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Chair: Mr. Peter Schiefke



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• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 65 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, February 14, 2023, the committee meets to discuss on its study on the role of McKinsey & Company in the creation and the beginnings of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House Order of Thursday, June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

I'll introduce the witnesses. Then, I believe I will turn it over to Dr. Lewis who has a point of order.

We will begin with, from the Canada Infrastructure Bank, Ehren Cory, chief executive officer; and Frédéric Duguay, general counsel and corporate secretary. Welcome. From the Canadian Union of Public Employees, we welcome Diane Therrien, senior research officer, joining us by video conference.

We are currently in the process of trying to connect with Jennifer Carr, Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, by video conference. We hope to be able to do that shortly.

With that, I will turn it over to Dr. Lewis for the remarks that she would like to share.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to take these few minutes to have the floor to address some preliminary committee business that pertains to this study, and I thank you for this opportunity to do so.

The committee should have before them a notice of motion that should have been distributed to the entire committee. While I respect that we have witnesses here before us today who can speak to the study, I believe that it's of critical importance for us to deal with the motion, because it is central to this committee's work and the ability to adequately investigate this McKinsey connection to the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Therefore, I would like to move the following motion, which has been circulated to the members of this committee:

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(1) and (2), in relation to the committee's study examining the role of McKinsey & Company in the creation and beginnings of the Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB):

a) summonses be served on Dominic Barton, past Global Managing Director of McKinsey & Co.; Andrew Pickersgill, past Managing Partner of the Canadian Practice of McKinsey & Co.; Janice Fukakusa, Inaugural Board Chair of the CIB; Michael Sabia, past Board Chair of the CIB and past Member of the Advisory Council on Economic Growth; Bruno Guilmette, past Interim Chief Investment Officer and Board Director of the CIB; and Tamara Vrooman, Board Chair of the CIB, requiring each of them to appear at dates and times to be fixed by the Chair, but no later than May 11, 2023; and

b) the Committee strongly urges Annie Ropar, past Chief Financial Officer of the CIB, and the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Infrastructure, to appear no later than May 11, 2023.

Now, after the Conservatives served this motion on Friday, this motion to compel testimony, I understand that Ms. Vrooman has now accepted this committee's invitation to appear and that Andrew Pickersgill at McKinsey has requested that his McKinsey colleague Rob Palter appear before him.

I'm happy to amend the motion, Mr. Chair, to remove Ms. Vrooman's name, and we can also discuss whether we would like to remove Mr. Pickersgill if his colleague appears before him.

Also, after Conservatives made it clear that these witnesses will answer to the committee, I understand that current and former Liberal cabinet ministers, others at the Infrastructure Bank and McKinsey executives are also currently open to coming and checking their schedules.

Let me say for the record that until Conservatives gave notice of their intention to summon these key witnesses, we had a complete lockout of all the current and former board chairs and the directors of the Infrastructure Bank, including Mr. Michael Sabia, who is currently the deputy minister to the finance minister, Chrystia Freeland. In essence, the people with key knowledge of this study about McKinsey's contracts at the bank were not participating.

I also want to restate and reiterate that this committee agreed to study this issue unanimously. We consented to this study because of the deep connections that McKinsey & Company has had with the Canada Infrastructure Bank from its inception.

We also recognize broader issues, including the reliance on external consultants by this government. The government awarded \$22 billion in contracts to outside consulting firms to do work that is clearly part of the public service's core responsibilities. Overall, these high-priced consultants cost Canadians \$1,400 a year to every Canadian household. These decisions have led to a demoralized public service, and this has resulted in one of the largest public service strikes in Canada's history.

• (1110)

The bank was created on the recommendation of the former McKinsey global managing partner, Dominic Barton. Thereafter, we know that contracts in the amount of \$1.4 million—non-transparent contracts, sole-source contracts—were awarded to McKinsey. Several McKinsey people were also hired at the bank, including the current CEO.

This is a taxpayer-funded bank, and Canadians deserve answers of transparency. That is why I am, frankly, astonished that this committee has put out over a dozen invitations to key people who have worked for the Infrastructure Bank, who have served on its board or who have been ministers of this bank, and we have not seen them respect those invitations to provide answers to Canadians.

