask tough questions. That is the job of opposition members, and frankly, it's the job of any member of Parliament, but when it comes

to the privacy of Canadians, when it comes to looking at a motion that speaks to someone's mother and someone's brother, there's something wrong with that. There's something that strikes me as being very.... It just doesn't sit well.

I had the pleasure of listening to Margaret Trudeau when she came to the city of Vaughan to give a speech to the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce in front of a thousand people. It was a women's event, and she spoke about mental health and her experience and life. There were a thousand people in that room glued, listening to this individual share her life experience. You could hear a pin drop in that room.

So I ask myself, for this individual, this mother, this grandmother, why are we undertaking a fishing expedition? For me, it doesn't sit well. The motion in no way sits well. I do not support the motion. I don't support the motion, not only because I'm a Liberal MP. I don't support the motion because it doesn't sit well with my values.

With regard to protecting Canadians' privacy, in 2016 there was a study done called "Protecting the Privacy of Canadians: Review of the Privacy Act". I think this is relevant to this committee and to the motion at hand. I'll just read some of it into the record:

The Privacy Commissioner recommends creating a legal obligation for government institutions to safeguard personal information.... In his initial appearance before the Committee, Commissioner Therrien said, "In the digital world, it is infinitely easier to collect, store, analyze, and share huge amounts of personal information, making it far more challenging to safeguard all of that data and raising new risks for privacy." Regarding the safeguarding of information, he noted that "[c]urrently, that is the subject of government policy, not legal obligations per se."

In a brief submitted to the Committee, BC FIPA said:

We agree with the Commissioner that administrative direction from the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) is not sufficient, and that the Privacy Act should be brought in line with other legislation (including the BC's FIPPA [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act] and PIPEDA) by expressly including this requirement. There should not be a lower standard of protection in the public sector than the standard the federal government has imposed on the private sector through PIPEDA.

In its brief, the Privacy and Access Law Section of the CBA also agreed with the need for including safeguards in the legislation

—and here I reiterate the word "safeguards" because we don't want fishing expeditions, and that is what so concerns me about the motion—

pointing out that while the TBS and other government institutions have created policies on safeguarding information "[t]hose efforts have been inadequate to signal to public servants and the public the serious risk of loss, theft or misuse of personal information in digital form." The brief also noted, "A feature common to many other Canadian privacy laws, both public sector and private sector, is to require the organization to create reasonable safeguards to protect personal information including administrative, technical and physical safeguards."

● (1715)

Mr. Israel of the CIPPIC and Ms. McPhail of the CCLA both endorsed the idea of creating a legal obligation to safeguard personal information. In her testimony, Ms. Austin pointed out that, "there are serious Charter issues in not safeguarding that information properly that the courts are starting to really pay attention to."

Some witnesses discussed the need for sanctions when there are violations of the Act. Mr. Fraser said, "Many more modern privacy laws ... have an offence provision that if an individual or even an institution, unlawfully and usually with knowledge, is in violation of the statute, they can be charged under that." Mr. Gogolek of BC FIPA said, "There should be a broader scope and a broader availability of sanctions, including damages, under the Privacy Act."

We know individuals' privacy in the modern age is of paramount concern to us.

I'm a new member of the ethics committee. I've read Mr. Barrett's motion several times, or Michael, if he likes to be referred to that way. I understand what he's asking about—I don't agree, like I said—but I am very, very respectful of someone's privacy, especially a non-political office-holder's privacy, especially during a time when the government came out with a number of programs.

We have to remember that there were no funds administered or distributed under the proposed program. Students were assisted through COVID-19 through the Canada emergency student benefit. They were assisted with an increase in the Canada summer jobs program, and I know that's something that Mr. Barrett and his party called for. We actually boosted, we listened and we consulted. That's what a government is in power to do. We didn't just say "no", we didn't bury our heads in the sand; we listened, and that's what we continue to do.

When I was reading through this brief, I was able to glean and pick up:

One of the safeguarding measures that was suggested is to require that data be stored in Canada. This is referred to as domestic data storage or data localization. Mr. Gogolek testified,

in British Columbia our public sector act has a domestic data storage requirement, something that does not exist at the federal level. Again, this requirement was recently supported by the committee reviewing our Act earlier this year, and also by the Government of British Columbia. We would commend this to you as something you may want to look at....

Other witnesses had reservations about this approach. In referring to the concerns about storing information in the United States, which has a different approach to the privacy of information, Ms. Austin said,

Data localization is one response to that dynamic. I think it's an unrealistic response to think that this is a solution in the long term. Another response... is to negotiate a bilateral agreement with allies like the U.S. to say that when Canadian data is in the United States, you protect us to the same extent that you protect your own citizens.

Mr. Chair, I know I veered a little bit away from the motion. I'm going to tie it back in, because I understand the point and principle of relevance.

Mr. Fraser said that the location of data is only one of many factors to be considered. He said there needs to be "nuanced risk analysis" and referred to the TBS policy,

which is, if any government department is going to make any decision about the location of data in connection with outsourcing...location is going to be a factor, but there are other things as well. Who is going to be the service provider? Who are they beholden to? What national ties do they have?

Similarly, Assistant Commissioner Oliver of the RCMP also called for a risk-based approach to safeguarding information....

That is why I believe, when I read the motion.... I think at one point, regarding who has access to the material, whether it's in camera or out of camera, we as MPs know that information in today's world is very powerful because it can be used in many different ways, and it could be torqued in many different ways and it could be leaked.

The idea, the opportunity or the chance of someone's family being impinged—if that's the correct word, and I know there are many lawyers in here who will correct me on that—scares me. I think about this motion, and it does scare me. I go back to that basic rule of life: Why are you going after someone's mum? Why are you going after someone's brother? I fundamentally disagree with that.

● (1720)

Is it right to ask questions of sitting office-holders, of sitting politicians or public servants? Yes, absolutely, ask as many as you want. In fact, one member of Parliament, during a committee I was able to sit on, when the power went out, assumed the title of chair when the chair was unable to log back in due to climatic effects in P.E.I. We understand that. We understand it is our job to ask tough questions, and tough questions were put to the Prime Minister and to Ms. Telford, and they were answered.

To be frank, we as MPs need to bring in policies at this time. I know that MP Green has brought forth a number of policies that he's championing. Some I agree with; some I probably don't agree with, but at least I give him full credit for doing that.

Mr. Barrett, you have your right to bring forth motions and ideas. I would love to see ideas that help us to get through COVID-19 more, that improve the situation, that get people back working faster. If they're tough questions, they're tough questions, and we have a responsibility to answer them. The ministers around the cabinet who have the privilege of being ministers of the Crown have the responsibility to answer those questions, to be frank, to be straight up, to put their cards on the table and say, this is where it is, this is what we're doing, this is how we're going to get to a better place. And I welcome those tough questions. I don't shy away from them and I wouldn't shy away from them.

One of the recommendations in this report that I was able to read on privacy and why it's so principal and central to the motion at hand, and why I so adamantly oppose the motion, is recommendation 7:

The Committee agrees with the commissioner's recommendation on creating a legal obligation for government institutions to safeguard personal information and therefore recommends:

....That the Privacy Act be amended to create an explicit requirement for institutions to safeguard personal information with appropriate physical, organizational and technological measures commensurate with the level of sensitivity of the data.

Recommendation 8, which balances it out, states:

That, the Privacy Act be amended to set out clear consequences for failing to safeguard personal information.

This part is particularly relevant to the motion before this committee, I believe. Why? It is because what we are debating here in this motion affects Canadians in a very profound manner. We are talking about a family. We are talking about a brother and mother who are non-political office-holders, who have given their time to many charities across this country to assist and to educate. Within that spirit, I have a significant issue with it. When I think about the breaches of privacy or the breaches of personal information, I think of this:

The Privacy Commissioner recommends requiring government institutions to report material privacy breaches to the OPC and, where appropriate, to notify affected individuals....

I would personally love to hear from the Privacy Commissioner on what he thinks about this motion, about what it touches and what it doesn't touch. Are my concerns real, or can they be alleviated? Are we really undertaking a fishing expedition, which I think we are, or are we not?

I do not believe, in my good heart, that I'd be supporting a motion that will not answer any more questions, or raise any questions, but basically delves into the private lives of two individuals who are not the Prime Minister of Canada and his wife. It just doesn't give me good feelings. I've been a member of Parliament for six years and I've participated in political life. My first election was in 1988 and I did not enter into this realm to vote for a motion that delves into the lives of someone's mother or brother.

● (1725)

I know when I speak to my residents, because I have spoken to some of them about this, they're in alignment. They're totally in alignment.

Therefore, I caution the opposition, I really do, in saying that the focus of Canadians is not this motion. The focus of Canadians is not going into the privacy of Margaret Trudeau or Alexandre. That's not their shtick, if I can use that term. I think as a committee we need to be very judicious, very diligent in our studies. We need to understand what Canadians are thinking about.

We as a committee should be very judicious in what motions we undertake to study, and which motions we don't. I look at the need for privacy protection, and I share MP Sweet's.... I know you've been a member of Parliament for many years and have done a phenomenal job representing the residents in your riding. We all want to do the same thing and we all want to reach certain levels of building that profile and that brand. I say to you, sir, and to all our committee members that we all need to look at this commissioner's annual report on privacy, and we need to think about what we do as a committee and where we spend our time.

The motion at hand does not move us forward. The motion at hand does not answer or, if I can use the term, meet head-on the issues that are impacting Canadians. The motion at hand delves into privacy, and I'm going to go back to that. I'll go back to it a thousand times in the next 24 hours if I need to. The motion at hand goes back and delves into the privacy of individuals where I fundamentally believe we have no right to go to. Again, it just strikes me as completely wrong.

You want to ask tough questions, ask the tough questions. Over the summer we had a number of sittings of the House of Commons. We had a number of sittings of the finance committee, which I was able to serve on and help out. Now here we're back in Parliament. We'll be back sitting next week. Again you'll have a number of chances to ask questions. This motion frankly is not [*Inaudible—Editor*]. I look at the commissioner's message from looking at the Privacy Act and the privacy of Canadians. I want to read this because it's so important to understand what we're up against in today's world...even for the fact that the committee and MP Barrett have put forward this motion to seek to look at documents that per-

tain to the privacy of Canadians who are non-elected office-holders, who do not benefit from a program that was introduced by the federal government. I question that.

I will read the commissioner's message for the well-being of the committee:

The need for federal privacy laws better suited to protecting Canadians in the digital age has been a common thread in our annual reports to Parliament for many years.

Last year in this space, I noted how major investigations into Statistics Canada, Facebook and Equifax had all revealed serious weaknesses within the current legislation.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic makes the significant gaps in our legislative framework all the more striking.

When I read that third sentence of the commissioner's message, I think about this motion, because if it weren't for COVID-19 we would not have needed all of these programs to be put in place to keep our economy afloat, for that 20% of the economy that was shut down, to help millions of Canadians out, to attempt to put in place programs to assist not only seniors, not only disabled Canadians, but to assist students as well.

● (1730)

One of the avenues that we investigated as a government was to look at the WE organization and to see if we could go down that route, which we pulled back on after doing our due diligence and asking those tough questions.

We put in place the Canada emergency student benefit to help those students who were impacted, who had those summer jobs lined up that were no longer there. We know, fundamentally, that when there is a recession, for whatever cause.... And this was a shock to our economy. It wasn't a failure of the market. We needed to put in place programs, and that's where we got to this motion.

I would love to sit on a committee where we can go through all the programs we put in place and ask tough questions, because I know those programs help millions of Canadians, including thousands in my riding, whether they are businesses, students or seniors, and now, at the end of the month, disabled Canadians.

I know we worked a lot with the opposition. I know we all worked together to ensure that no one was left behind, and no is being left behind. That's why there was a unanimous vote in the House of Commons, but by golly, am I going to oppose a motion that goes after someone's mum and brother? It strikes me as wrong.

I know the folks sitting outside in the morning having coffee—socially distanced, of course, and wearing masks—in the area that I represent; I know what you are doing. You're going after someone's mum, after their brother. You're spending time doing that. We have businesses to run. We have kids to keep in school. We have personal protection, making sure that's being delivered everywhere. We have to make sure we get Canadians to get that flu shot. And you're spending time doing what?"

At my core, I don't like it. I've always represented my constituents; I'm in my sixth year now. I'm a very frank MP, as my colleagues know. I just don't like it. I don't need to be a politician to say that or a party to say that. I know this is a motion that is fundamentally wrong.

I want to read the commissioner's message into the record.

The pandemic has raised numerous issues for the protection of personal information. Around the world, there have been heated debates about contact tracing applications and their impact on privacy.

We need to look at that, tracing applications, the COVID-19 app. That's what our committee should be doing:

Many of us have been asked to submit to health monitoring measures at the airport, or before we enter workspaces, restaurants and stores.

More broadly, the pandemic has accelerated the digital revolution – bringing both benefits as well as risks for privacy.

Again, we go back to privacy, Mr. Chair. For me, that's what this motion talks about and dwells on: privacy. Are we ensuring that people's privacy is being protected? Are we delving into people's privacy that we have no right to delve into?

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Quite some time ago, the honourable member admitted that he was stretching the relevance of his remarks, and now he has become deeply repetitious. We've heard repeatedly that this is wrong, that we shouldn't do it. And we've heard repeatedly this idea of privacy. These are two points of order on both accounts, in my opinion, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

In the past, I have instructed members to try to stay relevant to the motion at hand.

Thank you for that intervention.

Mr. Sorbara, please go ahead.

• (1735)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to Mr. Green for his intervention.

You'll have to excuse me if I steered away from relevance in pointing out the Legion mask at the beginning of my comments, but I've always tried to stay within the purview of the motion at hand, Mr. Barrett's motion.

If there's something we disagree with, we disagree with it, but in my humble view I will try to stick within the realm of relevance. We're not here to waste anyone's time. We're not here to not debate. We are here to debate the issue at hand, and for me it goes to the heart of one word, which is "privacy".

The need for social distancing has meant that even more of our daily life takes place via the use of technology. Instead of meeting in person, we have further shifted to working, socializing, going to school and seeing a doctor remotely. Through video conferencing services and online platforms, technologies have been very useful in halting the spread of COVID-19. By allowing essential activity to continue safely, they can and do serve the public good.

At the same time, however, they raise new privacy risks. For example, telemedicine creates risks to doctor-patient confidentiality when virtual platforms involve commercial enterprises. E-learning platforms can capture sensitive information about students' learning disabilities and other behavioural issues.

I read the Privacy Commissioner's official response to the pandemic:

In May, we issued a joint statement with our provincial and territorial counterparts, outlining key privacy principles to consider as contact tracing and similar digital applications are developed.

Privacy guardians from across the country felt it was important to issue a common statement because these applications raise important privacy risks. But the fact that such a statement was necessary is an unfortunate reminder that some of Canada's privacy laws – certainly its federal laws – do not provide a level of protection suited to the digital environment.

Respect for privacy rights should not be a suggested best practice left to the goodwill of government officials or big tech. It should be a clearly codified and enforceable requirement. In a joint resolution last fall, our provincial and territorial counterparts also joined us in calling for effective privacy legislation in a data driven society.

Our response to the pandemic as well as how this enormous public health challenge demonstrates the importance of rights-based law reform is described in more detail in the next section of this annual report.

I'm not going to read the entire report this evening. If given the opportunity, maybe later on this evening I will, but I'm not sure.

On the motion at hand from Mr. Barrett, the privacy of a family in this most extraordinary and unique period of time needs to be respected, and it's not being respected. As I stated from the beginning, when I think about all the programs we've put in place and how we have arrived at this motion, going through the study and the work that was done during the summertime, this is not a motion.

I'm not going to use "worthy of consideration", because all motions should be worthy of consideration by my committee colleagues. It is a motion that is a fishing expedition. If you want to call it painting a wall with a brush and just throwing paint on it, that's what it is for me. It's nothing more and nothing less.

As for the exact wording, “any expenses that were reimbursed and the name of the company, organization, person or entity booking it”, I’m actually going to read the entire motion, because I do want to delve into that.

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.

• (1740)

When I look at the line that says, “that were reimbursed and the name of the company, organization, person or entity booking it”, I see that it is a very broad definition for a motion. That means that we, as a committee, can go and pick out one of 38 million Canadians, write a motion, put their name in, and say that we want to know what you’ve done since October 14, 2008, independent of who you are, and bingo, you’re coming in front of our committee. That is terrifying. As I’ve said before—and this is repetition, MP Green—we’re doing it to two individuals who are not public office holders. It’s a mother and a brother. On that level there, I think to myself, as a member of a committee reading this motion, that any Canadian can just be put in there. You know what? Let’s go do it to this business person. Let’s go do it to that lawyer, or somebody who has emailed their member of Parliament asking for help or providing recommendations, or a stakeholder we have met with. This freaks me out a little bit, and again, it’s fundamentally wrong.

With that, Chair, I think I’ve emptied out my brain cells for the last 45 minutes. As a member of Parliament sitting here tonight at 5:41 p.m.—and I have to go to a viewing after 6 o’clock for a friend’s father who unfortunately passed away—I think to myself, “Why am I looking at this motion? What am I investigating? What documents are these folks after, other than going after the documents of the Prime Minister’s mother and brother and wife? How is this moving Canada forward?”

I know MP Angus earlier said it was a \$900-million program. No, it wasn’t a \$900-million program. No, there weren’t any funds distributed by the federal government. No, there were not any taxpayer funds used. We know that. We know the only program that assisted students was the Canada emergency student benefit, and it was approximately 704,000 students who received funds from that. We know that.

This motion is as wide as a dump truck, and I’m talking about the big ones, not the small ones. These are the ones that you can put tons and tons of soil in or that you use when you tear down a building. Where is it going? This is basically saying that we want you, Margaret Trudeau, to empty out to us the last five years of your life when you’ve spoken for mental health. If someone spoke for mental health, we want to know. Whoever booked it, we want to know.

Think about that. It’s pretty rotten, isn’t it? It kind of smells the joint up. Sorry for using that unparliamentary language, Chair. It could be mental health, the Children’s Aid Society, or if you’ve spo-

ken at various causes. We know charities these days, especially in this pandemic, see a declining number of donors and people who can assist. That’s what you’re going. There’s not even a mention of the organization that the government had spoken to to put in place the program. No, there’s not even a mention.

To me, this motion here is completely different from the motion that was brought forward in July, and the intent is different. This is like digging a big circle and just digging and digging and digging until you can find one stone that doesn’t match the other stones, and saying, oh, I found something. That’s all it is.

It troubles me—I say this to you, Chair—when there’s an opportunity cost. For me as an economist, an opportunity cost is a big thing. When we’re spending our time talking about something, we’re not spending our time talking about something else. When I’m spending time talking about MP Michael Barrett’s motion from October 8, 2020, about this, that means I’m not spending time talking about and reading “OECD releases global tax reporting framework for digital platforms in the sharing and gig economy”. I’m not talking about “Model Rules for Reporting by Platform Operators with respect to Sellers in the Sharing and Gig Economy”. I’m not looking at things for this committee to deal with in relation to privacy so we can strengthen and improve laws for Canadians.

• (1745)

When I read this motion, I keep thinking about it. These documents should be provided “within 24 hours of adoption of this motion”. Is that even realistic?

For me, this motion contains a number of errors. I think I’ve pointed out a couple of them.

First of all, it doesn’t even delve into something that Canadians are concerned about right now. Canadians are concerned. Here in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, we’ve had one school that had to close down because of COVID-19. If I told those several hundred parents who have their kids home right now that I’m dealing with a motion this evening to look at where the Prime Minister of Canada’s mother has spoken in the last couple of years and who booked it, I think they would have a few choice words for me and my committee members. I think so. Maybe I’m wrong, but I think I can read those tea leaves quite well, and as a parent, I know that’s a fact.

When we want to talk about the issues at hand for Canadians, when we want to talk about what Canadians are worrying about, I preface this by saying I believe in full accountability, transparency and asking tough questions of the government, because I do that myself, and I’ve done it for the last six years.

When I think about this motion, “each speaking appearance, an indication of the fee provided, any expenses that were reimbursed and the name of the company”, what are we looking at? What are we asking here?

