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# Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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Chair: Mr. David Sweet





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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Good morning, colleagues. Happy Friday.

We'll begin with the speaking list and the motion that's before us. My understanding is that we have been able to eke out resources until 5:30 today. I will remind you that IT has limited us, because they're doing some upgrades in the hope that next week and the weeks afterwards we'll have lots more capacity for all committees, and for some overflow as well.

Our scheduled time is 11 o'clock till one o'clock. However, of course, I'm at the behest of the committee.

First off on our speakers list, we only have two right now: Mr. Angus and Ms. Shanahan.

Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and it's good to be able to speak with my colleagues at the ethics committee.

This summer we had, I believe, two meetings on the issue that is before us, the issue of conflict of interest and the awarding of the contracts that led to the WE scandal. At that time in the summer, there was also some investigation at the finance committee.

However, neither committee has been able to finish any of its work. The Prime Minister prorogued Parliament. Work that could have been done by early September was then put off. We are now some 30 hours into a Liberal filibuster. I have never in all my years witnessed a government attempt to stop the work of a committee by just throwing up roadblock after roadblock.

These are important issues and the further we get away from the original subject, the more it becomes a question of people saying, "Isn't it time to move on?" Well, it's time to move on when a parliamentary committee has finished its report to Parliament. That is our obligation. When we do a parliamentary report, we can have a unanimous report where we all agree, or we can have a minority report where one party disagrees with another party on what the evidence meant, but we have an obligation to finish the report.

Therefore, I think it's important to go through some of the reasons why this study is so important for the Canadian people. This is a question about the extraordinary amount of political influence the WE group had to be able to literally call into the finance minister's office and secure very large amounts of money with very little oversight and very little accountability. That is actually a slightly

separate program, and I'm going to refer to it later, from the full \$912 million program that we are focused on.

The questions that need to be addressed are the following. Did group have the capacity? Was there proper oversight? Were the proper checks and balances put in place? If they weren't, why not? Was it because of this group's incredible skill at embedding themselves within the Liberal power structure? This is not an issue, I think, of the Prime Minister calling his staff and saying, I want the Kielburger brothers to get this deal.

I think what we see here is that the Kielburger brothers were able to play on their close relationship with the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister's wife who acted as a goodwill ambassador for them, the Prime Minister's mother who was paid to work at corporate events, and the Prime Minister's brother who was also paid. They created a sense of comfort that certainly clouded the judgment of Minister Bill Morneau, whose financial and political relationships with the Kielburgers we're going to look at much more closely today, and certainly led to his having to step down.

It also brings in other ministers, Minister Chagger, who misrepresented herself at our committee on what she spoke about with them, and Minister Ng and Minister Qualtrough to some extent, all of whom the Kielburgers reached out to very carefully so that questions that should have been asked weren't asked.

At our last committee meeting, I spoke about the surprising news that the Kielburger organization had hired an Israeli disinformation team, Percepto. According a exposé of this group by The Times of Israel on November 1, the group was formed by former Israeli military ops crews and "helped clients bury dubious pasts". Now the Kielburger brothers say they don't know anything about Percepto, that they've never dealt with it, but they are listed as a client in a Dropbox of Percepto that was found by The Times of Israel investigation, as well as by The Globe and Mail.

You have to ask yourself why a children's charity is hiring an Israeli disinformation team to deal with online information. That raises the question of the \$600,000 the WE group paid to U.S. political consulting firms, and particularly one that was very closely tied to the Republican Party, Firehouse Strategies, which was paid \$130,000.

Now, Firehouse Strategies, as we now know, came out of the Marco Rubio campaign and were intent on using the tactics that Donald Trump had perfected in being very aggressive with media push-back.

Once again we have a children's charity, which had access to all of our schools and all of our ministers, hiring a Republican disinformation team, and we're asking why. This is also a group that tells us that all the money they raise goes to help children, but \$600,000 is being spent in the United States on these political consultants.

The reason I go back to Firehouse Strategies and their connection to the Kielburger brothers is the strategies they offer, which they call "defensive/combatative media training." Again, why would a children's charity need to have combatative media outreach?

In a 2019 podcast, Mr. Sullivan, one of the three co-founders who came out of the Marco Rubio campaign, said that their strategy is: "You figure out who the opponent is, and let's go and get 18 bad stories about them". He added that, "Our belief is in modern communications you either throw spears or you catch spears, and catching them is no fun."

Again, this is a group that is supposed to be a children's charity, but we're dealing now with a political strategy of getting 18 bad stories about their opponents because it's about throwing spears.

My colleagues, I feel that our committee is now catching spears from the Kielburger group, who are very adept, as we know, in media and media manipulation. As our committee is unable to finish our report, they have launched a major publicity campaign. Firehouse Strategies talks about getting 18 articles in. Well, they've certainly gotten op-eds into the Toronto Star, and they've gotten other elements out there.

What's interesting about this latest media blitz, which I feel is really falsely representing the work of our committee, is that their spokesman is Mr. David Stillman. If people hadn't listened to our committee meeting on Monday, they wouldn't know that David Stillman was a former employee of WE, yet he's being presented in the media as this independent voice on charities, good work and good foundations. He was a board member of WE; he was a former member of the charity.

It's this pattern of getting people you know and work with and hire to go out and do your publicity for you. Why is that needed? Either this charity stands on its own two feet and can explain what happened in this scandal, or we're dealing with something that's much murkier.

My Liberal colleagues have done some research and found out that my daughters did some volunteering for them. My daughters were very inspired by the Craig Kielburger book when they were young, and one of my daughters did work overseas. When I first learned about the group, I thought they were doing leadership training, and that was really exciting.

I kind of lost sight of them for a number of years, and I saw them more and more tied into Justin Trudeau speaking at their events. They seemed to be much more tied to the Trudeau family, and I thought that was odd. They moved, it seemed, from doing grassroots organizing meetings and training to these big rallies.

Then I started to learn that they had more and more corporate involvement, which may or may not be a problem. However, the fact that we did not know that the Prime Minister's wife was hired to do those corporate events, I think, is questionable. It's questionable in that, when asked about paying the Prime Minister's family, we were told that they were not getting paid, and that was false.

I refer you to a July 7, 2020 article from the CBC, which said that 150 staff from WE had written about systemic racism in the organization. The story was based on Amanda Maitland, who resigned. She was a young, inspiring woman of colour who was there to inspire young people. I think she would have been a real symbol for the kind of work the WE group did. She talked about how her work was being rewritten by white staff and how her experience was being dramatically changed. This is why I think it's interesting and worth commenting on.

• (1110)

She was quoted as saying:

I began to speak about the culture of fear. I began to share that what is happening in this organization is that employees are having siloed conversations.

She said that when she started to speak up about the culture of fear, a lot of people were nodding their heads. This was at a meeting with staff. She said, "Marc Kielburger immediately...stepped forward and shut me down."

In that July 7, 2020 article, CBC confirmed that they had spoken to four WE employees who were at that town hall. They confirmed that when Amanda Maitland spoke up, the Kielburgers quickly tried to end the conversation. I quote, "The automatic response was her being shut down by Marc Kielburger, and him being visibly angry." Other employees spoke of a culture of fear within the organization.

To me this is important because this group has been given quasi-ambassadorial status by the Trudeau government. When the Trudeau government wanted to do something at the UN, WE was involved. When they wanted to do a big show in England, they brought the Prime Minister's wife. We're talking about young volunteers who could have been like my daughters, who were really inspired. Working in an organization where there's talk of a culture of fear, why does that matter? That matters because these were issues and the organization and the culture within the organization that I think should have been fact-checked by the bureaucrats but because the Kielburgers are so closely tied to the Prime Minister's family, no questions were asked about that.

The CBC news article continued:

People were afraid to speak out because they didn't want to lose their jobs. Another former employee of colour on the WE Day team said: "I was so scared to speak up. If you ever said anything that's out of line, or questioned anything, you would end up not being in [my former supervisor's] good books...and you would get kicked off the team or fired."

We could say that maybe something morphed when they went from being this small grassroots organization to this huge conglomerate doing big spectacle shows. Maybe they just expected their young staff to have to pick that up. We're in an age where questions of toxic work environments and intimidation have become very fair play and people need answers to it. What surprised me when I was starting to look into this was that I had many former WE staff who reached out to me, but they were very afraid of using their names. They were very afraid to speak out publicly. I thought it was just a children's charity. They do inspiring stuff with young people. Why were they so afraid?

How far back does this go? We have an email from September 4, 2009, by Dan Mossip Balkwill saying goodbye to all the WE staff. The subject is "An honest goodbye". I found it very moving because he could have been like one of my daughters. He joined the organization absolutely inspired and wanting to change the world.

In his email, he said:

But the staff who work here, work out of love. It's love dammit, not money, glamour, fame, or fortune, just love. They love what they do, who they do it for, and who they do it with. They signed up to give at least two years of their life to change the world, literally that's what they signed up for.

I think that's a really powerful statement.

He went on to say:

To reduce them to tears, tell them to leave if they don't like it, that they need to suck it up, or that their problems don't compare to children in Africa is atrocious. Telling them to leave if they don't like it shows that you don't value them as a staff.

He talked about the dangers they were put in as young workers, being told that if they did a long trip, staff were not going to get a hotel paid for:

Or at the office when people fall down stairs, that have never had weather-strips put on them, or women walk down dark alleys at midnight after returning a car from a full day of work....

Me to We was supposed to redefine business. Instead it became another private sector company whose number one aim is money, where people and staff come second. I don't want to work at an organization where we're constantly reminded that we are paid low wages to keep admin rates low, so donors will give more money. I don't want to work at an organization where fear is used as a tactic to achieve an end.

• (1115)

That was in 2009, or 11 years ago, that this culture of intimidation was being talked about.

What I find interesting is that when the Kielburger group was challenged, as they have been by these reports, they reached out to David Stillman, a former employee, to exonerate them and to say that all of these things that were being said were false, they did respond to questions about the toxic work environment at WE with the young volunteers and young staff.

In 2018 they hired a New Hampshire-based consultant, David Baum, who describes himself as a "conversation architect".

Baum's report totally exonerates WE and is very impressive. He says:

In my professional opinion, We and its leadership have handled the constant change, complexity and multitude of demands as well as any non-profit or social purpose organization of its size that I've worked with.

He further says:

A huge part of WE's success comes directly from the founders. Their compelling vision, and ability to leverage it into their people who genuinely believe they are changing the world, is deeply impressive.

That report would very much fit with the kind of image we had of the WE organization, of this inspiring group doing incredible change, and that the two brothers really cared. So with these allegations of toxic treatment of young people, well, how could those be true?

The report was given out to the media to deal with any allegations of bullying and intimidation.

Canadaland, which asked where that report was prepared, was told that it was done "in an independent and unbiased capacity" when Mr. Baum wrote it. However, what we learn is that Mr. David Baum, according to IRS filings, was paid \$750,000 for consulting work for WE from 2015 to 2019, so he was being paid by WE an enormous amount of money and yet being presented as an independent voice.

The brothers also wrote an op-ed for Postmedia in 2015 in which they said, about Mr. Baum, "In our lives, that someone is our trusted friend David Baum." Here is the full quote:

Even the toughest guys I know are relieved to have someone safe to go to for advice and a pep talk. In our lives that someone is our trusted friend David Baum.

Their trusted friend is the one they present to us as having provided this completely independent report on the toxic work environment faced by young people at WE.

I want to add just one more thing on this, because it is just really surprising: David Baum officiated at Craig Kielburger's wedding.

You have serious allegations about a youth charity and abusive work and 150 young staff talking about racism and racialized voices not being heard, and they present to the media a document that completely exonerates them and says how great they are and it's written by the guy who officiated at Craig Kielburger's wedding.

These are questions that need to be asked, because I think if the civil service felt a little more empowered to ask questions of this deal that Madam Chagger and Mr. Morneau were so bullish on, we might not have got as far down the road with this plan.

I refer you again to Michelle Douglas, who testified at the finance committee, because we're talking about governance. No questions were asked about the corporate governance and the capacity of this organization to deliver this massive program.

Michelle Douglas, if you look up her resumé, is a very impressive figure. You would want her on your board. I don't know if any of my colleagues in the Liberal party have ever been involved in charities, but charity boards are very important. They oversee the finances; they have to be able to tell the donors and the CRA and any of their regulators that the charity meets the tests of their finances and legal obligations.

When we had Michelle Douglas come to the finance committee, we asked her what happened in the meeting when Marc Kielburger apparently got angry and hung up on her, and why she left the organization in March.

• (1120)

She said:

Given my passion for the organization, it was a difficult decision for me to tender my resignation. I did not resign as a routine matter or as part of a planned board transition. I resigned because I could not do my job. I could not discharge my governance duties.

She goes onto say that in March, the WE executives were scrambling to contend with the impacts of the pandemic:

They began to lay off large numbers of staff. As the days went by, the number of job losses grew quickly, into the hundreds. The board felt, of course, a duty to protect the organization and to consider the interests of its stakeholders, including its employees, donors, partners, beneficiaries and others. I convened an ad hoc committee of the board to hold daily calls with the executive team for briefings and updates, and we provided key updates, in turn, to the board at large.

One of the key elements that I think is really powerful in Ms. Douglas' statement is that among those stakeholders she was worried about protecting were the employees, those young people. Her previous email talked about their being underpaid and the culture of fear, but she wanted to make sure they were protected, and she said:

It was our view that we could not fire hundreds of people without very strong demonstrable evidence and, even then, that we should explore mitigation measures to save jobs. Instead, the executive team were dismissing employees with great speed and in large numbers.

She continues:

On March 25 Craig Kielburger called me to ask that I resign from the board of directors of WE Charity.

Now, I've never heard of a charity where the founders can call up and tell the board that they're fired for asking financial questions. That's their job. The board was worried about those low paid young people who had given so much time to the organization and it was trying to find a way to mitigate that, but it seems that it was not at all a priority of WE, and the board was fired.

This counts because, again, when we're talking about government programs—especially in the nature of something close to a billion dollars that's going to be handed out—we need to know that

the governance structure is sound and that this is an organization that can actually deliver.

If you look into the documents—I don't know if my Liberal colleagues have read the 5,000 pages that we have, the ones that aren't blacked out—you'll see that they raise a number of questions again about why people did not vet their claims. I keep going back to the fact that this was a group very much tied to the Prime Minister, tied to the Prime Minister's mother through payments, tied to the Prime Minister's brother through payments, tied to the Prime Minister's wife through the fact that they had her as their goodwill ambassador, and tied to the key ministers on the file.

In order to be able to deliver this program—it is extraordinary getting 20,000 young people placed within a couple of months very quickly for the whole summer—one of the things that they claimed, and this was in their....

They reached out, and you can see it on slide 13 of the documents that were given to the Finance and ESDC officials: "WE has confirmed a strategic coordination partnership with Imagine Canada to support the recruitment and coordination of non-profit partners."

Imagine Canada has incredible connections, so if you're the front-line civil servant trying to vet this project, it would make sense that Imagine Canada is signed on—that's a good, good sign. The slide was updated a few days later on May 4 to read:

Support the creation of up to 20,000 Initial Volunteer Opportunities upon launch WE will create volunteer placements for 10,000 students and partner with Imagine Canada an umbrella organization for Canadian charities, to engage 50 national not-forprofit (NFP) organizations to create 10,000 additional opportunities that will be posted within two weeks of launch. These opportunities will be available in all parts of the country, in both urban centres and rural and small communities.

Now we do know that they were having enormous problems. They did not have the support in Quebec they claimed. We do not see any real figures for rural and isolated communities, but nonetheless, because of that Imagine Canada connection, it seemed doable to our hard-working civil servants.

• (1125)

This language was copied and pasted word for word into Minister Chagger's briefing material for her colleagues for the May 5 cabinet COVID committee meeting. This language was also found in the ministerial briefing notes and the implementation documents. In fact, it came up as part of the questions the Treasury Board had for ESDC and Finance on May 8.

The Treasury Board asked, “What are the 50 large nonprofit organizations with which the third-party would be working directly? Do they have wide and deep roots with smaller non profit organizations across Canada?” As part of their answer, ESDC replied:

WE Charities has agreed to work collaboratively with the government of Canada to identify organizations to develop placement opportunities. In addition, they have confirmed a strategic coordination partnership with Imagine Canada to support the recruitment and coordination of non-profit partners.... They will leverage their networks to extensive networks to reach smaller NFPs.

Now, the problem is that they didn't have an agreement with Imagine Canada. Imagine Canada had to clarify that. In fact, they released a statement: “Our CEO, Bruce MacDonald, initially agreed to participate on an Advisory Committee for the project. He withdrew from the Advisory Committee before it ever met.”

Then CEO Bruce MacDonald of Imagine Canada had to elaborate even further when he was questioned: “Was Imagine Canada involved in discussions about the CSSG program?” He said:

WE Charity approached Imagine Canada in May with the news that a new initiative was being developed to support post-secondary students who would be unlikely to find summer employment.... This role of connector and convenor is one that Imagine Canada often plays and I connected WE Charity to several organizations in the sector that could potentially assist with delivering the program.

At this early stage, I was asked to sit on [the] Advisory Committee for the program, and I agreed to do so. [But] this committee never met or convened in any fashion.

He went on to say:

Imagine Canada was also asked to consider playing a role in evaluating the program. Evaluation and research have long been core strengths for Imagine Canada so I agreed to consider this. As discussions about the program developed, however, concerns that it was blurring the distinction between paid work and volunteering began to surface. We relayed these concerns to both WE Charity and government officials, but they were not acted upon. As a result, Imagine Canada decided not to participate and I asked to be removed from the Advisory Committee.

He then said:

...it has been reported that Imagine Canada was among several organizational staff at Employment and Social Development Canada...considered to deliver the CSSG program. At no time were we contacted by anyone at ESDC or anyone else within the federal government to discuss this possibility.

To me, this is very concerning because we have raised concerns that this blurring of supposed volunteering and the payments that were made may actually be illegal under Canadian labour law. Imagine Canada raised these questions. They said they were not willing to participate; and yet Imagine Canada was presented as the partner, and this was not questioned.

What is really concerning is that even in late June, after Imagine Canada walked away from having even the minor role it would have had in CSSG, it remained there in the documents to the federal government. In the briefing note attached to the finance minister's final decision on releasing funds for the.... It is said on page 6 of the June 22 draft for the delivery of the Canada student service grant that “10,000 of these placements will be created by WE directly. The remainder will be created by working in partnership with 50 NFPs and Imagine Canada, an umbrella organization.”

Then, even more concerning, on the eve of the launch of the CSSG on June 25, WE was actively listing Imagine Canada as one of its partners. In an email on June 24, with the subject heading “Re: CSSG Roll out questions”, was the full list of confirmed NF-

Ps. Number one was YMCA Nationwide, and number two was Imagine Canada. That was not true.

• (1130)

When the government seemed so shocked that this plan, this scheme, fell apart so quickly, it's been presented as if this were somehow the result of people being mean to WE, and people not willing to help this great organization. These were complete falsehoods being presented, and nobody was checking. I think this is really concerning.

One of the strange things I find through this whole thing is that even when the Kielburger brothers and the WE group could just give us straight-up, simple answers, there seems to be this pattern of obfuscation, exaggeration and downright, it seems to me, misrepresentation.

I'm hearing from my good friend, Mr. Sorbara, that they would never make any profit. It was impossible to make a profit. They were doing all of this for the Canadian people. It's the Marc Kielburger line that they never would have answered Canada's call if they had known the trouble they would have gotten into.

As we have seen, and I may have to explain this again to my Liberal colleagues, Canada didn't call them. They were calling Canada incessantly through their lobbyist, Sofia Marquez, and through having direct email and contact information right to the finance minister. They were just going right into his office to talk to him. So, the idea that there was no profit....

Then, it became even clearer: there was no administration fee. How do you deliver a program of this size and have no administration fee? There's something about it that makes me think that the Kielburgers wanted us to think that they were so willing to work for the good of Canadian people that they couldn't even take anything, but it just doesn't make sense.

Mr. Fragiskatos, at the finance committee on July 28, said:

I want to ask about the administration fee. How...would it have been had WE administered the Canadian student service grant, and for what purposes? When we say “administration fee”, I'm not sure...most Canadians understand what is meant by that.

Craig Kielburger responded:

I appreciate your asking that question. If I can start by clarifying, in fact [there]...wasn't an administration fee; it was a program implementation fee. What I mean by that is.... Often in the charitable world, when people think admin, they think back office or fundraising. The costs here were simply directly for reimbursements on the delivery of the program.

Wow.

Later in that same meeting Mr. Sean Fraser said he sometimes has trouble hearing the answers. He found one answer, to his colleague Ms. Dzerowicz, and then to Mr. Fragiskatos, “quite stunning”. He said, “I want to make sure I have my understanding correct.”

He continued:

Of the \$500...million program, there is an “up to” \$43-million administration fee, depending on how many students can be placed. I was under the impression that this was going to provide some sort of benefit to the organization for administering this program?

Am I correct in my understanding that every penny of that administration fee, if the program were actually executed properly, would not have gone to the organization but would have been used exclusively for expenses?

Mr. Marc Kielburger responded, “Sir, that’s correct. It would have been exclusively for expenses, number one.”

Craig Kielburger added that it was “For program expenses—not even administration”.

Mr. Marc Kielburger said:

Yes.

Number two, it’s not an administration fee.... It’s...a program fee.

—and here we go—

We were doing this on behalf of the government, helping the government. We were asked to do this by the government. The organization itself would not profit. We were there because we wanted to be of assistance.

Again, this wasn’t an administration fee. It was a program fee, and 100% had to be used, of course, for the program.

Now, I think people would have thought less if Mr. Kielburger had just said, of course, there was an administration fee. How do you think they were going to deal with \$500 million to \$900 million as an organization?

But, no, there was no administration fee. Every single thing was going to help our young people in the middle of a pandemic.

The problem is that if you read the document, “administration fee” is there at every step of the way. They did charge an administration fee. In their revised project proposal on the PowerPoint deck dated May 4, WE breaks down the budget, each into the two proposed cohorts.

- (1135)

These are very detailed and include how many people they will be hiring, how much it will cost, legal fees, technology they will have to pay for, etc., and the last budget category in each cohort is entitled “program administration”, and under that line it says “admin costs for WE Charity 15%”.

For cohort one, that was \$2,543,478 and cohort two, that was \$1,796,288. That would be an admin fee of \$4,339,766 outside of the expenses.