How can we, as a committee, complete this study and investigate the role of McKinsey in the creation and the beginning of the bank, when those who were around at the time and who were directly involved are refusing to come and testify at this committee? It is extremely disconcerting that these witnesses, most of whom are paid by taxpayers, are refusing to come.

It is shocking that these taxpayer-funded witnesses are refusing to appear before a parliamentary committee to provide answers to Canadians with regard to the bank's business dealings with McKinsey. These are taxpayer-funded executives, board chairs and hired consultants, who are paid six-figure salaries and who don't think they even have to answer to a parliamentary committee.

That is exactly why we have a problem with this bank. This committee's study shows why Canadians have a problem with this bank. The lack of transparency of this bank on contracts, on hiring, on salaries, on its project agreements, on its financing arrangements and on providing accurate information to Parliament on the status of current projects is why we have a problem with this bank. All of those things are an affront to transparency. Canadians expect, and deserve, more from the institutions they fund.

We have already cancelled one meeting because of this lack of co-operation, Mr. Chair. That cancelled committee meeting cost taxpayers. We lost valuable time as a committee to do the work Canadians expect us to do. Accountability starts at the top. Leaders are required to show up, especially leaders who earn six-figure salaries. Those whom Canadians elect should be held to the highest standards. They earn more money than the average Canadian taxpayer who is paying their salaries. That is why it is even more discouraging to members of this committee and to elected members of the House to see this unacceptable tone coming from the top.

Why is it that we have to strongly urge the current Minister of Infrastructure to show up and answer for his leadership on this bank? Why are all of the previous ministers on this file, which has

been a revolving door of ministers, not willing to answer questions about the government's flagship infrastructure policy and how it has been executed? It's clear they are afraid of transparency, and they are afraid of the hard questions. If they have nothing to hide, they should come and they should come willingly.

Let me list the current and former elected officials who have not agreed to appear before this committee to answer questions on their ties with the Infrastructure Bank and McKinsey: current minister Dominic LeBlanc, no response; former minister Amarjeet Sohi, a minister who brought in the Infrastructure Bank, declined; former minister François-Philippe Champagne, no response.

• (1115)

I will say, to her credit, that the former minister, Catherine McKenna, has agreed to appear, and she is the exception in this entire group of Liberal cabinet ministers. This utter disregard and lack of accountability is a trend that starts at the top. Furthermore, this lack of co-operation is an affront to the authority of this committee and an affront to Parliament.

In closing, I sincerely hope that those we have invited to testify will come to committee, because they have first-hand knowledge of the beginnings of the bank and its contracts with McKinsey. Unfortunately, at this point, we are already looking at cancelling the next meeting of this study, because of the lack of co-operation from this government and from this bank. We need key witnesses, former bank chairs and executives with the Canada Infrastructure Bank and McKinsey to co-operate to get to the bottom of this issue.

If they do not come voluntarily, it is fully within the committee's authority, and entirely appropriate, to adopt a motion to summon key witnesses to allow this committee to truly investigate the issues and keep the publicly funded bank accountable.

Those are our respectful submissions. I suspect that other members of this committee may also have something to say about my motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Lewis.

I have two hands up.

Ms. O'Connell, I'll turn the floor over to you, followed by Mr. Strahl.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Another day, and another conspiracy theory by the Conservatives. I'm very pleased to be here at this committee today to see that the Conservatives have not lost their ability to invent a scandal where one doesn't exist. They call this an affront to transparency. I would suggest it's an affront to reality.

The fact is that while Dr. Lewis was speaking and talking about how there's a refusal of witnesses, a refusal to conduct this study, we have witnesses sitting here ready to answer questions. Instead of answering those questions and talking about the Infrastructure Bank, the Conservatives would rather spend time creating clips and clickbait, and will probably attempt to fundraise and make money on the clickbait they would create, rather than to put questions to the witnesses sitting right here today.