This says I want to go into someone's private life and get all their information because I'm going to undertake a fishing expedition and I'm going to smear you. That's what it says to me. Maybe I'm wrong, and the MPs from the other side of the aisle or even my side of the aisle can say, "No, Francesco, you're wrong." I'm going to say that I'll listen. I'll hear you out, but that's what I get from it. That's my interpretation of it.

Chair, I don't know what other motions the opposition members plan to bring forward. We're debating this one, and I look forward to continuing to debate this one because, in my other time, when I'm not sitting on public accounts and helping out in finance, along with parliamentary secretary duties to help Canadians, I have such a privilege of being a parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Revenue. I know I'm reading about things that concern Canadians today, and I would have hoped that there was a motion that was tight, that asked the questions that need to be asked on any subject. When I read this, I'm thinking, "Oh my God, what is this?"

For me, Chair, when someone puts together a motion as an MP, maybe there should be a training course, because when you're elected a member of Parliament, it's like you're going to become a father, but there's no book. No one says, "Here's the book. This is what you're going to do." It's kind of like trial by fire. You learn as you go. You read Bosc and Gagnon. You look at the book and you think, "Oh my God, am I actually going to read that or am I going to go grab a drink with my colleagues?" and you kind of take up the "drink with my colleagues" situation first, and then you go back and read the Standing Orders.

When you are a member of Parliament and you put together a motion, you ask, "What am I looking for? What am I asking?" This is just a broad fishing expedition. That's all it is. There's nothing more, nothing less. It does not ask any tough questions, such as whether the programs were effective and whether they helped Canadians.

We know from the testimony during the summertime that we got the information we needed. The Prime Minister—and this is me speaking as someone who was raised in northern British Columbia, whose parents were union members—owned up and said, "I didn't recuse myself. I made my mistake." When you have someone do that, that's called leadership. That's saying, "You know what? I'll take responsibility for what I did wrong by owning up to it." As a father, I need to do that; as a husband, I need to do that; as an MP, I need to do that, and as a person. That's the first thing you're taught in life. When you do something wrong, you say, "Hey, I made a mistake. I learned from it, but I've got to move on."

That's what we saw this summer. That's called leadership.

• (1750)

In this day and age, when it's easy to use our digital platforms and put together our little five-second blurb and say you scored a political point, much like in this motion that I have in front of me, it doesn't help anyone's life, it doesn't improve our lot and it doesn't strengthen our communities. You know what does? It's when we work together.

When we take ideas from all sides of the aisle and come back, much like if we worked with the NDP on ensuring a very robust re-

covery benefit and we listened to their ideas, or if we listened to the Conservatives on CEBA or to other stakeholders that we all meet with, that's when we shine. That's when we come forward and say we're really proud to be a member of Parliament. I'm proud not only to be part of the governing party, but to be a member of Parliament first and foremost.

At this point, it's nothing more than a fishing expedition. Mr. Chair, I'll have one swig of water and I think I'm almost finished. I'm sure some of you will be happy with that.

Mr. Chair, on the notion of privacy, the first thing that strikes me about this motion is the privacy concerns I've raised. I think we all need to step back as parliamentarians, as Canadians and as individuals and say to ourselves that we are looking at something that, for me, impinges on a person's privacy as an individual who has a profile here in Canada whom we all know, whom many in our community have been with when, for instance, the Prime Minister's mother has spoken to us. This does not strike me as a good motion to approve in any way.

Whatever the opposition is looking to find, my hunch tells me that you're going to be greatly disappointed. The programs we put in place during the summer have a lot of moving pieces for sure. I think every government has demonstrated that across the world. Today we see cases spiking in a lot of different countries in second or third waves. We're all in this together; this isn't going away. We need to dig deeply as Canadians, as parliamentarians, and ask ourselves if we are we doing the right thing, because right now, whether it's in Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario, the United States, Europe or other countries, we are dealing with a pandemic. At the same time, this motion brought by MP Barrett, to me, completely veers us off that tangent in doing the right thing for our constituents and as Canadians.

MP Barrett, I understand your rebuttal and I empathize with you. This is politics, so we have to go ahead. There has to be something there.

Do you know what you're doing? You're going after someone's mother and brother. You're asking for this big fishing expedition, which my constituents don't like. They don't. I've heard it.

I'm going to stay focused. I'm going to enjoy this committee. I enjoy making new friends from both sides of the aisle. I'm quite honoured to say I have friends on both sides of the aisle, from whichever party. That's just the way I was raised.

However, from a basic value proposition, not even a political proposition, I look at this as going right to the heart of someone's privacy. I can't accept that. I think this motion is completely wrong. I think the intent of this motion, for me, is not in line with my values. It's just not.

It's unfortunate, but again, Chair—I'll stop in a few minutes, or I'll try to—the idea that you can ask for someone's records is... I read this line over and over, "...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...."

• (1755)

For the Prime Minister's mother, who came to the city of Vaughan to speak to the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce event on women's issues, do you need that record? She came and told her story. Do you need that record? That is the motion. Really? Is that why we are here? We are here for someone who came to a luncheon with 1,000 other women and a few men, and this motion would capture that. It's kind of shameful.

The opposition really needs to think about this motion and really understand what this motion means, because it's easy to write something like this down and say, "We need these documents. There has to be something burning there." Well, do you know what? You are going to get somebody who spoke to a room of 1,000 women, a couple of men and the mayor of Vaughan—

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, on a point of order—

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: He has used the term "privacy" almost 20 times in the last 20 minutes, and he has now retold the story for the third time. We can tell he is parched, and I would love for the member to either find something relevant or cease and desist the repetition.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

Mr. Sorbara, you mentioned you were wrapping up.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Yes, Chair, I'm wrapping up.

Thank you for the intervention by the honourable member from one of the Hamilton ridings. There are four Hamilton members, if I'm not mistaken, and they all do a great job for their constituents, so thank you for raising the issue of relevance and repetition.

In the last 10 minutes it has been said that the Prime Minister's mother, Margaret Trudeau, came to the city of Vaughan and gave a speech to over 1,000 individuals in the city, in my riding, and actually right next door to the training facility for the carpenters union. I love my union members in my riding, Mr. Green, and I got the training facility for the LiUNA local 183 and the carpenters. My Dad was a labourer, a carpenter, and a proud union member, so I have to point that out.

I have to point out that the Prime Minister's mother came and gave a speech on mental health to 1,000 people. This motion, if passed, would want to see the records of this individual coming to give a speech on mental health and telling her story. That is important for Canadians to know. The Conservative Party of Canada is writing motions down, and Canadians need to know where it is going with them. If that is where we have come to, I am really sorry to see that.

With that, Chair, I will stop at this time and cede the floor to the next honourable colleague.

Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, colleagues.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Sorbara, we ask you to pass along the committee's sympathies to the family you're going to visit who lost a loved one.

I'd also like to point out, with respect to my four venerable members of Parliament for Hamilton, that other than me, there are two Liberal and two NDP, so there are five representatives from Hamilton, not four. That's just so you know for the future, Mr. Sorbara.

Now we move on to Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: I do apologize for that oversight, Chair. Please forgive me on that one.

The Chair: There's no need to request forgiveness on that. It's all good.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Matthew Green: He forgot either Bob or Filomena, so we'll have to go to the tape for that.

• (1800)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks very much, Chair.

We're three and a half hours into the latest prorogation continuation cover-up filibuster, and the finance committee has been filibustered since the 8th of this month. If you check the calendar, everyone, it's the 15th. That committee was suspended mid-filibuster and it's resumed. It's been going on for a ridiculous amount of time; and into our third meeting here, the same is true.

It's time to see what's in the documents. It's time to end the cover-up.

I could swear that some of the colleagues on the other side of the aisle get paid every time they say my name. If you get a quarter every time you say my name, there would be big cheques being cashed, so it—

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I just want to say that we feel the same way every time that Mr. Barrett says "cover-up".

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin, but that's not a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Han Dong: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Michael Barrett: On the subject of the cover-up by Mr. Drouin and Mr. Dong—

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Barrett; Mr. Dong has a point of order.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to remind the committee members that we are not in camera. This conversation is being watched by the general public, who may have various levels of understanding of proceedings here. Something that we may think is a joke or that we take as a joke may not be seen that way by other people. I would just caution members to be very careful on their choice of words.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dong. Those are wise words.

Go ahead, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Chairman, while I do not believe necessarily the word “cover-up” or the general use of the word “cover-up” is unparliamentary, when somebody says “cover-up by Mr. Drouin” or “cover-up by Mr. Dong”, I do believe that is unparliamentary.

As the chairman of the committee, I believe you should ask the member not to make those accusations of honourable members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

I did address the committee earlier in regard to impugning someone's actions. I don't know whether criticizing actions or consequences would be unparliamentary, but I certainly think impugning those, calling into question the motive of those actions, would be unparliamentary.

I just want to caution all members in that regard. We don't know what the motives of any individual are when they act, or the subsequent consequence, so let's just keep it to the action and the consequence.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The action of a multi-day filibuster by members of the government is a government-led cover-up, Mr. Chair. I'll leave it to members to govern themselves accordingly.

To Mr. Dong's point on people watching and not having an understanding of what's going on, I think that as we go into our third day of these proceedings, people are getting the picture very clearly that three days into this meeting there has—

Mr. Han Dong: I didn't say that they don't have an understanding of what's going on. Don't put words in my mouth, please, Mr. Barrett.

The Chair: Colleagues, please address the chair when you're going to make a comment.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: To Mr. Dong's point, when he said that Canadians who are watching might not know what's going on, they're getting a very clear picture of what's going on when we're into a multi-day filibuster by these members.

We've heard over and over again about going after individuals. We're not going after individuals; we're looking to verify information that has been presented to parliamentary committees. We've seen wild inconsistencies between testimony by ministers and documents that weren't redacted. Seeing the information unredacted and the way it was ordered, and seeing the information to verify testimony that on a number of occasions has been demonstrated to not be consistent with the truth is important work. It is important work for this committee to do if Canadians are going to be able to trust the work and trust the programs implemented by the Government of Canada.

Chair, it's certainly high time for this to come to a vote, but we'll look forward to many more hours of hydration and pontificating and texts that are readily available to folks being read into the record.

I'd like you to poll the committee, if you could, to see whether we can take this opportunity to bring it to a vote.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1805)

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, I don't see any consensus. I already have shaking heads—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I think it's a great idea.

The Chair: We have a few on record who think it's a great idea and others who don't, so there's no unanimous consent in that regard.

We'll go to Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The last time we chatted, we were about to go to AIPAC in Washington in March, and the whole world changed. You probably made a very wise decision in deciding to stay home at the time. You were probably a couple of weeks ahead of everybody else, and I congratulate you for that.

I congratulate you on being chair of this committee. You're always a very dignified and a very fair member. I appreciate your chairing this committee and I appreciate the opportunity to intervene and be part of this committee in this important discussion.

[*Translation*]

I was also very moved by what Ms. Gaudreau said. I do believe that partisan behaviour is not needed at a committee meeting and that it's very important to steer clear of it.

For the same reason, I would like to present arguments as to why this proposal is highly partisan and why it should be amended before the committee votes on it.

At the end of the day, this proposal is not going to reach consensus. We're going to be here all evening, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, because some committee members, particularly Liberal members, feel that this motion is very unfair. I hope that everyone will listen as I explain why I think it's unfair. I hope that I can get everyone on board.

[*English*]

As I'm getting to that, I'm going to switch back to English for a moment. This morning, I had the pleasure of being on a discussion with Elizabeth May and Garnett Genuis to talk about faith in politics and how we need to get away from partisanship. I'm hoping—also in English—that my colleagues will listen to some of the arguments that I present, including you, Mr. Chair, in terms of the receivability of this motion and looking at the way the motion is drafted. I think there are some serious flaws with respect to the motion.

Let me start by going to the Conflict of Interest Act.

I'm going to read one section, because I think it's really relevant. In the Conflict of Interest Act, "reporting public office holder" is the term that covers the people who are covered by this act. It means a public officer holder who is:

- (a) a minister of the Crown, minister of state or parliamentary secretary;
 - (a.1) the Chief Electoral Officer;
- (b) a member of ministerial staff who works on average 15 hours or more a week;
- (c) a ministerial adviser;
- (d) a Governor in Council appointee, or a ministerial appointee whose appointment is approved by the Governor in Council, who exercises his or her official duties and functions on a part-time basis but receives an annual salary and benefits;
- (e) a Governor in Council appointee, or a ministerial appointee whose appointment is approved by the Governor in Council, who exercises his or her official duties and functions on a full-time basis;
- (e.1) the Parliamentary Budget Officer; or
- (f) a person or a member of a class of persons if the person or class of persons is designated under subsection 62.1(2) or 62.2(2).

[*Translation*]

Let me explain.

The motion before us requires that documents be produced going back as far as October 14, 2008, for Justin Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, Margaret Trudeau and Alexandre Trudeau. The Prime Minister of Canada has only been subject to this section of the act since his election as Prime Minister in October 2015. From 2008 to 2015, he was not Prime Minister. From 2008 to 2012, he was a member of Parliament, and from 2012 to 2015, he was leader of the third party in the House. For seven of the 12 years for which documents about his family are requested, he was not subject to this legislation.

If I were committee chair, I would consider this motion to be out of order, as it requires someone to produce documents when they were not subject to the legislation at the time.

• (1810)

[*English*]

I don't even need to get into the question of his family members during that time, because the principal individual wasn't covered by the act for seven of the 12 years for which documents are being requested. I don't think that's right.

I believe in parliamentary committees. I do. I'm one of those people in my party who is always talking about the importance of committees and the powers of committees. I do believe that the committee has a wide power to compel the production of documents, to seek government testimony and to hold the government accountable. I do believe that.

However, I don't believe, where the motion strays well beyond where the act requires the Prime Minister to disclose information for himself and his family, that it's fair to go back. Otherwise, as Mr. Sorbara has said, we could be asking for literally anybody who is not covered under the act to produce documents for themselves and their families. I don't think that's fair, and I'd hope my colleagues would take that under advisement and into consideration when they're considering why I cannot support this motion.

There's a second question. I don't believe that it's always unacceptable.... Here, I'm going to diverge from my colleagues on the Liberal side. I don't believe it's always unacceptable to refuse...or that a committee can never ask for information about someone's relatives. I think there may be times when it is reasonable for a committee to make such a request. With respect to the WE Charity, there may well be justification for requesting information about Alexandre Trudeau and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, because we know already, from public information, that they have spoken for and been paid by this charity and affiliated organizations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, I want to know the following. If the goal here is to look for information on WE and its affiliated organizations, why isn't the name of the organization included in the motion?

I'll read the motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), an order of the Committee do issue to Speakers' Spotlight for a copy of all records pertaining ...

I want to point out the words "all records pertaining." This isn't about records pertaining to WE and its affiliated organizations.

... to speaking appearances arranged, since October 14, 2008, ...

I already explained why the date of October 14, 2008, was an issue. The Prime Minister wasn't subject to the Conflict of Interest Act between 2008 and 2015.

... for Justin Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, Margaret Trudeau and Alexandre Trudeau— including, in respect of each speaking appearance, ...

I want to point out that the motion says "each speaking appearance" here, without referring to the appearances pertaining to WE.

... an indication of the fee provided, any expenses that were reimbursed and the name of the company, organization, person or entity booking it— ...

Clearly, the goal here isn't to look for information regarding Alexandre Trudeau and Margaret Trudeau in relation to WE. The goal is for someone to find something pertaining to speaking appearances made by Margaret Trudeau, Alexandre Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau and Justin Trudeau for one organization or another between 2008 and 2015. In my opinion, there's not enough evidence for a committee to conduct an investigation, search for documents, and require the production of documents other than WE documents.

I believe that I've already outlined two major issues with this motion.

First, we're talking about years during which the Prime Minister wasn't subject to the Conflict of Interest Act.

Furthermore, the member who spoke just before me—I won't name him, since he thinks that 25¢ is received each time his name is said—argued that the rationale for this motion is to prove that some of the other information disclosed during the WE investigation isn't accurate. If that were the case, the motion would have stated that only documents pertaining to WE and its affiliated organizations must be produced. However, this isn't the case, and we should really wonder why. This is the second issue.

I'll also explain a third issue with this motion.

• (1815)

[English]

Again, Mr. Chair, because I have the document in front of me in English, I'll switch back to English in order to read it.

There is indeed, in the act before us, the Conflict of Interest Act, a distinction made between family members. I'm going to read what family members are:

The following are the members of a public office holder's family for the purposes of this Act:

(a) his or her spouse or common-law partner; and

(b) his or her dependent children and the dependent children of his or her spouse or common-law partner.

That does not mean that there is not another section or other sections in the act that do not deal with the wider circle of relatives. Relatives can indeed include the mother and the brother of the public officer holder, but when we come to relevant provisions of this act that deal with the ability to, for example, speak to another organization and not disclose what it is you are paid or who you are speaking to, those provisions are only dealing with the immediate family members, which are the spouse and the dependent children. They don't deal with the brother and the mother.

I'll refer you to section 11 of the act, which states:

No public office holder or member of his or her family

—and the act defines the members of his or her family as the spouse and the dependent children or the common-law partner—

shall accept any gift or other advantage, including from a trust, that might reasonably be seen to have been given to influence the public office holder in the exercise of an official power, duty or function.

Then there are exceptions.

Therefore, this entire issue is that certain opposition parties, and not others, have made this claim that I think is a stretch, that the amounts paid to Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, and certainly to Alexandre and Margaret Trudeau, somehow are a means of influencing the Prime Minister and therefore currying favour of the WE Charity to make us, the government, give a contract to the WE Charity and is thus improper.

However, the relevant section of the act on gifts and other advantages refers only to family members. It does not refer to relatives, which is the wider section that would have been referred to would it have been intended to have this committee run off and ask for the production of Alexandre Trudeau and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau's speaking fees. That's another mystery, and I again point to that in this act, it's very simple, there are multiple sections where you refer to the mother or brother of the public office holder.

For example, with regard to a government department, the act states:

No public office holder, other than a minister of the Crown, minister of state or parliamentary secretary, who otherwise has the authority shall permit the public sector entity for which he or she is responsible, or to which he or she is assigned, to enter into a contract or employment relationship with his or her spouse, common-law partner, child, sibling or parent except in accordance with an impartial administrative process in which the public office holder plays no part.

That is clear. In that section, you're talking about the whole family that is mentioned, but again, going back to the section on gifts and other advantages, I'll repeat section 11(1):

No public office holder or member of his or her family shall accept any gift or other advantage, including from a trust, that might reasonably be seen to have been given to influence the public office holder in the exercise of an official power, duty or function.

Then you go back again to the definition of "Family members", and in this act, the following are the members of a public officer holder's family for the purposes of this act: his or her spouse or common-law partner; and his or her dependent children and the dependent children of his or her spouse or common-law partner, which makes it seem to me that when the Parliament passed this act it deliberately, in its wisdom, after going through committees and going through Parliament, decided not to include the mother and the brother in that relevant section of the act.

Now I think I've presented you three flaws in this motion. One, the deeds go beyond the deeds that the Prime Minister was even covered by the act. Two, the fact is we're not referring specifically to the WE Charity, so that goes against the *raison d'être* of the motion previously advanced by the mover of the motion. Number three, the relevant section of this act doesn't cover the mother or the brother.

• (1820)

I believe I have made that case cogently, Mr. Chair. As a result, these reasons I believe that this motion is out of order because it goes beyond the powers of the committee and strays from the Conflict of Interest Act.

But Mr. Chair, let me also go to another question that I think is quite relevant.

We're all now talking about going after the current Prime Minister and his spouse and his mother and his brother and not tied to the WE Charity. If this motion had been tied to WE, I could have understood it better, but it's not.

It is not unusual in Canada, Mr. Chair, for prime ministers and members of their family to start going on speakers' tours after they leave office or before they are in office. For example, Mr. Chair, let me mention that the Right Honourable Stephen Harper is a client of Worldwide Speakers Group. Stephen Harper, on the Worldwide Speakers Group website, says that he is willing to travel from Canada to anywhere in the world for an arranged fee, that you need to inquire for details, and it says that "The Right Honourable Stephen Harper led Canada through the world's most complex geopolitical, economic and security challenges as the country's 22nd Prime Minister. During his tenure in the world's top forums such as the G-7 and G-20, NATO and the United Nations, Prime Minister Harper was known for a frank, assertive leadership style defined by principled diplomacy, disciplined economic policy, a strong stance on international peace and security, and passionate defence of freedom and human dignity."