The other thing I found really striking in this is that if you’re in a group and you’re doing admin fees, and if you have your own rent costs and real estate costs, that’s your business. The admin covers the program, because again the Kielburgers said every dollar was going to help young people. However, in this agreement with the federal government, they have their real estate getting paid off. There’s a line for rent, which equals \$590,000, so that’s above and beyond.

Now, we do know that there were a lot of questions about their not being able to make their real estate covenant—and I have the documents here in case my Liberal colleagues didn’t read any of the documents from the government—but there’s this \$590,000 rent fee that’s put in on top of the admin fee, which is separate from the pro-

gram fees. That’s a serious number of dineros going to the organization that said they weren’t getting anything.

We go through initial processing and administrative capacity, and that’s a \$12.8-million fee. Under “Grant Disbursement for first 40,000 Placements”, we have \$2 million for “setup and disbursement costs for 40,000 grants tied to placements”, and a 15% administration cost. “For the additional vetting of placements and disbursement of grants for up to 60,000 eligible students”, we have \$9.13 million for “capacity to assess ‘outside’ placements, and disbursement costs for 60,000 grants tied to placements outside of those created by WE”, plus another 15% administration cost.

So there you go: 15% administration, and then 15% administration. Why not just tell us you’re charging 15% for administration? It might have made them seem a little more believable.

Here’s the thing. On June 18, as they were discussing extending the program to October 30 or November 15.... In each category, there’s an NGO disbursement cost, program costs and, yes, an administration cost. In this case, that would have been \$482,791 or \$566,591. Clearly, WE is getting 15% program costs, again money carrying on into the fall.

When my colleague Mr. Sorbara said that there was never going to be any profit, and that this is just the opposition attacking them, my question is, why did the organization not come clean to Parliament? Why, under oath, would they misrepresent the fact that they were getting a 15% admin fee?

Now, I could also go on about the Liberals, who also seem to have this problem. It’s a simple thing. What should this program have cost? Mr. Sorbara the other day was again quoting the Kielburger line that the opposition was misrepresenting the numbers, saying it was \$900 million, when in fact it was only \$543 million, and why was the opposition using these false numbers? Well, it’s actually \$912 million, and we’re going to get to that crucial \$12 million. I think my colleagues will find the \$12 million very, very interesting.

Where did the opposition come up with this \$912-million figure? Well, when the Prime Minister made the announcement on April 22, they distributed documents, and the Canada student service grant was \$912 million. On June 25, the Prime Minister finally announced the full details. Media reports, using the April 22 backgrounder, said \$912 million, and there were no corrections from the government. The next day, June 26, Minister Chagger’s office explained to the media that WE would get only \$19.5 million for administering that. No details were given out.



• (1140)

If you remember, this was when we learned that there was going to be a \$912-million program to a group that was tied so closely to the Prime Minister that there were lots of questions—major, major questions. The government seemed surprised that people noticed the fact that the Prime Minister's first big speech after becoming Prime Minister was with WE, that his wife was travelling with him and that his mother and brother were involved, so they came out and had to say, no, the only amount of money out of this \$912 million to WE is \$19.5 million.

Okay. Now, if you're getting confused here, when dealing with the Liberals and dealing with the Kielburger group you sometimes feel like a bumpkin at the country fair trying to keep an eye on the shell game. The Liberals and the Kielburgers are moving those shells all the time, so we're going to walk through this just a little carefully.

On July 16, Minister Chagger appeared at the finance committee. In an opening statement, she said:

The first announcement we made was for 20,000 placements, and \$19.5 million was allocated. Of this \$19.5 million, \$5 million was for not-for-profits for the creation and support they needed, and \$300,000 was for accessibility supports.... There were two other categories of funding envisioned in the contribution agreement. There was \$10.5 million to be provided to WE Charity to administer the program for smaller, local not-for-profits that would want to participate.... Had that occurred, there could have been another \$13.53 million provided to WE for an additional 20,000 placements.... The maximum amount that WE Charity could have received was \$43.53 million out of the total budget of \$912 million.

So she is still using the \$912-million figure, but we moved from \$19.5 million to \$43.5 million—\$43.53 million, just to be correct—that the WE group was going to get. But she's still using the \$912-million figure, and this is what she's giving to our committee.

The Clerk of the Privy Council didn't make a correction. Neither did Bill Morneau or any of the department or ESDC officials when they were brought before testimony. The only reason we found out that it wasn't the \$912 million was that I asked directly at the finance committee that we get a copy of the contribution agreement. That was on July 27. There, we realized that they had actually signed the deal for \$543 million.

My God, the Liberals all jumped up and down and said, "See how the opposition is misrepresenting and blowing this out of proportion?" They said that it wasn't \$912 million and it was only \$543 million. Why didn't the Liberals just say this in the first place? There was so much hoo-ha-ha over this that we were really having a hard time even finding out what happened to the rest of the money in that.

But let's just continue on this. They told us it was \$43.53 million to administer \$912 million, but then, when they changed the numbers, it was still the same amount of money, \$43.33 million, to administer the \$500 million, so that was the maximum WE could receive.

We're told this by Minister Chagger at committee on July 16, when she says, "The maximum amount that WE Charity could have received was \$43.53 million out of the...\$912 million." But then we learn, according to documents we obtained, that a "contingency

fund of \$354.23 million is also available...should it appear that initial funding of \$500 million for the grants could be exhausted." It was still \$912 million. They just satisfied \$354.23 million ready to go out if it was needed, so we're back to the \$900 million-plus.

This is where the WE group moves from beyond \$43.53 million. On June 18, ESDC and WE were in discussion to extend the program, and Marc Kielburger wrote:

Hi [Rachel]

Thank you for your time. Please find below the costs for the extension of the program per our conversation...today.

We had our finance team pull the numbers and they are consistent with other aspects of the program....

Then he goes on about the "knock-on effect" and "flow through" costs, and right down there in these documents, lo and behold, WE is going to get another \$3.2 million to \$3.8 million on top of the \$43.53 million they were already getting, and this is in the agreement they made with them. Yet we've been told time and time again that we misrepresented the numbers, that the numbers aren't correct.

• (1145)

I hope people are not getting tired of all the mathematics here. This is important, because this is about the due diligence that anyone else, any other group, would have been subjected to, but this group was not, right down to the fact that they didn't even sign it with WE Charity; they signed it with a holding company, which, when you look at their original structure, seemed only to hold real estate.

Nobody bothered to check that. Nobody bothered to check the fact that when they signed their legal agreements, they said they followed the Lobbying Act, although we know they were doing an amazing amount of lobbying, more than General Motors. Yet they were not registered to lobby, so they may have even been involved in potentially illegal lobbying, but it was signed off and nobody checked.

So what is this \$12 million about? There's the \$900-million announcement for the Canada student service grant, but there's another \$12 million on top. Remember how Minister Chagger talked about the WE social entrepreneurship proposal, the first proposal? That proposal, on April 17, when the WE group got wind of this much bigger possibility, morphed into a new program that became the Canada student service grant.

What happened to that original proposal? That original proposal still got funded. It turns out that the \$12 million was given from Minister Ng's office to Minister Morneau's office on April 10. On April 10, Minister Morneau is looking at this \$12-million proposal. Now, what's interesting is that when Katie Telford testified, she said that they had looked at that proposal and that PCO was not interested in it. They did not want it to go ahead, and yet it went ahead.

On April 10, here's an email from Craig Kielburger to Bill Morneau directly.

Hi Bill,

I hope this finds you, Nancy, Henry, Clare, Edward, and Grace enjoying some well-deserved downtime over Easter together.

I cannot imagine the pace of information and decision-making over the past few weeks. You once told me that you sought public office to make a difference—and this is certainly the most defining impact that you will ever have for the country.

If I may interrupt for a moment, allow me to brief you on conversations with Minister Ng. She suggested that we submit a proposal to scale our youth entrepreneurship program (originally championed by your office) with the purpose of mitigating economic struggles and preparing for a post-pandemic world.

Okay, so that's April 10. He's talking to Bill Morneau directly.

On April 21, Bill Morneau not only allocates \$900 million, but he gives the other \$12 million to Employment and Social Development Canada to support that original WE social entrepreneurship initiative. The next day, when the Prime Minister announces the CSSG, we have a \$912-million cost. That \$12 million on top of the \$900 million is this original plan, which on April 10, Craig Kielburger had emailed Bill Morneau personally to ask him to look at, and 11 days later, it's passed.

This, I think, is really crucial. When Bill Morneau was asked to testify, he was asked if he had spoken at all to the Kielburgers. He said,

[On] April 26, I spoke with Craig Kielburger. I know that we would have broadly discussed the impact of...COVID.... He did not raise the Canada student service grant, nor did I.

If you remember, colleagues, Minister Morneau was emphatic that he was just calling through businesses in the area, just to make sure they were okay, and he just happened to be calling Craig Kielburger. He didn't tell us that he had been talking to Craig Kielburger on April 10 about this \$12-million program. On April 26, it is just a check-in to make sure that everybody is okay. That's fantastic, and yet we have the WE notes as part of the finance committee undertakings release, in which Craig Kielburger talks about his meeting with finance minister and discussing the WE social entrepreneurship proposal.

• (1150)

Minister Bill Morneau maybe forgot he had a villa in France; the guy forgot he had a bill for \$40,000 from the Kielburgers; maybe he forgot that he met and signed off on an agreement to give the Kielburger brothers \$12 million, which Katie Telford said the government didn't think was a good idea. Maybe he forgot to tell our committee that they discussed this proposal he had just approved. We could take Minister Morneau at his word, or we could say that maybe Minister Morneau lied to our committee, that he didn't tell the truth.

Why is this important? This is important because on April 10 Kielburger contacted Bill Morneau, and 11 days later the Kielburger group is supposed to be getting \$12 million. They are getting it from a minister whose daughter has been hired by the Kielburgers, whose family has been flown around the world by the Kielburger group. And we have reports that WE's youth staff, the staff we talked about, who sometimes were afraid for their jobs, were involved in political events for Bill Morneau, and they walk out with \$12 million.

I know my Liberal colleagues will say that \$12 million is nit-picking here. What's \$12 million? God, the Liberals were willing to blow \$900 million on this group.

To put this in context, in the communities I represent, two years ago we had a horrific, complete collapse of infrastructure and housing at Cat Lake First Nation reserve in Treaty 9. The situation was so bad that people were being medevaced out. People died. People died in Cat Lake from the mould in their homes and the condemned nature of...the fact that 75% of the infrastructure of that reserve was so bad that people were being medevaced out and people died. And trying to get this government to put any money in was a battle royale, and at the end of the day the people of Cat Lake got a promise of \$10 million.

It took national demonstrations. It took international media. It took people being medevaced out and horrific pictures of children suffering to get \$10 million, and yet Craig Kielburger could call the finance minister, ask about the family, see how all the children are doing, and get \$12 million turned over to the Kielburger group without any oversight or questions.

That shows the power of this group to evade basic oversight, to evade the Lobbying Act, to call directly in to ministers. Why? It's because of their political connections. That's why this issue is not going to go away. That's why we have to deal with this, my friends. If the Liberals want to continue to protect...and obfuscate and obstruct our work, we, as the opposition, are bound to get to the bottom of this.

I'm calling on my colleagues to stop the procedural games. Let's get down to a vote.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1155)

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

I will review the speaking order again: Madame Shanahan, Mr. Fergus, Mr. Dong, Madame Gaudreau and Mr. Barrett.

Now we will go to Madame Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that long speech by my friend Mr. Angus. I also appreciate his point of view. Just to put it on the record, I'd like to say that the Liberals are not the only ones talking for a long time. We have had evidence of that before. It seems to me that the NDP and the Conservatives have done it a number of times as well. The only party that hasn't spoken for too long is the Bloc Québécois.

It is a burden that almost all parties bear these days.

It is true that we have spent a lot of time talking during this debate, but we have ended up with the hybrid motion before us. Part of the motion proposed by Mr. Angus has been amended. In my humble opinion, it has been well amended. We will continue to work to review government spending during the pandemic and we will particularly focus our attention on two points in the motion.

Then there was an amendment to this motion, proposed by Ms. Gaudreau, where the issue of WE Charity documents came back on the floor. I must comment on this issue because I feel it's important for those listening to us to know that the committee had previously defeated the motion. That being said, we now have a motion that includes several items that encourage Speakers' Spotlight to submit to us all documents since October 14, 2008.

You have read in the newspapers, as I have, that Speakers' Spotlight stated that almost everyone who pays taxes has kept records going back only a certain amount of time. In fact, Speakers' Spotlight can confirm only that it has all records for the past seven years. So that takes us back to 2013. Before that year, it cannot guarantee that it will be able to provide the committee with all the documents, just as Canadians are required to keep tax returns and all related documents for at least seven years.

By the way, let me add that, this past weekend, my wife and I went down to the basement to empty some boxes, as we do from time to time, to reduce the amount of stuff in the house. We came across a box full of papers. They were tax returns from 2002 and 2003. I can assure you, our tax returns are very simple. You can confirm it with—

• (1200)

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Fergus, do you have your translation button on French?

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** No, sir. I have the new Zoom software, which should allow me.... It works inside the House, and I don't have anything different. It allows me to keep it on the speaker, on the floor version, and it should work. This is the new software that was updated about a month and a half ago for most members.

Is it not working for you, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** We're not getting any interpretation on the phone lines. That's why I wanted to ask.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Should I switch over then?

**The Chair:** Why don't you try that, Mr. Fergus? If there's any issue, I'll interrupt you as politely as possible.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** You always do, sir.

• (1205)

[Translation]

I will continue my comments, and I hope it is working now.

Is everything okay for those attending the meeting by telephone? Can Madam Clerk confirm that?

[English]

**The Chair:** We're just checking there, Mr. Fergus.

[Translation]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Please continue, Mr. Fergus.

[English]

[Translation]

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

As I was saying, we freed up the space in our basement taken up by documents that we were required to keep for seven years. There is no point in keeping documents that are almost 20 years old. So we put them in the recycling bin.

I'm talking about my own house. I can imagine what it's like for a company that has to pay rent. Storage is one of the most expensive things for businesses. They are required to keep their documents for a certain period of time, seven years, I imagine.

I can see immediately that the motion goes far beyond what is necessary.

Mr. Chair, I am feeling a little uncomfortable. Was the interpretation malfunctioning from the beginning of my comments?

[English]

**The Chair:** I think all is good now, Mr. Fergus. It was just that patch with the phone lines. Now it's good.

[Translation]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I would not want to be in the unfortunate situation of my comments not being translated properly for those who do not speak French well enough to understand what I am saying.

As I said, I threw those documents away. It was okay to do it, but my tax returns are not complicated. You would see on my tax return as a member of Parliament that not much has changed. I have always had just one job. For a while I had a consulting firm, but that was temporary. Otherwise, I have always been an employee.

I'm talking about these things because we have overstepped the measures in the motion we are considering. If we pass a motion today, we will be trying to get blood from a stone. I don't know if my colleague from the Bloc Québécois will be prepared to support this amendment. If not, I could present a very simple motion that will permit us to do our job and take action.

I will introduce a subamendment. I have it here. I move that the motion be amended by replacing the words "since October 14, 2008" with "that they have in their possession up to 2013, and any additional relevant documents, as mentioned in their open letter shared on November 10, 2020".

Mr. Chair, I will send it to the clerk in both official languages.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fergus. We'll wait until that is received and then we'll go on with debate.

Because I'm not in the committee room, it's always a little more difficult. We'll suspend for five minutes and then come back.

Okay, we're suspended until 12:17. It's 12:12 right now.

• (1210)

(Pause)

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, there's been an amendment tabled by Mr. Fergus in regard to a change of date. The complication with Mr. Fergus's amendment is that it falls within a broader amendment that the committee voted for. It's part of the amendment made previously by Madame Gaudreau. The precedents that we've looked at... We have proactively looked at it because the clerk and I had conversations with regard to how this motion was evolving. If there is unanimous consent of the members of the committee—of course, we can do anything by UC—then this amendment can be accepted.

If not, Mr. Fergus, with respect, I have to rule it out of order, because it's an amendment, as I said, that was part of an amendment that's already been accepted by the committee in regard to the motion.

I'll just end there and let Mr. Fergus give some input, and then canvass the committee.

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

I guess I'm just trying to get a bit of a sense, then, from you and the clerk. If I'm understanding you correctly, almost no amendment... I guess what you're saying is that the way it stands now, we can't adjust this amendment in any way except through unanimous consent.

**The Chair:** On this portion of the motion that was previously amended, there's a precedent that you can't go back on an amendment that's already been accepted by the committee.

That said, if there's unanimous consent with regard to what you're putting forward, then the committee can do whatever it likes with UC.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I didn't go at the real substance, I think, of the motion. I was working on trying at making sure that the motion has a real-world applicability, given what was released on November 10 by the speakers bureau.

I accept the interpretation, obviously, but I'm just trying to understand it for future amendments. I'm not trying to kill the motion. I'm not trying to vacate it of its meaning. I'm just trying to make sure that it fits where we all are.

Mr. Chair, I guess I'm just trying to understand why that would be considered a... I accept your ruling, but I'm trying to work my way through this.

**The Chair:** Well, I can assure you, Mr. Fergus, that being a human being and always wanting people to like me, I guess I would always like to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

That said, there's a precedent. Any other aspect of the motion, of course, is amendable, but where it's already been amended and decided by the committee, that's where we run into precedent. This goes right to the amendment that Madame Gaudreau had presented and was voted on and accepted, but like I said, if there's unanimous consent in the committee to accept your amendment, then we could move forward with that.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we are dealing with my original motion. I have not been consulted by Mr. Fergus on his amendment, so I would not support this going ahead.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** That was going to be my next question, actually. Would that also apply to the original motion that had been amended?

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Any aspect of the motion that has not been amended can still be amended by the committee. You can still move an amendment in that regard. Because this portion of the motion was already amended and agreed to by the committee, that's why I needed to rule the way I did, Mr. Fergus.

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

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Fergus.

I'll review the speakers list. We have Mr. Dong, Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Barrett—he's in the room and not up on my electronic screen—Mr. Angus and Mr. Sorbara.

Now I'll go to Mr. Dong.

Yes, Mr. Fergus?

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I just want to add my name back to the list, sir.

**The Chair:** Yes, I see it up there now electronically.

I apologize, Mr. Dong. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

I was going to support Mr. Fergus's amendment. I think that would be a good compromise and perhaps would bring this conversation to a more productive path.

Before I get into debate on the main motion, at the end of the last meeting, if I remember correctly, you were going to make a ruling on the motion that I put forward at the last meeting. Are we still on the past floor discussion of hearing a ruling from you, Chair, or are we just going to move on to a new day with new debate?

**The Chair:** No, Mr. Dong. Just to refresh your memory, I did make a ruling on that. We have a motion on the floor that we need to dispose of beforehand, and that was new business that you were raising and not an order from the House. That's why I ruled the way I did: that we continue this debate.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Okay. Thank you, Chair, for clarifying that.

I was listening to Mr. Angus's points and comments on the WE Charity, which were a long review of information that came forward through the finance committee. There was a lot of information there, to the point that I was wondering.... We have already received tons of information from WE Charity. Are we still going back and trying to find out more through this motion?

What else are we looking for? Are we going back going through the same thing again? In my colleague Mr. Sorbara's words, are we going to keep on going with the fishing expedition or can we move forward on something new, something that the Canadians trust us and this committee to do? That's my initial thought after listening to Mr. Angus's comments about WE.

I want to start with the tweet by Mr. Barrett following the last meeting. There was a lot of attention brought to his tweet on breaking news. Through Twitter, a very popular social media platform, he was alleging that Speakers' Spotlight had destroyed committee's documents and implied that there is a conspiracy, that there's something illegal happening because they didn't keep the documents over a certain period of time.

There was a lot of assumption of guilt on his part. Then, later on, we all know what happened. Speakers' Spotlight came out with a response to the tweet. I would like to read this response into the record, because I think it would clarify something for the committee. Following that, I will comment on the response.

The response from the Speakers' Spotlight started off with this:

On Monday, November 9th, Michael Barrett, M.P. posted a video on his Twitter feed, with the description, "BREAKING at Ethics Committee we learn that legally ordered WE documents have been destroyed."

That's a quote taken from Mr. Barrett's tweet. The response continues:

In the video, Mr. Barrett states, "Speakers' Spotlight has destroyed all the records of speaking engagements for the individuals named in the motion, the Prime Minister and his spouse, for any period [of] outside seven years".

The statement is patently false and misleading.

We believe what Mr. Barrett is referring to is a conversation we had with Ms. Miriam Burke, the Clerk of the Committee, a few weeks ago. Ms. Burke had reached out to let us know that the Committee was voting on a motion, and that an Order for documents may be forthcoming. She wanted to get a sense of the volume of the documents that were to be produced, so she could make the necessary preparations, including arranging for translation services.

We let Ms. Burke know that because all of the [speakers'] engagements took place more than 7 years ago, we did not have hard copies of the files, as these had been purged in the normal course of business.

● (1240)

We also let Ms. Burke know that we do have some digital copies of documents that we would produce, along with records of all the speaking engagements dating back to 2008 that were legally required by the Order.

It is standard practice for companies to purge documents after 7 years, and we have always followed this practice. Furthermore, under Canadian privacy law, we are required to destroy all personal information as soon as it is no longer necessary. Therefore, it is not just good legal practice, but a legal requirement that we have been following.

This next sentence is in bold:

To be clear, we have not destroyed any legally ordered documents. Any reports to the contrary are entirely false.

We encourage Mr. Barrett to consult on this matter the office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada who, as an Agent of Parliament, would be in position

to fully explain the legal requirements to destroy personal information as soon as it is no longer necessary.

It's signed by Martin and Farah Perelmuter. I don't know them personally. I hope I didn't offend them with my pronunciation of their names. They are president and CEO and co-founders of Speakers' Spotlight.

We can see from the response that the company mentioned in this motion has objection, and rightfully so, to Mr. Barrett's tweet quickly following the committee meeting. I want to bring this to the committee, because as elected members, especially members of this committee, we are tasked with tremendous responsibility, which comes with tremendous power as well.

I always tell myself, with respect to my position on the committee, that we have to be extremely careful with what we say and not to assume innocence or guilt as we go on with our investigation of our studies.

