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Chair: Mr. Ali Ehsassi



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• (1715)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting 105 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Before we begin, I emphasize to all members the following preventive measures.

To prevent disruptive and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to keep their earpieces away from their microphones at all times.

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Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Please bear in mind that I have to recognize you before you speak.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee will commence consideration of the request by members of the committee to consider a request to undertake a study of waivers granting the use of Russian titanium in Canadian aerospace manufacturing.

Go ahead, Madam McPherson.

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

The reason I'm one of the members who signed this Standing Order 106(4) request is that it is very concerning, as we have heard, that once again the government has undermined the sanctions against Russia and our sanctions regime by allowing another waiver. This isn't the first time this has happened, of course. There was a waiving sanctions for the turbines. I think it was two years ago. At

that point, we called an emergency meeting of this committee so we could discuss the matter and understand the government's decision to soften our sanctions in a way that I know is very disappointing to our Ukrainian allies. It is also very disappointing to other people around the world who are hoping that Canada will continue to stand in support of Ukraine. We have heard that this is particularly egregious because Ukraine has titanium they could use, and instead we have waived the sanction on Russian titanium.

I think it is very important that we understand why the government made this decision. The government has said that it is steadfast in its support of Ukraine. This does make one question whether that is accurate or not.

I circulated what I suggest the committee should undertake, and it is:

That, pursuant to the 106(4) request for an emergency meeting made by members of the Committee on April 26, 2024, in response to the government's decision to grant sanctions waivers to two aerospace companies to allow them to use Russian titanium in their manufacturing, and given that this is not the first time that the government has weakened and undermined Canada's sanction regime against Russia by waiving sanctions, the Committee study the matter and hold at least two meetings on the issue, and invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to testify.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

The Liberals are often accused of taking simple issues and making them complex, and at the risk of that accusation, I want to spend a bit of time talking about this motion. It is worded in an almost simplistic way for a very complex issue, with assertions being made that may or may not be true.

Let me start out by saying that we are in favour of an opportunity to discuss the waiver at this committee. We think the committee has not only the right but the responsibility to understand this in an important way, so we are not opposed to doing this. We think our sanctions regime should be extremely targeted and focused on the enemies or wrongdoers in any situation.

Right now with respect to Russia's illegal invasion into Ukraine, we have, in Canada alone, an unprecedented number of sanctions, which we have heard about in this committee. Whereas we used to have dozens to hundreds, we now have thousands of sanctions in place against Russia, Russian oligarchs and others who do business in and with Russia. It is an important regime, and we do it with our friends, we do it with our allies and we do it in concert with others.

At times, with sanctions, as we have understood since the 1980s, problems can be raised and we can have the wrong people paying costs or prices for the sanctions we are imposing. That's why waivers are in place. That's why there is a structure within our sanctions system allowing waivers to be made when a case is made that says a particular sanction is hurting the wrong people at the wrong time, is not effective or is counterproductive in our ongoing, always committed response to Ukraine and the egregious assault they are facing every day by Russia.

There is a system in place for waivers, and I don't blame any member of the committee for not knowing how these things work. Part of that is strictly controlled due to commercial interests and confidentiality, because what is in a supply chain, especially for high-tech or high-value manufacturing, is confidential, proprietary information that we want to make sure we protect. These are Canadians, Canadian businesses and Canadian jobs at risk. There is a system in place, and I think it would be very good for this committee to hear, to the ability that it can be explained, what the companies saw the problem was.

Let's be clear. We're talking about two aerospace companies. We're talking about Bombardier and Airbus. We are talking about two companies with thousands of employees in Canada that have a particular, very highly sensitive and important safety and commercial interest at stake. They have requested, as we have read in media reports, a waiver on one part of one sanction to allow them to do their work.

Again, we'll support this, but I'm going to suggest some amendments. Part of that is because we are not talking about buying a box of titanium. Two aerospace companies in Canada are attempting to bring in parts that they fear, they know or they understand may have titanium in them that has come from Russia. They're doing their due diligence. These are good corporate citizens trying to make sure that they do not break a Canadian law that this Parliament has passed and that the government has put in place at this time through the sanctions regime.