Mr. Chair, I was able with your permission to extol former Prime Minister Harper in his own words of how he likes to be sold as a speaker, and I have a whole lot of respect for him. But Mr. Chair, what would stop me from proposing an amendment to this motion, because it's not tied to WE in any way, would be if we were to ask for all the information related to former Prime Minister Stephen Harper or Laureen Harper, who also has been booked as a speaker, or Rona Ambrose also booked by Speakers' Spotlight?

Another example would be Caroline Mulroney who, as a minister in the province of Ontario, had the opposition ask for a committee to subpoena for all of the speaking engagements of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who I as a Montrealer have great respect for. He is a client of the Washington Speakers Bureau, and the Washington Speakers Bureau says this about him: "Charming, humorous, insightful, informative and a distinguished world leader, Brian Mulroney is the architect of international commerce who transformed Canada into an economic and political influence in the world."

While I guess Lester Pearson and Pierre Elliott Trudeau and others might dispute that only Brian Mulroney transformed Canada into having political influence on the world, again, I applaud former Prime Minister Mulroney. I think he has done great things since leaving office, and I think he's a very fine man, and his wife is a very fine woman, and his family, Mark and Caroline and Nick and Benedict. I like all of them, but that does not mean that Caroline and her brother Ben should have to produce his records of what he's earning when he's on CTV. It doesn't mean that her father should have to produce records either.

All I would need to do is to move to amend this motion one after the other all night long in adding the names of former Conservative politicians who accept money from speakers' bureaus. I am prepared to have a debate on each one, but that is why I believe this motion has strayed far away from something that's collegial, where we are looking for information on WE, where I may have been more sympathetic to looking for what my colleague, Mr. Sorbara, called a "fishing expedition". I'm not going to call it that. I'm just saying it's wrong.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

When I explain to my colleagues and my counterparts why I think this is unfair, I hope that they'll listen to me and look at this issue in their role as a member of Parliament, regardless of their party. I hope that they'll consider the consequences of a motion to require the production of documents pertaining to the family members of a person who wasn't even subject to the legislation in question at the time set out in the request. That's the first thing.

Second, the goal of the motion is to require the production of documents when the individuals involved aren't subject to the section of the legislation that underpins the motion.

Third, they're referring to the legislation and saying that all this is related to WE. However, the motion fails to include the name of the organization or its affiliated organizations.

Fourth, are we really headed down a path where we'll require anyone to provide all their documents to the committee? Let's say

I'm a speaker and I've been paid by various groups for my services. If I've also been a member of Parliament or I will be one in the future, or if someone in my family is a member of Parliament, will I be required to produce my documents? I think that this goes too far.

I hope that we can find an offline solution. It would be more useful to end this meeting and take another opportunity to discuss the issue among ourselves and find a solution, so that we don't have to stay here all evening.

[*English*]

In the hope of that happening, Mr. Chair, I move that this meeting do adjourn.

The Chair: A motion has been put on the floor for the adjournment of the meeting.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Could we have a recorded vote, please, Chair?

The Chair: Yes, we'll be asking the clerk to take over that function.

We've been changing clerks, by the way, to give our permanent clerk a break. This happened right in the transition.

Madam Clerk.

Ms. Aimée Belmore (Committee Clerk): Hello, everyone. My name is Aimée Belmore, and I am filling in for Miriam Burke, your clerk.

I have a request for a recorded division on the motion to adjourn the meeting.

The Chair: That is correct, Madam Clerk.

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

The Chair: We will continue the debate.

We'll move to Mrs. Shanahan.

• (1830)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

Before I get started, could you clarify the speaking order for us?

The Chair: Yes. Thank you, Madam Shanahan. You always keep me accountable on that, and I should have refreshed it. You're quite right.

After you will be Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Dong, Mr. Drouin and then Mr. Simms.

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

Chair, I must say that I am very much heartened and enlightened by the interventions we've heard today, because I think it goes to the heart of the matter as to why the motion before us is unacceptable, certainly to me. I thank my good colleague, Mr. Housefather, for his articulate and detailed exposition of exactly what the flaws are in that motion.

Indeed, I want to pick up on one of the flaws, and that is not referring to the WE Charity because, oddly enough, earlier today Mr. Angus was very much concerned about the WE Charity. He was talking about the WE Charity at length: about the documents and about testimony that had been given to I think particularly the finance committee and elsewhere concerning WE.

I'm sorry that he's not here, but I'm sure that Mr. Green will pass this on to him. I would like to remind Mr. Angus, who had a great concern about the quality of the documents, about the redaction process, about transparency and who was telling this committee what—or other committees. I had that opportunity at our previous meeting to read out to this committee the different letters from the ministries—from Finance, from the Treasury Board, from Innovation, from PCO and the Clerk of the Privy Council—about the care that was taken in redacting in providing those documents. Because indeed, the redaction process is an important legitimate process that is designed to protect—there's a certain screening that has to happen—different elements that are important to Canadians, the first, of course, being national security.

In each letter, I'll remind members of the committee, the writers made it clear that national security was not an issue in the redaction, but that the privacy of individuals concerned, as well as cabinet confidences that were unrelated to the issue at hand—the student grant program—were certainly considered carefully and those that were unrelated were taken out, but others—cabinet confidences—in the quest for transparency were included in the documents. I won't say it in my words but in the words of the Clerk of the Privy Council Office, Ian Shugart, a highly respected public servant, who has served both sides of the aisle and who has the highest integrity.

Mr. Shugart was able to say in a letter, “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.” A little later on, he further explains:

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.

● (1835)

I have decided to disclose this information because in my view because 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'm going to come back to that, because it is key that this type of work was done by qualified public servants with every due consideration. So, I'm going to object strenuously to the characterization that Mr. Angus made earlier today, that somehow the redaction was overdone or that it was not done in good faith for the purposes of this committee.

We find the same thing from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. This is from Mr. Simon Kennedy regarding the delivery of the documents that were requested by the finance committee earlier this summer:

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 de-

partments, the staff from WE Charity in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act.

A little later on, he continued:

...you will note that...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 the members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. A principled approach was adopted to this information to ensure a non-selective application.

We find the same thing when the Secretariat of the Treasury Board of Canada. This is from Peter Wallace, referring to the finance committee's motion that cabinet confidences are to be excluded from the package, who confirmed the following:

...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.

So, where is information being hidden from the parliamentarians that need to see it?

The information concerning the WE situation was all provided. I for one have confidence that all of this was done in the proper manner to make sure that, over and above the request made by the finance committee, the documents pertaining to WE were provided.

Again, the secretariat in this case makes reference to the principled approach that was taken. It was not a lackadaisical approach. It was not an arbitrary approach. It was not that everyone did as they saw fit. There's a principle that is followed. We should expect no less. It says:

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.

Again, this was an approach over and above what was requested.

● (1840)

Think of the work that went into the production of those documents. We all heard that over 5,000 pieces were delivered this summer prior to the prorogation. Everyone had a lot of time to pore over them. They were provided to the maximum possible, given the principles of protecting personal data and cabinet confidences, and as I say, really pushing that envelope.

Of course, we heard also from the Minister of Finance's office on that same note. Having been a member of the public accounts committee in the last Parliament, I can remember how critical that was, the financial information, information that could affect private interests, competitive information, sensitive trade information, market-moving information. How important it is to maintain that privacy. I dare say, I can't reveal some of the discussions that we had in camera at the time, of course. We were dealing with some quite extensive audits of different government agencies. We're talking about billions of dollars that were being managed.

I was delighted to serve with the likes of David Christopherson from the NDP, and others. I believe Mr. Poilievre was with us for a very short while. Because the public accounts committee is known for its unanimous approval of reports, everyone understood how important that financial information was and how the keeping of cabinet confidences from one government to the next is an important principle.

The finance department also confirms that considerable information on the Canada student services grant, which was the issue at hand contained in cabinet confidences, is being provided to the committee. A principled approach was taken, with respect of this information, to ensure a non-selective application of the protection afforded by cabinet confidentiality. Information not related to the Canada student services grant that is contained in cabinet confidences is withheld and identified as not relevant to the request, as it should be. We would expect no less. As time goes on and different Parliaments are formed and different governments are formed, that is a principle that must be maintained.

With respect—

• (1845)

The Chair: Go ahead, on a point of order.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm allowed to speak here at the committee. To the techie people, I asked to be allowed to have my video started. The host has stopped my video. Can we get that fixed, please?

The Chair: Madam Clerk, could you have technical services...?

Oh, here we go. We have the video on.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Great. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Madam Clerk and the tech people.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Chair, I certainly am glad to see my colleague, Mr. Sorbara, back. I know that he is a long-time finance committee member, so I'm sure he wants to hear what I have to say about the finance department and its efforts. The letter from the finance department says:

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.

The writer goes on to say:

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.

That was Paul Rochon writing on behalf of the Department of Finance.

That is why I have confidence that the volume of documents that were produced at the behest of the finance committee in response to that inquiry this summer, which I know many Canadians.... Okay, there was COVID and then there was the WE Charity committees.

Chair, now it's all about COVID. I echo the earlier remarks of some of my colleagues about how that's what we need to be talking about now, especially how the use of digital applications and the

importance of privacy and so on relate to the public health and the fight against COVID.

I do want to come back now to the Privacy Act in brief. I call it PIPEDA. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not as eloquent as some of my colleagues on these issues, but as a private person.... I believe it was my colleague, Mr. Sorbara, who talked about the reforms that are needed to the Privacy Act. I'll share with the committee, and especially Canadians who are watching, that the Privacy Act is basically an instrument recognizing that governments need information about their citizens in order to deliver programs and set public policies. At the same time, Canadians need to know that their personal information is being collected and used only according to strict rules that preserve their right to privacy. The Privacy Act is the law that sets out your privacy rights in your interactions with the federal government. It applies to how the government collects, uses and discloses your personal information. The Privacy Act protects the personal information that government institutions hold and gives you the right to access your personal information that is held by the federal government.

This something that is important for us to study as a committee. There are also reforms that need to take place. We need to make sure there are clear safeguards to protect personal information, including of those—and this is where it's related to the letters that I was referring to—employees and others who interact with the federal government.

The act that is known by its acronym PIPEDA, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, is a more recent act.

• (1850)

Again, I would like to learn more about these acts. I would like to have that opportunity in this committee to study these further and to review the work of the Privacy Commissioner. The fact this act applies to private sector organizations across Canada that collect, use or disclose personal information in the course of a commercial activity, I would suspect there is application here regarding the motion that is before us, that there is room for many questions, as one of my colleagues said previously, about how we, as a committee, as parliamentarians, may ask for any document to be produced, but there is a right to privacy as well.

There may be a lot more that needs to be said here. Maybe it's in the right line, maybe it's not. That is something I would like to better understand. As my colleagues have said, to think that anyone who's going about their business can be at risk of having their personal, professional, contractual or financial information called in to a parliamentary committee at any time, whether or not there's a link with any public office holder, consistent or inconsistent with the constraints or the appropriateness for a committee to make such a request.... I don't think Canadians expect to have a drive-by hit from a parliamentary committee when they're just going about their business.

These are individuals who are not in public life. There are certainly many ways. As we have said, if there is a suspicion or a question about the appropriateness of a public office holder's affairs, whether with family members as defined by the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons or not, members of Parliament have the avenue of writing a letter to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make their complaint or ask a question. He or she is empowered in every way to make the determination, first of all, whether to proceed with a case or not.

Mr. Angus earlier referred to Katie Telford's husband, Mr. Silver, and what was going on there. Well, the Ethics Commissioner determined there was nothing there to investigate. That is what we heard very recently.

Do we have confidence or not in the work of the Ethics Commissioner and on the inappropriateness of setting up a parallel investigative process? I have learned so much from my colleagues. It was one of our colleagues who was working with us earlier this summer, Mr. Vaughan, who said very cogently that when we set up a parallel investigative process, it is not unlikely this body could reach very different conclusions from the Ethics Commissioner.

• (1855)

That calls the role of the Ethics Commissioner into question immediately. That's not a good situation. That's what's important to me as a parliamentarian. It is all about the appropriateness. That's why I talk about the mandate. That's why I go back to the act and specifically to the roles each and every one of us has to play here.

As Mr. Vaughan says, that's not a good situation. For those of us who rely on the Ethics Commissioner to clear our names or to deliver findings to us, it is not a good situation to undermine the integrity of that office while that office is doing critically important work on our behalf.

He goes on to say, "I'm very reluctant to set a precedent in this committee". That twigged me right away, because, being a Quebecker, we're all about the Civil Code. I see my colleague Madame Gaudreau knows what I'm talking about.

Of course, the common law is precedent. That is key. Once you set a precedent, then it's very difficult to break in the common law. So, as Mr. Vaughan says:

I am very reluctant to set a precedent in this committee, which does not have a mandate to investigate any member of Parliament for any reason on a particular issue. To suddenly say that this committee would then have the power to compel any member of Parliament to attend and suffer the political consequences if they decline

—and that was on, of course, a previous motion this summer—

sets a really dangerous precedent. It sends the ethics standing committee off in a whole new direction that it was never intended to deal with.

I think I have to take Mr. Vaughan's words even further to say that the call for the production of documents, which Mr. Housefather rightfully said is flawed in that the dating of the motion pre-dates that member of Parliament's even being a public office holder, does not refer to the WE Charity, which it purports to be about, and is not relevant in that it does not cover the mother or the brother, the section 11 that my colleague referred to in the code.

We're setting one, two, three, four, five, six new precedents. This is not a constructive and productive way. If we think something needs to be changed, then we need to do a study on that. Otherwise, it's not by one incident or by focusing on one particular situation....

We set up the Ethics Commissioner not to depoliticize what was happening—because it's all about politics, I get it—but to give us clarity in a political setting so that the Ethics Commissioner would be that independent investigator doing his or her work, regardless of what winds were blowing around. From there, how we choose to respond to the Ethics Commissioner is where this committee's work begins.

He goes on in that vein.

I will just finish, then. Our work does not start by investigating the individual simultaneously, regardless of who that individual is, whether it's the Prime Minister, his wife, his brother or his mother.

It is clear, when you read the full mandate of this committee, that our job is to evaluate those reports. If the commissioner is not doing a good job, it's up to us to say that. Then we can make recommendations to Parliament on what changes need to be made to guidelines and conflict of interest regulations so that Canadians can have confidence in Parliament.

• (1900)

Mr. Chair, that is where I will conclude my remarks at this time.

I feel that the collective wisdom here is going to get us to a good place.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Shanahan.

I appreciate that.

We'll now move on to Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Chair, I think I'll take up the challenge of Ms. Shanahan. She suggested that we consider the collective wisdom of the group.

I would ask that we move to a vote.

The Chair: You're asking to move to a vote on—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I think the Liberals, through Ms. Shanahan, have suggested that we would seek the collective wisdom of the committee.

I would suggest that before I try to convince my Liberal colleagues, who clearly have decided they are going to remain opposed regardless of what arguments are brought forward by my party and the remaining opposition parties to support it.... I don't think anybody's mind is going to be changed at this point so I would suggest, as Ms. Shanahan has suggested, that we go to a vote on the motion.

The Chair: Is there consensus to move to a vote on the motion?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: No.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Absolutely not.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: There's no consensus, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Please continue, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Well, I think that's very helpful. I think what we have seen, over the last number of meetings, is a Liberal party that will stop at nothing, having consistently brought in new members and cycled members through this committee simply to do one thing and one thing only, and that is to protect the Prime Minister at any cost.

What we are seeing reported in the news, what we are seeing by virtue of the actions of these committee members over the last number of hours, both today and in previous meetings, is that they will stop at nothing, including embarrassing themselves to ensure that these documents never see the light of day.

I intend to remain here as long as we need to, to ensure that these documents do get submitted to the committee. This is nothing new. These documents were slated to be released to the committee just hours before the Prime Minister did the unprecedented thing, having broken the promise that he made during the previous election. He promised to never prorogue the House of Commons. The Prime Minister did the exceptional thing in moving to prorogue the House of Commons to do one thing and one thing only.

Traditionally, prorogations are done for the purpose of resetting the parliamentary calendar. What we've seen in the last number of weeks is that the Prime Minister has not changed course. What we saw in the Speech from the Throne showed that the Prime Minister has remained on course on every single provision of the federal government. There is no change in their fiscal track. There's no change in their legislative track. The only thing they did by proroguing was to ensure that the investigation into the Prime Minister, and specifically the release of these documents, didn't happen because of the prorogation. These documents would have been submitted to this committee just hours following the Prime Minister's declaration to prorogue the House of Commons.

For the last number of weeks, because of prorogation, this committee has been unable to move forward to get these documents released. Having prorogued Parliament, he delayed that. Now he's offended that we're doing our jobs in resurrecting this study and ensuring that we have transparency and accountability, as is our responsibility and our job.

Quite frankly, it's not just the opposition members' job to hold the Prime Minister accountable. It's also Liberal members' job. The members on this committee are not cabinet ministers, but have a re-

sponsibility on behalf of their constituents to hold the Prime Minister and the cabinet responsible for their actions.

The Liberal members of this committee may believe that if they do the heavy lifting of protecting the Prime Minister, if they embarrass themselves by engaging in this ongoing filibuster, that the Prime Minister will give them some role of becoming an esteemed parliamentary secretary or a minister. Well, if they have to sell themselves down that road, they have to look their constituents in the eye and explain to them why they don't believe in transparency and accountability. They have to look their constituents in the eye and say they don't believe in their democratic responsibility to hold the government to account.

Now, I wouldn't want to do that, and I've been in their shoes. I've been in their shoes where, having been in government, somebody from the Prime Minister's Office suggested that I do something at committee, including filibustering and any number of other things that I thought would have been embarrassing, and I turned them down. I would suggest that they consider doing that as well, and doing what's in the best interests of their constituents by voting in support of transparency and accountability.

There is no concern about these documents floating around in the general population. There have been provisions made to ensure that these documents are held in the clerk's office and that they will only be accessed by members of Parliament and the staff of those members on this committee. If my colleagues don't trust their staff, I would encourage them not to allow their staff to have access to these documents. I trust my staff.

I believe, Mr. Chair, that the Liberals won't change their minds. I don't think it matters how long we sit here and debate these things. The national media is now reporting that there are some Liberal members of Parliament who are going to the media and saying privately that they do fear what is included in these documents.

• (1905)

Not only does the Prime Minister fear what's included in these documents, to the extent that he would prorogue Parliament just hours before these documents would have been released, but now we have Liberal members of Parliament who also are going to members of the media and suggesting they are afraid of what's included in these documents and how it may hurt their party.

I would suggest to Liberal members of Parliament that there is a greater hurt that can be undertaken by not releasing these documents and not doing what's in the best interest of Canadians, and that is, we're going to hurt our democratic process.

We have before us an organization, the WE organization, which was granted by the federal government, by the Prime Minister and cabinet, nearly \$1 billion. This was on the heels of that same organization giving the Prime Minister and his family over \$500,000 over the last number of years. We know that. That's what's on the public record. Those are not disputed facts. What we don't know is what is included in these documents.

I can tell you that if these documents were to exonerate the Prime Minister and his family, the Liberal members of this committee would be encouraged by the Prime Minister's Office to hurry up and ensure that these documents see the light of day. Not only would they be given to this committee and to the clerk, and for us to view them privately, the Prime Minister's Office would demand that the Liberal members of Parliament amend this motion to ensure that the public and the media would also have access to these documents.

We know that their fight and their filibuster demonstrates exactly how fearful they are of what's included in these documents. The bombshell included in these documents is demonstrated by the extent to which the Liberal members of Parliament will go to ensure that these documents never see the light of day.

Now, before he was the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau was fond of saying that sunlight was the best disinfectant. I would encourage the Liberal members, again, to consider that the spreading infection of Liberal corruption is in need of sunlight; it's in need of disinfectant.