I'll come back to the point that there is an ongoing investigation by the commissioner. I completely respect the process. The commissioner will complete his or her study, whichever commissioner, and then come back to the committee. Then we can ask questions. Then we can provide recommendations. To me, that's a much better practice than if the committee....

Mr. Angus has spoken about this quite a few times. The committee has as the power to do its own study. I understand that. However, there is an ongoing investigation happening. I think we should trust the expert, the professional, the unbiased officer of Parliament, to complete his investigation, so we don't run into a situation where we may say something or put forward some recommendations that would contaminate his investigation, or even worse, cast some doubt on his investigation. I don't think that's productive. I don't think that's helpful for Canadians finding out the truth that they're entitled to.

The other thing I want to talk about, and lead off my debate today with, is that in the last meeting, I put forward a motion purely because of the fact that in the last almost year now, if you look at the motions being discussed by the committee, there were no motions put forward by a Liberal member. The record, and I spoke to that, is 14 to 0. I think that is not the spirit of the committee.

● (1245)

I know this is a non-partisan committee and members of this committee can put forward motions, but I was quickly dismissed by a substituting member from the Conservative side. I think it was Ms. Gladu. I don't think she participated in my earlier debate or even in the last meeting. She came in and called the motion disgraceful. I took offence to that.

As a permanent member, I don't think that an attempt to put forward a motion that is on an important matter and is very important to Canadians in the context that there is quite an increase in online activities and online purchasing during the COVID period, and that it is very timely for us to look at how digital currency, despite the fact that it is a very hard discussion—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Madame Gaudreau.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Chair, I'm trying to understand how this relates to the amended motion we should be voting on. I really wish we could have a discussion with my colleague Mr. Dong on his motion and the others. If he were to move that we go to a vote instead, we could discuss how we should proceed.

[English]

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

It has been my history to leave a lot of breadth, but I felt the other day that I asked all of you to read a couple of pages from the procedural manual in regard to relevance and repetition. Although I'm loath to ever move to limit an individual member, I would just say again to try to stay relevant to the specific motion that's on the floor, as well to be cautious with too much repetition, or we'll get to a point where I need to rule.

Please go ahead, Mr. Dong. Just explain the relevance to the original motion.

• (1250)

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you, Chair. I respect that.

My point was that I just want to make sure that my colleagues on the committee understand where I'm coming from, because I am protesting about a comment made about my motion. I talked about how in the last meeting there were motions put forward by substituting members. These were allowed, debated and voted on.

In contrast, none of the motions put forward by the Liberals were accepted or debated or voted on. I think that speaks to a phenomenon that we're right in the middle of. Then, to have another member from the Conservative Party coming in and calling my motion, which at the time I thought was in order, a disgrace, I think that was disrespectful. I just want to make it clear and make sure that gets on the record.

Coming back to the motion and talking about the medical supplies procured by the government and the services procured by the government, we have to also look at the context that COVID has put us into. Throughout this unprecedented crisis, this side of the committee has been working to keep Canadians safe. As well, protecting our economy was an investment into our small businesses—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I think my colleague should rephrase things. The fact is that the Liberals have obstructed our committee for well over 30 hours and are continuing to do so. They don't get to say that on their side they're concerned about keeping Canadians safe. All of us, as representatives of our regions, work full out, from any party, on the issue of safety.

I think it's really, really not acceptable for the Liberals to claim that they're the ones who care about people's safety because they're obstructing the work of this committee. That is a ridiculous assumption to make, and I think he needs to retract that.

**Mr. Han Dong:** That is not a point of order.

**The Chair:** It is not.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

**Mr. Han Dong:** All members, as Mr. Angus said, have a responsibility to make sure that everyone who needs help gets help. Canadians have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to slow down the spread of the virus.

I want to give out a shout-out to the doctors and nurses and health care providers on the front lines, especially in my riding. I went out very early on and reached out to the six long-term care facilities in my riding, making sure they had enough PPEs and making sure they were getting enough support from their provincial government and from the marketplace, even, because some of them—

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'd ask that you begin to rule on relevance. We continue to hear unrelated conversations about things that have nothing to do with the motion or the amendment. I would ask that you ask the member, again, to move to a relevant topic that relates to the things we're currently debating.

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

Mr. Dong, please let us know how this relates to the motion, okay?

**Mr. Han Dong:** Absolutely. The motion is about procurement, about procurement by the government, which includes PPE and ventilators.

What I'm saying here is that, first, we have to look at the background, at the challenges faced by the government and also our front-line workers and health care professionals so that we have a full understanding of the challenges in the procurement area. We're not talking about right now. Going back to April and May, we all saw, through the media, how competitive it was to get our hands on PPE. That's why I was reaching out to local hospitals. That's why I tried to liaise and to connect those who had the resources, who had the PPE, with those who had a serious shortfall of those products.

So I think it's very relevant. If we're going to look at the entire practice of government procurement, we have to understand the background and the conditions at the time. Then we will understand the plan and the execution of the procurement. I think it's relevant.

I also want to give a shout-out to students at Seneca. In May everything was shut down. We kept hearing that some of the front-line workers, a very small number of them, were afraid for their own safety, for their family's safety. There was a serious shortage on that front. But at Seneca, a class of recent graduates stepped forward, over 200 of them, the majority of whom were international students. I can understand why the government, through its ministry of citizenship and immigration, came out with policies to recognize the contributions made so far by non-Canadians trained in Canada with this kind of skill. Again, I want to give a shout-out to those individuals as well.

This work by the front-line workers is critical. That is why the government remains laser focused on securing personal protective equipment and medical supplies that they need, particularly as we see the resurgence of the virus. Canadian health care workers and essential service workers are in need of critical PPE, ventilators and rapid tests. That is what we, as a government, have done. The COVID expert panel, at the request of the Public Health Agency of Canada, and through PSPC, awarded a contract to FTI medical to produce, in Canada, ventilators designed to save the lives of Canadians.

We are proud of our work to support the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and secure the equipment and supplies needed to save lives during this crisis. It is a public health crisis. It seems to me that, especially at the beginning of COVID, we did not have enough supplies to support the work of the first-line health care workers. Over the past month, we have managed to procure enough critical PPE to meet the needs of Canadians while operating in a hyper-competitive market driven by unprecedented global demand. In Canada, especially at the very beginning of COVID, our manufacturing sector was not equipped and was not prepared to produce made-in-Canada equipment. We heard horror stories about PPE being intercepted at the border or in the middle of airports. We were put in a very terrible situation, actually, and I have to commend the government for doing a great job with a short turnaround.

• (1255)

Remember—I think it was the middle of March—when public servants were asked to work from home? With all that resistance, the government was able to move very quickly, not just to secure the very needed PPE and medical equipment internationally, but to also very quickly support our domestic production. I remember that there was an announcement to put in \$600 million to boost production capacity in case we would find a vaccine for COVID-19. That was planned back in February, if I remember this correctly, so you can see how swift the government's response has been in boosting domestic production.

Thanks to those efforts, Canada's PPE is being produced here in Canada. I remember that my office was receiving so many calls from the community and from local businesses that were able to get their hands on PPE and that wanted, through our office, to donate to those institutions or organizations, including food banks, North York General Hospital and long-term care facilities that were in serious need of PPE. Very quickly, we were able to meet those demands.

I also facilitated and helped some of these donors to donate to neighbouring ridings, to hospitals in downtown Toronto and in Mississauga, because we were in it together. We heard the health minister say that this virus has no boundaries. It doesn't care if it's in Don Valley North or it's in Oakville, right? Helping everybody was the theme at the time.

We've also seen a tremendous amount of community leaders stepping up. In my riding, which is a very diverse riding, we've seen leaders stepping up from the Chinese Canadian community and collecting donations, going out and securing PPE and delivering lunch. We've seen leaders from the Tamil community, owners of local restaurants, donating food to nurses and doctors working so hard on the front lines and saving lives. We've seen leaders from the Muslim community stepping up and sharing best practices to provide supports for those who had just arrived in Canada. In following the quarantine rules—having to stay home for 14 days and with very limited access to friends and family—they were supported by the community leaders and the community volunteers. These are all very heartwarming facts in terms of fighting COVID with very limited resources at a time when there was very limited access to PPE and medical equipment.

Chair, as you can see, I can go on and on about the dozens of Canadian companies with stories about individuals who stepped up to produce PPE, rapid tests and other products, including ventilators. Companies in Calgary, Winnipeg, Saint John, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Montreal, and cities and towns across the country have worked tirelessly while upholding the highest standards of transparency and providing regular updates to Canadians and members of the House about our procurement work without jeopardizing the integrity of these procurements. I remember that from May through to July, I was on a call almost every day talking with staff and officials in different departments and trying to pass on some information about access to PPE or passing on advice on things we needed to do to protect our seniors.

• (1300)

I thought the government's response was very, very quick. At the time, not just within the Liberal Party, the minister held daily briefings with all party members and senators. I heard at the time that the leader of the Green Party, Elizabeth May, was commended for that initiative by the health minister and also noted the changes that she saw very quickly after her suggested advice to the minister.

Those were examples—rare but very good examples—of where all party members pulled together their creativity, their network and their information to support the government's work, whether in public health policy or procurement policy.

I saw that the ministry came out with a portal because it had received an overwhelming amount of information and evidence of willingness by Canadian businesses that were trying to help. They didn't want to be the bottleneck, so they created a portal to take these goodwill offerings. It was later transformed into an online what I would call "marketplace". Businesses that couldn't access PPE could go onto this portal and talk to the suppliers directly. I thought that was a very, very smart move. It was appreciated by businesses all around, trust me.

I go out and speak to the businesses in my riding. I often start my conversations by asking them if they have enough PPE to carry on. They have to make sure their staff are safe and well protected. Indirectly that is protecting their customers as well.

Chair, since March, our government has been engaging in an unprecedented effort to ensure that Canadians have the supplies they need to stay healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our procurement experts have worked day and night aggressively buying from all available suppliers and distributors to secure precious PPEs for Canadians.

Today, we continue to operate in the highly competitive global market, in which the entire world is seeking out the same material, including masks, tests, gloves, and gowns. Supply chains remain stressed.

Negotiations are ongoing with a number of companies in these fields. Even still, we will be producing PPE well into the future to help Canadians be safe today and tomorrow. Putting companies before this committee, based on nothing more than the fact that one of the partners in a consortium is a former Liberal MP—I don't know him personally, but he is just one partner in the consortium—could put at risk Canada's ability to do the important work needed.

We have a duty to Canadians to protect the integrity of the procurement system, and we take that very seriously. Our government has kept Canadians informed of what we have been doing to protect them. Since April we have taken steps to be as transparent as possible to keep all citizens, including members of the House, fully up to date on our work.

We have made public the process we are following to procure key COVID-19 supplies. As orders have arrived and continue to arrive, Canadians have been able to consult the PSPC website for a regular update and overview of purchases and deliveries, which is how the contract for FTI became public. In fact, the website includes a nice overview to show how money has been spent on procuring PPE during the pandemic. I'll just give an example to the committee and to my colleagues.

● (1305)

This is a summary of aggregate procurement dated October 15, so it's quite recent. We have a lot of equipment here: vinyl gloves, \$2.2 million; N95 respirators, \$655 million; surgical masks, \$239 million; cloth masks, \$34 million; face shields, \$261 million; goggles, \$23 million; gowns, \$1.7 billion; and other protective clothing, \$30 million. The government spent \$375 million on hand sanitizer. Other PPE—thermometers, accessories, auto-clave bags, thicker rubber gloves—cost \$21 million; testing equipment, \$688 million; ventilators and ventilator accessories, \$1.14

billion; and other medical equipment, \$293 million. The total amount of protected contract values was \$162 million. Together it amounted to about \$6 billion.

What's more, an important part of our committee is transparency and accountability. The government is publicly disclosing contracting information to the fullest extent possible while protecting our supply chain. I just want to cite a few. This is all public information. There's one about ABC Technologies. The commodity is face shields for \$3.49 million. There's one about AMD Medicom Inc. for N95 respirators and surgical masks. The amount is shown to the decimal: \$116,076,840.61. There's a whole bunch being disclosed on the government website. I could go on and on with this big list.

My point is that we have been quite transparent with the products, the PPE and medical supplies, that we have purchased. We've been quite clear with the contracts and the types of commodities and for how much. It's all disclosed online. This information, which is also available on the PSPC website, includes the names of suppliers and the amounts of the contracts. We are regularly updating these sites. To protect Canada's order and our negotiating position, only certain procurement information is being protected. As a government, we have been and will continue to be here to support Canadians. We have their backs with the necessary PPE to keep hospitals, long-term care homes and emergency services functioning.

As well, Mr. Chair, Canadians have been regularly updated on the purchase of PPE as well as new manufacturing contracts with Canadian and international companies through frequent announcements. We have been providing updates on agreements that the government has signed with several companies to secure Canada's access to the most promising vaccines being developed around the world. We're also moving swiftly to ensure that Canada has access to the most effective and efficient testing solutions possible. Along the way, we have been informing Canadians about the agreements we have made with these companies as well as the type and quantity of kits we are procuring.

● (1310)

Let me assure you, Mr. Chair, that our government is committed to providing Canadians, including the members of this committee, with as much information as possible about our efforts to respond to COVID-19. As supply chains for essential equipment and supplies stabilize, we will continue to publicly disclose more contract information. Canadians deserve to have as much information as we can provide without jeopardizing our procurement for critical PPE. That's a risk we simply will not take.



Despite the hyper competitive global market, the government has acquired billions of units of PPE, including masks, N95 respirators, face shields, hand sanitizer and protective gowns and gloves, and more is on the way. We achieved this with a two-pronged strategy in reaching out to multiple suppliers overseas to procure existing supplies and secure future shipments and also calling out to innovative Canadian companies that have been stepping up to produce the most vital PPE here at home. That stability will be even more crucial now that COVID cases are once again on the rise.

Now more than ever, our procurement efforts must continue with full force. Canada remains focused on acquiring enough supplies to allow us to face every scenario in this pandemic. These are extraordinary times. As this government works to ensure Canadians are supported and safe, we will continue to keep Canadians informed of our efforts to keep them safe.

Chair, let me reiterate that as COVID cases climb across the country, we need to ensure that Canadians are prepared for all scenarios. This pandemic is the most serious public health crisis Canada has ever faced and keeping Canadians healthy and safe is our number one goal.

• (1315)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, Mr. Dong was saying earlier how bad he felt because in all of the motions that were brought forward, the Liberals hadn't shown up, but now, to be using the pandemic to divert the work of our committee, to stop us from working, while trying to hide behind the high numbers, I find that it's just not very credible or respectable.

We have a motion before us. The motion is regarding how these payments were made, and for Mr. Dong to be using the pandemic and people's fear of the pandemic as a reason to filibuster and talk the clock out.... We're now into our 33rd hour of the Liberal obstruction. I ask him, if he's going to obstruct and interfere with our committee, to at least stay focused on the subject at hand.

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

Mr. Dong, go ahead.

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

If this committee wants to do the work that actually matters to Canadians, then I would suggest that we focus our work on the original motion put forth by Mr. Angus. I'm not in disagreement with Mr. Angus. It's just that what I'm having a problem with, quite honestly, is that a vote took place not once but twice before the committee and lost. The motion was rewritten, almost identically in some parts, into the form—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Point of order, Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Statements made must be accurate. This is the eighth time I've heard that we will not accept the decision not to revoke a decision when a mistake has been made.

Let's face the situation now, take the bull by the horns and vote, after 33 hours of deliberations.

[*English*]

**Mr. Han Dong:** Chair, I know that I have the floor, and that wasn't a point of order. It was debate. I would just simply state—

**The Chair:** Actually, Mr. Dong, it was a point of order. That's why I sent around page 1059 from the procedure book. Let me read it to you:

In addition, the Chair may, at his or her discretion, interrupt a member whose observations and questions are repetitive or are unrelated to the matter before the committee. If the member in question persists in making repetitive or off-topic comments, the Chair can give the floor to another member.

Again, I will absolutely do everything I can to avoid that kind of ruling, but members should try to at least be a little bit creative in how they speak to the particular motion and not be repetitive.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you, Chair. I'll definitely keep that in mind. I respect that.

My remarks today have everything to do with the situation we're facing right now with COVID and some of the stuff that the government has done in terms of procurement, and this does speak to the motion itself.

Like I said, I would love it if we worked work on the original motion put forth by Mr. Angus and amended by Mr. Fergus and just go on with that, but unfortunately we're stuck debating accepting an amendment that, in my view, was brought forward to the committee for the third time.

With that, I'll conclude. I'll yield the floor to my colleagues, but I will probably chime in later on.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1320)

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

Madame Gaudreau, you are next.

In fact, we have Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus, Mr. Sorbara and then Mr. Fergus.

I know that you've been waiting for a while, Madame Gaudreau, so I won't do this before you speak unless you're okay with it. It's 1:20. I just thought it would be good to have a five-minute suspension for what nature drives us to.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I will be very open as long as you are too.

We will be back in five minutes. I will be next to speak.

• (1325)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll suspend for five minutes, colleagues. I have 1:22 on my screen. It will be 1:27 when we reconvene.

• (1325)

(Pause)

• (1325)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, we'll return from suspension.

Again, I'll review our speakers list. We have Madame Gaudreau, and then Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Ferguson.

Madame Gaudreau, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Mr. Chair, thank you for that break, because it helped me get my emotions back under control. The many accounts, values and words put forward in the past 33 hours and a few minutes lead me to believe that we have reached the end of the line.

I will explain why I am telling you that. I will take less than five minutes, as I usually do, but what I have to say is important. As I was saying earlier, we have gone over what happened several times and tried to change what we have right now.

I see that Mr. Samson is here. For those who were not here, it's important that you know we had a request to revoke an erroneous vote. A few minutes later, in front of the national media, they explained why. All the details are there to justify it. We will not come back to it. I will not take 30 minutes to tell you about it.

We voted on the motion to revoke. Had it passed, the vote would have been changed and we would not be here right now. How can I agree to try to draw things out as much as possible when we should be dealing with what has just been voted on? You have just shown us.

With all due respect, colleagues—I hear the word “respect”, I hear that it's important, that we need to show that we are accountable, that we take our responsibilities seriously. With all due respect, my government colleagues, show us some, because, in broad daylight, you are clearly doing the opposite.

It's 1:30 p.m. on Friday the thirteenth. After 33 hours during which you have had time to say everything you wanted to say—not to mention everything you keep repeating—I believe we will even be able to finish before 5:30 p.m.

I'm going to refer back to those words, because I always come back to our fundamental objective, which is to represent all the people of Quebec and Canada. I know that the list of speakers has many names on it. So, please, it's not that hard to say: “let's go for it, we're ready”.

I salute your work, Mr. Chair, because I am full of compassion. I have seen a lot in my life, but this situation is clearly out of the ordinary. I will say it again: I'm ashamed of us.

I hope the message gets through. Over and above our game—because we have to recognize that a game is being played here and I am quite capable of seeing that—I hope that, together, we can man-

age to get it over with, to do what needs to be done and to fulfill our responsibilities.

I will put my name on the list again, I will say it again and again, until I'm blue in the face. I think you have just demonstrated that we have talked this through.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1330)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Gaudreau.

[*English*]

Now we'll move to Mr. Barrett.

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

We find ourselves back here again, 33 hours in, and hearing a re-counting from the Liberals of their previous testimony. Early in the meeting, Mr. Angus laid out what brought us here. We heard from Madame Gaudreau the plain reason that this motion ought to come to vote. Everyone has had their say.

I'd like to speak briefly to and address the comments made by Mr. Dong. He made comments with respect to the Speakers' Spotlight documents. He read into the record a tweet from that organization.

The comments that I made in committee were the information that was provided to us. The situation is that some of the information is still there, while some of it has been purged. There are no lies that have been spoken by me.

I find it really interesting to hear Mr. Dong talk about the offence of having Ms. Gladu come to committee and address the motion that was ruled out of order and for Mr. Dong to interject on points of order and say they weren't points of order when one of the Liberal substitutes who came to the committee, Mr. Drouin, interjected a few times and attempted to take control of the meeting in a pretty high-pitched way.

It's interesting, because the connections to the Ontario Liberal Party that the federal Liberals have are pertinent to the question of destroyed documents. The chief of staff to former Ontario Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty, David Livingston, was found guilty and ultimately sent to jail for mischief in relation to data and attempted misuse of a computer system to commit mischief. The ruling stated, “Mr. Livingston's plan to eliminate sensitive and confidential work-related data, in my view”—

• (1335)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Chair, you've commented several times today on relevance. I have no idea how Mr. Barrett's train of thought and commentary are relevant to the motion, the information at hand and the conversation we're having as a committee.

**The Chair:** Okay, Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Barrett, I believe you were speaking about Mr. Dong's comments in regard to a tweet you had in this committee. Is that correct?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Correct.

**The Chair:** Okay. Continue on. Just make sure the members know your relevance.

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

It's interesting to hear that comment from Mr. Sorbara, who decided to offend the sensibilities of Canadians at this committee by spending time talking about his preference in what kind of underwear he would wear instead of addressing the motion at hand.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** On a point of order, Chair, that's completely unnecessary banter and talk. It's actually quite offensive that Mr. Barrett would go there on a personal basis. We were speaking about a company called Stanfield's in Canada. It had nothing to do with undergarments.

I'm not sure where the CPC is going in this committee with this diatribe they're having, but it's quite obvious that they're not concerned about the well-being of Canadians and the direction in which this committee is going.

MP Barrett, please, we can do better than that. Raise the bar on your conversation, please.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I've a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I ask you to ask Mr. Sorbara to read the rules of order, because I feel that now he's actually trying to deliberately interfere and be provocative. We need to get on with this. Mr. Sorbara will have all afternoon to talk about Stanfield's underwear if he wants, as long as it pertains to the motion, but we need to get back to the issue at hand so that we can try to get to a vote today.

**The Chair:** Please continue on, Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Right, and as I said, Mr. Chair, it was Mr. Sorbara's decision to discuss his preference regarding the type of underwear he would wear when he spoke to this committee, so when we talk about offensive, these are choices that Mr. Sorbara made.

To continue where I left off with respect to the relation between the Ontario Liberal Party and the federal Liberals and the chief of staff to former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, David Livingston, who was found guilty and ultimately—

**Mr. Han Dong:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I understand that you asked Mr. Barrett to show the relevance of this debate—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** You have to let me finish my sentence.