We have a situation where Canadians have the right to know—and it's important, within the bounds of commercial confidence—why this decision was made, but there are a few problems I have with the kind of value statement that is embedded in here. I would simply like to have a simpler motion that doesn't necessarily make a political speech but is able to get to the heart of the matter.

I am going to suggest four amendments to the motion as it stands right now.

• (1720)

The first one is with respect to the use of the words “Russian titanium”, which is in the third line in the English version. I would like to replace the words “to use Russian titanium” with “the use of components potentially containing Russian titanium”. I think that's important because we don't know the full facts on this and the committee should hear the full facts. I don't want to make a statement in a motion about something that may or may not be true, because we'd get the wrong evidence. If someone came to talk to us about the use of Russian titanium, they could simply say that it is not what they do. We want to be very clear that we want to talk about the use of components potentially containing Russian titanium.

That is the first amendment. I'm going to give all four amendments at this time. You can decide whether you want to vote on them all at once or separately.

As to the second replacement, while we would like to support this motion, obviously we differ with respect to the value statement. It says, “and given that this is not the first time that the government has weakened and undermined Canada's sanction regime against Russia by waiving sanctions”. That's an opinion and we don't necessarily think it belongs in a motion. I'd like to replace those words with “in light of media reports that aerospace companies employing thousands of Canadian workers received waivers to ensure their supply chain is compliant with Canadian sanctions regulations”. This is a justification for why we would like to do the study.

As to the third amendment, instead of “at least two meetings”, it would be “hold one meeting” on this issue.

The fourth amendment is with respect to witnesses. It would read, “invite Airbus, Bombardier, relevant ministers and government officials, and other witnesses as appropriate”.

I will speak to those amendments for just one minute and then yield the floor.

To summarize, I would be asking to replace “to use Russian titanium” with “the use of components potentially containing Russian titanium”. That is the first one.

The second one is the lengthy statement about weakening and undermining Canada's sanctions regime being replaced with the statement “in light of media reports that aerospace companies employing thousands of Canadian workers received waivers to ensure their supply chain is compliant with Canadian sanctions regulations”.

The third one is to hold one meeting on this issue.

Last, we would like to replace “invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to testify” with “invite Airbus, Bombardier, relevant ministers and government officials, and other witnesses as appropriate”.

Those are the four amendments we'd like to make. They would enable us to wholeheartedly support this motion and ensure that Canadians get to hear why this waiver was indeed granted.

• (1725)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Perhaps we could deal with these one at a time, so we could more efficiently knock them off.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I am fine with that. I wanted to make sure that everyone got the geography of what I was doing out, but I thought you would probably want to take them separately.

The Chair: We'll be dealing with them individually, as requested by Mr. Chong.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): I have a point of order.

Is Mr. Oliphant willing to share these with us in writing by email or in a hard copy so we can have them in front of us?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'm not quite able to do that, because I was doing it on the fly from many notes. I can repeat them at any time, and I suspect the analysts—

The Chair: Why don't we repeat them when we are discussing each one of them individually?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: As we are doing them one at a time, we'll get them repeated to make sure we have them right.

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, please go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with the spirit of the motion moved by our NDP colleague. However, I disagree with Mr. Oliphant's statement that the idea of other waivers constitutes an opinion. I think that this exemplifies this government's bad habit of acting secretly. It isn't an opinion. In an article published on October 3, 2023, *Le Devoir* drew up a whole list of waivers granted by the Canadian government.

I remember all the fuss about the turbines. That didn't stop the government from continuing to grant waivers without telling anyone. This was revealed by *Le Devoir*. We then realized that we had been somewhat taken for a ride. As usual, the government took action behind closed doors, in a highly secretive manner.

This isn't an opinion. I'll be voting against Mr. Oliphant's amendment.

What annoys me about both Ms. McPherson's motion and Mr. Oliphant's proposed amendment is that they both put the spotlight on one type of waiver. *Le Devoir* revealed that there are a number of different types of waivers. The spotlight is on one industry, which strikes me as harmful to its reputation. The industry has been dragged into this situation unwillingly.