The only affront we have here today is to reality within the Conservative Party, because how can anybody suggest there is no transparency while you have witnesses here...?

• (1120)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Excuse me. I have the floor and I'd appreciate—

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: You came here deliberately to cause conflict. That is your role. That has always been your role.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Excuse me. I am a member of Parliament.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: This has been a peaceful committee—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Get out of here.

The Chair: Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: —until you intervened. Is that how you speak to your colleague saying, “Get out of here?” Very eloquent.

The Chair: Dr. Lewis.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: You said that I'm not—

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: You're not going to bully us.

The Chair: Dr. Lewis, I'm going to have to call you out of order.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Canadians are going to hear from the witnesses, and we demand that.

The Chair: Dr. Lewis, Ms. O'Connell had the floor.

I think we can all respect each other. It's the standard practice here at this committee. Let's not bring what's occurring in other committees into this room.

Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's absolutely disrespectful to suggest that I, as a member of Parliament, can't sit here and that I would come to this committee simply to disrupt.

Excuse me. I have every right to be here, as anybody else, and if the member opposite—

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: You just told me to get out of here.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: —can't control herself, I think we're going to have a very long day.

The Chair: Dr. Lewis, that's the second time.

I want to make it clear at the outset that we're not going to tolerate that at this meeting. When somebody is speaking, nobody else will speak.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Will she be admonished for telling me to get out of here?

The Chair: Dr. Lewis, she did not speak when you spoke.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Will she be admonished for telling me to get out of here?

The Chair: I can tell you, based on her facial expressions, she did not appreciate what you said, but she did not interrupt you.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Will she—

The Chair: That's the kind of respect I expect every member to show each other in this room.

Thank you.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: They heckled while I was speaking, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. O'Connell did not. If you feel you're being disrespected, please bring that to the chair, and I will take action to address it.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I'm bringing it to the chair right now.

I was told, as a member, as an elected official, to get out of here. I would like her admonished for telling me to get out of here. I have a right to be here. I was elected.

The Chair: If that happens again and you see that the Chair has not taken action, then I will take action, because I want to defend your right to speak in this room. It is your right, Dr. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Yes.

The Chair: Instead of doing that, you've decided to do exactly what you are now complaining about against Ms. O'Connell. I'm not going to tolerate that in this room. I will make sure that nobody else speaks when you speak. When Ms. O'Connell speaks, I will make sure she has the right to speak. That's the way we're going to work things in this room.

Can we proceed? We have important work to do today. She has the floor. If you'd like to speak again, I will gladly put your name down after Mr. Strahl's.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Chair, I'd like an opportunity to respond to you.

Mr. Chair, I was elected by the residents of Haldimand—Norfolk to be in this room and to defend taxpayers, and another member told me, an elected official, to get out of here, saying that I don't have a place in this room. She came and she has disrespected not only Canadian taxpayers but the entire constituency of Haldimand—Norfolk, by telling an elected official to get out of the committee room. I was told to get out of here.

I would like her admonished for that unparliamentary behaviour before we proceed.

The Chair: Dr. Lewis, if you heard those words coming out of her mouth, which I did not, your recourse is to call a point of order and say, “Mr. Chair, this was said to me and I would like the following action to be taken.” That was not done. In the future, please bring that to my attention. You know that I highly respect you. I respect all members in this room, and I will make sure that everybody has the right to speak and nobody is insulted nor the constituents that they represent.

We will continue. I will provide the floor to Ms. O'Connell, and I ask that everyone to please respect one another during the proceedings of this meeting.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity.

I find the outbursts absolutely insane. I sit here and have to listen to the fact that I am questioned for my presence here today, and then we hear an outburst about the comments that Dr. Lewis made to me the second I responded to this motion. It's a constant silencing of opinions that differ from the Conservative Party. That's what we are continuing to see. I won't be silenced. The member opposite can make all the fuss she likes. That's not going to stop me from speaking my mind on the merits of this motion.

The fact is that the merits of this motion are ridiculous because we have witnesses sitting here right now. The member opposite referred to Minister LeBlanc's apparent refusal to appear and answer any questions. In fact, Mr. Chair, I sat here while Dr. Lewis asked—or perhaps it was one of her colleagues—the minister if he would appear at this very committee in which he was appearing.