**Mr. Han Dong:** I was just interrupted by him again on a point of order, and now he's talking about a provincial party, which, even as a Liberal, I have no responsibility to comment on or defend or to say anything about. I question the relevance of that.

**The Chair:** I understand, Mr. Dong.

I've been allowing everybody quite a number of minutes to steer back to relevance, so I'll give Mr. Barrett the same privilege to show us the relevance and come back to his point.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Right, Chair, and Mr. Dong was serving as a member of the Ontario Liberal Party when the chief of staff to former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty was found guilty and was sent to jail.

**Mr. Han Dong:** On a point of order—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I'm going to finish my sentence, guys. You can keep interrupting me.

**Mr. Han Dong:** No, on a point of order, Chair—

**The Chair:** What is your point of order, Mr. Dong?

**Mr. Han Dong:** What Mr. Barrett said is completely untrue. I served between 2014 and 2018, and I wasn't there during the time he is talking about with regard to the provincial Liberals—and again, I don't think it has any relevance to the motion we are debating. I want to correct the record on that point.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, I will remind everybody that points of order are for procedure, and you will always have a chance to correct the record when your speaking slot comes up. I'm certain everybody will take full freedom to do that.

Please continue, Mr. Barrett.

● (1340)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Right.

Chair, the criminal case that saw Mr. David Livingston, the former chief of staff to Ontario Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty, convicted and found guilty of those charges certainly did take place when Mr. Dong was serving in the provincial legislature. The ruling stated:

Mr. Livingston's plan to eliminate sensitive and confidential work-related data, in my view, amounted to a "scorched earth" strategy, where information that could be potentially useful to adversaries, both within and outside of the Liberal Party, would be destroyed.

We've just seen the energy and effort that go into the Liberal members' attempts to prevent substantive points being put on the record with respect to the record of Liberal parties. Mr. Drouin, who had those excited interventions, worked for that premier. Here we are, trying to get the truth. Here we are, trying to get to a vote. The Liberal members on the committee objected to the ruling of the chair, lost the chair challenge, and now, it seems, even though they got their say, because they didn't get their way, are not willing to let this come to a vote.

The sensibilities of Canadians are rightly offended by the 33-hour-plus filibuster that we have here. We heard from Mr. Dong a list of expenditures. Now, expenditures shouldn't be the sole measure of success; we need to see results as well. I can tell you that the resources expended on 33 hours of filibustering could be much better spent, and the folks in my community, who are looking for all kinds of help, don't see a government that's serious about transparency. We heard a very long speech about transparency from Mr. Dong while engaged in a cover-up filibuster.

The points have been made many times over, and it is certainly high time for it to come to a vote. This is how democracy works. If the Liberals have made convincing arguments to a sufficient number of their colleagues on both sides of the aisle, then they will carry the day and they will be able to defeat the motion. If not, the motion will go forward, and we will take a look at the CSSG, the awarding of the contract to Baylis Medical, and Palantir. We were going to have someone from Speakers' Spotlight come and talk about these documents, and they can fully explain their process and clarify what has been unclear and provide the information that the committee has been looking for. Then we can move on.

We've heard from many Liberals, permanent members of the committee and otherwise, and they were loath to hear about the connections between the provincial Liberals and their team, but they exist. We've seen that it's important, that if documents aren't provided and aren't tabled on the record, there is a risk that they can be destroyed. Time is of the essence for this committee to get documents. Time is of the essence for this committee to hear testimony, be it on the ventilators or Mr. MacNaughton or the CSSG. This was a half-billion-dollar contribution agreement for the CSSG, originally billed as \$912 million, to the benefit of \$40 million-plus to the Kielburgers, who themselves drew the connection between members of the Trudeau family and their organization in their submission to cabinet.

• (1345)

They're the ones who put pictures of the Prime Minister's family in their proposal to the federal cabinet. That's not something the opposition did. That wasn't us looking to create a witch hunt. It was that organization. That was their conscious choice in an effort to benefit from a lucrative agreement at the height of a pandemic when they needed that contract quite badly, since they were laying off many employees.

Chair, this committee has heard the arguments from all sides. It is certainly high time for us to have a vote.

As a final note, I would say to my colleagues that if they don't like hearing back what they have already talked about in committee, if they find it offensive later when repeated to them—and I'm happy to read the blues into the record again for Mr. Sorbara, if he'd like—they should be mindful of how they spend their hours—

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, Mr. Barrett has opened the door for me to clarify the record by reading the blues to provide exactly what was said at committee. I took a look at it. I wasn't at the committee meeting when this exchange took place, so I decided to look it up. Here it is, sir.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order—

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Mr. Sorbara said:

The last example I want to turn our attention to is that of a great iconic Canadian company called Stanfield's, which manufactures numerous clothing articles. The company can trace its origins back to Nova Scotia in the 1850s. Former company chairman and CEO—

Then he was interrupted, much as just happened here, Mr. Chair, by Mr. Angus, who said:

I don't remember that anybody has had any interest in underwear as part of this pandemic study. If the Liberals are going to continue to drag us down the hole of

filibustering, the issue that they agreed to is with regard to Mr. Baylis, because he is a former member of Parliament, which makes it pertinent.

If they're going to start to now talk about underwear, Mr. Chair, they are certainly wasting our time and taxpayers' time.

Mr. Chair, as you can see, it was Mr. Angus who made that connection, and not Mr. Sorbara.

Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus, did you have a point of order?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, I just think that watching Mr. Fergus go to bat for Stanfield's underwear from the 1850s on a point of order on what Mr. Sorbara had said about Stanfield's underwear shows that this committee is turning into farce. I think it's not a point of order; it's just more obstruction.

Perhaps Mr. Barrett has something else to say, or he can finish and we can continue on, but I think that Mr. Fergus's last interjection pretty much sums up what we've been subjected to and what the Canadian people have been subjected to for the last 33 hours.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, this is exactly the reason we need to make sure that we all have interests in this and—

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

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** —there is too much....

At least allow me to make the point of order so that you can figure out what your point of order is.

**The Chair:** Order.

Colleagues, give me a second.

Mr. Barrett, please, I've always let everyone extinguish their point of order first, even though I have to say, colleagues, as much as I respect and like working with you all, that the vast majority are not procedural. The vast majority are comments, but I have allowed everybody that luxury.

Mr. Fergus, if you could make it brief, that would be great, and then I'll go on to Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** I'll make it very brief.

What is unfair, sir, is the attribution, the drive-by smear that is put to another honourable member when it's actually the person who raised it. Mr. Angus just did it perfectly again. He just decided to mock the situation when in fact he is the source of that statement. That's what I am trying to point out.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, that's an opinion.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** It's no more a point of order than what you had raised, Mr. Angus, or Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Sweet, please—

**The Chair:** Colleagues...Mr. Barrett, you already have the floor; you don't need to arrest the floor with a point of floor. Now that they've been extinguished, you can go ahead.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Chair, Mr. Fergus just said that.... First of all, he didn't hear me. He was raising a point of order to the point of order on his point of order.

When I looked to interject on that point—on which I was not given the floor by you, Chair—he then said that my point was invalid. This is supreme arrogance.

I want to read to you from the blues, and I quote, from November 3, 2020. At 5:10 p.m. Francesco Sorbara, Vaughan—Woodbridge, Ontario, said, “I think that boxers are better than underwear, but that's a whole different story.”

Chair, this was the point that Mr. Fergus.... You wanted to read the blues into the record; there it is.

We have Liberal members who want to offer their—

• (1350)

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Read further above, Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** I'm sorry, Chair; could you have the member repeat his comment?

**The Chair:** No. I think here's what we'll do, colleagues. It looks like the temperature is rising. Let's suspend for 10 minutes. Let's let the temperature go down.

Mr. Barrett, you'll have the floor when we return.

• (1350)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1400)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, it's 2 p.m., and we're ready to go back into session.

Colleagues, it's been a long time. There's no question about it. We're all human beings, and it's been a long time because everybody has a good reason for it to be a long time.

I'm not asking you to respect the reasons that your colleagues have—far from it. That's what we do: We argue about policy, we argue about methods and we argue about principles.

However, you are all duly elected by your constituents, you're in one of the most honoured places in Canada and you swore an oath to serve it. That means that although you have no obligation to respect your colleagues' positions, you do have an obligation to respect your colleagues. That would be what is necessary to reflect to your constituents that you're dedicated to them.

As I said, that we're human. I understand why it's a little bit heated at the moment with the many hours that this has gone on, but let's pay each other the respect that is due, continue the debate and see how our debate continues to maybe dispose of this motion.

I'll go back to Mr. Barrett, and I'm going to remind us all of the speaking order again before I give the floor to Mr. Barrett. It is Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Fergus and Madame Gaudreau.

Go ahead, Mr. Barrett.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

It's unfortunate that the suspension came after the pile-on. I must have hit a nerve there in talking about the connections between the conviction of an Ontario Liberal operative and the subject at hand with respect to destruction of documents.

I would note for my colleagues that there were hours of speaking by them without the interjection of a point of order or a heckle or any of a number of things, and that I didn't get 60 seconds into speaking before the pile-on started. I think it's important to note that while I have disagreed heartily with much of what has been said by my Liberal colleagues, I've restrained my interventions on the relevance or the lack thereof in what has been said today.

Chair, I had concluded my remarks before we slipped into the gong show there, so I would ask that the committee members have the courage of their convictions and vote on the motion at hand.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Are you asking me to canvass the members here to see if there's a willingness to go to a vote?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Indeed, sir.

**The Chair:** Okay.

No, there's no consensus, Mr. Barrett.

We'll go on now to Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank you for those profound words. It is very important to remember that people across this country are watching what is happening here, and I think that little exchange about underwear and who is to blame for saying things about underwear represented a very low point in all the committees I have been on, and I have been on some very fractious and bitter committees.

I think what worries me is that this is the first committee in which the actual work of the committee, I believe, is being deliberately obstructed.

We had two meetings on this issue. Back in the summer we were about to get the Speakers' Spotlight documents. The Prime Minister prorogued the House. That shut the work of this committee down for well over a month. Then we came back, feeling that we were going to simply carry on and finish the report, which, I think, we would have easily been finished by now, but we ran into one obstruction after another from government members.

I have reached out to try to broker a couple of compromises because I believe it is our obligation to get these committees up and running. We don't get everything we want when we come into a committee hearing. We sometimes get compromises. It has been said many times that a camel is a racehorse that was designed by a committee. We all wanted the racehorse, but we end up sometimes with a lopsided camel. That is democracy.

I am feeling now a little regretful that I reached out to make those compromises, because I feel that whenever we agreed to change the motion to bring the Liberals onside, the playing field changed immediately.

We were told again and again by the Liberals that it was outrageous that we wanted to include Madam Margaret Trudeau and Sasha Trudeau and how much money they were paid through their work with WE. We were told that it was over the line, that it was a personal infringement, when the relevance to that issue was the fact that the WE group had started to make huge payments to the Trudeau family after the Prime Minister became elected, and when they were trying to get that \$900 million program, they were using photos of the Prime Minister's family. It put the Prime Minister into a conflict of interest under section 5 of the act. This was a very legitimate question.

We told the Liberals we would have very strong processes in place to protect that documentation. The only thing we needed from the documentation was to verify it, because we had been given false statements. We had been told that the Trudeau family was absolutely not paid, and that wasn't true. Michelle Douglas from the WE board testified that she had asked straight up whether the Trudeau family had been paid and was told they weren't. Our committee had no reason not to trust the words we had heard. Those documents should have simply verified that, and we could have moved on, but the Liberals drew a hard line there.

I reached out and said that I was not all that interested in how much the Trudeau family were being paid. We had identified that it was a significant amount of money. Whether it was significantly more or not, we had been told that it didn't really change the matter. However, as soon as we made that agreement, suddenly it became terribly unfair that we were asking about the Prime Minister's wife, even though the Liberals had identified in those negotiations that it was husband and wife, Prime Minister and wife, who were the people who should be looked at. As soon as we shortened the focus, they wanted to change it again. I found that very concerning.

They came back in their negotiations and said they wanted us to look at the Frank Baylis deal, yet we have been hearing nothing from the Liberals about how terrible it is that we're investigating this Frank Baylis deal. They have been using examples of other people from PPE companies who make donations and saying that they shouldn't be dragged in just because they make donations to one party or another.

It's not the fact that Mr. Baylis made donations; it's the fact that he's a former member of Parliament. That's significant. Rahim Jaffer was a former member of Parliament who went back in with a new business deal, and he was charged, I believe, and convicted because he was breaking the rules by using his connections.

We just need to verify that those connections were not improperly used. That's a pretty straightforward thing. A committee study does not presuppose guilt. We're looking into examples.

● (1405)

When the Liberals said that they didn't want us to look at Mr. Silver but they wanted us to look at Mr. Baylis, I agreed. Then, suddenly, we were being told how terrible that was and that we were persecuting Mr. Baylis, so I don't have a lot of trust right now for the Liberals, particularly as I sit and listen to them, hour in and hour out, talk about anything other than getting this thing dealt with.

In terms of the Bloc amendment, I believe that the Bloc amendment was out of order, and I said that at the time. I said that if the Bloc voted to shut down the request for the documents, then that matter was finished. However, the chair ruled that it was in order. I can disagree with the chair, but once a decision has been made, then that's the decision that's been made by the committee, and we move on. We don't get to relitigate it, as the Liberals are doing. We don't get to say, "Well, it's not democratic because we didn't like the result."

What was democratic was that a vote was taken and the chair ruled it in order, so now we need to move on, but we're not being allowed to move on. The Liberals continue to put up all matter of obstructions, even today, with my colleague claiming that the Liberals are actually concerned about the safety of Canadians—meaning what? Meaning that those of us who are doing our work at this committee are not worried about the safety of Canadians? I find that to be very, very offensive.

The sideshow we just witnessed about whether or not Stanfield's underwear, founded in I don't know what year, was unfair or fair, or a drive-by smear about Liberals who wanted to talk about the underwear thing, shows to me that this is obstruction.

I would give my Liberal colleagues two quotes. One is from March 7, 2011:

It has come to this, Mr. Speaker. In order for members of the House to do our jobs and make informed decisions on behalf of Canadians, we need to pry scraps of relevant information out of the [government's] clenched fists and drag it out of them as they kick and scream at committee.

Who said that? Justin Trudeau said that.  
Justin Trudeau also said:

Mr. Speaker, bits of blacked-out documents with key information missing are not disclosure. Non-answers in the House are not disclosure. Rhetorical personal attacks are not disclosure. We need to get at the truth.

What has been hidden from us are the documents that were supposed to be released. Many of those pages were blacked out. That's not acceptable.

As far as the Speakers' Spotlight documents go, I was certainly surprised to learn that they didn't have all the documents, but I don't in any way assume that Speakers' Spotlight was involved in any cover-up. I would like to have them come and explain what happened, but I do know that Speakers' Spotlight has said that there is other information.

Let's just get that information and move on, because now the Liberals again have tried to move an out-of-order motion today—it's something they couldn't do—to limit the documents to 2013, when Speakers' Spotlight said that there is information preceding that. I don't think that this should be that big a deal. I think the documents should exonerate the Prime Minister and his wife. If their words are true, there shouldn't be a problem.

If we can get to this motion, we can bring in Speakers' Spotlight, because it is definitely not the work of our committee to insinuate that someone outside of a government has done something wrong. We just need to verify.

Our role here is to come up with a report for the Canadian people that they can use to make their decision, so I'd ask my colleagues to stop arguing about underwear, to stop telling us about how every single PPE mask and glove has been appropriated right down to the penny, to stop coming up with reasons they don't want to discuss this, and have a vote.

We're 33 hours into the vote. The Liberals are wasting taxpayers' money, they are wasting our time and they are making a mockery of a committee that has often been very fractious, often very partisan and controversial and, at times, very bitter, but that committee has always sat, it has always met, it has always voted, and it has always produced reports, so I'm telling my Liberal colleagues that the time has come.

I'd like to ask, Chair, if we could test the room to see if we're ready for a vote or if we're going to be stuck with more obstruction from the Liberals. Can we vote on this?

• (1410)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Angus. I'm just looking at the screen here to see if there's a willingness to go to a vote.

No, there's no consent, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Thank you.

I'll cede the floor and I'll let the Liberals continue with their obstruction, now going on 33, almost 34, hours.

Thank you.

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

Next on the speakers list is Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Fergus, and then Madame Gaudreau.

Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I just want to say good afternoon again to everyone. We've had a lot of deliberation today and substantive conversation. I do just want to echo that the conversations do get heated. We sometimes represent different views, but at the end of the day, we represent Canadians. I'm going to do that and I always try to do. Those of you who know me and who have interacted with me over the years know that consider myself not to be a really partisan MP, if I can use that term. I represented the Liberals and am proud to be a Liberal. I was 15 years old when I first bought my membership and became involved in politics. Nonetheless, I was voted here to represent the wonderful constituents of Vaughan—Woodbridge and I represent them all. No matter who they voted for, no matter where they come from, and no matter what their views are, I have time for them all and I love them all, and I try to do the best job that I can as the member of Parliament for Vaughan—Woodbridge here in this wonderful city of Vaughan.

I know the rest of my dear and honourable colleagues do the same in their constituencies. I think that's something that I hold dear to my heart and I know that all my honourable colleagues hold dear to their hearts.

With that, Chair, I do know that my name has been bandied about several times since the beginning of our sitting today at about 11 o'clock. What is sort of surprising is that I never realized I was

that popular or that important, but it seems I've become pretty popular today in some testimony to my colleagues.

I thank you for thinking of me. It's always very nice to be thought of and it's always nice to be mentioned. If you wish to comment on my past comments or my past words, feel free to do so. We are in committee. We are allowed to chat and represent our views, and that's great.

Chair, one thing I as a member of the ethics committee promise to do for as long as I get to serve on this committee is to be respectful to my colleagues, and I always try to do that. I haven't been respectful, I'll be the first one to apologize and so forth.

That's my shtick. Those are my comments.

Chair, as we're going here, I do want to back up, because Mr. Angus in his early deliberations this morning was very free flowing and had a lot of commentary, and I always listen intently to Mr. Angus. I do. I find him very wise.

I do want to say, MP Angus, that I know you posted the picture from Ortona, where we were last year during this week. I saw some of your Instagram posts and they were very touching and reminded me of our trip last year. I'm saying this because it was Remembrance Day week, not for any other reason, so don't read into it, please.

But Mr. Angus did comment about finance and a number of proceedings and his interpretation of things. So Mr. Chair, you gave Mr. Angus quite the breadth of room yourself.

I think Mr. Angus mentioned that recently he was disappointed and that he thought that we on the government side didn't live up to perhaps not obligations but certain discussions that may have transpired. I always frame those discussions as private discussions between MPs. We always chat amongst ourselves. A lot of us are friends.

I know on our trip, MP Angus, the Bloc member who was with us was Mr. Desilets, with whom I still keep in contact and who I think of as a friend and someone I just smile with and we chat and so forth. We have those things. I think we need to have respect for those conversations.

I will go back to MP Angus's motion from October 22, from which we had agreed to remove, I believe, Mr. Fergus's amendment, which was passed in good spirit, in co-operation with the honourable member for the New Democratic Party. We removed the bullet point (a) on the examination of MCAP and Rob Silver's involvement with the queues in the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program.

I will slow down for the interpreters.

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

Pardon me, Ms. Gaudreau.

[*English*]

I apologize if I'm speaking too fast.

We also removed “(d) an examination of the use of partisan resources and processes in the appointment of federal judges that may have constituted violations of the privacy rights of nominees; and that the Committee...”.

MP Angus, on your amended motion, with Mr. Fergus's help, I wish to thank the New Democratic member for what I would say is recognizing the fact that going after someone's mother was wrong. Going after someone's brother was wrong. I want to recognize this. MP Angus recognized that. I thought that on a personal basis, which I argued here in my riding office in Vaughan, it was an incorrect thing to do by the official opposition. I thought that was a huge amount of overreach. I fundamentally argued at that time, Chair, that it was fundamentally wrong, shameful and embarrassing to go after the Prime Minister's mother. I'm glad that MP Angus helped us get to a point where we can move....

I do agree with MP Angus on his interpretation of the amendment that Madame Gaudreau put forward and that was voted on by the committee. Chair, in my procedural understanding, I understood that portion of the amendment that Madame Gaudreau put forward to be substantively if not almost exactly similar in intent to the motion that was voted on and that was defeated. To me, that amendment was out of order.

Now, I'm not the chair. I'm not the clerk. I'm not the entire committee. That was my interpretation. Again, it was as I described it when an individual goes golfing. It was a mulligan. It was a do-over. I also understand and appreciate very much MP Angus's comment, which you mentioned recently....

Mr. Angus, if I've misquoted you, please correct me.

He commented that he believed that Madame Gaudreau's amendment was out of order, but because the ruling was that the amendment was not out of order, ruled on by the chair, then he voted for the amendment to add to his amended motion, where the amended motion was with Mr. Fergus's amendment. We have a motion that was amended once and then amended twice, and that has become a sticking point.

I really feel that we had seen some movement and some goodwill. I would like to move on to doing whichever study the committee adopts under your leadership, Chair, and, Chair, thank you for your patience. It's admirable. You called a 10-minute break to suspend and calm things down, which I thought was very timely, Chair. I thank you for doing that, in your wisdom. Thank you very much, Chair. I think that was appreciated.

Frankly, I'm attacked on Twitter by some of the MPs every time I leave this ethics committee. I see it on Twitter. I see Mr. Warkentin's tweets. I read them, and I say, “Oh, wow, you're attacking me today, Mr. Warkentin.” But what I know is that I'm going to keep doing the great work that my constituents ask of me. I'm going to still visit my seniors when I'm able to, and I'm going to make sure that income supports for people who continue to be impacted by COVID-19 are going to be received. That's what our government is going to do.

If the opposite side wishes to attack me on Twitter.... It's all there, Mr. Chair. If the opposite side wishes to attack me, and that's the bar, the level they're going to stoop to, they can continue doing

that—all the power, please do.... Because you know what? My constituents and Canadians know that we are in a pandemic and our government is going to work with the provincial governments across the country to continue to help out Canadians. So wow, if MP Warkentin wishes to attack and play that negativity, I'll allow him to do that. Please, do so.