Mr. Oliphant made a point of stating in his remarks that thousands of sanctions had been imposed. When we studied the sanctions regime, the government went to the trouble of saying that we should always work with our allies in order to improve our effectiveness and avoid leaving industrial sectors in a tight spot. However, the government has done exactly the opposite. Our allies haven't imposed the same sanction on titanium. This has left our aerospace industry in a tight spot compared to its European and American competitors.

The government didn't do its job properly, so it had to introduce waivers to ensure that our industry wasn't put at a disadvantage. The government simply told the people in our industry to find sup-

plies from somewhere else, without providing any support. When that didn't work, it introduced waivers, once again on the sly.

What annoys me about this motion is that it puts the spotlight on the aerospace industry. This bad publicity certainly isn't conducive to the industry's ongoing operations and development.

If the chair had given me the floor before handing it over to Mr. Oliphant, I would have moved a different and much simpler amendment. I would like to share it with you. Based on my proposal, you can decide what you want to do with Mr. Oliphant's amendments.

The idea would be to add, between the words “waivers”—

• (1730)

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I am interested in knowing what Mr. Bergeron will do, but on a point of order, we have an amendment—actually four, but we can take them severally—on the floor. We should have our debate now on the amendment as opposed to on adding another amendment.

Let's deal with these amendments, because if we don't do that, the whole parliamentary procedure falls apart.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'm not talking about an amendment, but about something that may be relevant at some point.

I'm talking about the idea of adding, between the words “waivers” and “the committee”, the words “to the sanctions regime against Russia”. I would also remove “sanctions waivers to two aerospace companies to allow them to use Russian titanium in their manufacturing, and given that this is not the first time that the government has weakened and undermined Canada's sanction regime against Russia by waiving sanctions”. To connect the start and end of the motion, I would add, between the words “waivers” and “the committee”, the words “to the sanctions regime against Russia”.

The motion would now read as follows: “That, pursuant to the 106(4) request for an emergency meeting made by members of the committee on April 26, 2024, in response to the government's decision to grant waivers to the sanctions regime against Russia, the committee study the matter and hold at least two meetings on the issue, and invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to testify.”

We'll have a chance to vote on Mr. Oliphant's proposed amendments, which I hope won't be adopted. I'll move my proposed amendment at that time, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I already said what I needed to say. We'll see what other members want to say.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I'm confused. What is on the floor in front of the committee right now?

The Chair: I think on the floor are four amendments introduced by Mr. Oliphant.

• (1735)

Hon. Michael Chong: Is it all four right now?

The Chair: No, individually—one by one.

Hon. Michael Chong: Which amendment is on the floor right now?

The Chair: The first one—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: From a procedural point of view, four amendments have been proposed, and we would take them *ad seriatim*. I suggest that we do it in the order of the text of the report.

Would it be helpful if I read the first one?

An hon. member: Yes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Okay.

The very first one is in the third line of the English version. It would replace “to use Russian titanium” with the words “the use of components potentially containing Russian titanium”.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I have a question of clarification for Mr. Oliphant. As I recall, at the beginning, he mentioned the confidentiality of the components or ingredients that go into the manufacturing of products by Airbus and Bombardier. Then he said, “potentially containing Russian titanium”. That complicates things even further, because there could be other sources of titanium in some components.

If we don't know the tricks of the trade and we don't have an idea of the content of the product, how can we determine how accurate this approach will be?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think I understand your point. I'll be very clear: I have not been privy to conversations at Global Affairs about this topic. This is not my file. This file is handled elsewhere from me. I have the same information that you have from media reports.

From what I understand, there are components used in the aerospace industry in Canada that come from European manufacturers. Those European manufacturers use titanium that comes from Russia, but they may source it from elsewhere. The waivers are to ensure that a company is not breaking the law if they discover at some point that there is titanium from Russia in the components that have been made.

I think we would need the Aerospace Industries Association or other particular companies to come and explain why this is a problem. We have done that in this committee. Are there other sources of those components? Are the components already made? Is there titanium in them? It's about the safety of aircraft.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: I'll take it at face value, but I do recommend, due to the lack of information and knowledge about this industry in general—and I agree on the confidentiality issue—that we should probably keep the motion as wide open as it is.