The challenge with an infection is that it can be disinfected and can go away when it's a small thing. When it gets covered up, and when it gets hidden away, and when it doesn't get dealt with, it becomes more and more severe, to the extent that the remedy is far more aggressive.

Liberal members on this committee have to consider just how bad things have to get for them and their party before they'll do the honourable thing: Do what Canadians would expect to bring transparency and accountability to their own government. If they refuse, if they allow the infection to continue to grow at the Prime Minister's level, having now been complicit in that cover-up here at committee, I can tell you that the infection will become far more severe and the remedy will be far more severe. I wouldn't wish that on them, but that is a choice they have to make.

Their capitulation to the Prime Minister's Office's demands that they continue talking at this committee at length will demonstrate just how fearful they are, and the Prime Minister is, of these documents seeing the light of day. I think that Canadians will become more and more engaged on exactly what it is they're doing, and they'll fully understand why they're doing it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1910)

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

Now we'll move on to Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I heard my colleague speak vigorously and I want to congratulate him on his very good speech. As committee members, we must all look at this issue. However, I'm trying to better understand where the opposition members' motion is coming from.

I gather that they want to obtain documents dating back to 2008 because they believe that the current Prime Minister and WE were involved in some type of scheming at the time.

Nothing happened from 2008 to 2015, since the Liberal Party was in opposition and was only the third party. However, from 2015 to 2019, the Liberal Party had a majority in the House. At that time, I sat with my colleague Mr. Warkentin on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. In a way, we were trying to correct the idea that if you give contracts to our mother or brother, we'll give you contracts.

From 2015 to 2019, we sat and did nothing, until Mr. Trudeau apparently planned a global pandemic. The government then decided to award a contract to WE, supposedly to please the Prime Minister's family. I've read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and several other fiction books. I've found more truth in those books than in what the opposition parties are saying right now.

According to these parties, the Liberal members aren't being transparent right now. Let me explain how Parliament works. Often parliamentarians who have been here for a long time, such as Mr. Warkentin and Mr. Gourde, seem to forget what they've done in the past. In doing so, they apply a double standard to our parliamentary democracy.

[*English*]

With that, Mr. Chair, I'm just trying to get a good understanding of what the opposition is trying to propose and where they're trying to go with this particular motion.

I have to say that I'm very inspired by Mr. Warkentin's speech and I want to remind everyone on this committee—and we're almost coming up to the seventh anniversary of the November 6, 2013, vote—because I think it's important, that if we are to hold government to account, or any member of Parliament to account, we ought to let the public know where they were on November 6, 2013. On the vote topic I'll have to read the particular motion of where that stands.

On November 6, 2013, it read:

That the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics be instructed to examine the conduct of the Prime Minister's Office regarding the repayment of Senator Mike Duffy's expenses; that the Prime Minister be ordered to appear under oath as a witness before the Committee for a period of 3 hours, before December 10, 2013; and that the proceedings be televised.

• (1915)

Mr. Chair, just to go back and bring everybody back, before pro-rogation we had the Prime Minister appear before the committee, which is unprecedented by the way. And we had the Prime Minister's chief of staff appear before the committee.

I know that Mr. Barrett and Mr. Poilievre sent a letter to the Ethics Commissioner and they tried to go after the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff but the commissioner politely declined. I noticed in the spirit of transparency that both the member for Leeds-Grenville and the member for Carleton didn't particularly share that information with their constituents. I didn't see them tweet any information about how their requests were declined and how they were ridiculed by the Ethics Commissioner. The commissioner said, Mr. Poilievre and Mr. Barrett, we've heard your concerns. We've heard your false accusation, but when you have real proof, please send it to us because it makes no sense at all. They didn't share that information and I'm wondering, in the spirit of transparency, if Mr. Barrett would share that in this particular committee, and whether he shares that in his householder to his particular constituents. Again, it's all in the spirit of transparency. I think we owe it to the population of Canadians, to all of us, as parliamentarians to be transparent with our constituents when it comes to ethics matters.

Mr. Chair, bringing us back to the motion at hand—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Did you want me to reply to you, Mr. Drouin?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Are you calling a point of order or are you trying to interrupt me?

Mr. Michael Barrett: You just asked me a question. Was it rhetorical?

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'm still speaking.

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, please address your comments through the chair, but you'll have time to speak again.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Prime Minister appeared before committee and the opposition is trying to go on a wild goose chase, and since we are so close to Thanksgiving probably they are trying to go on a wild turkey chase.

I want to remind committee members of the following. When Mr. Warkentin, on November 6, 2013, had an opportunity to stand up for Canadians and stand up for his constituents and say to Canadians that he believed in transparency, what did he do? He voted against the then prime minister's appearing before the Ethics Commissioner. By the way, our Prime Minister stood up before the committee and testified before the committee and was extremely transparent before all Canadians. And it was televised, by the way.

It was the same thing with Mr. Gourde. He had an opportunity, by the way, to say to Canadians that he had the chance to have his prime minister appear before his committee. What did Mr. Gourde say? He said on November 6, 2013, that he didn't believe, because he was in government, that his prime minister should appear and be accountable to Canadians; and they voted against his prime minister appearing before committee.

That is the difference between Liberals and Conservatives. The Conservatives talk about a good game of being great about transparency and whatnot, but when it comes to action about being actually transparent to Canadians, actions speak louder than words. Mr.

Warkentin and Mr. Gourde were not there and were not present when they had the chance to speak and to put action before words.

It is not just the actions of Mr. Warkentin and Mr. Gourde. We have Mr. O'Toole, for instance, who's now the Leader of the Official Opposition, crying foul on how the Liberals are trying to cover up a big scandal. What did Mr. O'Toole do on November 6, 2013? He did the exact same thing as Mr. Warkentin and Mr. Gourde, and all Conservative members. I see the numbers: 148 Conservative members voted against having their prime minister appear before a committee to show transparency, to show to Canadian people that he was ready to show transparency to Canadians.

I'm looking at this motion, Mr. Chair, and it is pure hypocrisy.

This brings me to my next point, which is about how we deal with family members. I want to thank my hon. colleague Francesco Sorbara who spoke about this.

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): I want to rise on a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Gourde.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Following the comments made by my colleague Mr. Drouin, I believe that, as great democrats, we should proceed to a vote. If Mr. Drouin is brave, he'll agree to let us vote now.

When we make these types of statements before the committee, we must expect to defend our democracy. However, to defend democracy, we must be able to vote one day. I hope that the party currently in power will agree to finally let the committee members vote and continue their work properly.

Mr. Chair, I would like to proceed to a recorded division.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

[*English*]

I can always seek consensus, but on a point of order it would be very difficult to do that, Mr. Gourde.

I see a lot of heads shaking, so I don't think there is any consensus in that regard.

You can continue, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This brings me to my next point, on how we treat family members and how we treat designated public office holders. As members of the Conservative party would know, because they brought in the new Lobbying Act—and this was an act that was pushed by the Prime Minister's own chief of staff, Guy Giorno—the Lobbying Act doesn't differentiate between the Prime Minister, an assistant deputy minister, a member of Parliament, a parliamentary secretary, a deputy minister or the chief of defence staff. It treats us all the same.

Therein lies the question that I ask members of the opposition concerning whether or not they ought to in fact publish all of their parents' financial information. If they're asking the Prime Minister...in order to hold him to a higher standard of ethics, then I would hope that Mr. Barrett would have the same ethical standard, and even go higher, to publish his own parents' information, if they're still alive.

Mr. Barrett, with all due respect, I don't know your family situation, but this is a serious discussion as to whether or not all 338 members of Parliament in this House should publish their brothers' financial statements, their sisters' financial statements, and/or their mothers' or their fathers' financial statements. If the opposition is serious about this motion, then I would hope that they would proactively publish the financial statements they themselves are asking for in this particular motion.

In 2013, it took one leader to have a proactive disclosure for MPs to publish their own personal expenses, and that wasn't driven by the Conservative Party of Canada; this was driven by the Liberal Party of Canada, even though they were the second party of opposition. They were stuck in the corner, where the NDP is now. It took Mr. Trudeau, now the Prime Minister, to drive that particular innovation in transparency, and then the NDP and then the Conservative Party of Canada followed through. I think that's an important point to make with respect to this particular motion.

Speaking of transparency, I know that Mr. O'Toole, the leader of the official opposition, recently won the Conservative party nomination, and I, too, am wondering how transparent the policies are. Mr. O'Toole has presented plenty of policies to Canadians, and I only wish him well, but one particular policy he's proposed is to defund the CBC. Defunding the CBC, to me as a French Canadian, is unacceptable, and I think my French colleague would agree, but even my English colleagues who have zero presence of private media other than the CBC in their communities, especially rural communities.

The point I'm trying to make is that if we are going to be raising the bar on ethical standards, we should be aware that Jeff Ballingall, the chief marketing officer for The Post Millennial, has worked actively on Mr. O'Toole's campaign. One question that I have for the opposition is, how much influence did Mr. Ballingall have on Mr. O'Toole's policy to defund the CBC? Defunding the CBC, as we know, would be of direct financial benefit to The Post Millennial. Again, I'm not the one saying this, but the former leader of the opposition stood up during leadership night and said, you should not be watching Global News; don't watch CBC. You should be watching The Post Millennial.

• (1925)

Again, I'm not making this up. I'm just wondering if Jeff Ballingall registered to lobby a designated public office holder. Should the ethics committee be looking at this?

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, I just wanted to say that on all sides—and it has been on all sides tonight—there have been points of order in regard to staying with the point at hand, and that is the motion at hand. I have cautioned a number of colleagues in that regard, so just make sure that your comments are germane to the motion.

Mr. Francis Drouin: They are exactly germane to the motion, Mr. Chair. What Mr. Barrett is trying to bring forward are the family ties of the Prime Minister, which are not covered by the ethics act, by the way. I have serious issues with the relationship between Mr. Ballingall and Mr. O'Toole, and with his policy to defund the CBC. Perhaps a better use of time for the ethics committee would be looking at that particular issue. I hope that in the matter of transparency, my colleagues on the Conservative side would want to take a look at that.

If the media and the Conservative Party are in cahoots, then I have an issue with that. If they are lobbying to defund certain—

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I don't think that anyone believes that the Conservative Party and the media are in cahoots, and I don't think that this is germane to the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett. I had just mentioned that.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Great.

I want to thank my colleague from Leeds—Grenville. I have to come back to the point.

No matter how many times *Thelma & Louise* stand up on Sunday afternoons or Thanksgiving Sundays, we know how that particular movie ends. It's two people driving off a cliff.

I know they're just trying to drive a particular matter that has absolutely no scandal. In Canada, when there is corruption, there is only one entity that can determine that, and it's the police. If Mr. Barrett has some particular evidence to provide to the police, then he can do so and provide that to the police, because at the end of the day, we know that Mr. Barrett is just trying to do a drive-by smear. He stands up with the MP for Carleton and the member for Leeds—Grenville. They stand up on Sundays and Thanksgiving Mondays, trying to drive media attention, and it has absolutely—

• (1930)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I don't believe that the member has moved to relevance, but if he is suggesting that we should take our evidence to the police, I would recommend to him that he release the evidence to this committee so that we can determine whether it should be handed over to the police. It's he who is limiting our ability to have any evidence to review.

The Chair: Please continue, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Agreed.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I would respond to my colleague that the police are free to do anything they want, despite pressure from the opposition and/or any government entity in this country. The police are free to do whatsoever, free to investigate anything they want to in this country.

That's where it lies, Mr. Chair. This is a drive-by smear by the opposition, and it has nothing to do with anything that is relative to this country.

I would ask my honourable colleagues from the opposition how many emails they are getting on this particular matter. I have Conservatives in my riding, and they're not even sending emails on it. They're worried about what is going to happen tomorrow, what is going to happen in a few months and what is going to happen when the provincial governments close the economy, close the restaurants. Is the federal government going to be there to support them? That's what matters, Mr. Chair.

I understand that Mr. Warkentin, who voted against his own Prime Minister appearing before his own committee.... He speaks of transparency, but he voted against his own Prime Minister appearing in order to show transparency.

I get it. Listen, I get it. I've been around this town for a long time. My riding is only half an hour away. Trust me when I say I'm in the bubble. I get it, I honestly get it, but at the end of the day, Canadians care about what the federal government is going to do about COVID-19 and about how it is going to support them.

I'm going to switch to French.

[*Translation*]

I'm francophone, after all.

I think that Canadians must understand how much the government wants to take care of them. When I hear my opposition colleagues on this committee suddenly preaching transparency when they voted against transparency, I have an issue with that. Mr. Barrett's motion isn't important to Canadians and doesn't affect them.

I'm trying to understand Mr. Barrett's motion. I'll ask him the question later. I hope that, in the spirit of transparency, he'll want to confirm it. However, if he's currently proposing that we ask for the financial statements of the parents and siblings of the members of Parliament—

[*English*]

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The member is saying I'm suggesting something that is absolutely not true. I've asked only for the documents related to the WE controversy, to the scandal involving his Prime Minister, and the Liberal members on this committee voted against having him testify. That's all that I've requested.

I've made no request for financial information from the family members of other members, because it's not germane to the investigation of the latest corruption scandal involving [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Chair: Please continue, Mr. Drouin.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, you can see that this is where the issue lies. Mr. Barrett is asking for a double standard. Regardless of who the Prime Minister will be in the future, he's asking for financial information on the Prime Minister's family members when they aren't subject to the Conflict of Interest Act.

If Mr. Barrett really wants to meddle in the affairs of members' parents and siblings, let him move a motion calling on all members to proactively disclose their parents' financial statements. However, I know that Mr. Barrett wouldn't support this type of motion. Nevertheless, through his motion, he wants to see that information disclosed. Therein lies the issue. How far does Mr. Barrett want to push the boundaries of ethics and conflict of interest?

I don't see an issue regarding the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He's doing an excellent job. He's already investigating this matter.

If Mr. Barrett is basically saying that politicians should be able to investigate other politicians, he's completely out in left field. I know that he understands what it means to be out in left field, because there are several fields in his constituency. I speak to a number of farmers from his constituency and I know them very well.

The issue is whether Mr. Barrett would be willing to submit his parents' financial statements. As a member of Parliament, I have no idea why Mr. Barrett would vote for or against a given bill. According to the Commissioner of Lobbying, the definition of “designated public office holder” doesn't distinguish between a prime minister, a member of Parliament and a minister.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Barrett can rise on a point of order all he wants. He's wrong when it comes to this matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, I'm not sure if I misunderstood the interpretation. Is the member moving an amendment to call for the financial information of my mom and dad?

I just want to be clear. That would be confusing, because I'm not a designated public office holder covered by the Conflict of Interest Act, unlike the Prime Minister. I am covered by the conflict of interest code.

The member, not being a regular member of the standing committee, may not have an understanding of the difference between the act and the code. I just wanted to be sure that I understand his amendment correctly. If he is calling for the financial information from my mom and dad, is that based on the conflict of interest code or the Conflict of Interest Act, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I didn't hear an amendment there, but I'll have Mr. Drouin respond to that in that regard.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Barrett just proved my point. The Conflict of Interest Act doesn't apply to—

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin: —the parents and siblings—

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin: I love it when the Conservatives interrupt me by rising on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Drouin, I have a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin: They don't like it when I tell the truth.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, there's another point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Chair, if Mr. Drouin is suggesting that, if our parents released their financial information, he would vote in support of this motion, I think my parents would be happy to release their financial information to this committee. If we could be sure that he would vote in support of this WE document scandal release of documentation....

The Chair: Mr. Warkentin, that's not a point of order.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'm looking for consensus here.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin: I realize the member is trying to reach some sort of consensus, but I would encourage him to check with his caucus before proposing something like that.

I'd like to follow up on Mr. Barrett's argument. He clearly stated that this wasn't covered under the Conflict of Interest Act. The committee may wish to examine this issue, but I encourage my fellow members to think about who would want to run for election when they have to disclose not only their information, but also that of their parents. I don't have anything to hide either. My father is retired. My brother works in construction and doesn't have any government contracts. I have absolutely nothing to hide.

Mr. Barrett's motion would require that a person's mother, brother and all sorts of other people who aren't subject to the Conflict of Interest Act disclose their information. Mr. Chair, I'm wondering why you didn't rule it out of order for that reason.

What I'm trying to say is that, in principle, it's not the job of politicians to determine whether something corrupt occurred. It's up to police, and here's the proof. When the WE issue made headlines in early July, Mr. Barrett, the member for Carleton and even the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle called for an investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and so forth. We are still waiting for the results of that investigation to find out whether anyone will

be going to jail because of this situation or whether it was nothing more than stories made up by Mr. Barrett and the member for Carleton, yet again.

Mr. Chair, as members, we have a responsibility to decide on a process and follow it. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is in the midst of looking into the matter, and it is our responsibility, as parliamentarians, to have full confidence in him.

I know that, come Sunday, Mr. Barrett and the member for Carleton will probably demand another kind of anticorruption investigation and who knows what else. It'll make the news, which will please them and make them feel validated. That's fine and dandy, but at the end of the day, the Liberal members in the House take the matter seriously. With the members of the opposition continuing to demand some sort of investigation into another investigation regarding a different investigation, at some point, we have to take our jobs as parliamentarians seriously. We have work to do.

People want to know what we're doing in response to COVID-19 to support them and make sure businesses come through the pandemic.

When it comes to information about this person's or that person's family, there's a long-standing tradition in politics: you can go after a politician, but you can't go after their family. I call this doing things à la Deborah Grey.

• (1940)

[English]

Well, the hypocrisy, Mr. Chair, is that Deborah Grey later signed on. As much as she spoke against that MP pension, she signed on to it. She is now collecting an MP's pension.

I feel the hypocrisy from the opposition. I have to mention Deborah Grey. Deborah Grey, in the 1990s, was the parliamentarian who was saying about MPs' pensions, "How dare you grab an MP's pension? How dare you MPs, Liberal MPs and Conservative MPs?" I remind everybody that the Canadian Alliance, the Reform Party and the PC Party were all divorced. They were all separated, and how ashamed that Deborah Grey was saying, "How dare you grab your MP's pension?"

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Francis Drouin: And that is, Mr. Chair, if I can say this with my final words, the Canadian Alliance and Conservative hypocrisy.

The Chair: Mr. Warkentin, you have a point of order.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know my good friend over there knows how to stay relevant to the conversation, because I've heard him be relevant in other committees. Unfortunately, he has resisted the call to remain relevant. I would ask you to convey to him the importance of remaining relevant, so that we can move to a vote.

The Chair: That's a good point.

Mr. Drouin, Deborah Grey has been gone from the House of Commons for quite a number of years, and I don't really see how that's germane to the motion. If you could stay with comments that are germane to the motion, that would be great.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, the best way to predict the future of the opposition party is to look at its history. I'm looking at members of the opposition, and they're surely acting the same way they were acting in the 1990s, like the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance. I am trying to stay relevant. I think it's germane to the opposition motion at hand that we are studying.

Trying to go after family members.... The proof is in the pudding. All of the opposition members who want to have the financial information of family members, who are not covered under the Conflict of Interest Act, are themselves not publishing and are not being proactive about publishing the information of their own family members, who are not covered under the ethics act.

We go through a process with the Ethics Commissioner. I have to divulge all of the information of my wife—

• (1945)

The Chair: Mr. Johns, go ahead.

Mr. Gord Johns: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the member is citing that we're going after family members. This isn't what's happening here. This is about an almost \$1-billion contract that was awarded to an organization. We're trying to get information about who got paid by that company for speaking, to see the connection. This isn't a normal family matter; this is about getting to the bottom of this.

To be fair, there's still \$900 million that hasn't been awarded to students, who are waiting and who were expecting to get the help they needed.

Yes, I agree with Mr. Drouin that we want to get back to work and that we want to be helping Canadians. That's what we've been doing simultaneously through this whole process. The bottom line is that \$900 million is still sitting idle, not helping the very students who were supposed to be getting help.

We need to get to the bottom of this and hopefully get some answers. There's a lot of money going out the door. When this money is going out and it's not being properly vetted.... That's what we're doing here. We're finding out how this money got awarded and what sort of conflict there was, potentially. We're just trying to get these simple answers about who got paid.