It's not constructive. Half the things you've put out are false. Actually, it's sort of beneath us, sort of beneath why we're elected as MPs. That's my opinion, Mr. Warkentin. I see that you're chirping in the background, as I would call it, and I'll let you chirp, but at the same time, I'm going to be an MP. I'm going to do the job that my constituents elected me to do, not only the people who voted for me, but what everyone in my riding wants me to do: build a better country for us, make sure we have a good future for our kids and a clean environment and a healthy country, a country that provides equality of opportunity for all Canadians. That's what we're about and what every MP is about. Maybe we differ in the way we get there, but all MPs are about that.

• (1420)

I share MP Angus's passion for helping our indigenous Canadians and the nation-to-nation relationship. Many of the MPs may not know this, but I grew up in northern British Columbia, in the riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley. Growing up, I knew too well the issues faced by our indigenous brothers and sisters. I'm glad, so glad, to see our government build this nation-to-nation relationship and continue along that path.

Chair, I do wish to move an amendment. I want to see if it's ruled in order by you and the clerk. Let me read it to the committee.

I move that we add, after section (b):

(c) that in order to comply with Canadian and Provincial privacy laws, that any request for documents be limited to those documents in the organization's possession, as well as other relevant documents they may have;

• (1425)

**The Chair:** Okay. There's an amendment on the floor.

Yes, Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, it seems to me they're trying to do what was done in the previous motion, which was to limit it to seven years. This is another form of that.

You ruled the previous motion out of order, so would this present motion not be out of order as well?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Angus. That's what I was trying to clarify, whether Mr. Sorbara misspoke. The actual number of seven years is not in the motion. He misspoke in French.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Would you repeat it in English, Mr. Sorbara, so that we can all hear it once more?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Yes. Thank you for that, Chair. I will clarify for MP Angus as well as the entire committee.

I move that we add, after section (b):

(c) that in order to comply with Canadian and Provincial privacy laws, that any request for documents be limited to those documents in the organization's possession, as well as other relevant documents they may have;



**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Sorbara. Are you going to send that to the clerk?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I'm going to do that as we speak.

**The Chair:** At first glance, Mr. Sorbara, it appears to be in order. We'll suspend for five minutes while you get a copy to the clerk. If you're able to correct the French version as well, please do, and the clerk can distribute it to all members.

• (1425) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1435)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, we're ready to get back in session. The distribution of the amendment to the motion has been circulated. I hope you have all received it.

I'm prepared to rule on this amendment, colleagues. This amendment is in order, coming after section (b). We will now move to debate on the amendment.

Right now, I see that Mr. Fergus has dropped off the speakers list, so I will go to Madame Gaudreau and then to you, Mr. Angus.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** My name was not on the list, but that's okay. I am going to come back again and again to what we're trying to do at this point. I'd like to take a few moments to assess it.

I see that people want to make sure that they have documents in their possession. If we are requesting documents, let's do it immediately. However, I fear that the documents will up and disappear. We have the benefit of the doubt.

I don't know what is going on right now. When people keep drawing things out, it's because something is fishy, it doesn't smell right. I can't wait to hear what my colleagues have to say. Right now, I want to move on, but I also want to know what documents they are looking to obtain.

I will speak again later. To move the discussion forward, I would like to know what the motivations are behind all of this. Why add this proposal? What does it add or improve, or what does it take away? I don't know the answers, but perhaps my colleagues can help me process my thinking.

Thank you.

• (1440)

[*English*]

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

Now on the speakers list, I have Mr. Angus, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Angus.

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

I think this amendment is completely unnecessary. We have put in place very strong protections around the documents that we would receive. We've been very careful about this, and we have done this because the Liberals said again and again and again that they didn't trust the committee. They wanted all manner of protections, so the protections are there. We don't have to say in a motion

that we are needing to respect the privacy laws of the nation. As the privacy and ethics committee, we respect the laws of the nation. That's understood.

I am not sure what the Liberals are trying to limit, what Speakers' Spotlight obligation on what documents they have to turn over. Speakers' Spotlight has documents or they don't have documents. For us to presuppose where those documents are, who holds them, I think is troubling. It's troubling in the sense that perhaps the Liberals are doing some research on their own and feel that there may be troubling documents that they don't want us to be able to access. I think fundamentally my concern is—given the bad faith I've seen for the last 34 hours—that this becomes another subamendment to be argued about ad nauseam, and it keeps us from getting to the main motion.

We saw earlier today the Liberals' attempt at a motion that was ruled out of order. At the last meeting, Mr. Dong came forward with a really strange motion to try to shut down our work altogether with another motion. I think this amendment is just part of a series of tactics—delaying tactics, stalling tactics—trying to get us off the topic at hand, which is that we have a motion before us. We have tried to get this motion voted on multiple times.

Let's just vote on this amendment of the Liberals and then get back to the business at hand, but I think we're wasting our time, and they are wasting our time with this. This is completely unnecessary. This is simply another game that they're playing, another stalling tactic, and it actually I think undermines the credibility of our committee, because our committee fully respects the privacy laws of this nation, and we don't need to be told by the Liberals how to do that.

I'm ready to vote on their motion and get back to work.

**The Chair:** Is there consensus, colleagues, to vote on the amendment? No.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Aha—you see?

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** On a point of order, Chair, the only reason I'm not providing unanimous consent is that I do wish to speak on my rationale for this amendment to the motion.

To Mr. Angus, I do not want to speak for hours and hours on this amendment to the motion. I don't think that's the intent, and when you hear my words, you'll understand why. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus, have you concluded your remarks?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Yes.

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

Now we will go on to Mr. Sorbara, and I'll just review the list again. It's Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Dong and Madame Gaudreau.

Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and thanks to the committee for taking time to consider the amendment that I put forward.

Really, I want to make this terse or short. I'm not going to use the word "brief", but I'm going to make this short.

In Madame Gaudreau's amendment that was adopted by the committee, which was the second amendment on Mr. Angus's motion, if I'm not mistaken there was a section pertaining to Speakers' Spotlight and to having a copy of the records and related speeches going back to, I believe, October 14, 2008. If I'm not understanding that correctly or if I have misunderstood the amendment, please correct me if I'm wrong.

What this would allow us to do, very simply, is to ensure that this request for this set of documents in (a) would comply with Canadian and provincial privacy laws. Speakers' Spotlight have handled their documents in compliance with—and I'm assuming they're going to be in compliance with—all of the regulatory requirements. We understand that they are required to hold documents for a period of, I believe, seven years. It is within their right to do so, and within the Privacy Act.

So, respecting the view of Speakers' Spotlight and their view of the production motion, we don't want to put forward an amended motion that would then make Speakers' Spotlight in contempt of Parliament. The documents they had are no longer there because they were allowed to legally, within their purview and within the existing laws, not have to hold them any further. Much as is, I believe, the case with tax records and personal records, I think you have to maintain your documents for seven years. Having worked in the accounting world for a number of years, I think it's very similar. This would be the same sort of precedent.

We would not want to put any organization in contempt of Parliament for doing something that was legally within its right, and we as a committee have stated such. They have done something that was legally correct, which they could do, and we have put them in a situation in which they cannot bring forth documents that they no longer have because it was within their right to no longer have them.

That's why I brought forward this amendment and that's what it refers to.

I hope I've been clear on that.

Thank you.

• (1445)

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

We'll will now go on to Mr. Warkentin.

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

This is just another delaying tactic by the Liberals. Obviously, they don't want these documents to ever come forward. The Liberals have now come up with an amendment that really doesn't do anything other than reiterate facts that are already existing, the fact that we're in compliance with the law. Let's move on. We know that the Liberals will continue to bring forward amendments, because they're being instructed to continue to frustrate and delay the work

of this committee. We've never heard at this committee from any Liberal member who has said, "If you give us this, we will then allow this to go to a vote." They've never negotiated in good faith. They've always just said to give them this and give them that. Then they have a new problem once there's been give by this committee. Every single opposition member of this committee has given up something to get to where we are today. The Liberals, however, have given up nothing.

As a matter of fact, the Liberals, not only on this committee but generally, have gone to extraordinary measures to ensure that these documents never see the light of day. Before we prorogued, these documents were just hours away from the committee receiving them. When the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament, he did so at a time when he would ensure that these documents never reached committee. The investigation stopped. Of course, at that point there were assurances by the Liberals that we would move back to this once Parliament resumed. When Parliament resumed and the House was prepared to call for these documents by an order in the House, the Prime Minister threatened a surprise election if in fact these documents would ever see the light of day.

The Liberals will stop at nothing. We've seen it at this committee. We're now into 30-some hours of debate as to whether or not these documents should be released. The Liberals continue to negotiate in bad faith. This amendment is just another example of them trying to negotiate in bad faith but also trying to water down the ability of this committee to get the documents that are necessary. I do believe we need to move on. We need to continue to demonstrate that these Liberals will stop at nothing to ensure that these documents never see the light of day. I'm going to continue to do what I need to do and what Canadians expect us to do as a committee, which is to provide transparency and ensure that what is hidden is released.

It's interesting; the Liberals continue to say that we don't need these documents because we've already heard what the facts are. Well, if these documents simply corroborated the testimony of the Prime Minister and others that the Liberals brought forward, then the Liberals should just let these documents be released. Their extreme and extraordinary actions until this point, including embarrassing themselves as members of this committee by talking about all kinds of nonsense simply to try to delay this from ever coming to a vote, demonstrate that there is something included in these documents that will be a bombshell that will negatively impact possibly the Prime Minister and certainly the Liberal Party of Canada.

I believe it's time to move to a vote on this amendment. Let's allow it to fail and then let's go on to a vote on the main motion.

• (1450)

**The Chair:** Is there any desire to go ahead and vote on this amendment, colleagues? I don't see any dissent.

Madam Clerk, go ahead and do a recorded vote on the amendment that's on the floor right now from Mr. Sorbara.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, the vote is five for, five against.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry about, Clerk. Could you repeat that, please?

**The Clerk:** The vote is five for, and five against.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. I asked because when you said “five for”, it sounded like “five, four...”. Okay, yes. You can log my vote as a negative vote.

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

**The Chair:** We'll continue debate on the main motion.

We go to the next person on the list, Mr. Dong.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you, Chair. I just want to take a moment to thank you for your leadership on this committee. As we can see, it's pretty obvious that it's not an easy job. On this side, we certainly appreciate the leadership and stewardship you've demonstrated as a very able parliamentarian. I respect that. I believe that if you canvas the membership, you will find that at least we can all agree on this, which is something that I hope we can model this after.

I was going to ask for the rationale of the amendment we just voted on, but Mr. Sorbara addressed that. I actually saw the relevance and also the rationale of the amendment. I was hoping that opposition members would see that as well. I found that Mr. Warkentin's comment was contradictory. On the one hand, he said that the amendment is totally unnecessary, that these are obvious and we wouldn't ask anyone to do anything illegal. On the other hand, towards the end of his remarks, he said that this was another attempt by the Liberals to water down the original motion. I find that very contradictory. If it's a given and not necessary, meaning that it doesn't do anything to the motion, how can it be used to water down the main motion?

I don't want to go back and forth on these nitty-gritties. I think we still have the motion in front of us. We obviously have different views of the motion and of what has happened to the motion since it was first introduced. We have a different view of that, and that's why we are debating this.

It's a fact that it's the same motion that has been before us for several days now, and I know the members are eager to get to vote on it. However, I think all my opposition colleagues would agree that through thoughtful debate—and they probably would agree that debate is essential in our parliamentary system—we do what it takes to make sure we get the motion right to the best of our ability. I think all members can agree, Chair, that getting it right is essential.

We have already seen the adverse effect of committee studies going too far. Just look at WE Charity, for example. They have had to shutter their operations in Canada. We can agree to disagree about the merits of the WE Charity being selected to oversee the Canada student services grant. However, prior to the CSSG matter, WE Charity was a well-respected charity. Tens of thousands of Canadian students worked with them. I've heard that in the past my colleague's daughter, Mr. Angus's daughter, participated as well, and some of the biggest names in philanthropy supported them. Now they're no longer functioning in Canada. That's a fact.

I can only think of who is suffering and that is the tens of thousands of young people who otherwise would have had a chance to advance their leadership and their work network and to do something that they're really inspired to do. I'm not taking a position on the WE Charity one way or the other. I'm just stating the facts. As committee members, we have to remember that these are all real, tangible outcomes of our actions on this committee.

● (1455)

For every action we take here there is often an equal reaction, so as we look to undertake the study being recommended by Mr. Angus, I believe it is incumbent on us to pause and ensure that the work we are going to embark on will have no adverse effects.

I believe first and foremost, Chair, that if we're going to be studying matters that relate to specific Canadians' business, we need to ensure that we have the necessary evidence to back up such a study.

We are all keenly aware of the effects that COVID-19 has had on businesses in our ridings. I speak with residents and businesses in Don Valley North almost every day, Chair, and what I can tell you for certain is that their focus is not on some study at the ethics committee. I have actually brought this up to my constituents, and their focus is on the pandemic and its effect on their families and businesses. These constituents tell me repeatedly that they are expecting this government—as a matter of fact, all governments—to focus on combatting the pandemic and on planning remedies to assist with the economic recovery to follow.

We have to be very careful to focus our work very precisely in a way that does not have an adverse effects on Canadian businesses and Canadian industries. I have heard that the outcome of the WE Charity put a chill on the industry, but having said that, at the same time we can achieve some of the stated goals Mr. Angus has put forward.

On balance, the review of the pandemic spending and the decisions around how these funds were spent is a good use of our time. When we, as the House of Commons, adjourned on March 13 we did not take these decisions lightly. We recognized that, as a country, we were embarking on a national battle the likes of which we have not experienced since the Second World War. In terms of death and destruction, there is no comparison. However, the overwhelming national response required from the people of Canada during this pandemic has to be similar.

Now before Mr. Angus attacks me on relevance—and I've been interrupted quite a few times today and previously, which I don't mind because it is a function of this committee and I've taken your advice, Mr. Chair, to heart—I do want to make a point on where I'm going here.

My point is that when we suspended, we passed a unanimous consent motion. The current thrust of that emergency motion was that all emergency spending in response to the pandemic would be under review, not just by Parliament but also by the Auditor General and other relevant independent officers of Parliament. This was essential. We need to have transparency, especially when asking parliamentarians to allow the government to function freely in an emergency in the way we did.

It has always been expected that we would see the relevant parliamentary committee conduct a review of the spending that took place during the pandemic. Many Canadians expected that this review would take place after the pandemic has ended, and not in the middle of a raging second wave. However, it's good that we get a head start on some of the review work.

• (1500)

As I look at Mr. Angus's motion, I think the initial thrust of it is relevant. While the finance committee will naturally focus on the spending aspect itself, such as how and where the money is spent, the relevant control mechanism about who got a particular contract and the process of its awarding may be studied by the government operations and estimates committee.

I believe that it would be perfectly fair for us as a committee to undertake a study of the safeguards put in place to ensure that no conflicts of interest were present during the spending of the pandemic funds. I also think it's appropriate for us as a committee to review spending from a privacy angle to ensure that privacy laws were respected and followed and, from a lobbying front, to ensure that lobbying regulations were followed as well. I think an overall focus and area of the study... We could really get some good work done looking at the pandemic from these angles.

However, what I'm having a tough time with, Chair, are the specifics in the motion, mainly the singling out of just the Canada student service grant and then the matter of Baylis Medical and Palantir. It would be my opinion that to group all of these matters together would presuppose an outcome.

My opposition colleagues continue to try to build a narrative around each of the items listed in this motion, trying to surmise that something irregular occurred and that somehow the rules were broken, to a point that one of the proponents had to respond through social media, which I read earlier. If we were to listen to critics like Mr. Barrett, we would assume that corruption has run rampant and unchecked, when we know this is simply not the case. It's not true.

I also contend that there is a relevance matter, as these are all separate items only loosely tied together via this motion. In my humble opinion, this is being done simply to confuse the public.

This brings me back to the presupposition of guilt. I talked about this earlier. It's so obvious that the opposition is only fixated on finding guilt. I fear that, once we find that nothing occurred and that each organization is innocent, the outcome will not matter, but the reputations of those involved will be badly harmed. I talked about the WE Charity and the outcome of that. They and Canadian businesses will be so badly harmed by the impact, as Canadians have noted with WE.

Our goal here should not be to find guilt for guilt's sake, to find harm for harm's sake, or to tear down simply for the sake of political advancement. Our goal here should be to do no harm if no harm needs to be done.

I also think it bears noting that we're not a court of law here. We're not the police. We don't have a team of investigators at our disposal, nor do we have the procedural rules that allow for fairness and due process.

• (1505)

It has always been inherently clear that committees are a political place. There is nothing wrong with that. I have accepted that, as shown by my observations over the last short while. The necessary tug of war between government and opposition members is what makes our parliamentary system so effective. It leads to better decisions and better policy. I understand that.

However, we also have to recognize the scope of our limitations, that we are not a court or tribunal. When we undertake a study that gives the illusion that we are, it has tangible consequences for others. This is the point I keep coming back to today, the negative effects on these organizations or businesses, even if we find afterwards that there is nothing wrong in their practices.

I think we need to take a moment to think about the adverse effect of an unfettered study of a private company... For example, Chair, take the section about Baylis Medical. I am not defending a certain organization or a certain company, but if we step back for a moment from the fact that Mr. Frank Baylis, a former member of the Liberal caucus, is involved with the company...

Chair, now I am going to talk for a moment about the history of this company, and I believe it is important for the context.

I understand that in our past meeting, Mr. Angus felt that free advertisement was being provided for Baylis Medical. It's not what's happening here right now. A quick historic overview would provide the necessary context of why we need to be careful with the effect that our study could have on this business.

The truth is that Baylis Medical is a made-in-Quebec success story, the type of business that opposition colleagues would usually talk to. Mr. Baylis and his family immigrated from Barbados when he was young. He was in fact—

• (1510)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, on a point order, we learned about Mr. Baylis's Barbadian family history from Mrs. Shanahan. If Mr. Dong has something relevant and new to say, he should say something new and relevant. If he is just going to crib Mrs. Shanahan's notes and repeat the same stuff that held up our committee for hours and hours before, I question, again, the rules.

Maybe you need to explain to Mr. Dong what the rules are. I am sure he knows them and is just ignoring them, but he can't repeat again and again the stuff that's already been established. His Barbadian history is irrelevant.

The question is on the motion. Are they going to obstruct or can we get to a vote?

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

Continue, Mr. Dong.

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

I understand that we have a few new members joining us today, so I would like to put everything in context. I take Mr. Angus's point, and I'll be short.

Baylis Medical, a Quebec company that became a success story, was founded by immigrants coming to Canada who found an area they were passionate about and put their heart and soul into it. Baylis is the type of business that we should all be promoting. However, because Mr. Baylis chose to step up and represent his constituents from 2015 to 2019, he and his company are now being demonized.

If I read the mood of the committee right, the opposition members are going to assume guilt and drag them through the public square and try to demonize them. I don't think that's the right thing to do.

Colleagues know full well that contracts for ventilators, which is at the heart of Mr. Angus's reasoning for bringing this forward, was not with Baylis Medical at all but with another company, which did in fact later subcontract to Baylis. Now it's being suggested that we conduct a study that specifically targets this company. There is no proof of wrongdoing whatsoever, yet we are being asked to dedicate a considerable amount of time and resources into a review that simply has no merit.

There is currently no open investigation by the Ethics Commissioner or Privacy Commissioner or commissioner of lobbying into this matter. The primary contractor is public and was disclosed transparently.

In a pandemic, thousands of Canadian companies have been asked to step up and assist in the efforts to provide essential PPE and other emergency equipment to ensure that we have adequate resources to combat COVID-19. Baylis Medical, like many other companies, stepped up. It shouldn't be unfairly targeted because its chairman was a member of a government party previously. It's not as if he's a sitting member right now.

The truth is, Chair, if we go by the logic—and please, if opposition members are listening—we could easily start looking into the party affiliations of all other businesses and business owners who received government contracts.

I know I don't need to repeat the words of my colleagues on this side from the last meeting. I'm sure colleagues can recall many examples of Conservative-affiliated business owners who have donated to and supported the Conservative Party of Canada. However, that doesn't stop them from receiving contracts. If we went by that logic, that a business owner's political affiliation dictates whether or

not they receive a government contract, then only a very small number of businesses would be innocent in their view. No small or medium-sized business in Canada would be eligible.

Chair, I can go on and on with point-by-point reasoning on all matters that relate to this motion. However, as I've already been speaking for some time now, I will leave colleagues and the public with just one final point.

• (1515)

We are now in the middle of a second wave of COVID-19. Much of Quebec is in red zones. Ontario similarly has several regions in a modified stage 2.

The city where I live, Toronto, has received multiple warning signs. I see businesses that are truly worried. Businesses in Toronto are facing enhanced restrictions.

There are similar actions being taken in every province in Canada as we try to contain and manage this second wave. Businesses throughout this country are struggling. They have barely recovered from the lockdown that helped us through the first wave of COVID-19. They're looking to government, Parliament and parliamentarians for support and a plan for recovery.

We already have the FINA committee seized with the matter of WE and exploring issues relating to the Canada student service grant. It's unclear if they are going to be able to meet their obligations under the standing order to conduct pre-budget consultations, which are so important. We simply cannot afford to have another committee stuck in gridlock. Colleagues can place the blame squarely at the feet of the government if they wish. However, I think it's clear to the public at large that it is the opposition that is completely wrapped up in this non-scandal. The more time we waste on this, the more Canadians are going to take note.

I will ask Mr. Angus and my colleagues if we could please work together to come up with a motion that is both fair—

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

**Mr. Han Dong:** I'm almost done.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I have been listening to my honourable colleague talk about the COVID crisis. We are all living it, and we deal with it every day in our offices, but it has nothing to do with the motion.

However, if he wants us to end the gridlock, I am right there with him. I'd like to hear him say that he's ready to call a vote. Let's call a vote and end the gridlock so that we can get down to work and tell Canadians that Parliament is working for them at this time.

• (1520)

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

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

That brings me to my final sentence. Respectfully, I would like to ask Mr. Angus and all of my colleagues to work together to come up with a motion that's both fair and equitable and allows us to begin the real work that we are mandated to do here at this committee.

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

Next on the speaking list are Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Angus and Madame Lambropoulos. That's the speaking list right now.

We'll go to Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What do we want? We all want the truth.

How far will we go? We are told that we should be concerned about current issues, but they are doing everything they can to ensure that we do not achieve our goal.