When we bring industry and the experts here, we will have a chance to at least understand this whole issue properly and deal with it without having to deal with any speculation over what is right and what is wrong and what is accurate and what is not.

It's going to be very difficult for us to determine what we are voting for if we cannot go that way on your first recommendation.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: My fear is they could easily say, “We do not use Russian titanium in our manufacturing.” Then we wouldn't get the truth. They could easily say that.

I'm trying to be more helpful—maybe it's not helpful—by broadening it to say that if they are bringing in components to do secondary manufacturing that may contain titanium, we want to hear about it.

It's not just titanium. If we just ask about titanium, they're going to say.... It's not Walmart, and you go in and buy a box of titanium. This is very complex stuff. It's not my world—I'm not an aerospace engineer—but I understand it's unlikely we get titanium in a box. We get it in a component, and components are such that there may or may not be titanium in them. We should have the industry association and the companies come to talk about it. That's all.

I'm being more specific to help us make sure we don't have someone go around it.

• (1740)

Hon. Michael Chong: Let's vote.

The Chair: Let's put it to a vote. Let's have a show of hands.

(Amendment negatived)

The Chair: The next amendment is up for debate.

Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: This is replacing the value statement, which I found we couldn't support, to get it to a motion that we could support.

It's to replace the words “and given that this is not the first time that the government has weakened and undermined Canada's sanction regime”—we profoundly disagree with that statement—“against Russia by waiving sanctions” with the words “in light of media reports that aerospace companies employing thousands of Canadian workers”—

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): On a point of order, Chair, the bells are ringing. I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

The Chair: That's correct.

Do we have consent?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: How long are the bells for? Are they half-hour bells?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: We have 28 minutes remaining.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Can we continue for 15 more minutes?

The Chair: Is everyone good with 15 minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Go ahead on your second amendment, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: The second one is to add “in light of media reports that aerospace companies employing thousands of Canadian workers received waivers to ensure their supply chain is compliant with Canadian sanctions regulations”.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

All those in favour?

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We'll move on to the third one.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Instead of “hold at least two meetings”, it's “hold one meeting”.

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We'll move on to the fourth amendment.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: The fourth amendment is with respect to witnesses. The motion only requires one witness, and we don't view that as sufficient.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, there isn't any interpretation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Interpretation is not working.

Can you proceed anyway?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I will keep talking to see if it's working.

Is it working now?

An hon. member: Yes.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Okay. It's “invite Airbus, Bombardier, relevant ministers and government officials, and other witnesses as appropriate”.

I'm talking about the Aerospace Industries Association particularly, but I didn't know the name of it.

The Chair: Okay.

All those in favour?

Yes, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, as I said, and given what I plan to propose in a moment, one thing that annoys me about Mr. Oliphant's other motion is the focus on the aerospace industry, when other waivers have been granted. I would like us to also look at the other waivers granted by the government. However, if we stick to this list of witnesses alone, it limits our ability to invite

stakeholders from other sectors that have also been granted waivers by the government.

I would like to ask my colleagues to vote against this other proposed amendment. This will give the committee some leeway in deciding which witnesses to invite.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Chatel, please.

[*Translation*]

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

I think that Mr. Oliphant's motion is broad enough. However, I would like my colleague to tell us which companies he would like to invite to testify.

• (1745)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'm referring to the article in *Le Devoir*, published on October 3. The article refers to printed circuits allegedly shipped to Russia through other countries. We aren't just talking about the aerospace industry. We're talking about vodka and shellfish. The federal government allegedly granted waivers for a whole range of products.

We shouldn't limit this to the aerospace industry alone. It isn't the only industry to have been granted waivers by the government. I also find that limiting the list of witnesses deprives the committee of the opportunity to invite other witnesses.

I would like us to keep the original list proposed by Ms. McPherson. With two meetings, inviting only the Minister of Foreign Affairs implies that we can invite other witnesses.

[*English*]

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: First we have to go to Madam Chatel.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you, but—

[*English*]

The Chair: Did you say “point of order”?

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Yes.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Alghabra.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Thank you.