This isn't targeting—

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I don't believe this is a point of order. I think the member is debating.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull, if you want me to cut off everybody who I think doesn't have a point of order, I'd be glad to do that, but I will do it consistently. I'll either give people the time—I've usually given only one or two minutes—or I'll cut everybody right off as soon as I sense that it's not a policy or procedure issue.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Sorry, Chair, I was just sensing that it was getting into debate. Thanks.

The Chair: No worries, it's just the way I operate. I give a little bit of space, as I have with Mr. Drouin, with regard to being germane to the subject.

Mr. Johns, are you just about done with your point of order?

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, the member is saying that this is a witch hunt after family members. This isn't going after any family members. We're talking about \$900 million that has been doled out. We're trying to find out what the links were with the organization and get to the bottom of this.

This is a reasonable ask, with \$900 million. There are students still waiting for help, and they're calling our office. These are students who went out and volunteered when the Prime Minister said, on April 24, "Get out and help. Contribute to your country." I know young people who went out and started volunteering down at the Salvation Army and at the Bread of Life in my community, delivering food to the most vulnerable. Then the Prime Minister said, "We're going to help you out." At the end of June, what does he do? He announces a new program. He says the program is going to be working through WE Charity, and that they may not even be able to stay connected to the organization they are helping.

I mean, the apathy here, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Mr. Johns, as I mentioned to Mr. Turnbull, I like to give some space, but think we need to conclude that point. I get your point. It's not a point of procedure.

We'll have to let Mr. Drouin continue.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I hear Mr. Johns' point and I respect him as a colleague. He's complaining about \$900 million, but of course what my constituents are asking me now is, how the heck did the NDP buffle \$2.5 million when they were almost in power and the official opposition? My question to that particular member is, have they paid back the expenses?

That's a side note, Mr. Chair, and obviously I want to stay on topic and the issue at hand. The motion of Mr. Barrett is going after family members, which is not covered under the ethics act.

What Mr. Johns has said is somewhat relevant, because we're trying to ask for information from a third party that is in no way connected to WE. The Speakers Bureau is in no way connected to WE. We're asking for information from them, and they offer speaker services and client services to a bunch of organizations across Canada. I believe Rona Ambrose is a member. John Baird is a member of the Speakers Bureau—I wouldn't say a member, but I would say a speaker, part of the Speakers Bureau. They offer their services, which I respectfully say is an offer. I respect John Baird, and I certainly respect Rona Ambrose, especially for her work trying to get judges trained about sexual harassment.

This is where, Mr. Chair, I'm trying to understand where the opposition is trying to go. They've asked for the Prime Minister to appear. He has appeared. They've asked for the chief of staff to the Prime Minister. She has appeared. They've asked for the Minister of Youth and Diversification. She has appeared. They've asked for the deputy minister and the ADM to appear. They've appeared.

How long is this going to take, and is this a fair process, Mr. Chair? There is a fair process going on right now, and this is with the Ethics Commissioner. Let's let the Ethics Commissioner do his work and then, if the opposition thinks that we should go after family members who are not covered under the ethics act, the Conflict of Interest Act, then maybe that's something that—I'm not a regular member of the ethics committee—opposition members will want to look at.

Mr. Chair, I will end my comment here. I will wish my colleagues well, and I hope that the opposition parties, especially the Conservative Party, which voted against the Prime Minister appearing before committee, see the light of day.

• (1950)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

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

The Chair: Sure, go ahead.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I should call it my “point of speakers list”, I suppose, Chair, but maybe you were getting to that, just to clarify the speakers list.

The Chair: You have kept me so accountable, Mrs. Shanahan. I was about ready to do that. Actually, in all fairness, before doing that, I was going to say that our first break was at two hours. We're now at an additional three and a half hours.

Your magic number is usually 10 minutes, Mrs. Shanahan, so I think we'll take a break for 10 minutes. It's 7:52. We'll come back with Mr. Simms, who's next on the list, at 8:02, and I will review the speakers list at that time as well.

• (1950)

(Pause)

• (2005)

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll resume.

I'm going to review the speakers list with you. It's Mr. Simms, Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Barrett, Madame Gaudreau, and then Mr. Warkentin.

We'll go now to Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

I am not a regular of this committee. I'd like to think of myself as a little more than an accidental tourist but more of an eager and interested tourist as to what is germane to this debate.

I hope you'll find some of my comments somewhat interesting. I won't say “exhilarating”, because I will start to sound as if I'm reading from my own householder. I would like to say that I hope you find it somewhat interesting, and hopefully you'll find it a little more exciting than simply watching the grass grow.

Over the next little while, I want to bring forward some of my thoughts on this. I've been a member of Parliament now for quite some time, I'd say. I don't even want to put a number to it. I've been here that long.

I haven't dealt much with the ethics committee, except when I was a critic some years back, but I have been involved with procedure and House affairs. I have written about it, some of which was published, some not. I've been very interested in the debate that has unfolded regarding certain bits of legislation.

When it comes to the Ethics Commissioner, I haven't dealt with the Ethics Commissioner a lot in the past little while, so I don't want to get into the weeds of where it is they are, nor privacy for that matter, but I do want to talk about some of the things that I feel about this motion, whether it's in form or not. I understand there has been a ruling that it is in form and can be presented, and I don't want to dispute that whatsoever. What I would like to do, as a parliamentarian, is talk about the spirit of it and—I mean this sincerely—how it falls short of aspects of what I consider to be a motion that demands a lot of a few people.

There are people with lives and feelings who are non-political actors and who are cited in this motion. Whether you feel they belong there or not is one issue, but it's serious. I say that in the context of... If we are going to proceed with this motion, then we have to give due consideration to what it is about to do to people involved in this text.

Let's consider several things. Let's consider, first of all, the motion itself: “an order of the Committee do issue to Speakers' Spotlight for a copy of all records pertaining to speaking appearances”. Okay, that's one thing. We have the ability, ostensibly, under the rights of our Constitution and so on, to demand certain things; a committee can do that. I'll get to that in just a moment, because it is an all-encompassing power.

You're demanding documents, first of all, dating back to 2008. I believe one of my colleagues earlier said that the person being sought after as the subject of this investigation would be the Prime Minister, who was not covered by the act for seven of those twelve years. It goes back quite a distance. I remember that. I was there then as well, when the Prime Minister was the member of Parliament for Papineau at the time. Okay, I'll just leave it at that for now.

We're also talking about his wife and his mother, and then it goes on to his brother: "including, in respect of each speaking appearance, an indication of the fee provided". Now we're getting into the weeds of some really private stuff that we're talking about here. Then you have to measure whether that is significant enough to provide the answers that the opposition is looking for. Trust me, I've spent a long time in opposition. With an equal amount of vim and vigour, I went after information from the Conservatives when they were in government, and when I look back, even I am ashamed of that right now. To say it was theatre would be rather generous.

● (2010)

Therefore, let's talk about those individuals for just a moment and what you're asking of them. As someone pointed out earlier, without a doubt, they are non-political actors. They didn't choose to be on a ballot. They didn't choose to be the brother of the Prime Minister. In the case of Alexandre Trudeau, the brother, obviously he was in a situation where he was in that family. He has been exposed to the political life since birth, but I choose him as an example because....

Okay, by way of a funny story, I hope it draws some relevance out of the conversation I'm talking about, but I'm sure my colleagues will pull me back into the path of right direction if I stray too far, and I'm sure you as chair will do much the same.

A friend of mine was campaigning one day. He was campaigning for a municipal council seat. I'm good friends with him and I think he's a very nice person. He didn't win, but he could have added a lot to the council of the day.

We knocked on several doors. One door in particular caught my interest because the person who came to the door said to my friend, "I'm not voting for you, because I don't like what your brother has said to me."

For reasons of backstory, let's just talk about his brother. He can be described as that person at the end of a bar who for some reason likes to talk and is never invited to. He's that person on Twitter who randomly shoots out at everybody they don't like. Without providing any details as to who he is, I think I'm painting a picture of a person you don't want to be around for too long. When this person said, "I'm not voting for you because of your brother," my friend's response was, "If I had to answer for my brother all the time, I'd never leave home."

I'm not saying there's any dissension between Alexandre and the current Prime Minister. I think they're both wonderful people. Obviously, I have met them both and they have a good relationship as brothers. However, the reason I bring that up is that my friend who was campaigning has a life, a life that is different from that of his sibling, distinctly different. Not only does he have a life that's distinctly different from that of his sibling, but he has a character that is distinctly different. I realize that character has nothing to do with this, but in this case, the brother of the Prime Minister is now being ensnared in a situation where I don't think he belongs.

I don't think for one moment that, if we give it much thought, whether we're Conservative, NDP, Bloc, Green Party, Liberal or whatever, we can ask of this person, who was never really asked to

be involved in the first place, whether he is a political actor. There are siblings who are. They're involved in the particular party, or involved in a particular government. Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have many siblings who served in the same caucus together and they've had to answer for their brothers or sisters on certain occasions, and that's fair game.

These people were making a living. I'm not saying this motion denies them the ability to make a living, but it doesn't help. It certainly is not a situation where this person is being drawn in, or I should say "persons", because I'm not just talking about the brother here. I'm talking about this motion that I don't think is going to capture the answers they're looking for. At the same time, I do not think for one moment that the people cited in this should be a substantial part of the information they need regarding this particular situation.

● (2015)

What is this situation? That's a good question. It goes back to students, doesn't it? At the base of it, it goes back to students, many of whom were not in a great situation over the summer. There were measures for them. There was the student benefit. There was the Canada summer jobs program. I know that's an ongoing program, but by the same token, there were some measures added into it because of the pandemic that we are going through right now.

I think that at the very base of it, we wanted to provide a grant in this particular situation. I know some people would think that the money that was involved in this particular program did not measure up to what is either minimum wage or something that is before them, but it was similar to a grant or a bursary or something of that nature. For that reason, I thought it was a great idea.

Then we got into a situation in which the Prime Minister did several things, including apologizing, appearing in front of a committee and other measures. To say that this did not measure up to the standards by which the opposition marches in a direction of true virtuous nature is pretty much.... I've been there, done that. I don't agree with the content of the message you're putting forward, but in a Marshall McLuhan kind of way, I guess the medium is the message. They used the medium by which they can attain power down the road, and so on and so forth. I say that with a great deal of humility, because I did that for several years myself.

Let me go back to Michael's motion. It finishes with, "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...." I'll just leave it at that.

I want to go back to correspondence. This is an important part, I think. This is correspondence from the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Secretary to the Cabinet. That is Mr. Shugart. It says the office of the Clerk of the Privy Council Office. That is Mr. Shugart, Clerk of the Privy Council. This is of course to the clerk of the finance committee. It says: "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...."

Before I get called onto the carpet about it not being germane to the situation, I do this because there are arguments here and there that are similar to what has been talked about thus far.

He brings in a detailed timeline of events in Annex 2, and a full list of organizations that were consulted on program development. The letter reads, "...the Department of Employment and Social Development (ESDC) provided the Committee with a list".... I'm sorry. I just read that very quickly. My apologies to interpretation. I do that. I am proudly from Newfoundland. It's getting late at night here, later than what it is there. Sometimes we get carried away and we sound like we come from a long way off. I will slow it down for the sake of interpretation. My apologies.

Thereafter it says, "...on April 9, 2020, Department of Finance officials were provided with a report on stakeholder outreach," which is a very important part of all this, but that in and of itself—stakeholder outreach—is a very important point, because I'm going to bring up something else later in my presentation about another time when they talked about stakeholder outreach and how it deals with privacy.

It says that "the PCO media centre monitors coverage of the Government of Canada priorities." They provided that as well. We have a list of participants, recordings in mid-April between several members of the bureaucracy, including Ms. Wernick and Michelle Kovacevic. In great detail, they were outlining the situation that took place, that got us to the point where we talked about who was going to be a delivery mechanism of this particular program.

- (2020)

Let's keep this in mind: This is not brand new, this idea that we go outside the bureaucracy to deliver certain programs for the benefit of Canadians. As a case in point, NAV Canada is a private company. They provide all the guidance for airplanes across the country and around the world, so it's not a concept totally alien to Canada to go outside our own organizations to get other organizations, whether they be for profit or not for profit, to help us in delivering more efficient services. That was taking place.

The conversations around this were about how WE Charity was one that was worthy of discussion. Of course I say that because I think they were, and of course other people would say that's where things went off the rails.

Let me just go back to this letter, because I'm not arguing the point about whether WE was appropriate to deliver the services or not. What I'm saying is that this letter provides a level of transparency that I thought was good.

If I can be partisan for just one moment, I did not see a whole heck of a lot of that prior to the last government. Remember that when I was originally elected, it was a Liberal government, and there were some elements of non-transparency there that I wasn't happy with, and it's true that here are levels of non-transparency with the current government. That is true.

Like Mr. Warkentin, who bragged that there were times when he said no to his own, I've done the same thing myself on occasion. Sometimes you have to do what you have to do.

However, as was pointed out earlier, let's go back to the fact that some of this information also includes that "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." What a novel idea.

I did not witness that a lot when I was in Parliament from 2006 to 2015. I remember November of 2013, when we asked Stephen Harper to appear in front of a committee to deal with the issue of Senator Duffy and others involved in that situation. The answer was that he wasn't going to do that. I think it was more that he didn't think so. He paraphrased it more than that, but it was more like he didn't think it was going to happen.

There may have been other times when we asked the Prime Minister Harper to appear in front of the committee, but I don't think Stephen Harper would have appeared at a committee if he had to walk through it just to get home, quite frankly.

That may be a little unfair, and I apologize, but let's be honest: He was not eager to sit in front of opposition politicians.

That said, though, it is surprising, because I remember many question period moments when I thought Stephen Harper was quite adept at what he was doing. I thought he was pretty good on his feet, and one of the better speakers in the House. He was not quite at the status of Bob Rae, but he was good. Nevertheless, I digress.

Let me go back to this situation. I think the level of transparency throughout it was more than I was expecting. I hadn't seen the Prime Minister appearing before committee. I thought he handled it as well as he could, given the situation.

There is a thing about committees. I am a chair currently, and Mr. Sweet, I'm sure you would agree, and there are other people. I see Ms. Sahota is here as well, and she is also a chair.

- (2025)

You know, you get seven minutes or six minutes to ask a question. Things get pretty heated. There are two ways of doing it. You can either ask a question or you can make a statement, but when you try to do both, it doesn't work. Sometimes it went off the rails for that reason, but the fact that he was there impressed me from the beginning, and I was okay with his answers.

Now, do I agree with everything the Prime Minister does? Nope. Do I agree with everything that the government does? Nope, and if you know my voting record, sometimes I don't mind saying so.

However, I'm going to return to Michael's motion. I have to call you Mr. Barrett, because I'm not used to using first names in committee.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, speaking through you, let me say please, by all means, Mr. Simms can call me Michael.

Mr. Scott Simms: Well, I appreciate that, sir, because without getting too emotional, I knew quite well your predecessor and I miss him dearly.

Mr. Michael Barrett: If I can just add to that, he spoke well of you also, Scott.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, Michael. I appreciate that.

I know what I want to talk about. This is something I found earlier in the public accounts committee. It is a report called “The Power of Committees to Order the Production of Documents and Records”. It’s the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts from December 2009. It’s very interesting. It’s quite straightforward in the sense that the power of the committee is greater than many people would think when it comes to demanding papers, and so on and so forth. The power to actually get the evidence is not as strong as some may think, but there certainly is a right to demand it, as in this particular case.

Before you’re beginning to think that I’m making the case for the opposition, let me march through this as slowly as I can. I hope you’ll stick around. I’ll try to do this more quickly than I seem to be. I know it’s late; it’s certainly late where I am.

It begins, “Pursuant to its mandate, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts periodically holds meetings” for witnesses, questions or subject matter, and so on and so forth.

Okay, here it is: “On 24 March 2009, the Committee heard witnesses from Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) on the Auditor General’s December 2008 report on Contracting for Professional Services. In the course of the meeting held on the audit report, officials from PWGSC were asked questions relating to the Government Enterprise Network Services (GENS)....”

Let me explain that very quickly. GENS was a former part of the federal government’s IT shared services initiative. They were asked to bring forward information; however, they didn’t want to. They were dragged into this kicking and screaming, similar to the election of a new Speaker, to a certain degree, except that’s kind of fake, while this was real.

In response, the deputy minister of public works—I won’t use names, because it’s not really germane to the point—stated “that he would undertake to provide the committee with a number of video-cassettes”, or audio recordings, “on the industry consultation on GENS. These documents were to be provided by 7 April 2009.”

In a letter, the deputy minister said that public works “would be delivering the requested documents, but on the advice of legal counsel, would do so only in accordance with the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act”.

There was a big to-and-fro about how this was going to work. Essentially, it ends like this: They had done a consultation process with the general public about IT services, but they were not comfortable with releasing some of that information because some people gave it in confidence.

In the ruling here, they said the committees are empowered to do that. They have a right to ask. Other people have a right to deny for reasons that are stated. If the committee feels that the House should look into it, they have to ask them to do that as well, in order to push this through.

Here’s what’s important, as stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Marleau and Montpetit. They talk about “the power to send for persons and papers, which is accorded to committees”, which includes many powers, of course, as cited here.

The last sentence here in the report, which is quoted from the book, is important. The testimony of this particular report says, “Although the House has not placed any restrictions on the power to send for papers and records, it may not be appropriate to insist on the production of papers in all cases.”

Before my opposition gets excited about the all-encompassing aspect and before they start painting a picture that the committee’s power resembles the Death Star, if you catch the *Star Wars* reference, with a huge tractor beam that sucks in all information, it’s also written in there that you can’t go crazy with this power.

• (2030)

This is like some wild cash grab to get all the information that you want or need, so they say, “Although the House has not placed any restrictions on the power to send for papers and records, it may not be appropriate to insist on the production of papers in all cases.”

Let me put my partisan hat on for just a moment.

Here’s what’s interesting, and I’m glad you asked. In the supplementary opinion put forward by the government of the day, which were the Conservatives, it says:

CPC members want to highlight that when a committee or the House of Commons calls for persons, papers and records the consideration of the public interest needs to be the first and most important consideration.

I’m sure you would agree, and that’s how I’m sure the Conservatives feel right now. What they’re doing is, as stated here in their submission, “the first and most important consideration.”

It goes on to say:

The participants in these consultations understood that their participation and comments were to be protected from disclosure by the Privacy Act and therefore may have shared confidential information that they would not otherwise have shared.

The Conservative Party of the day believed that the information that may have been handed over to a committee by private citizens was not right, not fair and not in the spirit of what the production of papers was meant to be.

In other words, it was okay to get information from the Department of Public Works, but there were people involved who had given evidence privately to the government, and the Conservatives felt you’d gone a step too far.

Going back to the original motion, have we built a bridge too far? I would argue that in the spirit of it, yes, I think you have, because of the elements here.

My colleague earlier—I think it was Mr. Housefather—talked about going beyond the non-political actors, going beyond to a place where you shouldn't be going because of the privacy aspect. He talked about siblings and other family members who were going to be subjected to this. I think he brought up a valid point.

I suspect the Conservatives and I could argue this every way to Sunday, and I say that with the deepest respect because I don't want to get into name-calling and so on and so forth. I just think that what encapsulates the spirit of your motion is that it's a bridge too far in this particular case.

I think that what Mr. Shugart has provided in his letter—several letters, actually—does illustrate the great deal of effort to get to the bottom of this. Now I know we—I and the opposition—don't agree on that, but I think it can be.... I just don't want anyone to think that I'm here, as was noted earlier, simply just to defend the boss, as the saying goes. I'm sure people will construe that I am, but nevertheless I do have a genuine concern about what this motion does.

This is going to sound bad, but let me just explain. For the record, Michael, if you spent more time looking at the nuts and bolts of the information that they're looking for, it could be done in a way that doesn't reach out and try to “cash grab” several elements of society. When I first read it, it just seemed like something that went madly off in different directions. It was like a motion that was written and developed by a very large committee of people with differing ideas about how they wanted to establish a fight, as it were.

• (2035)

Michael, I don't mean that disparagingly. Don't get me wrong. Hey, look, I understand—been there, done that. There have been things that I have written and said that when I look back....