I am really overwhelmed by the mixed messages. If you are going to talk the talk, you have got to walk the walk, as they say. I don't like to repeat myself. After I have repeated the same thing three times to my children, they are surely going to be punished. I must admit, however, that in politics, I have discovered a new number for counting repetitions: a gazillion. It is all hard to swallow. I have to accept it, but it is not easy.

People tell us about the issues in Parliament. When I speak to you, what am I looking for? Is it power? Come on! As has been said before, when you want to defend the public's interests, you focus on what they really need. I am saying loud and clear that we need to move on. Mr. Chair, you can blame me for saying that, but there are no limits here. Anything goes, but democracy doesn't seem to go at all.

It is 3:22 p.m. and we will wait until 3:26 p. m. to find out that it's no longer possible. I have been here since the beginning. I only missed 12 minutes, whereas we have now been meeting for 35 hours. It is just unbelievable. You are going to have to give me some arguments, colleagues, so that when I am home on the weekend, I can explain to anyone who asks about my job, what it is basically all about, and what they elected me for. They will point out that I am clearly not solving their high-speed Internet problem or helping them get through the pandemic. We cannot even say that we are able to take care of our people anymore. That is not what I'm doing right now.

New participants are being brought in. With all due respect, I must tell you, colleagues, that I will be vigilant. Since I only missed 12 minutes of the meeting, when I hear what is being said, I will remember what has been said. In addition, I will also have the blues in front of me and I will not hesitate to speak up. I'm going to be tiresome, but this has to stop. It makes no sense.

I am embarrassed and ashamed. I have said it a "gazillion" times already, but no one understood. Having said that, I invite democracy to take its rightful place. We have thoroughly examined the issue. I will not tell you in detail why I believe that, by dragging out the debates, by wanting to hide or change things too much and with everything pointing to a loss of confidence, we have indeed reached that point.

But all we hear is that there is nothing to hide. If that is truly the case, let's take action. Then we can really focus on what we are supposed to do. So for the umpteenth time, I invite my colleagues to cast their vote so that we can finally see the results of democracy. We have been elected, as part of this government, and I still do not understand why the rules are so lax.

• (1525)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Gaudreau. I would never, ever consider blaming anything on you. I'll shoulder the blame any time I need to interrupt someone. Thank you very much for your words.

Colleagues, I'll suspend again for five minutes just so that we can do what needs to be done.

Mr. Angus, you are next in the speaking order. I hope you don't mind the suspension just before you speak.

After that, we will have Ms. Lambropoulos and Mr. Sorbara.

• (1525)

(Pause)

• (1530)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, welcome back.

Thank you very much for your patience, Mr. Angus. You have the floor.

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

I'm only taking the time to speak now because I feel that contrary to the glib lines I hear from my Liberal colleagues, in this conversation, as we're all working to get a better motion, someone has to come in occasionally just to put on the record what's actually happening. Every time we reach a point, whether by vote, or even by amendment, or by compromise, the yardsticks change again for the Liberals.

We just went through a couple of attempted motions today on the documents, because the Liberals have been obsessed about the documents. We've given a number of times on the documents. They've lost two votes today. Now suddenly they're no longer talking about the documents. They're talking about the motion in general and their opposition to it. They tell us that they really want to work with us on the motion, so let's construct a motion that works for them—but then we get told that the motion itself is problematic.

Listen, I get it; when you're in government and you get into an ethical scandal, you don't like it. You don't like people holding you to account. This isn't just a Liberal thing. My Conservative colleagues can probably tell you how much they disliked me when I was taking on issues like Mike Duffy, Bev Oda and her infamous \$1,500 limo rides, Pamela Wallin, or the Nigel Wright case. These issues happen. Conflicts of interest, breaches of the Lobbying Act, helping friends out happen when you're in government.

What I find particularly striking about the Liberal government is that Liberals don't seem to think these laws actually apply to them, because in every case, whoever gets in trouble—well, they were good friends. They were good. We heard Mr. Sorbara mention Mr. David MacNaughton's name in connection with his great service to the country. Mr. Dong was telling us that we have to be very careful about the adverse effect we will have by bringing forward, for example, the case of Mr. MacNaughton. Mr. MacNaughton was Justin Trudeau's election co-chair. He was then made ambassador to the United States, the highest post you can get diplomatically. I've had a number of problems with the Trudeau government giving partisan appointments to diplomats, because it gets us into trouble. Mr. McCallum is a perfect example.

We saw with Mr. MacNaughton that he went from being a Liberal electoral co-chair, knowing every single person in the Liberal Party and being very close to the Prime Minister, to becoming ambassador of the most important post. When you come back, you have lots of contacts. We have laws in this country. I know it seems to bother the Liberals, but the Conflict of Interest Act has real provisions about what you can do with that knowledge so that you can't just use it to your own personal advantage. Mr. MacNaughton was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner.

This isn't about the opposition presupposing something or damaging a company's reputation. The company we're talking about is Palantir, a company that, if my colleagues googled them, would be found to be notorious around the world on allegations of human rights violations and of being involved in a possible case of state-sanctioned extrajudicial killing. They've been identified with the worst of the Trump administration's targeting and separation of immigrant families. Palantir brings a very, very questionable legacy into this country.

Then Mr. MacNaughton becomes their Canadian president. He's not registered to lobby. Lo and behold, he has meetings with all manner of very top Liberals. Of course, it's all supposed to be about the pandemic. The Liberals will tell us that these were all the things they were doing in the pandemic to keep people safe. The fact is that if you have a company as controversial as Palantir, people should know why they're meeting with the deputy prime minister. If they're going to be holding these meetings, they should follow the laws of the land, including the Lobbying Act. Those laws weren't followed.

We need to find out why this was allowed to happen. We need to shine a light on it. As it says in the Book of Luke, what is done in the dark will be shown in the light, and what is whispered in the backrooms will be shouted from the rooftops. When someone as powerful as Mr. MacNaughton uses his position to further the interests of a company like Palantir, it is not in the interest of the Canadian people, and it comes to our committee to look at that.

• (1535)

However, now we're being told that we're presupposing, that we're going to put a chill on all manner of people who are doing this kind of thing. I hope we're putting a chill on them. For God's sake, we should be putting a chill on them. That is the work of an ethics committee that is not afraid to take on the issues.

This afternoon we went on from arguing about the documents and not wanting to put Speakers' Spotlight in a situation of contempt of Parliament. We know that there's no way for that, if they comply with the laws. Whether they have the documents or don't have the documents, they will be judged on whether they followed the law. They're not going to be hanged in the public square, unlike what the Liberals are trying to insinuate.

However, we've moved away from discussing documents, and now they're back to how we damaged WE Charity by asking questions. We heard about tens of thousands of young people. That's what the Liberal line is, and it is a false line.

The question about WE Charity was about their relations with key Liberals. It was about the ability of the Kielburger brothers to walk in and call up—without being registered to lobby—senior ministers, in fact Bill Morneau. They sent him a personal email on April 10 and 11 days later got a \$12-million deal, and while they were doing that, they got the inside scoop on the Canada student service grant.

What got WE into trouble was that there were a great many questions about this deal that could not be answered credibly, questions that I have pointed out, but obviously my colleagues weren't listening. If due diligence had been done, this deal might never have gotten off the ground in the first place and WE would have continued doing the work it was doing.

There are questions about lobbying, questions about oversight, questions about their supposed relationship with Imagine Canada. They were going right to cabinet and saying they had this signed agreement when Imagine Canada was saying they had nothing to do with it.

We have an obligation to find out if these issues were advanced improperly because of political connections. We know that the WE group was tied directly to payments to the Prime Minister's mother and brother, and that they were using the Prime Minister's wife as a goodwill ambassador.

It's not that anybody has ever suggested the Prime Minister gave them the contract because of these payments. The question is whether other ministers and civil servants were influenced to give WE a pass because of the connections that they had built with Minister Qualtrough, Minister Ng and certainly minister Morneau. He was deeply, deeply involved in very questionable ways in terms of their relationship, which I think cost Mr. Morneau his job.

This is our work. The Liberals are obstructing our work. Every time they get one argument voted down, they go to the next one. We are now close to 35 hours into this obstruction and gridlock.

I say that we've run out of road. We are not having a conversation here. We are dealing with deliberate obstruction of our work, and it's making our committee look ridiculous. It's turning our work into a mockery.

I say we put it to a vote so we can get on with our weekend and then start coming up with our witness lists so we can get this committee study done and then move on to other issues. I would like to test the floor.

● (1540)

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

I'll see if there's unanimous consent to continue to a vote.

There's no consensus, Mr. Angus.

We will now move on to Ms. Lambropoulos.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me the opportunity to speak.

I am not a regular on this committee, as many of you probably know. This is my first time on this committee.

I'm happy to get the opportunity to speak, mainly because I do have first-hand experience with the WE organization as a former high school teacher in Montreal. Many of the teachers who worked with me were engaged with projects with the WE organization that benefited some of the students at my school.

I know my school is only one very small example, compared to the amount of amazing work this organization does across Canada. I know there are over 400 schools just in the province of Quebec that actually benefited from WE and worked directly with WE on student leadership to basically help their students get amazing experiences doing important work across the world.

I'm sure it obviously wasn't the intention of the opposition or of the committee, but the amazing work that has been done through this organization over the last decade has been undermined and ridiculed a little bit through the current discussions that have been taking place. Unfortunately for the organization, it's been quite damaging to them. I think that's extremely unfortunate, because they do exceptional work.

I do believe that in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic that we're currently living in, many of the programs that the Government of Canada has put out have been done in a very quick manner in order to bring help as quickly as possible to Canadians. We know many Canadians have been ill. Most Canadians have been impacted by COVID-19 in some way or another.

Youth have been particularly impacted. A lot of young people I speak to don't know what the future holds for them and don't know what types of work experiences they'll be able to get in the near future. They're finishing university and obviously investing in their education right now, because they see it as a perfect opportunity to do so, considering that they're staying home and they don't see an end to this thing. However, the Canada student service grant would have been a great opportunity for many students across Canada to get these extra experiences and to get something on their CV that looks great and prepares them for a job in the future, when finally we get out of this crisis and the economy gets back on its feet.

I just wanted to point out that it's unfortunate that this is what's going on right now with this organization and to talk about my experience. I know there are many young people who were looking forward to this experience. Unfortunately, this year opportunities

were taken away from thousands of young Canadians because of what happened and what's transpired in the last couple of months.

I'm really hoping that in the coming year, whatever program gets brought out actually does benefit the kids and the students who could benefit.

Another point I wanted to make is about Baylis Medical Company, a company in my riding, which has a great reputation here in Saint-Laurent. Another company in my riding that received funds to create ventilators was CAE. The riding of Saint-Laurent happens to be an industrial hub here in Quebec.

I was quite happy that a lot of the businesses in the riding did get these types of contracts, because obviously Canadians needed to feel that ventilators would be accessible if ever the second wave were to come and if they finally would need a hospital and extra help because of the virus, whose full effects we don't yet know. Also, we don't know where the second wave of the virus will bring us. We don't know how many Canadians are going to eventually need to end up on a ventilator.

Obviously it was important for the government to take the necessary precautions and steps to ensure that Canadians would be safe for the long term and that we would be able to offer enough medical equipment to as many Canadians as need be.

● (1545)

Again, as my colleague Mr. Dong mentioned during his presentation and in what he was mentioning earlier, the contract was not given directly to Baylis Medical. They were subcontracted, just as other companies are. We know that in the grand scheme of things, companies never work independently to do these things. There are always many companies that come into play when producing any type of equipment. A company is never in it alone, right? They need supplies from different types of companies.

It's only normal that one of the companies would be the one with the good reputation—the Baylis Medical company. It could have been any medical company. I think the reason we're looking into this is that the Baylis company is obviously related to Frank Baylis, a previous member of Parliament who was sitting here in the House of Commons. I definitely don't think.... We would have probably turned a blind eye to it if the company name were different or if it wasn't something that was completely related to a past member.

As was mentioned, I remember, in the House of Commons, one of the contracts, specifically one affiliated with Baylis Medical, was a contract that a known Conservative supporter received from the federal government, so it's not a partisan issue in this particular case. It's really about making sure that the companies that have the tools necessary to give us the equipment we need in the coming months, which we may very well need even more than we've prepared for—we don't know yet—get the contracts that we offer, because we need to make sure that we're protecting as many Canadians as possible.

Those are the points I wanted to flag.



I know that this committee has been sitting for quite a while—many, many hours—and I did not hear all of the arguments, because this is the first hour that I'm sitting on this committee. I definitely don't know what was previously stated, but I do, however, really want to bring in my experience as a teacher, because I know many people who have directly benefited from WE. I think it's very unfortunate right now for so many students and young people that I technically feel I represent, because as one of the youngest MPs in the Canadian Parliament, I definitely feel that it's my responsibility to be their voice and to represent them. I definitely feel that they were robbed of an opportunity because of how things transpired, and I definitely don't see how this study would help that in the future.

I would like for us to come up with new ways to support young people and to create opportunities for them that they will benefit from in the long term. I don't necessarily see how doing this type of study on the committee would help us get there faster. If anything, I think that maybe a lot of the supports we're giving may come to a halt if we were to continue going ahead. I wouldn't want to see that.

I'm really hoping that these points are taken into account when you're making a final decision. Thank you.

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

We'll now move to Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I'm so excited to start deliberating on the amended motion at hand. I just need to dig something up, Mr. Chair, very quickly—some notes I have put together to speak on what I call the amended amended motion at hand.

I will speak to the matter that was before us a few minutes ago in terms of the defeated motion on Speakers' Spotlight and so forth.

As we know, organizations and individuals across the country maintain records for a number of years, and they meet both fiduciary and legal requirements in maintaining those documents. Speakers' Spotlight has highlighted the fact that records are maintained on a consistent, cumulative basis and that after a certain period of time, when documents are no longer required to meet fiduciary or legal requirements, they no longer maintain those documents. I think that's very relevant.

I also think it is relevant is that we are now in the year 2020, I believe, and the Prime Minister became Prime Minister in 2015. As for records pertaining to that period, Speakers' Spotlight would have encapsulated them within the seven-year look-back period, and I will call it a look-back period.

I notice some of our members have got up to stretch. I will admit that during the break I had to get up and stretch, and I was almost inspired to do some calisthenics to get some exercise here, because sitting and being stationary is not great for health.

Going back to Mr. Angus's motion, looking at the points and considering the company Baylis Medical—and we heard some very wise remarks from my learned colleague from *la belle province*—it seems to me that what I call this fishing expedition.... I don't want to call it a smear campaign, because I don't believe any of our colleagues or anyone from other areas of political life want to smear

anybody. We don't want to paint with a brush like that, but I do think Baylis Medical company should....

I will not repeat those remarks, Chair, but I will just say that, in all defence, they are a great organization, and you've heard me comment in a prior speech when I was not defending Baylis but just speaking on facts related to that company.

Thank you, Chair, for allowing me to speak here this afternoon, for providing this opportunity to me. We've listened intently to all sides.

I will say, like Mr. Angus, I believe in doing good work in terms of the studies, and I have had the pleasure of sitting on this committee, my third committee in five years. I sat on finance for a number of years and listened to many stakeholders talk about how they want to improve Canada and what they see as the issues for their communities. Across the board, there were literally hundreds and hundreds of presentations.

The ethics committee has taken me on a different journey. I would anticipate a very different journey in terms of where we are. I do hope we come to some sort of unanimous approval on where we want to move the committee. I honestly thought we were there with Mr. Angus's motion, which was then amended by Mr. Fergus and then amended by Madame Gaudreau. I truly felt at that time, and I said this earlier, that it was not in a correct manner.

I do feel bad for Ms. Vignola, who replaced Ms. Gaudreau. Maybe something happened there that she needed to explain, and she obviously voted in a manner that she thought was appropriate, and she thought she was right. We all have that responsibility, and if you look back on the blues, she voted to not continue. That's it, and that's what we do in this job. We inform ourselves, and we need to inform ourselves not only before we get on committee but also during committee to make sure we ask the questions we need to ask.

• (1550)

It remains to be seen on that front.

In terms of where I want to—

[Translation]

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

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madame Gaudreau.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I want to check what Mr. Sorbara has just said. I don't know how we can shed light on it. We are told that we made a choice, but we had no communication in French. You all said that we did not hear things correctly so we cannot respond correctly. We have to stop talking about this, for heaven's sake. Otherwise, it's all we are going to talk about and then we go backwards.

Please, Mr. Chair, let's move on to the motion.

• (1555)

[English]

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

Mr. Sorbara, go ahead.

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

Thank you, Madame Gaudreau, for your intervention. I always listen intently and have a great deal of respect for your interventions, so thank you again.

We're all entitled to our opinions, and the events that day happened in that manner. Sometimes we may wish to have a mulligan on certain votes, but unfortunately, my understanding is that is not the way the rules of the committee work and it is also not the way I would see things. The vote that day happened in that manner, and I know Mr. Angus—not to speak for him—was probably disappointed with the outcome as well. To be frank, I was more interested in Mr. Angus's motion. I thought there was a lot of merit there. I thought that was going in the direction we wanted to go and that we could have moved on. Frankly, at this moment, we could have been studying that. It's disappointing.

Not to belabour that point, I do have some prepared remarks, Chair. I will try not to take up too much of the committee's time this afternoon. As you all know, I tend to have a few things to say and I'm sure I'll be watching my Twitter feed or someone will be informing me when occasionally one of the Conservative members will attack me on this thing. You know what? It's par for the course. I'm going to rise above and we're going to rise above, and we're going to do the good work that Canadians sent us here to do. That's what I'll continue to do and that will be my focus.

Mr. Chair, I'm surprised at where we are. I'm frankly a little disappointed, if I can say that, that we continue to be stuck and, to use the phrase, spinning our wheels on the same amended motion.

Mr. Chair, like my other colleagues, I was elected to serve the residents here, in this case in the wonderful riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. I continue to advance my priorities and policies in the best interests of my residents and all Canadians, so that the work we undertake here would be meaningful and contribute to the advancement of our society in some way.

Along that tangent, like my other colleagues, to ensure that—

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madame Gaudreau, with a point of order.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A few moments ago, I told you that I was going to be a little tiresome when it comes to remarks that my colleagues have made three or four times. I am going to be very vigilant. I would like to have some new information so that we can move to a vote.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madame Gaudreau, I did caution the committee previously about repetition. Let's try to be as succinct as possible and stay on the motion at hand.

Go ahead, Mr. Sorbara.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Again, Mr. Chair, thank you for allowing me to recommence my thoughts this afternoon. I'll refer to earlier on in the day. When we began committee today at 11 o'clock, my learned and very astute colleague, MP Angus, talked at length about the Canada student service grant, about WE, about the organization. He put forward a number of proposals, ideas and thoughts, and we listened intently.

In the back of my mind, I knew I could interrupt him with a point of relevance, but to be frank, I wanted to give Mr. Angus the floor to speak, to share his thoughts. I tend to learn something from him, so I'm going to continue to go that way.

I think we can all agree that Mr. Angus's initial proposal to study ethical levers in place to protect against conflicts of interest in the Prime Minister's Office is fair and is a study that could yield some fair and reasonable recommendations for members of this committee. This motion, Mr. Chair, fits the mandate of our committee. It fits the basic functions of our committee to study key aspects as they relate to our mandate found in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

However, what is not in the Standing Orders is any reference to this committee being an investigatory body. This committee is not a court of law. There are no rules of judicial fairness. There are no judges or lawyers and there is no due process, yet with motion after motion, the opposition majority seems to try to drag us down a path that we are simply, in my view, not suited to travel.

Members from our government are not unreasonable, Mr. Chair. Frankly speaking, for me, I feel a great desire to—

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

I missed my colleague's last five sentences. My congratulations to the interpreters for their work; it is extraordinary. This is the first time since 11 o'clock that we've had an interruption like that, so my hat is off to you.

I am told that the interpreters are back.

Thank you.

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

[English]

Mr. Sorbara, it looks as if there was a glitch in translation. We have been going for a long time, so that's fully understandable.

You can continue.

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

If you can just give me one second, Chair, I've written down some comments. I just want to make sure that I'm referring to the comments that I wanted to refer to and to go from there. I think I lost my place for a second, so let me just recapture where I am.

I think the last paragraph that I looked at was about how this committee is not a court of law, and there are no rules of judicial fairness. There are no judges or lawyers and there is no due process, yet with motion after motion, the opposition majority seems to want us to go down a path that we are simply not suited to travel, Mr. Chair.

Members from this side of the government—yes, I'm back on track—are not unreasonable, Mr. Chair, and I would say for myself, speaking personally, that I hope we can move on to a study and to multiple studies in the coming weeks and months. That is the role of committees. We are, as I've heard, masters of our domain and direction, so I hope we can come to some agreement.

I don't have the right words. I want to thank the interpreters for their patience. I am trying to speak slowly this afternoon. We understand that we are on camera, not in camera. Our words are parsed and looked at, and we are here to represent the best interests of our residents and of all Canadians, but I'm not into grandstanding, Chair. Other opposition members may wish to go down that route. I don't feel that's necessary and I don't feel that's right.

When the opposition speaks to several parts of this motion, the opposition knows full well that they are on tenuous grounds in regard to the motions that have been put forward. For example, on the 2008 date that is referenced here, we have seen Speakers' Spotlight reference that date as not being a date that would be in conjunction with the documents that they have kept for their clients, so that motion, in my understanding in reference to the amendment I put forward, would put them offside, and we don't want to do that. We want to concur with the privacy laws that are in place, both federally and provincially, and that protect Canadian citizens and organizations.

Again, Chair, I don't feel that we need to be unreasonable. I don't want to be unreasonable, because I do want to get to a study. It's 4:04 p.m. on a Friday afternoon, and many of us have things to do and family to see. I think we all understand full well that the idea of this study, with all the documents that have been released, is in my view a political game and an attempt to try to score political points. It's my view of why we are here in this vigorous and vibrant discussion that we've been having for several days.

There's been no evidence whatsoever to support some of the—I don't want to call them accusations—comments being made and some of the innuendo, particularly from the Queen's loyal opposition and some of the other opposition parties. Testimony at several committees, including this one, along with the release, Chair, of over 5,000 pages of documents, proves the exact opposite of what the opposition is trying to push.