I understand what our colleague Mr. Bergeron is trying to do, but at the end of the day, after we vote on this amendment, if he has other witnesses to add, he can certainly table them in his own amendment.

The Chair: Okay, that's fair enough.

Yes, Madam Chatel.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I think that saying that there can be other witnesses if needed is entirely in line with this. I don't think that an amendment, even one suggested by the Bloc Québécois, is necessary.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Can we read this motion again? I didn't hear anything about having other witnesses if needed.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Oliphant said it.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Okay. I didn't hear that. I'm sorry.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are we ready to put it to a vote?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: All those in favour?

An hon. member: No.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: It's unanimous.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: No, it's not unanimous.

The Chair: My apologies. I did not see that.

Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Before we go to the final vote on the motion as amended, I want to say that we support Ukraine. We don't doubt the Liberal government's support for Ukraine, but that doesn't mean we always agree with every decision the government makes. We think it's worthwhile to examine this matter, so we will support the motion as amended.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Now we'll go to the motion.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Is the amendment first?

Hon. Michael Chong: No, we're voting on the motion as amended.

The Chair: We're going to the motion as amended.

All those in favour?

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, first, I voted against the motion. Second, I would like to move an amendment.

I would add, between the words “waivers” and “the committee”, the following: “to the sanctions regime against—”

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order. That is not allowed. The motion has passed.

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, I've been advised by the clerk that you cannot do that.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: He could make another motion as long as it's been given due notice, but he can't amend this motion now that it has passed.

The Chair: Okay.

Yes, Mr. Epp.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): If you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following: That the motion I submitted on notice to the clerk a day ago regarding the Great Lakes Fishery Commission be moved, be allowed for debate if anyone wishes to debate the motion and, after the debate has collapsed, be adopted on division.

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

• (1750)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: You need unanimous consent to bring it up without notice.

Mr. Dave Epp: We need that to bring it to the floor.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I have a point of order.

If someone would like a suspension of the meeting, they can ask for a suspension, but we have to either suspend the meeting—and we can take quite a lot of time in that suspension—or move on to our work.

I'm not asking for a suspension.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I have a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Bergeron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, my discussion with the clerk was very simple.

I don't need to give notice to move a motion as long as it concerns the same topic. You denied me this right. Immediately afterwards, we moved on to another topic. I don't need to give notice to move a motion when we're still talking about the same topic. There has been an abuse of process. I would like to get back to the previous topic.

[*English*]

The Chair: What I will say on the point of order is that's what the clerk advised me at the time, Mr. Bergeron. I was just informing you of that. You could have brought it up and we could have discussed it at the time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I had to consult the clerk, and we quickly moved on to another topic. I shouldn't have been denied the opportunity to move a motion in the first place. We were still talking about the same topic. I didn't need to give notice.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bergeron, I was just simply informing you of what I had been advised, and then you chose not to pursue it any further.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I didn't make that choice. I consulted the clerk. It isn't the same thing.

[English]

The Chair: If you're consulting, you're not pursuing it anymore at that given juncture. Is that correct?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: No. Not at all.

[English]

The Chair: You could have told us that you would like a couple of minutes to consult. You could have done that.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of my colleagues to revisit the motion.

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: No.

The Chair: I'm afraid there's no unanimous consent.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I want to thank my Liberal colleagues for their help.

I won't forget.

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: [*Inaudible—Editor*] is on our side with the motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Yes, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: I would like to speak briefly to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission motion before it's deemed adopted on division.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I'm seeking clarification. Was he asking for unanimous consent to have it moved and for it to be debated? Is that the question on the floor right now?

Hon. Michael Chong: Yes. There was an agreement among members.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I don't give unanimous consent, Mr. Chair.

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

I believe if the member consults with her colleagues, she'll understand that there was a discussion among members of the committee before the meeting started, and there was an agreement to give unanimous consent to that motion.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I don't.

Hon. Michael Chong: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry about that, Mr. Chong.

This meeting stands adjourned.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: No, I don't think so. We had unanimous consent to bring up the motion. Now we just need to make sure there's no debate, and then you ask if we agree—

Hon. Omar Alhabra: She's not giving unanimous consent.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Okay.

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