I'm glad this is all public. This is great. Now I get to talk about how my days in opposition basically went astray, I guess; I don't know. Nevertheless, it's late and we're still rampant.

I really wanted to put that out there, because it just didn't sit that comfortably with me. If you look at it, I'm not sure.... That's where I look at the to-and-fro of Parliament, when you say one thing on that side of the House and you say this thing on this side of the House. You could be in third place or fourth place or whatever you are in the House, and say something entirely different. I think we have to be honest with ourselves about how we want to argue this in a genuine parliamentary manner and come to terms about how we want to get to a particular subject.

Listen, I get calls. Today was a particularly big day for people calling about their employment insurance and so on and so forth. I will come back to that, but just allow me to build a small arc back to the point I want to make about this particular motion. Yes, we spent a tremendous amount of time going through a lot of programs that flew fast and furiously out the door because we needed to provide the money by which the people could get through this pandemic. CERB started out as employment insurance exceptions. It

evolved into CERB, first delivered by Service Canada or the relevant department, and—

• (2040)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Scott, I'm really sorry to interrupt you, but I want to bring something to the attention of the chair.

I was originally on the speakers list, and the system booted me out. Now I'm no longer on the speakers list. I don't know if anybody got on after me. I just want to make sure my place is held where it's supposed to be.

The Chair: We have a double redundancy system going on here, Madam Sahota. I still have you after Mr. Warkentin. It's in writing, so we will not be sabotaged by the Internet.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Great. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Scott, I'm really sorry for interrupting you there momentarily. You've actually been very entertaining. At the beginning you said you might not be that entertaining, but I think there's a lot to learn from your words, as always.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you. My goodness. Wow.

Ruby, if it's okay with you, perhaps I'll get you to write my householder next time, but I digress.

That's a new term. I've been here 16 years, and a “double redundancy” something is like the redundancy department of redundancy. It's great. It's like Monty Python all over again. Nevertheless, again I digress. Sorry.

I was talking about the myriad programs that we're trying to engage people with to try to make sure they get over this pandemic. I talked about the CRA and the CERB, and then we get to the student benefit. You're put in a situation, and this is not just a Liberal thing. I saw the Conservatives go through this in 2008, around the time of the recession that hit. I remember the term at the time was “shovel ready”, which is a phrase used in politics, but in an entirely different context.

Anyway, these projects were flying out the door. They wanted to get projects out quickly to get people working in society. The shut-down that was happening wasn't to the extent that we see now with the pandemic; nevertheless, there were things that were moving fast and furiously, to the point where sometimes mistakes were made, so we backed up a bit and tried to work it out.

Did we complain? Of course we complained. We were part of the official loyal opposition, so that's what we did and what you do. I'm not trying to belittle the arguments you bring forward to this campaign, other than to say that I don't necessarily agree with the motion. I do it for sincere reasons as a parliamentarian. I know at the time that things were done that we needed to go back and reassess. The key there is to reassess what you felt was done wrong so that it unfolds to reach your target audience. I'm sorry if I'm using a marketing analogy for governance, because they're two separate things, but when it comes to a target audience and delivering services to Canadians, the point is that you need to look at what was done and assess how to provide it better.

In my opinion, what was done when the Prime Minister appeared before committee, when the information was provided and certain cabinet confidences were not redacted, I thought was a sincere measure on behalf of the government to deal with the situation, because at the end of the day, we wanted kids to get their grants, deservingly so. I know this first-hand. I have a son who's in university, and without getting too much into detail, that probably would have been a program that would have benefited him. I say that, but it didn't work.

Like everybody else, I would like to take a look at something as unique as this program, a program that has all the sincere hallmarks of being a good thing for students to allow them to not only just get money. That's one part of it, but what's most important is that it teaches volunteerism, or at least it illustrates the benefits of volunteerism. It illustrates how, no matter what their age, they can provide a huge benefit to society, a massive one. However, in many instances, they don't know how to engage. This grant program helps them to do that, and that's what's so important about it. I know Mr. Johns talked about it earlier, and he had some valid points about it that I hope we can rectify in the future.

I just hope that it doesn't get caught up in a political spat, but it's a little late for that now, isn't it?

● (2045)

I would love to say I'm going to wrap up, but I just had some coffee while you were away on a break, so I'm raring to go again.

I listened very intently to what all the speakers before me were saying, but when I see something that was not delivered, rather than laying blame on a whole myriad of people, including bureaucrats and people who are not on the ballot, I look for improvements.

Now, am I naive? Absolutely. When I started in politics back in 2000, I remember that a wise person looked at me and said I was obviously a little naive when it comes to how Ottawa works. I said yes. Then he said I should stay that way. It might help us. I never forgot that.

In the midst of all that is going on that is typically political, there lies a nub of truth in which we can find common cause. If we don't, we may fall into a pattern by which we never discuss anything together. I only have to point south of the border to illustrate my point.

Trust me that this is not a lecture on my part. I know it sounds like it, but it's in earnest, because I've seen a very high level of de-

bate go to a low level and back to a high level again. I hope that over the next few months, as we go post-pandemic—if I can use that term—the world is going to change. How is political discourse going to change? I'm looking at you on a screen. Some of you are halfway around the world from me, yet here we are at committee.

Mr. Johns just raised his hand. Mr. Johns may as well be in Australia and I may as well be in Iceland as far as our distance is concerned. However, the distance between us, Gord, is not just political; it's geographical.

I can honestly say that I hope metaphorically we're a lot closer when this is all said and done, because we're now into this new world. Someone who's been here.... I'm looking around and I don't know if anyone's been here longer than I have, but it's going to put us into a situation in which we're going to have to be careful and measured.

I'm not trying to get off the rail. I want to go back to the motion again.

On that note, I think we might be going off in several directions that are not focused and we're seeking sound bites. That's from me, who was in opposition for many years.

I think we have to come to grips with the fact that to get to the bottom of this, it's not just a government changing hands. It's also about improving on this program. Let's ask ourselves if this is a good program or not. That's fundamental to what we're arguing here.

Are any students watching this right now? There may be some, but not a lot. However, no matter who's watching or not, they could have benefited from this program.

I can honestly say that when this—

● (2050)

Mr. Gord Johns: I think students are working to make up for the money they didn't get to help them.

Mr. Scott Simms: You know what, Gord? Here's the thing. Sure they're working hard; of course they are, but they're expecting us to work hard too, and if our only goal is to change where we sit in the House, we're leaving them to their own devices to better their predicament, to get some education, to get an experience in volunteerism and to help us do things.

However, if they do, they'll have to be doing it on their own, because we're still playing this game. We're still just rattling back and forth doing this, and look, it's our system. I get it: You're in opposition; I'm in government. Who knows when that's going to change, but—

Mr. Gord Johns: Just release the documents and then it's easy.

Mr. Scott Simms: It did change at one point, right?

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I think Gord has a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, I think the bottom line is that if the documents are released, he's right that then we could spend our time doing what we want to be doing, and that's helping those students and helping people, but Canadians deserve an answer and that's what we're doing here. We're asking the government to release the documents so that we get the information and Canadians can get to the bottom of this.

Mr. Simms, I really appreciate it. We both want to see the students get the help they deserve. There's that \$900 million that didn't get spent. There were kids out there, young people out there, volunteering and expecting to get help, and they got betrayed. They're trying to figure it out right now. They're trying to figure out how they're going to get through the school year.

That money could be used properly. Instead—you're right—we're trying to figure out why money is going out the door from the government and ends up going to organizations that are connected to politicians. It shouldn't be this way.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Johns.

Mr. Gord Johns: We just want to get the answers.

The Chair: Mr. Simms, go ahead.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thanks for that point of order.

To go back to the point that I mentioned earlier, about the money, when we consider the fact that these programs are getting to the right people.... I don't know why, and that includes the comments that were just made.... Let's not look into who is involved, by which...they don't get the money. In other words, what I'm saying to you is that if you look at the situation that unfolded, that we have, when you wrap it up into nefarious motives, first of all, they weren't. It was quite obvious that nobody wanted to withhold this money from the students.

That is obvious, but if you want to talk about the system by which we perhaps can propose a better way of delivering the service, in terms of what I would expect if I were in opposition. I would be asking questions germane to the situation, which would be more like, okay, who is best able to provide a service such as this to students, the grant service itself? It was discussed that it was this outside source, which was WE Charity. Then, as you saw from the discussions, which were quite transparent, it seemed that the internal machinations of the Canadian government could not get it out as fast. Now, maybe Mr. Johns could say that maybe they could do it better, and that's a valid argument, but I didn't see that debate unfold.

I saw a debate unfold that was more about dragging people into this. Like I said, in the spirit of this motion, I don't think they belong there. I really don't. In many cases, if you want to look at how we can improve this for the future, there are ways of doing that. The discussion that we could have within either this committee or the finance committee.... Heck, you can even make a special committee if you wish. I'm sorry. I meant that somewhat sarcastically.

You could do that to get what Mr. Johns wants. That is true, but think about all that we're talking about now and the emphasis that we're putting on this particular motion to just have it here. We are confronting each other with it. How could we get to the nub of the

issue to do what is most important, which is to allow students to get the services, to get the experience they so desire?

I'm not perfect, Mr. Johns, but sometimes we can get close to perfection if we pretend that we're not perfect, if that makes any sense.

Nevertheless, I want to thank the committee for putting up with my little visit that I popped in. Thank you for having me, although I feel like you really didn't have much of a choice, but nevertheless, thanks for entertaining me.

Mr. Chair, thanks. That's it for me. I'm signing off. It's now 10:30 in Newfoundland and that's it for me. Thank you.

• (2055)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

You are correct, I think, on your assessment that you've been here the longest. You beat me by 18 months, by the way.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you.

The Chair: Now I have Mr. Turnbull on the speakers list.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's really great to be here. It's my first time joining this committee and having an opportunity to speak. I want to thank Mr. Simms, too, for his remarks. I know it was more than entertaining; I found it insightful. Thank you. I really appreciate your being here as well.

I'm subbing in for one of my honourable colleagues. I certainly share some of the concerns that other members of my team have expressed, but, you know, my hair doesn't stand up like this because I was overly shocked, Mr. Chair. I have seen motions like this at PROC. I also sit on that standing committee. We saw a quite lengthy motion that was perceived to be out of order eventually and deemed so by our honourable chair, who is also here tonight. It's really great to see Ruby Sahota here as well. She's done a wonderful job on the procedure and house affairs committee.

I say I'm not shocked by this motion, but I'm really concerned about it. I have a bit of background in an area that's relevant to this committee; I studied ethics. I'm one of probably very few people in Canada proud of having two philosophy degrees at university. I taught ethics and have a bit of background that might be relevant to this debate today.

I look at this motion—I have it here in front of me—and I think some of the concerns that have been expressed are deeply concerning to me as well, certainly the privacy issues that put the Prime Minister's family in a situation where documents would be disclosed about their speaking engagements. I don't see how this is relevant to the issue at hand. I know the opposition, quite rightfully, wants to dig into this supposed scandal. They keep saying it's a scandal. I have studied the facts of this issue. I've really paid attention to all the documentation. As an ethicist, I really do not feel like there's anything more than a very minor misstep with regard to this issue.

I really feel that this is a big overstep. One of the things that we learn, if we study and read the Conflict of Interest Act, is that a conflict of interest only occurs when an elected office holder, member of Parliament, or a reporting public officer holder acts in a way that furthers their own private interests or that of their family members. Family members are defined as a spouse, essentially. In this case, the only people who are really relevant here would be the Prime Minister and his wonderful wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau.

I think, from the testimony that I've seen, that Sophie Grégoire Trudeau has already disclosed all of her speaking engagements—or volunteer activities, I believe is more accurate—with regard to WE Charity. I believe that the Ethics Commissioner approved those in advance, well before any of the Canada student service grant was even entertained. It wasn't even an idea; it hadn't even been formulated yet.

The extension to the mother and brother of the Prime Minister is a very large overreach, because it's not relevant to even a potential conflict of interest, if there was one. If we look at the facts, I don't think there is anything more than a perceived conflict of interest. Let's just think about this for the moment. If there was a conflict of interest, as I said, you have to further your own private interests. How did the Prime Minister, if he were to sway decision-making towards WE Charity on this...?

• (2100)

We've heard repeatedly, time and time again, that the public service made a recommendation to go with WE Charity because of their due diligence. We've seen that they made a very clear recommendation. I know that other members here contest that. They think the public service didn't do their due diligence. But in fact they did. I did a lot of work in the charitable sector for many years, and I've seen the fact that WE Charity, for its faults—it had some, as all organizations do—certainly was well positioned to implement this type of program.

I can see how the public service, doing its due diligence, landed on a recommendation to go with WE Charity. Given the context of a pandemic, how can we really fault this decision and say that this binary decision in the Prime Minister's testimony...? He clearly indicated that this was a binary decision: either move forward with the Canada student service grant with WE Charity or not. How can you have a conflict of interest when you're making a go or no go decision? There were no other options to sway the Prime Minister's decision-making and to say that—

[Translation]

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

[English]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau has a point of order.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: The member's comments are very relevant. I am very mindful of anything having to do with ethics, but I would like us to keep our eye on the ultimate goal, which is to discuss the motion and anything closely related to it. The committee has already spent numerous hours on the details surrounding WE Charity.

Thank you.

• (2105)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gaudreau. Relevance is always key.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that comment from my honourable colleague. I am making, I believe, a relevant argument, which is, why is this particular motion coming forward at this time and what is it predicated upon? What is the theory?

I actually believe this is an attempt—and I think my colleague Mr. Sorbara said this before me—at a fishing expedition. What I've seen is that the opposition party asked questions, rightfully so, and got testimony and had witnesses come forth. They didn't like what they were hearing, so now they're digging for other information that would somehow essentially smear the Prime Minister and his family.

I get, again, that it's relevant to talk about the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister make this decision or sway decision-making for his own private interests? His wife was volunteering and got her expenses paid. How does that constitute a conflict of interest? There's absolutely no.... It's nonsense. I'm sorry. It's absurd to think that that constitutes a conflict of interest. There's no private interest there.

Furthermore, WE Charity, in terms of its contribution agreement.... Contribution agreements are used all the time by the federal government. They've been used multiple times throughout this pandemic. People keep calling this a sole-source contract, as if this was awarded to WE Charity with no process and no due diligence, which is absolutely false. We've heard this numerous times. So what are we fishing for here?

In philosophy.... I study philosophy, so bear with me here. I know you might fall asleep, but I will try to keep it interesting. The sophists were actually the first lawyers in ancient Greek society, and they were criticized by Plato, Socrates and Aristotle for being masters of rhetorical devices. They were good public speakers. Essentially, they taught other members of the Greek polis, but they were masters at what we call logical fallacies.

In this case, I think we're actually seeing the Conservatives use a logical fallacy that's been around for 2,000 years, so kudos to them. It's called *ad hominem*, and it's when you can't make an argument that will stand up to the principle of sufficient reason so you attack the person instead. You smear the person's reputation and name and their family.

Is that morally just? Is this motion morally just? We're sitting here debating this in the middle of a global pandemic. We've never seen a global pandemic, not in a hundred years, at least, since the Spanish flu. It's the second wave of the global pandemic. People are dying, and we're debating a motion that has no substance, that is morally bunk as far as I'm concerned, and it's all because the Conservatives didn't find what they were looking for, something that would be enough to make a headline so they can win some votes.

I just feel so strongly and passionately about this, Mr. Chair, because I just don't understand how we can continue to debate this when Canadians want us to be doing meaningful work, and for a government....

Look, there are other ethical theories we can talk about if we want to talk about ethics. Let's talk about leadership and ethical leadership. What I've seen in this pandemic—and I say this in a totally heartfelt and honest true-to-myself way—is true ethical leadership by our Prime Minister and our cabinet. I am proud to be Canadian, and I've been overwhelmed by the fact that our government has stepped up time and time again. We're not perfect. We don't ever claim to be. We always say there's more work to be done.

We designed programs within two or three weeks and launched them to support Canadians, and we refined them. The opposition party and the members within the Liberal caucus were part of that process, and we value that. That's the kind of dialectical process that democracy is founded on, but that's contrary to the sophistry that we're experiencing today. I'm sorry, my friends, but that has a negative connotation.

• (2110)

I don't mean to disregard the arguments that may be in opposition to this, but I really feel this is an attempt to smear the Prime Minister's name and his family, and I don't think it's justified. If I did, I wouldn't be here today. I would not be here.

I would also like to talk about some of the other contribution agreements.

Just think about the \$100 million that was given to food security organizations. Did anybody ask for a study on that? Maybe the Conservatives could look into that as well. What about the money that went to the Red Cross, United Way Centraide and Community Foundations of Canada, which was distributed to non-profits and charities across the country? Is that a conflict of interest, too? Is every contribution agreement now under scrutiny, because the government has decided to strategically partner with the charitable sector to deliver a program and a service that Canadians need and rely on? They're better positioned to do so in many cases—in most cases, I would say. Most of the charitable civil society organizations I've worked with would say they are better positioned than government. They would sometimes like government to work with them, enable them, and then get out of the way.

It's just misleading. We're misleading Canadians with this type of production of documents. There's no scandal here. It's a reach.

The other distinction that is really important for this debate is the difference between a perceived and an actual conflict of interest. I brought with me today a document that I'm really proud to have read several times over the years. People I know, professors, have actually published some of these documents. It's *The Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics*. These are probably the most pre-eminent scholars—

[Translation]

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

[English]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau has a point of order.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I know it's late, but for goodness' sake, think of the interpreters. There is an echo, so it's important that people continue to speak slowly.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gaudreau. That's a good point. We all have to remember that interpretation is doing a stellar job.

Mr. Turnbull, go ahead. Just be careful with regard to the cadence of your voice.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I'll be mindful of that. I'll try to slow it down.

I'm getting an echo in my headphones.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: The echo is getting really bad. I don't know if it's just me, but I'm hearing everything double time.

The Chair: I see the clerk working on it right now with the technical crew. We'll see if we can remedy that right away.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: I think it might be resolved.

The Chair: You sound good now, Mr. Turnbull.

Go ahead, and if there's a problem, I'll ask you to pause.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that, and I'll go slowly for my colleague. Thank you for that reminder.

In PROC, we studied the virtual Parliament and the many implications for our interpreters. Some of them included injuries that they could get in their ears—from acoustic shock, I think they called it. I'll try to be more mindful of that. My apologies to the interpreters.

I was referring to *The Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics*. In particular, I think it's interesting to look at the chapter on conflicts of interest. As a term, “conflict of interest” actually hasn't been around very long. This is not that relevant, but it's important for us to understand that it's a morally peculiar concept, and that's what the scholars in this particular text talk about.

There are different levels at which we can consider this morally peculiar concept. One thing I would point to is that it originated only in the 1970s in organizational conversation, and only really got a full-blown definition many years later. It really hasn't been around that long, in terms of Canadian history and organizational history.

Even within the lifetime of someone such as the Prime Minister, conflict of interest was not something that was necessarily talked about. This is not me making any comments about whether he should or shouldn't have known the definition, etc. It's in the Conflict of Interest Act, and everybody knows we all agreed to it when we became members of Parliament.

What I think is interesting is that the scholars argue that one can be in a conflict of interest just by virtue of the position they find themselves in within a certain occupation. In essence, if you think about me managing a company, I can be in a conflict of interest just by virtue of the fact that I'm the CEO of a company and my position makes me responsible for certain things, and I've had relationships in the past. I've taken on that position, and all of a sudden something occurs that puts me in a conflict of interest, unbeknownst to me. You can become embroiled in a conflict of interest, or a perceived one, without necessarily knowing it but just by virtue of the position you hold.

This is well documented in the text I refer to. Maybe I can read a few passages out of this. This one in particular is, I think, important. Actually, I think it is by someone who may have even appeared as a witness at some point. Wayne Norman and Chris MacDonald wrote this chapter in the Oxford handbook. They say:

Most careful definitions [of conflict of interest] place a primacy on picking out a particular kind of situation. A person has a conflict of interest because of the kind of situation she finds herself in, not simply because of the actual state of her own desires, interests, motives, and so on.

This is interesting. It means that conflict of interest is actually situational. It's not that you're a bad person because you find yourself in a conflict of interest.