Chair, I will admit that the majority of the opposition members have been very respectful to me as a person, and I've tried to be

very respectful back. Those are the values I'm going to continue to put forth and that have been instilled in me. I thank them, most of them, for being very respectful in terms of their commentary and comments. We can agree, but I think sometimes we just need to agree to disagree and make our points, and that's fine. However, sometimes we just tend to—

● (1605)

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

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

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I respect Mr. Sorbara's ability to keep walking the clock and wasting a lot of our time, but if he is serious.... They have made many promises and they have made many commitments, and they walk away. They have made many statements about working with us, and then they don't, but I will ask him, if he's serious about agreeing to disagree, to let's just go to a vote, and he can stop wasting our time.

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

Mr. Sorbara.

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

Mr. Angus, in full goodwill I put forward an amendment about half an hour ago. I thought it was a reasonable amendment. I'm not someone who's here to strategically try to do this or that. When I thought about it and discussed it with our team, I said that we need to make sure that, if we're going down this path.... Frankly, it would just been the third amendment to Mr. Angus's original motion, which I think would have been very constructive. It would not have taken away anything from the amendment. I'm trying to do my part to move it down the football field. If you want, call it "crossing some sort of line", but I thought it was constructive.

In going back to some remarks I had jotted down before the committee meeting today, the evidence supports the testimony of the Prime Minister and the relevant ministers at hand. This was a recommendation of the non-partisan public service. I'm speaking to the Canada student service grant. Upon review by cabinet afterwards, it was determined it was the best way to move forward to implement this CSSG, the acronym for the Canada student service grant. That is it, plain and simple. This is a very cut-and-dry matter. It's consistently been spun, ginned up or regurgitated to the public by the opposition in such a way that no one can make heads nor tails of it anymore.

This motion before us today continues. This amended amended motion before us continues to try to pull and stretch the narrative even further, as my opposition colleagues are taking several unrelated issues, trying to spin a narrative that something wrong was done, or innuendo, or any sort of comment or connotation. In my frank opinion, it simply does not exist.

Frankly, Chair, it's clear that the only real goal of some of the committee members, in regard to the Canada student service grant, is a targeted smear campaign, from the beginning, of the Prime Minister and his family. What has been abundantly clear, from the moment our government was elected in 2015 and through our debate on this motion here today is that the opposition has no interest in working in a bipartisan fashion in the best interests of Canadians. What is very clear to me, and I think to many Canadians, is that the opposition dislikes the Prime Minister on a very deep level. That is very much seen from some of the opposition members. Some of them may be on this committee as well, at certain times. These are meant to be very personal attacks against the Prime Minister. That's very unfortunate.

Maybe these lines or this innuendo may be cooked up in the back rooms, the war rooms of the opposition party. These are all meant to tarnish the Prime Minister personally in the eyes of Canadians. During this time, I find that concerning, I find it concerning that my opposition colleagues think they can obtain a role in forming government by going low, when in fact my party and I will go high. We'll make sure that we're doing the right things for Canadians at all times during this unique and extraordinary period of time in our history and the world's history.

You know, Chair, I thought that after the defeat of the motion from Mr. Barrett the other week, we were finally going to move past this charade and finally focus back on some important work here on the ethics committee. Yet it's clear that my colleagues on the other side once again focus on what I would call the "politics of division and confusion" rather than focus on what's in the best interest of Canadians.

I think we saw that earlier today, when we were speaking about a company that was founded in Nova Scotia, called Stanfield's, and the path that was taken and some of the comments offered by the opposition. I don't think they were constructive. I didn't want to participate in any of that debate or chatter. I left it to some of my opposition colleagues to chirp away. You know what? If that's where you want to go and that's how you think the committee's time should be spent, so be it, all the power to you.

Chair, there was a time when we could have a healthy debate in this committee about the issues of the day. Then, when that debate was over we could all part, be friends and chat. I think I've tried to maintain those relationships with all of my colleagues. We can grab a beverage or two. What we understood was that no matter what, we all knew that at the end of the day, we were working with the best interests of Canadians in mind.

• (1610)

I think what is clear with the bigger picture regarding WE and the organization of this program that was to be implemented and produced is that there was definitely, what I would call, a "fishing expedition" and also the scoring of political points.

As I said to Mr. Angus and all committee members, I am not here to defend any organization. Those of you who know me know I do not in any way support organizations, and I will be very clear when I criticize folks or organizations that are doing the wrong thing. I think we saw that last week with Whole Foods, on their poppy issue. A number of Canadians, of course, commented that

they don't support organizations doing the wrong thing and never will. I'll speak up for that.

It's the same thing here; I'm not going to defend anyone in any organization to do that. Everyone makes personal choices, and they should be held accountable and responsible, including the government and opposition parties. That's always been my train of thought.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Madame Gaudreau.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** As I said a few moments ago, I am appointing myself to be the watchdog against redundancy. In that context, I focused closely on my colleague's remarks and, apart from one small item, he said nothing new.

Thank you.

[English]

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

Colleagues, again, try to stay succinct and to the motion and not be repetitive.

Mr. Sorbara.

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

We've been referencing a number of companies in this country and know how organizations have stepped up across the board in helping with PPE. We are working very cooperatively with the provinces. The Prime Minister made another announcement today to support workers across this country with training. We know that companies like Baylis Medical, which is referenced in Mr. Angus's first motion, has stepped up, particularly in to manufacturing medical equipment and during COVID-19. We need them to continue to do that.

I'm not sure when it became the job of the opposition to attack well-respected Canadian businesses because they were given a sub-contract.

I'll put on record that recently we've seen corporate concentration in Canada, especially in the retail sector. We've seen companies, such as Sobeys, do the right thing. Its CEO said they're going to ensure they work with the farmers in Canada, with agri-food processors in Canada. They're going to work with them to ensure that their livelihoods are not impacted by COVID-19 and to strengthen the supply chain. I applaud Sobeys for—

• (1615)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I at least appreciate that my colleague is not talking about the underwear industry, but to talk about the grocery store industry, after what, seven hours of wasting our time today, I think is insulting our intelligence. We have a motion to speak to.

I ask you to remind him about page 1059 of the procedures book, though maybe he's not read it.... He is continually attempting to throw mud at the opposition, attacking our reason for doing this study, saying that we don't have a mandate to do this study. However, to be talking about grocery stores at this point, I think is reaching another low mark.

I ask you to keep him focused if he's going to talk the clock out until 5:30 today.

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

I'll just remind everybody that Mr. Sorbara has the floor right now, and then Madame Lattanzio, Madame Gaudreau and Mr. Long are on the list.

Mr. Sorbara, please do keep your comments to the motion.

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

Again, I respect Mr. Angus's and all committee members' interventions when I am speaking.

Thank you for pointing out page 1059.

Mr. Angus, I'm trying to come up to speed on all procedural mechanisms and the procedures in place to respect because many of us today are back home in our ridings. We are not in our committee room, though I'll be back in Ottawa next week for the sitting. I'll be in the committee room for the ethics meeting.

We are not in the House of Commons, but we always need to remember to respect the rules and our colleagues. I will try my best to continue to do that and I hope not to stray, and if I do stray, people should point that out, and I'll obviously try to be respectful and understand if I have erred in any sort of manner.

So, Chair, what is clear for us in the motion.... For Mr. Angus, the reason I brought up the grocery business was that they are good corporate citizens and Baylis Medical is a good corporate citizen. That was just an analogy.

As I noted earlier, part of it does deserve some merit, especially as it was carried out in a fair and equitable manner where we study the substance of the issues at hand and do not conduct a fishing expedition.

In looking at the motion at hand, I specifically cite the second paragraph:

that this study continue our work relating to the Canada student service grant, including this committee's work to review the safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest in federal government expenditures; government spending, WE Charity and the Canada student service grant....

I zero in on that section where we talk about government spending.

We talk about what the government has spent in protecting Canadians, and here we are approaching.... Although this week the weather has been strangely mild here in Ontario, I think we are going back to normal temperatures and may have snow next week.

We zero in on the government spending, and we think about what announcements we've made to protect Canadians, and if we finally do get to study the government's spending at this committee, or the COVID-19 app or facial recognition, I ask myself what the

government has done to protect Canadians with potential vaccine candidates per se, and we look at those, and we look at this study, and we say that the terms or envelope of the study is okay, and we see what we have done.

Today there is an article in *The Economist* about how Canada is so uniquely positioned in having come to agreements with a number of entities, organizations and companies for vaccines. For example, we see that we have come to an agreement with AstraZeneca to supply of up to 20 million doses of its viral vaccine candidate AZD1222. Medicigo will supply up to 76 million doses of its virus-like particle vaccine candidate, and obviously the Pfizer—

• (1620)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I don't think I'm sitting on the health committee. I don't know why discussion of vaccine numbers has anything to do with the issue at hand.

Now we are 35-plus hours into the Liberal filibuster. They have talked about every possible thing under the sun, including the great days of the 1980s, but the vaccine is not something we are talking about.

Can we keep this relevant so they stop wasting our time?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Angus. It is a point of order.

Mr. Sorbara, please stick to the facts of the motion with as little repetition as possible, please.

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

I'll continue and hopefully will be ceding the floor in due time to the next individual, the next committee member who has their hand raised.

As I previously said, Chair, and in these notes I've been writing down as the days have gone by and we've been sitting on this committee—I think this is the second Friday in a row that we've spent much time together—it has been a learning process. I am learning quite a bit from my colleagues.

While I can appreciate the merit of the motion that Mr. Angus has put forward, I do not agree that now is the right time for us to be reviewing it. This entire debate as it relates to the Canada student service grant is not what is on the minds of Canadians, nor is digging into the reputation of Canadian companies like Baylis Medical.

Residents of my riding, and I think all Canadians, are squarely focused on getting through the COVID-19 pandemic. We're right in the middle of the second wave.

I believe that today the Premier of Ontario announced changes in certain regions, including my region of the province, that will impact people's ability to go to the gym or potentially to dine indoors. I will review these changes this evening. He is being very conscientious and diligent for his citizens, and it is ensuring—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Madame Gaudreau, you have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Yes.

We have already heard about why we have to be concerned with the pandemic and my colleague is in fact repeating the comments he has already made. I actually have the blues in front of me. We need another subject so that we can then come to a decision. I think we have come full circle.

Thank you.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Sorbara, go ahead.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Thank you, Madame Gaudreau, for your intervention.

I don't want to repeat myself. I just want to make sure that I have clearly laid out my thoughts on where we are in the debate regarding Mr. Angus's motion and the amended motion to Mr. Angus...and then the second amendment to Mr. Angus...and then, unfortunately, the defeat of the amendment I put forward today, which I thought was quite reasonable.

As provinces continue to modify social norms and containment procedures, we must look at ways that Parliament and government can support the provinces to continue to battle this virus. The provinces and Canadians don't need more debate on WE Charity; they need Canada's political parties and committee members to work together.

We see good news coming from Pfizer, as I said, with the announcement that their vaccine candidate appears to be 90% effective. This is a very important day. It could very well prove to be a turning point in the coming weeks, as Pfizer continues to validate its clinical trials.

I, for one, am pleased that the government was ahead of the curve and smartly entered an agreement to purchase this vaccine candidate and others over the past several months. Our government has secured a minimum of 20 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine, and we are currently in negotiations to ensure that we have—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** On a point of order, Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I am really sorry.

We are talking about vaccine again.

I am going to be more and more tiresome, Mr. Chair. The clock is ticking and I am going to do my duty, which is to do everything I can to try and have us follow proper procedure. Let's move to something new, please.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Chair, I just wish to point out—

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.):** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** A point of order, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Mr. Chair, is the translation working? When the last member spoke, it didn't come through for me. I know I have my headset hooked up properly, and I know I have the English on for interpretation, but it didn't come through. Are you able to check to see if it is working?

**The Chair:** The clerk will be checking that right now. The translation came through to me very clearly, but we'll check it to make sure that's the case for all members of the committee.

• (1625)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Chair, I wish to say thank you to the interpreters. There was a lapse there. There was no translation.

I believe I understood Madame Gaudreau's comments. Really, in the motion there is a reference to procurement. There is a reference to government spending. It's my job just to reference that.

Actually, through the number of interventions, I probably would have completed speaking on the ability of our government and the job it has done—the Minister of PSPC, the Prime Minister, Minister Bains and so forth—in securing sufficient doses of the vaccines. I say “vaccines”, because there are a number being developed for Canadians. I think that is important.

As a government, we've ensured that we are well placed to protect Canadians from COVID-19, when the vaccines become available, with the diversity of contracts, which is so important.

Chair, I think this is what constituents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge are focused on. They're not concerned about the motion on the CSSG and matters relating to WE Charity.

We need to continue to keep our eye on the ball and work in the best interests of Canadians. I invite my colleagues on the other side to stand with us and put the focus on what matters to Canadians: combatting COVID-19—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'd love to rally around the flag with Mr. Sorbara, but that has nothing to do with the motion.

The reason for my intervention is the fact that he's almost repeating word for word his colleague. Whenever they seem to run out of road, they start hiding behind the issue of the pandemic, repeating that it's only Liberals who care about fighting the pandemic, which is categorically false. It's an insult to us, who sat through 35 hours of obstruction.

I ask my colleague to stop repeating the same lines he took from his previous colleague and stick to the motion.

Are they going to vote for this motion? Yes or no? That's democracy. Then we can get on.

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

Mr. Sorbara, do you have many more comments left?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** I have a few comments left, Chair. One of the first comments I would like to make is about Mr. Angus's comment about democracy. One aspect of democracy in our system is that we have committees that are put in place to serve certain areas, including this ethics committee. As a member of Parliament, I get the right to debate motions put forward by opposition parties or by the government. In that vein, I get to debate and speak to those motions frankly until my thoughts are down. I totally agree with you, Chair, that it shouldn't sound too repetitious. I'm only providing what I feel are substantive comments and comments to aid in the deliberation of facts, and suggestions and opinions that will help me reach a conclusion on whether I can support or oppose a motion.

In reference to Mr. Angus's motion, we've gone through it. Yes, it's been a lot longer than many of us would have liked. I think we're in the 34th or 35th hour of debate, but a number of iterations have caused me to question the motion at hand. This is repetition, I will agree. We've had a mulligan of a second amendment, which I was not pleased to see because I thought we were down a path where we could have seen some unanimity, and when I say "unanimity", I mean with a majority.

At the same time, unfortunately we got to another place where I'm having real difficulty, Chair. As I said, I was trying to be constructive today in putting forward the motion that I had, and it was defeated. There was no innuendo with my motion. I really want committee members to understand that. It was to reflect the privacy laws that exist both provincially and federally in our country. It was in that vein that I put forward the motion, and I am disappointed that it was not voted on.

It's 4:30 and I believe there are other members of the committee who wish to share their thoughts and opinions, and I'm happy to turn it over to them. I will raise my hand again and again, and in the Canadian way be polite and allow the person next in line to speak and share their thoughts and opinions, and then get back in line myself. I think that's the way our democracy works, and I think that's a healthy way of doing things.

I'm going to stop now, as it's 4:30, and yield the floor to the next speaker, and I will get back into line. I thank my committee members for judiciously and diligently listening to my words. I want to thank Ms. Gaudreau with sincere appreciation for her thoughts, and Deputy Angus whom I'm blessed to know. I'm really appreciative of his friendship more than anything, and I will continue, obviously, to be respectful of all my colleagues,

I will now yield the floor, Chair, to the next speaker.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your time.

[*English*]

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

I think it's wise for me to say right now that since I introduced the passage on pages 1058-59 of the procedural manual, which I felt was very important to do because of the amount of time this committee's been seized with this issue, I'm going to ask you to be very cognizant of it. I am on the precipice of making some rulings now that would make me feel very uncomfortable, but let's make sure that our comments are to the motion at hand, and not unnecessarily repetitive. I understand that sometimes you need to repeat something in order to show context, etc., but I think to be a responsible chair I need to give you that warning no matter what side of the aisle you're on in the committee, let's make sure that the debate is constructive and to the point.

I'm going to give you the speakers list now: Madame Lattanzio, Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Long, Madame Lambropoulos, and then Mr. Dong.

It's 4:32, Madame Lattanzio.

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

Thank you, colleagues, old and new.

I will tell you right off the bat that I am quite surprised that on a Friday afternoon at 4:30, here we are again on the same motion. I understood from our last meeting, from colleague, MP Gaudreau, that it was important that we come around the table and find some sort of consensus so that we could effectively move forward on this.

I am disappointed, Mr. Chairman, to hear—because obviously I wasn't present this morning—that amendments were presented by colleagues and they did not go through, as those might have been a gateway to moving forward with this issue.

I am going to try to not take up too much of this committee's time, but we have colleagues around the table who keep reminding us that we are on the 35th or 36th hour of debate on this motion. I just want to recall and maybe have the new members know that at the midpoint of those hours—I don't know if was 15 hours, 16 hours or whatever—this committee did go to a vote and wanted to move forward and then we found ourselves with this motion that has been amended yet again to bring back issues that had been voted on previously. It is holding up this committee and quite clearly we are at an impasse.

To say that we are at hour 34 or 35, it isn't for lack of trying. This committee did vote on this issue at the midpoint—and I signalled that I wanted to put that amendment in dispute—but I respect the chair's decision that it was not received, so therefore we are yet again back to square one.

To be frank, Mr. Chair, I am really surprised and actually quite disappointed that we are still here and stuck on this very same motion.

When I was first elected, Mr. Chair, I thought I was elected to serve my constituents and that my focus would be on participating, on making policy on priorities, and on continuing to advance the policies that would be in the best interests of all Canadians. I thought the work we would undertake collectively would be meaningful and would contribute to the advancement of our country in some way.

I won't go as far as calling it wishful thinking, Mr. Chairman, but our current predicament shows me that perhaps there should have been more wishful thinking in how we conduct our business around here.

It would be great if we could get back to a place where politics—and I would almost say the thirst for that political power—could be set aside for the good of our constituents and for our country, but I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, that is only wishful thinking on my part. Maybe that's what a rookie is—someone who comes in and has aspirations and dreams and sees things in the light of everybody working together for the common good. That was wishful thinking on my part and that's what I thought, but I guess we're not there.

Now we are here again, on a Friday afternoon, continuing to debate on a motion that is clearly showing its colours. It's the ultimate example of partisan political gamesmanship. I think that colleagues have been fairly patient over the last few weeks, but you know, Mr. Chair, I am going to say it again: I am disappointed. I am disappointed that time is being wasted again on this politically driven, politically motivated stunt.

I think we can all agree that Mr. Angus's initial proposal—and I've said this before—to study the ethical levers in place—

• (1635)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, the member just called our work a political stunt. I think that's unnecessarily provocative at this 35th hour.

I have tried to negotiate with the Liberals. I've made compromises. We have gotten nowhere. They keep changing the parameters but I'd prefer, if we're going to have to drag on into the evening, that she not use words like “stunt”. They really undermine the work and the seriousness that we bring to this committee.

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

Continue, Madame Lattanzio.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Thank you.

I think we can all agree—and I've said this before—that the initial proposal brought forward by my colleague, MP Mr. Angus, to study the ethical mechanisms in place to protect against the conflict of interest in the Prime Minister's Office is fair and is a study that could yield some fair and reasonable recommendations from members of this committee. This motion, Mr. Chair, fits the mandate of our committee. It fits the basic functions of our committee to study the key aspects as they relate to our mandate as found in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

However, I would like to point out that what is not found in our Standing Orders is any reference to this committee being an investigative body. As MP Sorbara said a few minutes ago—and it's

worth repeating—this committee is not a court of law. There are no rules of judicial fairness. There are no judges—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Madame Gaudreau, on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I am going to be extremely vigilant. I know that people are saying that they are repeating themselves, but when we say we are repeating ourselves, it's exactly what we must not do, please. There is new content, we know. I have the blues. I have all the details of the recent discussions. As I read them, I see clear redundancies.

Mr. Chair, let me invite you to act. I think we have reached that point.

Thank you.

[*English*]

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

Go ahead, Madame Lattanzio.

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

I'm going to reformulate and tell you that I agree with what Mr. Sorbara said. This is not a court of law. There are no rules for judicial fairness. There is no judge here. There are no lawyers and there is no due process, yet in motion after motion, or amendment after amendment, the opposition majority seems to find ways to drag us down this path that we are simply not, in my opinion, suited to travel.

Members from the government side are not unreasonable. I'm certainly not oblivious to how this is playing out. We're in front of cameras. The media are watching. This meeting is being put on display for the public; I would go as far as saying it is feigned indignation in the position of the government, which is in opposition to several parts of this now amended motion. The opposition knows full well that they are on tenuous ground with regard to the motions that have been put forward. In my opinion, I think they understand full well that the very idea of this study serves no other purpose than perhaps to garner political points.

There has been no evidence whatsoever to support the baseless accusations being made by the Conservatives and other opposition parties. Testimony at several committees, including this one, along with over 5,000 pages of documents, proves the exact opposite of what the opposition is trying to forge ahead with.

I don't know if Madame Gaudreau is dancing to my tune, but it pleasantly surprises me.

The evidence supports the testimony of the Prime Minister and relevant ministers that this was a recommendation of the non-partisan public service. Upon review of government, it was determined that this was the best way forward to implement the Canada student service grant: That's it. It's plain and simple.



Mr. Chair, this was a very cut-and-dried matter that has consistently been spun and promulgated to the public by the opposition in such a way that no one can make head or tail of it anymore. The amended motion that we have before us today continues to try to twist the narrative even further, with my opposition colleagues taking several unrelated issues and trying to spin a narrative of corruption that simply does not exist.

Quite frankly, it is quite clear that the only real goal of the opposition at this point and juncture of our debate with regard to the Canada student service grant, it seems to me, is to target only the Prime Minister and his family. They've become the target. It has also been abundantly clear, from the moment our government was elected in 2015 through too our debate on this motion here today, that the opposition has no interest in working in a bipartisan fashion in the best interests of Canadians. It is also very clear to me, and I think to many Canadians, that the opposition—

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** If I am dancing to my colleague's tune, it is because I have been here since 11 o'clock. I am listening carefully and unfortunately, on several occasions, comments have been made to which we cannot even react. I find that difficult, especially when the opposition is blamed for using the Prime Minister and his family.

Actually, we are doing our job. We want to make sure that taxpayers' money is used appropriately. I especially object to the same thing being repeated and, furthermore, to being attacked without being able to react. If I look like I am dancing, that's why.

[*English*]

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

Go ahead, Madam Lattanzio.