He said that he was able to, except for the fact he has no knowledge of the contract decisions made by McKinsey, so he would have nothing to offer the committee with respect to the information it was requesting. That is not saying he refuses to appear and refuses to answer questions. He is simply providing the committee with an opportunity to utilize its time with the most appropriate witnesses.

I'm sure that Conservatives remember how they treated committees and witnesses when they were in power. It is quite ironic to then say... When a minister rightly says that the Infrastructure Bank is arm's length, that he had no dealings with how contracts were decided and that we'd be better suited to invite other witnesses... Those other witnesses are sitting here today, and instead of actually asking questions of those appropriate witnesses, they decide to make a big fuss, create clickbait and create a scandal where one doesn't exist.

Mr. Chair, they refuse to take yes for an answer.

I understand we have six witnesses ready for next Tuesday. We have witnesses here today. We have additional witnesses that have been invited. To point out the member opposite's own ridiculousness with this motion, as the motion is being read into the record, the member opposite is making amendments to her own motion.

That should demonstrate to Canadians how ridiculous this process is. This is nothing more than an opportunity to divert the time and attention that this committee should be spending on the very real issues that Canadians are talking about, like climate change and resilient infrastructure. I don't know, perhaps the Conservative Party still doesn't believe climate change is real and, therefore, they don't think there is a need for a study about the resilient infrastructure that this government should be investing in and that there is no merit to that. Instead, they decide to take on a study that, by the way, Mr. Chair, OGGO has already studied.

OGGO actually heard from a variety of these very same witnesses and talked about the very same contracts. The members opposite

could also just read the blues from OGGO to get the very same testimony.

That's fine. All members agreed to take this on. The witnesses are lined up. More witnesses are invited. More are scheduled, but Conservatives instead want to create a fake scandal where one doesn't exist, suggesting this committee is not fully prepared to listen, talk about these things and ask questions.

Remember, this study is not about facts. It's not about reality for the Conservatives. It's about clickbait. It's about a scandal where one doesn't exist. They already have the information. OGGO already realized that really there was no... What's the classic Atlantic saying? The juice is not worth the squeeze.

That's what we're seeing here because OGGO already moved on from it. OGGO already studied it. OGGO already realized that they got all of the information they needed and moved on.

• (1125)

The Conservatives need additional clickbait. They don't want to talk about climate change. They don't want to talk about the infrastructure that needs to be built in this country. They don't want to talk about the things that I think most members want to talk about. They want to recycle. The one thing they believe in regarding climate change is recycling scandals that don't exist. That's what we're seeing here today.

If we want to ask those questions, that's fine. Witnesses are here. Let's redo the OGGO study for all members who are interested. Let's take away time from talking about infrastructure or other transport issues to redo that OGGO study with witnesses. Let's have the Conservatives create their clickbait instead of asking questions, because, let's be honest, they're not really interested in the facts. Their minds are made up.

Why ask questions of the witnesses who are here today? Instead, create that clickbait. Create that scandal that doesn't exist. Create some fake outrage about my comments and my being here. Suggest that I don't have a right to be here and that I'm only here to disrupt.

It's unfortunate that pointing out the hypocrisy in the Conservative Party and the Conservative members equals they don't want me here. That's fine. I don't take it personally. I just see that, whenever they're challenged with reality, the Conservatives are going to act in a way such that they can no longer conduct themselves in a professional manner in this committee.

Mr. Chair, I think that the best course forward is to continue with this meeting, allow the witnesses to answer the very legitimate questions that the committee members may have and allow the study to continue, like I said, with six witnesses next Tuesday. I'm assuming there are more that the clerk can update us on.

Leave the theatrics and the fake outrage of the Conservatives for their Twitter and Facebook followers.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Strahl.