Now, of course our Conflict of Interest Act tells us what individuals are expected to do if they find themselves in a conflict of interest, but I would argue that we have to become aware that we're in a conflict of interest first. If we're in that situation unbeknownst to us—if our mother or brother had done some speaking engagements and somehow we didn't know it—then we could find ourselves in a conflict of interest unbeknownst to ourselves and not necessarily have the awareness of the information we would need to identify that we're in a conflict of interest.

• (2115)

This is a perfectly plausible, rational explanation for how the WE Charity issue or misstep—I would call it no more than a misstep—could have happened.

If you look at this text even further, there is another.... Let me just go back for one second. I know you are not finding this riveting, but I am. I am nerding out here, showing my true colours. This is really relevant to this motion and understanding what conflict of interest actually is.

The text reads: "At the end of the day, an employee or professional may be expected to exercise moral restraint to prevent her own interest from clouding her judgment, but before then she will generally be expected to take concrete steps to escape the conflict, disclose it, have it managed" or as a last resort recuse herself. These are normally expectations that go along with certain positions where conflict of interest may arise more frequently.

Managers and leaders within organizations are generally expected to exercise judgment. I would argue, though, that they would have to have a support system around them in order to identify when they may be in a conflict of interest unbeknownst to them. This is the importance of culture. Within ethical theory, organizational culture has become the most prominent topic of conversation. People realize that you can't have ethical leadership without having

an ethical culture and cultivating a kind of ethical culture within your organization.

I want to read another quote, which is probably the one that had the most influence on me and is really the most relevant piece of information out of this particular text. I have more, but in this particular text, this would be the quote I would go back to over and over again, because it really speaks to just how easy it is for a leader as important and responsible for so much.... When taking on a role that has so many overlapping duties and such a high degree of responsibility, conflict of interest would actually be happening quite often.

We heard this in Katie Telford's testimony, where she said numerous times that she had regular contact with the Ethics Commissioner and his office. They went back and forth many times. It was also disclosed by the Prime Minister that his wife had volunteered with WE Charity and had been reimbursed for her expenses. This was out in the open. This was long before WE Charity and the Canada student service grant.

I'll go back to this quote, and I'll slow down. I apologize. I tend to speed up when I've been talking for a while. I just forget.

This quote is really impactful:

The minor revolution that took place in the latter half of the twentieth century was the recognition that responsibility for managing what we now call conflicts of interest cannot merely be left to the honor and courage of the professional or public official. It is not that professionals suddenly became dishonorable, cowardly, or corrupt. The cognitive bias literature confirms intuitive suspicions that "interests" really do interfere with the judgment of even honorable and courageous professionals.

What this means, my honourable colleagues, is that you can be honourable and courageous as a professional and still occasionally make a mistake around a perceived or even an actual conflict of interest. In fact, it's the culture of organizations that needs to provide support systems around our leaders and managers to ensure that they flag these, that they recognize them and then deal with them appropriately.

• (2120)

Putting all of the blame on and demonizing the Prime Minister and his family and trying to tie them into this conflict of interest, or supposed conflict of interest—because I really don't see that there actually is one.... Again, when you look at the fact that it's a binary decision and you can't sway the decision-making from one proposition to another, there's no latitude to sway decision-making.

Also, what private interest was the Prime Minister furthering? Was it his own? He wasn't making money off WE Charity. Was WE Charity, even in the contribution agreement, able to hire speakers? No, they were not. There was no budget line for speakers.

Furthermore, within a contribution agreement, there is always a conflict-of-interest clause, so with the fact that WE Charity was signing on to an agreement, obviously that agreement never got fulfilled due to this supposed controversy, but it's a shame that the charity, imperfect as it was—and it certainly, I'm sure, had some internal flaws—has closed up shop in Canada. I know full well that it did quite a lot of substantial, impactful work on the ground in communities. Schools and students are worse off because that charity has now left our country as a result of this matter that, in my view, is not a conflict of interest.

Going back to this text, which I think is one of the central texts if anybody is interested in really, truly understanding organizational culture and how it impacts conflict of interest and how we manage conflicts of interest, to look at this is really important.

If we were studying how we can improve the culture within the public service and even within the offices of ministers and the elected officials in cabinet, to flag these things earlier and deal with them more effectively would be something that I would be interested in working on and supporting, and so on, but that's not what we're here to talk about today. We're here to talk about a motion that, for all intents and purposes, just seems like a fishing expedition with no logical....

I operate on the principle of sufficient reason, which is what philosophy taught me from very early days. I learned in first-year philosophy class as the fundamental principle of debate that if you can't make a good, rational, logical argument, don't use the logical fallacy of the sophist to try to get your way. Don't attack the person.

I would never attack Mr. Warkentin, never, ever. It's not in my blood. I might disagree with you to the end of time, but I will not attack you as a person. I won't; I just won't. Therefore, why is that okay for parliamentarians to do? It's not appropriate. I'm sorry, but I just have to draw the line there and I really feel passionately and strongly about that.

What else was I going to say? I had a couple of other points.

Oh, yes, this is another important point—

• (2125)

Mr. Michael Barrett: On a point of order, Chair, just to the member opposite's point about attacking or getting into it personally with another individual, Mr. Drouin was talking about whether my parents were alive or dead and whether we should be ordering their financial documents. Now his colleague is saying that it's inappropriate to engage in commentary about individuals when the motion at hand, which is what we should be discussing and not receiving a lecture, is about the Prime Minister of Canada and members of his family who received half a million dollars in payments from an organization that was asked to administer a half-billion dollar contribution agreement.

It just seems as though there's a bit of a disconnect, so I wonder about the relevance of even that point, which almost seemed to be an olive branch to my colleague Mr. Warkentin but is absolutely contrary to what Mr. Drouin was saying.

Therefore, I wonder if we can get back to the matter at hand, which is the documents.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Please continue, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Sweet. I do appreciate it.

Mr. Barrett, I extend that olive branch to you as well.

I don't believe what you just said is true. I can't speak for Mr. Drouin, but I don't think he was attacking you as a person. He wasn't smearing your name. He may have been disagreeing with something you said, but I didn't hear him do that. I won't speak for my colleague, but maybe he'll address that later in his remarks.

I would also take issue with something you just said, that the Prime Minister and his family were paid half a million dollars. I don't know of any evidence suggesting that's true.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Let's take a look at the documents.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: If it were true, it would be—

• (2130)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, on a point of order regarding the interruptions by Mr. Barrett, I understand that he's trying to bring up some points, but at some point I wish you'd intervene.

Mr. Barrett has been bringing up some points of order that are not actually points of order. If we are to keep decorum in this committee, I would ask that you intervene. When Mr. Barrett is speaking—without even saying, “Point of order”—I would ask that you intervene to ensure proper decorum in this committee.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Frank, you interrupted me the same way.

The Chair: Okay, colleagues, please address your comments through the chair.

Thank you very much for your intervention, Monsieur Drouin.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate it. I won't further that little side debate.

I do think that cognitive bias has come into play here. I've spoken to scholars for many years. I have studied this. Within organizational cultures, individuals and leaders can be subject to cognitive biases. This is a human thing. All of us experience these all the time when we have to make decisions.

I have another really great book here that I've read multiple times. I actually know the woman who wrote it. She's world-renowned. Her name is Mary Gentile. She wrote a book called *Giving Voice to Values*. It's about how you can speak up or speak your mind when you know what's right.

It's very interesting because her theory of ethics is that ethics are really something to be practised. It's not to say that you'll never make mistakes, but that ethics are a practice of decision-making. There's constant improvement, learning and evolution in becoming an ethical leader. It's not a “we are” or “we aren't” type of thing. It's not a light switch type of thing.

This means that we have to understand that ethical leaders—even the most courageous and honourable ethical leaders, like our Prime Minister—are going to make the occasional misstep. I would argue that, within a global pandemic, when we are rolling out programs and working around the clock for Canadians....

I mean that. My eyes are red every day because I lose sleep over my dedication to Canadians. I'm not saying that other people here don't do the same. I think we all do that.

I don't think that you have to be perfect all of the time. There's some degree of understanding and compassion that I bring to this work. When our honourable members occasionally misstep, I don't then say that they're horrible people, or that they're cruel or corrupt. These headlines and these claims are just sensationalizing something that is absolutely untrue. I know it to be untrue based on my experience of the leadership within our party. I really feel that I have to speak out about this.

Not only are ethics about knowing consequences and performing our duties, they're also about our moral character and cultivating that. That's what Aristotle said. He put forward virtue ethics and talked about our moral character. We're constantly developing a moral character and expressing moral courage.

It's like a muscle that we're constantly practising. We can't expect ourselves to be perfect all of the time. It's not as clear-cut as whether you did it right or wrong, in many cases. There's a complexity to ethics that goes way beyond a simple kind of thinking that says, "you made a mistake, so you're out".

These cognitive biases have been well documented and well researched. I'll mention just a few of them here. I think they're really relevant. In particular, I would suggest that we should all be aware of the fact that within a high-stress environment, within a very compressed timeframe and with a high degree of duty and responsibility, there's a high-pressure situation that lends itself to even more potential for cognitive bias to come into play. Suffice it to say that we're more prone, as human beings, to mistakes within our decision-making process within that high-stress environment.

I'm not making excuses. I'm just giving you the latest thinking in ethics. This is not me saying this. These are experts. I'm quoting from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics*. This is the world-renowned author, Mary Gentile. This is not really contestable stuff, in a sense. These are leading thinkers in the world on ethics.

• (2135)

Some of these cognitive biases are obedience to authority; social proof, which is similar to groupthink; a false consensus effect; and over-optimism. How about that one? I think we are definitely guilty of that. I'm certainly guilty of that. As an ethicist, I consider myself a person of high integrity, but I'm definitely subject to over-optimism. I definitely am. I can't deny it. It's a self-serving bias. There's a bias which says that as human beings we tend to underestimate the amount by which our personal interest has an impact on our decisions.

How do we as leaders counteract that? I would say that it's about the support system within the organizational cultures that we culti-

vate and that can help support us to identify those cognitive biases and make better decisions. In some cases, we need an opposing voice within the process, or the courage from public servants to say something that may be contrary to what they think their minister wants to hear.

Anyway, some of the other cognitive biases are framing, process and cognitive dissonance, which people have probably heard about, sunk costs and loss aversion, the tangible, the abstract and the time-delay traps. I could go into these at length. Maybe I will later on, because I think they are really relevant for the given situation.

Essentially, you know, we can't blame individuals for actually falling prey to cognitive biases, because it's a human phenomenon. Research shows that all of us experience those biases. We should be saying that it's just hypocritical for us to always point the finger at our leaders and allow them to be smeared in the media when we ourselves are subject to the same criticisms. That includes the Conservatives, the Bloc, the NDP, all of the Liberal members and all of the Independent members. We're all ethical leaders who are striving to be more ethical. I couldn't feel more passionate about that statement and claim, and I believe it to be true within our caucus. I've seen it first-hand.

Let's talk about the character of our Prime Minister. Let's talk about how within this process.... Again, for conflict of interest, you have to put your own private interests ahead of your duties. In this particular situation, did the Prime Minister put his private interests ahead of the interests of youth? Absolutely not. He put youth first.

In terms of youth not having the supports they need, the consequences of this supposed controversy have put youth more at risk than the decision the government made to move forward with WE Charity. I would argue that the Prime Minister and cabinet still put their duty to Canadians and to youth ahead of any private interests. Again, they're still not guilty. No matter which way I look at it, they're not guilty of a conflict of interest, not an actual one—maybe a perceived one, maybe a created one—and this goes on and on.

This is my first term in politics. I'm celebrating my one-year anniversary here. I don't see anyone congratulating me, but thank you. I appreciate it. I'm learning so much. I really am learning a lot.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Congratulations.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you.

One of the things I'm learning is how to deal with the emotional side of this—that smearing people's good names is somehow okay and we're supposed to give in to this. I really feel strongly that we have to battle this and fight back against it. I just don't think I can stand for the precedent-setting nature of a motion like this that digs into the lives of Margaret and Alexandre Trudeau in a way that is completely unjustified. I see no way that it's justified. They're not even covered relatives or family members in the Conflict of Interest Act, so how can they be included in this motion? This is the ethics committee. We need to be ethical. This is not ethical.

I digress. I think I'll leave it there for the moment, Mr. Chair, and pass it on to one of my other honourable colleagues. I do appreciate everyone's time in humouring me. I know I get quite passionate. I hope I didn't offend anybody.

• (2140)

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

Just for a reminder, even though Ms. Shanahan isn't here to keep me accountable, I will still do it anyway. The speaker's list is as follows: Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Barrett and then Madame Gaudreau.

We'll move on to Mr. Sorbara.

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

I'd like to commend everybody's remarks this evening and congratulate them for all the insightful information.

To you, Mr. Chair, I say thank you for the great job you are doing as chair of this committee. We are on multiple hours of speaking to the motion brought forward by MP Barrett. There are a lot of differing views. We all get very passionate about our views and the information we wish to provide, not only to the committee, but to our residents and Canadians watching at home. It's great. You've done a fantastic job, so thank you, Chair, for that and for the guidance you're providing all members of the committee.

To my colleague and friend, committee member Mr. Turnbull, you're doing a great job. It's your first year anniversary. That's awesome, and I wish you much continuing success.

MP Warkentin, you've got to stop attacking me on Twitter, my friend. You're going at me pretty hard there. I thought we were friends and stuff. I'll still consider you a friend, but I had a few people point out that you tend to attack me once in a while, but that's politics, right? We're here for the good of all Canadians. Let's try to keep it on that point. We may not agree on everything, and I don't agree with MP Barrett's motion for many reasons.

One thing that I did, Chair, in my time.... Thank you for acknowledging the passing of the father of a good friend of mine from graduate school. His father passed away over the weekend, and I was able to get to the viewing this evening and express my condolences to my friend, Mauro, whom I've known for 20-some odd years from my days at U of T in graduate school. It was nice to see Mauro tonight, but not under those circumstances. Thank you for acknowledging that.

When I read the motion brought forth by MP Barrett in terms of the speaking experiences, and when I look at everything that's been going on over the last several months in terms of the committee work that was done, which was everything that was released in the media and is widely held and widely available for all of us, I think there are a number of things I want to correct. Maybe this is debate or not, but a number of MPs have thrown around numbers in the last hours. This is a billion dollar number.

Frankly, before the pandemic even started and when our government was putting together a whole hash of programs to support Canadians from coast to coast to coast, the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency business account, which we've now expanded, the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which we've extended.... When we were looking at a plan to put in place for students specifically and we introduced the Canada student benefit, which would benefit over 700,000 youth, we attempted to put together the Canada student service grant program.

Obviously, the road that path took and the due diligence that was involved from our side and from everyone's side was significant.

Personally, I did not even know that this organization called WE even existed. I had never attended an event. I had never interacted with any representatives from the organization. It was a very new organization for me, personally. I have two kids in the elementary school system here in Ontario, and they had never gone to any events. I just didn't know anything about it. I didn't know what they did or what they didn't do. I was very interested to read and understand what was going on and what you could say was political spin from the opposition. What was reality? Where were mistakes were made on our part? No government is perfect.

• (2145)

The Conservatives know that no government is perfect. They are not perfect. We are not perfect, and I would never profess to be perfect. That is why we constantly learn and try to do better. That is why we try to act with a moral compass that takes us in a direction we believe we're comfortable with and we think is right. When I listened this evening, and in the last few hours to some of the comments with reference to the motion and to documents, first of all, I have to say that there was never a \$900 million or a billion dollar program, to my understanding. The opposition can say there was, but there really wasn't.

If you actually go to the organization that was engaged with the government, and went through the process of being engaged with the government, first off, you can read the contribution agreement, which I have here, and you can go through it. You can go through that contribution agreement line by line, and you can understand where we were going with the contribution agreement, who we were trying to help out and what our intent was.

The intent was to help students. We did it through the Canada summer jobs program, which we expanded since we first came into office, and we did it through the Canada emergency student benefit. We've done it through changing the Canada grant programs and boosting them by billions of dollars. We also lowered interest rates for students on their student debt, helping them out in so many ways.

Therefore, when we think about the program in place and how we got to this motion, it's like a trajectory. I'm not going to read the funding agreement, but I am going to reference it.

Going to the WE website, the organization has obviously suffered consequences from everything. I say this to my colleagues—because it has been said tonight in debate, and I know my colleague Gord Johns mentioned it—it was never a billion dollars.

First, the total value of the contribution was \$543 million. That is the number. In the contribution—and you can read it—there was no money spent on this program. The program did not in fact then depart; it was not executed. It was not done. The theoretical maximum expense reimbursement to WE was approximately \$35 million for the design, delivery, disbursement of grants and third party costs.

The second fallacy was that the WE Charity was chosen to administer the program due to political connections. I looked into this, because of what Ian Shugart, the Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to Cabinet, said in his remarks at the Standing Committee on Finance in July. He said that WE was chosen for its track record and that “What WE was able to provide...was the full range of services that would go to the heart of this matching program that would put young people in contact with not-for-profits so they could gain the relevant experience; their ability to promote the program with a massive social media following; experience in other situations of matching young people to service opportunities;...existing database information; representation right across the country with partnerships with other charities.”

That was the Clerk of the Privy Council commenting on this and vouching for it and saying that this is why the program went in this direction. Unfortunately, the program was never implemented. We went with other programs for youth. Those funds were not spent. It's not that we'll put that aside, but I'll speak to that in a second.

Then there's been this spin that the Trudeau families and the former finance minister gained exorbitant benefits from WE Charity. That's why I called it a fishing expedition and an overreach by the opposition party. I fundamentally believe that.

There's actually a public link to the documents that WE disclosed during the summer for the Prime Minister's mother, Margaret Trudeau, his brother, and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau. It's there. I'm going to read it, because it pertains to this motion. It didn't take me too long to get the information. I just did a quick Google search.

The WE website notes:

Incorrect information is circulating regarding members of the Trudeau family earning honorariums, and the amount reimbursed for their associated expenses.

• (2150)

It continues:

Honorariums paid to members of the Trudeau family totalled \$217,500 for 35 engagements (with multiple events per engagement) between October 2016 and March 2020. Some media outlets and politicians are incorrectly identifying expenses paid to cover their travel, food, hotels, etc., as fees paid to the speakers themselves.

In order to correct the public record please see the full breakdown of all engagement honorariums and expenses related to Margaret Trudeau, Alexandre Trudeau and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau here:

Now this is the information put out by WE itself:

Margaret Trudeau Between October 2016 and March 2020, a speaking bureau was used to engage Margaret Trudeau 28 times. On each occasion she provided an average of 3-5 events per engagement.

This is all public. Nothing is not in the public realm. I didn't find some magical source for information. The site indicates:

For one engagement, there was no compensation. The amount she received in fees for the 27 engagements totalled \$180,000.00 (after 20% commission paid to Speaker's Spotlight) averaging \$6,666.66 per engagement. The total amount of expenses (hospitality costs including food, hotels, car service) was \$163,654.74, which captured several international trips to both the United States and United Kingdom, and represents an average of \$6,061.29 for each engagement. An additional \$160 in gifts was provided to Margaret Trudeau during this time.

It goes on to say the same thing about Alexandre Trudeau:

Between September 2017 and February 2018, a speaking bureau was used to engage Alexandre Trudeau 9 times. On each occasion he provided an average of

3-5 events per engagement. The amount he received in engagement and ancillary event fees for these 9 engagements totalled \$36,000.00 (after 20% commission paid to Speaker's Spotlight), averaging \$4,333.33 per engagement. The total amount of expenses (hospitality costs including food, hotels, car service, and flights) covered for Alexandre Trudeau over the 9 engagements he attended was \$22,025.42, or an average of \$2,447.26 per engagement. An additional \$230 in gifts was provided to Alexandre Trudeau during this time.

I think that during this time the mother of the Prime Minister may have been to other events, speaking about mental health, life experiences, and inspiring youth and young women, and that's fine. There's nothing untoward. These individuals have private careers and private lives, and here we are with Mr. Barrett's motion to go on this fishing expedition because he doesn't like...let me rephrase that, because the official opposition doesn't like the information that's out there because they think there's more sauce out there, if I can use that analogy. I think I was quoted about going after someone's mother and brother, who are not elected representatives, who have done nothing wrong, who have been exemplary citizens in my humble eyes, and I think that's completely wrong.