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

I've been sitting on this committee for many hours, and these are my observations. I think I'm entitled to put forward my observations as we're discussing what has transpired from the beginning of the presentation of this motion, the various attempts that have been made by various colleagues around the table to bring this resolution and move it forward. I think I'm well within my rights to be able to give my opinion on what has transpired to date, and of course, the content of the motion itself.

Going back to what I was saying before, it's very clear to me that at this point, at this juncture, I do not believe there's a will and a consensus to take the various opinions of my colleagues around the table to move forward on this issue, unfortunately. That's my opinion. I think the Prime Minister and his family have been the targets from the onset, and there's no way of moving past that. I find it rather concerning that we keep going in this way.

Mr. Chairman, I thought that after the defeat of the motion from Mr. Barrett the other week, we were finally going to move past this charade and finally focus on some important work, yet it's clear that my colleagues on the other side are once again focused on the political division, on personal attacks and confusion, rather than on what's in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Chairman, there was a time when we could have healthy debates about the issues of the day, and when the debate was over, we could all part and move on. In my opinion, efforts have been made. Days are going by and boundaries are being broken. I think, for my part, that when I see this, it is unfortunate and it makes it harder to move on.

I do not think it's appropriate or prudent, Mr. Chair, for this committee to continue to entertain political attacks on the PM, nor do I think it's appropriate that we undertake politically motivated studies against well-respected Canadian companies solely because one of their founders was a member of Parliament in our previous mandate.

It should be noted, Mr. Chairman, that the words used by my opposition colleagues have real effect. Just ask the WE Charity, which was forced to close its doors because of this continued attack on its reputation from the opposition. This foundation was founded and had its head office here in Canada and had various offices across the country. It's gone, Mr. Chairman. It's doing its work now in other countries. It's quite unfortunate. The real losers in all this are, of course, our students across the country.

I am not sure whether and when it became acceptable to tear down Canadian businesses—

• (1645)

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

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

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** As we're moving into the 36th or 37th hour, I've sat and listened to Ms. Lattanzio accuse me of making personal attacks, of destroying businesses, of destroying WE Charity. Our obligation as parliamentarians is to ask political questions. She might not like that, because she's government, but it is our obligation.

If the WE Charity did not meet the standards for that proposal, we have a right to ask about that. The decision they made to shut their charity was their decision, but we should never be told, "Shame on parliamentarians for asking for accountability." The fact is that the Prime Minister's Office, as well as senior ministers who had obligations to protect Canadians during the pandemic, failed.

For Ms. Lattanzio to lecture us about making personal attacks... I take my work very seriously. I've been 17 years in Parliament. I've been on this committee for years. I have seen the most wicked and vicious political battering at this committee, but I have always served with the intention of putting the Canadian people first.

If Ms. Lattanzio wants to talk the clock out by attacking us and saying that we're making personal attacks and trying to destroy business, I think that's very unfortunate. It's a question of relevance, because she's repeating the same lines that her colleagues are using. We're getting into repetition, so I would ask you to rule on that.

• (1650)

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

Go ahead and proceed, Madam Lattanzio.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are my observations and my perceptions.

With regard to Baylis Medical, which is also pertinent to the motion, it's worth noting that the Government of Canada has no contracts with Baylis Medical. We do not control whether another company subcontracts work from their contract to another company. This happens in government procurement all the time. We know that.

Companies like Baylis Medical are recognized as leaders in their field, in particular in manufacturing medical equipment. During COVID-19, they stepped up to ensure that they would assist in any way possible. I'm not sure when we were able to start going against the notion of subcontracting. I mean, there was a need, and they stepped up to the platter.

Chair, what is clear is that now we have an amended motion before us, and the original one from Mr. Angus. As I noted earlier in my remarks, part of it does have some merit, especially if the study is carried out in a fair and equitable manner by studying the substance of the main issue and not the conduct of a fishing expedition.

My concerns continue to be how my Conservative colleagues are going to try to bend what looks like a fair motion and use it to continue in their pursuit of a personal attack on the Prime Minister and his family.

I am also concerned—

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

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

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Chair, with respect to the member's comments about personal attacks, we hear allegations being levelled. The content of what the member is referring to is an NDP motion that was amended by a Liberal motion and then amended by a Bloc motion. The Conservatives have only voted on the amendments; we haven't put this forward. We continue to hear, almost word for word, the same speech delivered by her colleagues.

However, if we're going to continue and they're going to include these same misfired attacks or confused attacks, I would ask you, Chair, to remind the member about repetition and relevance.

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

I should tell you that repetition pertains to the individual member, not what may they may be saying from some other member.

However, I will remind the member—

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Chair, to be clear—

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Please let me finish, and then I'll recognize the points of order.

In regard to repetition, it would be whether the person who has the floor is being repetitive in their comments once they have the floor.

Mr. Barrett, did you have a subsequent point on that point?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Yes. Just on your clarification, is it that it is not out of order for two members to read the same statement?

**The Chair:** No, not from what I see in the procedure manual. I think from what I read, it's pertaining to an individual member being repetitive.

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

**The Chair:** I will certainly look at it again. These procedure manuals are quite arcane and have a number of precedents that you can follow for directions.

Mr. Long, go ahead. You had a point of order. By the way, that's a nice Christmas tree.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to be on the committee here, obviously coming to you from Saint John, New Brunswick. I actually spent time at the ethics committee, which I'll certainly talk about later.

Chair, through you, I want to remind members that they can't use points of order for debate. I think that's what has happened the last two or three times with opposition members. They obviously use points of order, and then they seem to digress into statements in debate.

I'm asking, through you, Chair, to remind members of that, please.

Thank you.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Long. I understand that.

I have given all parties latitude to say their piece when they interrupt on a point of order, and that's been the tradition on this committee. It's not to carry it on but to have it heard, and then obviously I give direction afterward if it's a legitimate point of order.

However, you raise a substantive issue, and we should try to keep our points of order to procedure and not debate.

We will continue with Madam Lattanzio.

**Ms. Patricia Lattanzio:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to wrap it up.

Mr. Chairman, I'm still very hopeful that as a committee we can get to a place where we can focus on reviewing the ethical safeguards in the PMO and we can study a wide range of considerations that hinge on that particular topic and come up with some real recommendations. Then we'll all be able to be on the same page.

Is that wishful thinking? Absolutely. Maybe it's my hope that we can move on with this. I am still very hopeful. I'm still very wishful. As always, I am willing to work in this committee with colleagues on all sides of the floor to come to some type of compromise that actually achieves some semblance of real outcomes for my constituents and for all Canadians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Now we'll go to Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly great to be on the committee today. I would like to spend a second reflecting.

When I started in 2015, I actually was on the ethics committee, and it was the first committee that I was appointed to. I certainly remember coming in, in 2015, and being obviously very nervous and not knowing what to expect. I was sitting around the horseshoe and I looked up to see that the chair was MP Calkins. I said, "Oh, how can that be? How can we be the majority government, and we have MP Calkins up chairing? How can that work?" Obviously, I quickly learned that ethics committees have opposition members as chairs. Certainly colleagues and opposition members sat across the room. Pat Kelly was one, and Matt Jeneroux. I sat beside people like Nate Erskine-Smith and Joël Lightbound. One thing that really came through in our committee was that we worked together. We obviously had our differences, and there's obviously a time for partisanship, but there's also a time to work together. Certainly the committee that I was on did work together.

I was asked to come here and fill in today. I think that my record as an MP shows that I'm not afraid to ask questions when questions need to be asked. Obviously, I've been paying attention to what's been unfolding, but what I'm seeing unfold here personally disappoints me.

I spent today, like every day, in my constituency office, and I'm a proud member of Parliament from Saint John—Rothesay. I had a mother come in with two children, and we helped her with the Canada child benefit. I had somebody who lost his job and needed help to fill out the forms for unemployment insurance and deal with the fact that we've reduced the hours of eligibility. We helped him. We've had other people come in and roll off of CERB onto the CRB, and so on and so forth. I'm so proud to work with constituents, with Canadians, and help them through a historic time.

Mr. Chair, I asked the last two constituents I had in today about what we're talking about today and how important, how relevant, they found it. Mr. Chair, I can tell you with 100% certainty that Canadians—certainly people in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay—are dealing with a historic, devastating, once-in-a-generation pandemic. That parliamentarians in a committee are trying to investigate the Prime Minister's family and raise questions about an honourable man, an MP and a friend, Frank Baylis, and his company just disappoints me, because I think all of us have shown over the last several months that we can work together and do great things for Canadians.

As a government, we are open to change and ideas, but the fact that this motion wants to try to dig things up for partisan purposes is personally disappointing.

Mr. Angus, I've never sat on a committee with you. I have a lot of respect for you, obviously, across the House, for your advocacy and how you speak. I'm surprised to hear that you've been an MP for 17 years. I tip my hat to you. I don't think I could survive in this world for 17 years.

• (1700)

I just think there are better ways that we, as parliamentarians, can be spending our time on behalf of Canadians.

Before I actually get going with my speech, I just want to thank you for letting me in. It certainly brings back memories of being on the committee.

I certainly also want to also acknowledge it's Veterans Week. Remembrance Day has just passed. I want to take a second to acknowledge all the veterans in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay. I am a two-time MP there now, and I am very proud of my riding. Hopefully everybody on this committee has visited Saint John—Rothesay. It's a port city, a wonderful city. They used to call it a Conservative city. It's certainly not a Conservative city anymore, but anyway, you're all welcome to come, and hopefully we can see you there.

We had a beautiful, moving service this year. Typically it's inside. We moved it outside, up to King's Square, and obviously the numbers are limited. I'm always so proud. This is the sixth time now; time flies. I got to lay a wreath on behalf of the government and our country, and it is always a proud time. Certainly with respect to our veterans—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** On a point of order, go ahead, Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** I am trying to find a connection with the motion we are going to be voting on.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay, Madame Gaudreau.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I take the point. I was just getting to that.

I just want to cap that off. Certainly for me and my family, to the veterans and their families, I want to thank you for everything you've done and your sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice, which has allowed us to do what we're doing today.

Chair, I'm going to ask for some indulgence just for a few moments, because I think there are some clarifications that need to be made coming out of the last meeting. Since that meeting, I've seen a number of public statements by members of the Conservative opposition that I find really concerning and disappointing.

First and foremost, is there no limit at all what the Conservatives will go to in order to serve their lust for power?

Chair, I understand that you are a member of the Conservative Party, and I know you do a good job as chair of this committee. I don't know you personally. My concern is not at all with you or how you have conducted yourself during these meetings. In fact, I know that to be the chair of something like what you're going through and we're all going through right now is difficult, so my hat is off to you, Chair. I think you've conducted yourself fairly and very well.

My concern, through you, Chair, is with the false statements being made by Mr. Barrett and others on the other side with regard to Speakers' Spotlight. From where I'm sitting—and I've tried to follow this from the outside looking in—it seems to me at times that with Mr. Barrett, there is no limit to what he'll go to to try to bring down the government. There is no consideration for collateral damage. Clearly, they were willing and are willing to bring down a Canadian charity, WE Charity, to advance the goal.

Now it's gone from that to a—

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, Monsieur Gourde, go ahead on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Chair, in the face of the systematic obstruction by the Liberals, who at the moment are playing a really very partisan game, and before this whole business deteriorates even more, I am asking for the committee's unanimous consent to move to a vote.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gourde. It's not really a point of order, but anytime anybody wants to ask for unanimous consent to vote....

There's no consent, Mr. Gourde. I see heads shaking.

Go ahead, Mr. Long. I also want to caution you about something I said about five meetings ago. I think we should all be careful about disparaging individual members. I think you can make comments through the chair in regard to some concerns about behaviour, but let's try to operate as professionally as we can toward each other and be tough on issues but respectful to people.

Go ahead, sir.

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

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

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** With respect to what you mentioned in ascribing motives to other members, I listened carefully to Mr. Long. I haven't had the opportunity to work with him before. When he first arrived at committee, he did talk about looking to collaborate with folks. I've never used the gentleman's name before, but I found that in his first appearance at this committee, he ascribed some pretty nasty things to me.

I do think your intervention on that point, Chair, is important. I would ask you to just remind the member, should he need to be reminded, about the collaborative relationship he longed for at the start of his remarks.

**The Chair:** That's been done, Mr. Barrett. Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Long.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you, Chair.

I take that point from MP Barrett, but as I said, I observe. I see it, and I just think there's certainly a better way than what I've seen, obviously, with respect to this motion and what the intent of the motion is. Again, the intent of the motion is to take down the charity that has done so much good in this country, and now the focus has switched to going after businesses—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order—

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

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I was really moved by Mr. Long telling us what a great committee it is and how he wanted us to come together, yet he's saying that the reason I brought this motion forward was to destroy a children's charity and that I am now intent on destroying Canadian businesses.

I know we're now in the 36th hour and the Liberals are getting desperate, but this is attacking my reputation. I take my work very seriously. I don't have a clue who Mr. Long is. I believe he's been elected. I'm sure he does great work with his people, but I don't know this man. He's never been on my committee before. He comes in and says I set this motion up to destroy a children's charity. He missed all the work, perhaps, when I explained about the problems we have to deal with.

I take this stuff very seriously. I come and I back it up with facts. I back it up with documentation. I stay focused on the issue at hand. If I'm going to have to sit and listen to the Liberals descend further and further, from talking about vaccines to talking about underwear and talking about the 1980s up until now, and have them challenge me and say that I'm doing all of this to destroy a charity....

I think Mr. Long is way out of line. I would ask you to keep us focused so that we don't end up disgracing this committee even further than it's been disgraced by the ongoing obstruction by the Liberals.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Mr. Long, continue.

I want to let you know that we have on the speakers list Mr. Dong and Mr. Fergus, and I have only 19 minutes before we lose IT support.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly the comments I just heard are personally disappointing to me too: "I don't have a clue about this man. I think he was elected." Well, I can tell you that I was certainly elected. I was elected in 2015, and I was elected last year also. I was the first back-to-back Liberal elected in my riding, so I have—

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

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

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I would like to retract that. I should never have said that I think he was elected. I don't really know this man. I've never dealt with him. I know he's making personal attacks about me, but I would never want to suggest that he wasn't duly elected by his representatives. Maybe he was elected twice, so I want to retract any comments I made about not thinking he was elected, but I would ask him to refrain from making personal attacks on me and on the reason I bring motions to committee, because I do my work with great seriousness.

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

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thanks, Chair.

When MP Angus said he didn't know if I was elected, I kind of did a double take. Jeez, maybe I have more to learn. Maybe unelected people can be on these committees speaking too.

Anyway, Chair, thank you for the clarification. I'm going to move on.

Chair, I have not had any personal dealings with Speakers' Spotlight. I don't think there's anyone who would pay to hear me speak, except once. In a past life, I was president and part owner of the Saint John Sea Dogs, a major junior hockey team. Those of you who know me know that I talk often about the Saint John Sea Dogs and how we won a Memorial Cup and had a very, very successful franchise in major junior hockey. It was the first Memorial Cup that went to Atlantic Canada. I did lots of speeches across the country then. I received a coffee mug once. It was a nice mug, and I still have it, but typically, Chair, in all seriousness, I'm not paid to speak.

However, there are many people who are. They have inspirational stories and offer their services as professional public speakers. Speakers' Spotlight maintains a roster of these individuals and acts as their agent, linking them with relevant professional organizations, community groups and corporations that wish to pay for their services. That's what happens with these entities. This company was a start-up by a husband-and-wife team that still runs the organization today. Until the Conservatives and other opposition spun this tale regarding the Prime Minister and WE Charity, most Canadians had likely never heard about Speakers' Spotlight.

Chair, in our constituency office today in Saint John—Rothesay, we probably had 10 or maybe 15 people in, all needing help. All of us certainly can speak to the fact that as members, we're there to serve. I'm honoured to have people come in my office for help. I help them fill out forms, advocate for them and what have you.

Chair, because I knew I was going to speak on the committee tonight—we are an hour ahead of you, just for the record; it's 6:15 here—I did a poll of the 15 people who came in my office today. None of them cared about WE Charity, the Canada student service grant—none of them, zero—so this is something that's been created in the Ottawa circle.

I certainly have nothing but respect for an MP who's been an MP for 17 years, but there are things that are more important to Canadians, Chair.

Chair, one thing I find very interesting is that the Conservative members are trying to paint Speakers' Spotlight as some Liberal-affiliated organization, much like they did with WE Charity. You would think they would learn their lesson and follow the evidence, because, as with WE, this is clearly not the case. Speakers' Spotlight deals with talent from all political parties. Conservative ministers and even prime ministers count themselves among the talent listed on the Speakers' Spotlight website. Who knows—maybe one day I can get my name in there. It's doubtful, but you never know.

• (1715)

Chair, this crazy idea that Speakers' Spotlight colluded with government to destroy documents is absolutely ludicrous. Since day one, the Conservatives have tried to advance the obscene theory that the Prime Minister personally advanced the Canada student service grant because his family had spoken at WE Charity events.

Let's think about that. Again, if you ask Canadians whether they believe that the Prime Minister of Canada, in plain sight, wanted to give this contract to WE because his family had some speaking engagements.... Chair, that is not reality. That is not what Canadians are consumed with. We all see what's going on around us. I thank God that I'm in New Brunswick, that I'm in the Atlantic Canada bubble. Canadians aren't consumed with this; only we are consumed with this.

The theme of ridiculousness continues, Chair. After the last meeting, obviously we've seen things that have been posted on Twitter. I think it's been personal. I just think that as parliamentarians we owe it to Canadians to give them facts, plain and simple—facts without spin. I think they'd find it refreshing. I think they're tired of this. They want to move on, but no—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** On a point of order, Chair, I do want to reach out to my colleague, who may have felt hurt that I said earlier—and I apologize—that I didn't know how he'd been elected.

I agree with him and I want to reach out to him. He says he's tired; I'm tired. He says Canadians want us to move on; I want us to move on. I'm asking him now, at 5:20, seven hours into this, to just call the vote and stop with the dramatics.

We're all tired of this. We're tired of the obstruction, so I'm asking him, as a sign of goodwill, to just move us to the vote so we can carry on and get our work done.

• (1720)

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

Mr. Long, if you want to, you can take that option up, or you can continue on.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I'm going to continue, Chair. I have some things, through you of course.... Again, it's great to be back on this committee, but there are some things I still want to say.

Again, I want to go back. The contention that Speakers' Spotlight completely ignored a legal order of this committee is clearly false. I think that other members on this committee know it as well. Again, I think members know full well that when the House was prorogued back in August to allow for the preparation of a throne speech for COVID-19 recovery, all orders for the production of documents died, including the request from this committee to Speakers' Spotlight for documentation. Furthermore, Chair, a new request was never passed by this committee in this session. In fact, this committee held a vote on whether to request further documentation for Speakers' Spotlight, and it failed. I find it really concerning that a member is out there giving false information. Let's call it what it is. The accusation that Speakers' Spotlight has violated an order of this committee is a complete and utter fabrication levied to help further the political interests of the Conservatives.

Chair, in closing, I am very disappointed that my colleagues would spread this misinformation to the detriment of a Canadian business without evidence to support this claim. As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to help Canadians and Canadian businesses. We want them to succeed. We want them to grow. We don't want to tear them down.

What is even more concerning is that my Conservative colleagues would try to chastise a business for simply following regular business practices as regulated by the Canada Revenue Agency and relevant privacy legislation. In what has become the norm, another group has had to publicly defend itself from Conservative attacks after being caught in the crosshairs of their war against the Prime Minister.

I think it's important to read a quote directly from Speakers' Spotlight, Chair. This won't be long, but it's important. It's of the utmost importance that we deal with facts here. Let me quote. The owners of Speakers' Spotlight noted:

It is standard practice for companies to purge documents after 7 years, and we have always followed this practice. Furthermore, under Canadian privacy law we are required to destroy all personal information as soon as it is no longer necessary. Therefore, it is not just good practice, but a legal requirement that we have been following.

Furthermore, the Canada Revenue Agency's guidance on the retention of corporate documents is also clear in this matter, noting that under the Income Tax Act, records must be maintained for a minimum of six years. You need to retain your records for six years. When I had my own businesses—previous to the Sea Dogs, I was in the aquaculture business and I was out on my own—we had to retain records for six years. I had a baby barn out back full of boxes. I had so much paperwork.

In any case, Speakers' Spotlight was well within the law in regard to regular business practices.

• (1725)

As well, Mr. Chair, there are other members who would have the public believe that this was some elaborately orchestrated conspiracy between the government and Speakers' Spotlight to disappear

documents, to get rid of documents. Again, that couldn't be further from the truth.

Let's step back. I challenge anybody on this committee or any member to say if they really believe it was orchestrated that way. Again, I've asked people who came into my office, Mr. Chair. I talked to a couple who came in who were in the tourism industry, and we all know what this pandemic has done to the tourism industry. We talked about how they were on CERB, and now they've transitioned on to EI or the CRB. I asked them point-blank whether they really believed there was this orchestrated, concocted alliance between this company and the Prime Minister. People look at me as if I had four heads.

We looked at it. We made our decision months back, Mr. Chair. Let's be clear: It was months back. They're looking at me wondering why we are even talking about this now. Why is this taking parliamentarians' time right now, when we are dealing with a threat to our country? I have profound disappointment that we are going down this road. We are continuing to try to dig at something that just doesn't really exist.

I had a guy come into my office yesterday, Mr. Chair, and tell me straight up that he's disillusioned with politics and politicians. I was disappointed. I think we've all heard that, and I said—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I have a point of order. It's now 5:28. We have a minute and a half left.

Mr. Long has certainly talked a lot. I learned about his junior hockey career and about all the people coming to his office, but it has nothing to do with the motion. They've talked the clock out for this meeting. I guess they will continue to talk the clock out on Monday.

Can we wrap this up? If we're going to have stuff that has nothing to do with the motion, we should just move to close out this very dismal meeting, in which the Liberals have blocked and obstructed us and talked about everything from vaccines, which aren't part of the motion, to junior hockey in New Brunswick, which is not part of the motion, to underwear and who spoke about underwear first, which of course has nothing to do with it.

If they're not going to talk about the motion, then I think we pretty much have talked the clock out.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, I'm going to move to adjourn the meeting right now, simply because in one minute we'll be adjourned technically, without any support for our meeting.

Upon Mr. Barrett's intervention, I've learned new information in regard to repetition and being on subject as well. I'm going to also elucidate on those judgments in the next meeting.

I will see all of you either on screen or in person on Monday.

The meeting is adjourned.









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