Before I do that, Madam Clerk, do you want to share the names of the members who are appearing? It might help guide our discussions.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Carine Grand-Jean): On May 9, we will have the Council of Canadians appearing, as well as the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Tamara Vrooman and Toby Sanger. I'm still waiting for Andrew Pickersgill. Robert Palter from McKinsey & Company will appear on the 11th.

I have heard from some others, who are saying that they can't appear on the suggested date, but they would be willing to appear on another date if we find one. They include Janice Fukakusa and probably Andrew Pickersgill, if we want him to appear after Mr. Palter.

The Chair: Thank you, Clerk.

Mr. Strahl, the floor is yours.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We've heard this "trying to create a scandal where one doesn't exist" before. I recall hearing that before the SNC-Lavalin scandal. We were told to just shut our mouths, to trust the government and that everything was fine. We know how that turned out.

I do think there is a bit of gaslighting here when a member tells Conservatives that they're being silenced while saying that these are conspiracy theories. We're telling another female member of Parliament to stop making a fuss, referring to them as being insane, the ridiculousness of this all, etc.

This is, quite frankly, an attempt to shut down a legitimate motion that is in order and was tabled before this committee as a result of... In the middle of last week, we had to cancel the Thursday meeting because no one would agree to come to participate in this study. Subsequent to that, Dr. Lewis wrote a letter to the chair and the clerk outlining our concern with that. She raised the matter in the House and raised the matter by motion, and suddenly there were a lot of people who had said no now saying yes. Forgive me, quite frankly, for saying that we should have trusted the process and allowed it to go on. We saw where that was leading.

Quite frankly, I understand that the Liberals don't want to go down this road and are going to oppose this motion, but there will be a time—I know they never believe it—when they are on this side of the table, and they will want parliamentary committees to be respected. They will want the supremacy of Parliament to be respected. They will expect ministers who are accountable who are

the responsible person for entities like the Canada Infrastructure Bank to be accountable and to present themselves.

We have a case where the governance website of the Canada Infrastructure Bank makes it very clear that the bank is accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Infrastructure. That is the accountability mechanism that parliamentarians have. Minister LeBlanc said he wouldn't come to the committee the last time he was here, but he did say that he would make sure that the CEO appears. He was already talking about directing traffic. I guess it would have been good. Maybe we could have called up the minister, and he could have directed which of the other Infrastructure Bank witnesses appeared. To have a minister of the Crown who is the responsible minister for the Canada Infrastructure Bank set the tone.... He set the tone when he said he would not come. Surprise, surprise—numerous other people affiliated with the bank said that they too had nothing to add.

Yes, the dynamics have changed dramatically since Dr. Lewis took action, since she moved her motion, since she indicated that we would be bringing forward a motion to summon those witnesses who had declined without a reason. A minister of the Crown has a complicated schedule, we understand that. When the invitation is declined, that's not the same as, "I will see when I can make time."

Yes, we will acknowledge that there has been a shift in the witness list since Dr. Lewis took action. Had she not, we would be cancelling additional meetings as we are cancelling a meeting on this study on Thursday.

I know this will fall on deaf ears on the Liberal side, but there is a time to recognize the precedent we are setting. If we set a precedent where witnesses in a complicated study, in a tough study, who get called to talk about things they don't really want to talk about....

Imagine if we had had our study following the debacle that was the Christmas travel season and the airlines had said to this committee, "Pound sand; we're not coming". The outrage from all members of this committee would have been palpable. We would not have tolerated it. We would not have tolerated the airlines, airports and others who were responsible for that debacle refusing to come here to answer to Canadians.

• (1135)

To suddenly just say that now it's okay, because this is something the government does not wish to talk about, I think sends a really chilling precedent, quite frankly. The minister can come and say that he doesn't want to talk about it, and suddenly all the people underneath him are giving the same answer.

The minister should be here. That shouldn't be in question. He might think he has nothing to add, but it's not up to him to make that determination. He's been invited. He's the minister responsible. We expect him to be here. I know that we can't compel the minister to come, but strongly urging him to come is I think the least we can do.