As its last comment on the website, they note the following regarding the Prime Minister's wife:

...Sophie Trudeau attended a total of eight WE Day events.

She received a one-time speaking fee of \$1,500.00 in 2012. The total amount of expenses (hospitality costs including hotels, car service and flights) covered for Sophie Trudeau over the 8 events she attended was \$23,940.76, or an average of \$2,992.59 per event. An additional \$240 in gifts was provided to Sophie Trudeau during this time.

I read this the other day, and I read the information on the site. I looked at it because we're here because of the motion, and what and who it relates to. Again, this concerns me considerably, to the extent that this is nothing more than going after the Prime Minister's mother and brother and wife. That's all it is, no more, no less. The documents have been disclosed. The tough questions were asked over the summer. The information was provided.

The way I view this is that it's a complete overreach by the opposition. Yes, it's unfortunate that the program did not go forward.

MP Simms is no longer on the call, but I've had the pleasure of working with Scott on the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association because he chairs it, and I've travelled with him. Scott is an exemplary MP for many reasons, not only because he's very well spoken and quite eloquent—we would all like to rise to that level of eloquence, absolutely. At the same time, he likes to call it the way it is. And he was right. He's says we've done a good job in a lot of programs that we've put in place. Definitely. We've helped Canadians from coast to coast with input from opposition parties, in cooperation with other levels of government, and we got it right.

I would fundamentally say, on all the programs, we got it right, and even on assisting our youth. I know MP Green who was on earlier, and MP Angus, spoke about that. There were programs put in place that assisted youth across this country, from Canada summer jobs, the Canada emergency student benefit, in addition to a number of measures we've taken over a number of years in various budgets, from the first time we formed a majority government in 2015 until now. We need to look at that.

• (2155)

Now, I look at their testimony. MP Johns said, well, it was a billion dollars. No, it wasn't a billion-dollar program, not at all. Was it supposed to help 100,000 young people? Yes, it was. Did we put in place other programs to replace that? Yes, to a certain extent we did, absolutely. Was it unfortunate the program didn't go ahead? Yes, absolutely.

At the same time, we are helping Canadians, and continue to help Canadians.

I do encourage my Conservative members to go to the WE website and find the information I found. You'll get the numbers you need. You'll see the expenses disclosed and the information I found. I think you should be quite satisfied with that and understand the fact that you really are overreaching, and Canadians will understand that fact. You are looking at this from unfortunately a very small prism, as I would call it. I like to use this term. There is a bigger picture. The bigger picture is that we in the middle of a second wave of a pandemic.

I do think it's important that certain segments of the funding agreement between Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of State of Diversity and Inclusion, and the WE Charity Foundation...because I think it's important to look at intent, the intent of the program, and why that relates to the motion at hand. The motion at hand is nothing more than trying to grab some documents. It's interesting to note that the motion doesn't ask about the intent of the Canada student service grant, the intent of our helping out youth. Who were these youth that we're supposed to be helping out?

I look at the intent in the funding agreement to provide biweekly reports to ESDC on all students registered in service opportunities and all the students who register for the CSSG with the following indicators as available: estimated volunteer service hours completed; number of students per birth year; number of students who identify as first language English or French, male or female or other, LGBTQ2+, visible minority or racialized, and as having a disability, as indigenous, and whether they identify as registered on reserve, off reserve, or as non-status, Métis or Inuit; the number of students who are newcomers to Canada; and the number of students by their highest level of education and completed, elementary, secondary and post-secondary.

When I look at this funding agreement and how it came to fruition, how it was recommended by the amazing public bureaucrats—I don't like using the word “bureaucrat”—but public servants that we have in the Government of Canada, what was the intent of this? The intent of this was to help students.

Now we've gotten to a point where this motion is not talking about anything in the realm of helping Canadians, but about wanting a copy of all records “pertaining to speaking appearances arranged, since October 14, 2008” of the four individuals, “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”.

• (2200)

It amazes me that with all the information out there we're still trying to draw from a rock anything left, because there is nothing left, the information is out there.

To my esteemed and learned colleague—I think that's the word—Mr. Turnbull, for whatever reason, I went and looked at what “ethics” meant and where it derived from and everything to that extent, but I put that aside and said that ethics to me is making sure you try to do the right thing. I think as parliamentarians we always try to do the right thing. I think someone who is in cabinet, or someone who is the prime minister, always tries to do the right thing. Yes, politics is politics. We all understand that, but fundamentally during this pandemic we are all in this together. A number of programs were put in place—and I know, Chair, I apologize if I repeat it—to help Canadians, yes.

This motion, does it aid the process? Does it assist this process in helping Canadians out? Absolutely not. This is nothing more than looking into a barrel and seeing nothing, but putting forward more motions that achieve nothing. Something on the website that I found interesting was about what we were thinking in the summer-time and what the organization that had been engaged by the public servants to help our youth out was thinking about even before the actual program came to fruition.

I want to read the executive summary, because I think, independent of organization, this is how Canadians wanted to help, this is what Canadians wanted to do, especially a lot of organizations.

In that regard, I had a number of organizations in my riding convert production lines so they could make sanitizing lotion, PPE. The Premier of Ontario has been to my riding several times.... There are a number of companies that converted to make personal protective equipment: gowns, masks, sanitizer. We are all in this together, and I look at this motion and ask, where's that spirit? It's like we're just going to play politics.

I look at my Twitter feed and I see Mr. Warkentin attacking me, and a number of Conservatives then attacking me. You know what? I'm really sad to see that, because for me, the parents in my riding and the families in my riding, they're not really paying attention to that, but to their kids going to school tomorrow morning and making sure that their hydro bills are paid at the end of the month. They're not paying attention to what Mr. Warkentin's tweeting about this motion and about my testimony.

It's unfortunate, but they're not paying attention, Mr. Warkentin. I hate to tell you that, they're really not.

I look at this motion and I'm like, really? You just go to the WE website and it's all disclosed there. You can get the information. If you want to see each individual receipt, each time a piece of food was eaten, each hotel, or each person who was involved, if that's where you want to go.... I don't know. Are we going to go down that path? Do you want to bring in every single tie...? It just amazes me. Where are we going with this motion?

I just wanted to read this into the record, Chair, if you'll allow me to:

This document outlines an opportunity to launch a national, bilingual turn key digital service program to enable 20,000 young Canadians to engage in summer service placements and projects during the COVID 19 crisis. There is an urgent need to support young people between the ages of 16 and 29, particularly those from under-represented groups, who are seeking meaningful opportunities to develop life skills, earn income for personal use such as paying for post secondary studies, and serving Canada to benefit communities.

By incentivizing and supporting youth to engage through a system of well organized service opportunities, they will—

I think Ms. Blaney would like to make a point of order.

• (2205)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Madam Blaney, we're not hearing you at all. Your audio is very low.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I'll fix it.

The Chair: That's better.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I would just remind members that the interpreters are working with us very late into the night and as you are reading, you are reading very rapidly. I wanted to remind us to be respectful of the people who are working so hard to allow us to do our job.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: May I go ahead, Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: MP Blaney, I thank you for that comment. My policy adviser texted me and said the same thing, so thank you to both you and my amazing policy adviser.

Thank you. I will slow down for the benefit of everyone. My sincere *excusez-moi* to the interpreters for going at a faster clip. I know they've been working terribly hard for hours on end. I thank them for all of their efforts, and MP Blaney for her gentle reminder.

Thank you so much. I'll continue:

By incentivizing and supporting youth to engage through a system of well-organized service opportunities, they will be empowered both to safely participate in service projects in an era of physical distancing, and to provide tangible benefits to addressing important social causes in their communities in collaboration with non-profits across Canada.

This bilingual digital service program seeks to:

Create meaningful service opportunities for approximately 20,000 youth between ages 16 and 29 years across Canada, bearing in mind COVID-19 physical distancing measures.

Offer turn-key service opportunities that are flexible and supportive of social impact efforts and designed in collaboration with non-profits across Canada.

Support Canada Service Corps national partners that may be in need of support to transform their traditional volunteer placements into digital service projects.

Ensure service initiatives are diverse and inclusive in nature for youth, provide skill-development...that benefit society, and include effective economic incentives to encourage participation.

This organization that put forward this idea and how it evolved to the CSSG goes to show me (a) how much they were involved in wanting to assist youth during this pandemic and (b) how genuinely forthright the information is out there for us to see. During the finance committee testimony, we heard from a number of individuals, from the Privy Council clerk to the Prime Minister to the Prime Minister's chief of staff. It's important for us to understand that the testimony was there for us to read and go over. For me, in my humble view, it answered many, many questions.

Now, I'm sure that the opposition—in their right, of course, in their job—want more questions answered. That's within their prerogative, and they need to keep doing that. I get that and I understand that.

I also would take a step back and ask what are the questions that we are trying to answer with this motion. What are we trying to get at with this motion? To me, again, the Prime Minister's mother was here at the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce. I'm sorry to repeat this, but for MP Blaney, who was not here when I said this, for her benefit, the Prime Minister's mother was here in the City of Vaughan. She participated in an event with the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce. She spoke about her life experience and her life story. There were approximately a good 1,000 people there, I would say. The majority of them—I'd say 800, probably 950—in the audience were women. You could hear a pin drop.

I would just be very saddened to know that this motion captures an event like that by an individual. It was a non-political event. They were invited by a non-political organization. It was attended, frankly, by a majority of people who were non-political, who run businesses and are women entrepreneurs who take risks every day, and are mothers—the whole gamut, spanning all different occupations, careers, experiences and communities—and here was the Prime Minister's mother coming to speak at that event.

This motion captures that. That concerns me. It concerns me especially when what's relevant has been disclosed and is on the public record. I think that is something that we all really need to dwell on. Now, on the ethics of the motion, being on the ethics committee, I'm not a philosopher. That's just not my shtick. I think I actually switched from philosophy class to an economics class. I went into economics instead, both at the undergraduate and the graduate levels, and that's my field. I love numbers, and that's why, when I read this document that's available about what the engagement honorariums were, what the associated expenses were.... It's all out there.

• (2210)

Why are we going back to 2008—I think it's 2008—when I believe there was another government in power at that time? How does what the Prime Minister's family were doing in 2008 pertain to today? I would argue that the intent of this motion is absolutely nothing other than a fishing expedition. That's all.

It is much to my dismay that we are down that path and that the opposition party has chosen to go down that path. I would hope that the other parties in the House and colleagues from all sides would look at that and say, “You know what? I think there are other avenues that we could proceed along. There are other ways of getting and having tough questions answered.”

I said this earlier on. I absolutely believe in asking tough questions and answering tough questions, no matter what aspect of my life I've been in, whether it's my private sector career for 20 years, growing up as a kid or now as a public servant, and I think it's important.

I'm just going back to the funding agreement because I think it's really important to again recognize that the aim of this agreement was not to benefit an organization, not to benefit individuals. The aim of this program was to benefit youth. That, to me, is the unfortunate aspect of how it evolved. Here, I agree with Mr. Simms, absolutely.

The principles of all the programs we entered into were to make sure our seniors were taken care of as they face higher costs, make sure that people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 or were impacted were taken care of through the programs and to make sure there was continued attachment between employers and employees, which we did through the CEWS.

I argued vehemently that the original program of 10% needed to be 75%—I sent several emails—and I was very happy to see, when it went to 75%, that small business owners in all our ridings were assisted through the CEBA, and that, yes, students could be assisted through various channels like Canada summer jobs, which I know the opposition pointed out and we acted on, as well the Canada emergency student benefit. We all know those programs are put in place, but, again, going to this motion here that's been brought forth, what does this achieve? That's the one question I would love the opposition to answer. What does this motion achieve?

The information is out there. Questions were asked over the summertime. What does this achieve other than, in my view, going after someone's mother and their brother and the Prime Minister's wife? That, to me, and as I was quoted, is to me, fundamentally wrong. People may think otherwise.

I know it's within the opposition's right and purview to ask for such a motion. I get it. To me it's overreach, and I think that, as a committee, we have many other things to study. If a committee or some sort of an agreement is reached between all the House leaders or if anything is done to study programs to look at them, great. Let's do that. Let's learn what we can learn from the pandemic. Let's learn how to make Canada a better place. Let's learn, hopefully, not for next time, because this pandemic is taking its toll on a lot of folks. We know that from—I don't want to say this, but—people who are homeless and needing help and people who have drug addictions and stuff. You read the stories. We know the numbers and the resources we need to dedicate to those areas, which we are.

• (2215)

This motion, however, does not help any Canadian out there. It does not help anyone; it's pure political partisanship to the nth degree, and I really wish I weren't speaking on this thing at 10:16 at

night. I wish I were home with my wife and my kids, who should be sleeping by now because they need to go to school tomorrow. For me, Chair—and I'll stop in a second—this is a non-starter.

I am going to yield the floor now. I will allow someone else to speak. I want to say it's nice to see everybody for the eighth hour now of this wonderful procedure.

Let me say to MP Barrett, I'd love to hear some of your comments. I greatly appreciate your work ethic and I respect you very much as an MP and as a friend, much like many of your colleagues. I understand we all have a job to do.

My job tonight is to say that this is what my feeling is about this on a personal basis. I just don't agree fundamentally with this motion, not even with its intent. Concerning the values of going after someone's mother and their family, again I say frankly, to me it's wrong—that's the way I look at it—especially when they're not political office holders.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sorbara.

Just to remind the committee, Mr. Barrett is up next, and then Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Warkentin, Ms. Sahota, Mr. Dong, Mr. Ferguson, Madame Blaney and Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, we heard about different types of cognitive biases from a member, but nothing about the evidence of selective perception in the arguments made by some of the members from the government side.

We heard from another member about Conservative members voting against the Prime Minister's being called to testify seven years ago, but nothing about the Liberal members of this committee voting against the Prime Minister's testifying this summer at this committee and, once the motion passed, the Prime Minister's not respecting the committee's call for him to testify.

We're now eight hours into this filibuster, and I'll remind members from the government side of the House that getting your say doesn't mean you'll get your way. Whether the Liberal members believe this is a matter of conscience or whether it's just the party line, why not vote on the record?

Chair, please poll the committee to see whether there's a consensus to move to a vote. If there is, we can have everyone on record with their view.

If we move to a vote, I'd ask for a recorded division. We've heard from everyone at great length, and while I see many hands ready to follow my time slot—folks who wish to speak—perhaps we'll have a breakthrough, at nearly 10:30 p.m. If not, then we'll settle in and continue to hear from other members.

With that request to you, Chair, I'll yield my time.

Thank you.

● (2220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

I can tell you that with the several shaking heads I see on the screen, there's no consensus on moving to a vote.

I will poll the members individually at this time, because we have been going for eight hours. I will check to see, for those members who are here, if they would like to....You can go ahead, tap your button, and then speak. Is there any consensus to go ahead?

There's no consensus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Gourde, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Chair, we're at a standstill right now and there's probably no way we'll reach a consensus tonight. Sooner or later, you're going to have to decide whether to hold the vote and whether to adjourn the meeting. As things stand, the committee members are never going to unanimously agree to holding the vote tonight. Unfortunately, you're caught between a rock and a hard place since it's five against five. You're eventually going to have to make a decision because this could go on forever.

In my 14 years—nearly 15, in fact—I've seen meetings last four or five days. That's where we seem to be headed, since every member of the Liberal Party may see fit to stop by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics between now and the end of next week. Nevertheless, we're going to have to sleep someday, so a decision will have to be made—the real decision being whether to sleep or not.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

I'm going to return to the speaking list.

Madame Gaudreau, you have been very patient. You now have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: It's very kind of you, Mr. Chair, to recognize that I have been patient. I enjoy hearing what my fellow members have to say.

After all these years, I know this can go on indefinitely, and I am very much aware of the challenge before us. We are going to debate until... I won't say it, but whatever will be will be.

There is a tendency to paint everyone with the same brush. I've listened to everything that's been said about those who are preoccupied with power. If anyone on this committee is not in pursuit of power, it's certainly me. I therefore encourage my fellow members to stop and think about that when they bring up partisanship, power and all the rest. I would hope that, because of my political party and who I am, those comments aren't directed at me. It bothers me when people say those things. Everything I say is truthful and sin-

cere and comes from a place of good faith, especially where the ethics committee is concerned.

It's clear to me that we are at a dead end, and my conscience is telling me I must attend to something else. I must inform you that I have to leave the meeting for several reasons. I had said that I would stay up all night, but I have a family and people who need me out there, on the ground, tomorrow morning. I feel I must do my duty.

I will leave you with this, however. We talked about philosophy and ethics. I can be a philosopher when the mood strikes me. Something I always bear in mind is Socrates and the triple filter test, which you are no doubt familiar with. Think about it.

Socrates' triple filter test is a list of three questions you must ask yourself before passing on information.

The first question to ask yourself is whether the information is true. If the answer is yes, with facts and proof to back it up, that's good. If not, you have to validate the information. You know this one, don't you?

The second question to ask yourself is whether the information is useful and achieves a benefit. You've all said it in different ways: is the information useful and what will it achieve?

The third and final question to ask yourself is whether the information is good, seriously, even though the information may be useful and true.

That test can help us, as parliamentarians, do the honourable thing. We set the example, as does the government. I heard people say that they are allowed to make mistakes. Of course, it's perfectly all right to self-correct and recuse oneself. There's another dimension to all this, however. I'm talking about the significance and magnitude of the issue. It's important to know where things stand and what position to take.

A government that leads coast to coast to coast is a government that leads a large federation, a government that must honour its duty and stay on the right track. In life, I learn from my mistakes, as I hope you do. Unfortunately, because of the two mistakes of the past, we cannot still have confidence, and with good reason, that this was a genuine and final mistake.

It's entirely legitimate, then, for us, as parliamentarians, to get to the bottom of this, within limits, I admit.

● (2225)

I'm perfectly comfortable taking action within reason. Let's not forget, though, the obligations we have to fulfill for simple little requests. We've been hearing about people who are vulnerable. As entrepreneurs and business people, you know as I do that, when conditions have to be met, we aren't immune to that.

How is it that we have a government that struggles with not only its reputation, but also the handling of public money, our money? How is it that some people are so vulnerable that every single penny counts? Someone mentioned the United Way, support agencies and businesses. I know exactly what they're going through, because I, too, am going through it, to some extent.

We are being told that we won't be getting to the bottom of the matter. Some have been asking whether we're not simply wasting our time. Time is what you make of it. If everything that has happened helps us work together more effectively, it will have been constructive and worthwhile.

I can see from my screen that some people are coming back and others are joining for the first time. Those people have heard everything we've experienced. Like you, some never really stopped working over the summer. We did our job, but not fully. That's why we have no other choice but to see this through.

I can't accept that, when everything comes to a sudden halt, like when the power goes out, you stop whatever you're doing, even when the power comes back on.

On that note, I sincerely apologize for having to leave in order to attend to my personal responsibilities. I didn't plan on doing this. I have no doubt that you will be carrying on for hours and will eventually come to an agreement. Unfortunately, I won't be there when it happens.

Mr. Chair, how does it work when you have to leave the meeting. Do I just let you know that I have to go and don't have a substitute?

• (2230)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau, it is your prerogative. If you want to depart from the committee, you can do so. It means that your voice will be absent.

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Barrett, on a point of order, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I think—

[*English*]

The Chair: Just a minute, Madame Gaudreau. Mr. Barrett had a point of order.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, not to interrupt Madame Gaudreau, who waited a very long time to speak, but while those logistics are discussed, I wonder if the chair would entertain a quick suspension of the meeting for a 10-minute hygiene break.

The Chair: It is 10:30, so let's suspend for 10 minutes, and we will return at 10:40.

• (2230)

(Pause)

• (2245)

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau, were you finished with your intervention?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I was just wondering how to wrap all this up. I was missing some information.

Since I had the floor, I move that the meeting be adjourned.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau, are you moving a motion to adjourn?

As she is, Madam Clerk, would you do the honours of looking after the vote?

The Clerk: All those in favour, please say yea; all those opposed, please say nay, when I call your name.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

• (2250)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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