I appreciate that Dr. Lewis's motion and her words in the House have gotten results, but we're not all the way there yet. We need to move this motion. We can amend it for those who have already agreed. We'll get to the questions today. We have a two-hour meeting. Don't worry, but this is the sort of thing where Parliament has to stand up for itself, because no one else will do it for this committee. If this committee doesn't stand up for itself and say that, when we extend an invitation, you might not be available, but you don't get to just decline, especially when you're part of an entity that is part of the government apparatus, as the bank is.

We hope we will get support to move forward with this. As the chair knows, there was a very bleak outlook here just a week ago. Yes, things have shifted, but that is not by accident. That is because of the actions we've taken to assert our authority to signal to those witnesses that we intend to proceed with this study in a way that is beneficial to this committee and to all Canadians.

I'd be happy to support Dr. Lewis's motion.

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

[*Translation*]

He will be followed by Mr. Bachrach, then Mr. Badawey.

Go ahead, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to welcome the witnesses who are with us today. I hope we'll have the opportunity to hear from them very soon. If we don't have time to hear from them, I hope we'll have an opportunity to invite them back.

With respect to Ms. Lewis' motion, I must say that I'm not a fan of conspiracy theories, but I too sent a list of witnesses to the clerk and they all declined the invitation, with one exception. So I share the disappointment of my Conservative colleagues. I would have loved to see these witnesses. If they couldn't come last week or today, at least they could come later, so we could do the work we need to do in this committee.

I won't start doing the same thing as my colleagues, but I think it's unfortunate that my colleagues are making very long interventions, which means that the time we have goes very quickly. We're wasting valuable time that could be put to good use.

So I'm going to move quickly to my amendment to Ms. Lewis' motion. I hope my colleagues will support it. It is to add the names of the witnesses I had proposed, but who declined the invitation: Annie Ropar, chief administrative officer at the Canada Infrastructure Bank; Steven Robins, head of Strategy at the Canada Infrastructure Bank; Aneil Jaswal, director of Sector Strategies at the Canada Infrastructure Bank; and Bill Morneau, former Minister of Finance.

I hope we can get back to work and be productive as soon as possible.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Bachrach, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I do hope we can hear from our witnesses at some point today.

With regard to the motion before us, I think the Conservatives make a decent point, which is that these witnesses were recalcitrant until this motion landed and, all of a sudden, they have expressed a desire to accommodate the committee. My concern is that, if we don't support this motion, that recalcitrance will reappear and we won't see them at committee.

We're doing a study on McKinsey's role at the Infrastructure Bank. Most of the folks on this list have been closely involved in the Infrastructure Bank, so I think their testimony is eminently relevant to the topic we're discussing. I also support my colleague from the Bloc in wanting to add his witness to the list.

My bigger concern is that the committee has a pretty aggressive work schedule between now and when Parliament rises for the summer. I am concerned that we've already litigated the Canada Infrastructure Bank once and issued a report. I'll remind the committee that it was the NDP that brought forward the single recommendation that the bank be scrapped, so we're hardly doing the bidding of the Liberals on this one.

I am just worried that this is the infrastructure committee and we should be dealing with issues related to infrastructure. The issue of procurement is currently being fairly thoroughly discussed at another committee that is focused on procurement. I want to avoid this redundant fishing trip exercise that hasn't really proven to bear much fruit at the other committee. At least in my discussions with colleagues, that's their impression.

I am curious to know more about the role of McKinsey and the bank. I think that's something that's relevant to Canadians. For the reasons I already mentioned, I will support the motion going forward. However, I want to make sure that we put some sort of a cap on this study and that we don't jeopardize other studies, such as the investigation into high-frequency rail, which I think is going to be of interest to a lot of folks. It also has tie-ins to the Canada Infrastructure Bank. We have other studies, including Mr. Chahal's study on climate resilient infrastructure, which I believe will be interesting.

As long as we can hold the length of the study to the envisioned four meetings.... We've already lost one meeting.

I would further suggest that, if we run into a situation again where we don't have witnesses for a meeting, instead of cancelling it, we should proceed concurrently with one of the other studies. Perhaps that means the chair might ask us to submit witnesses for those other studies so that we can have them in our back pocket and proceed as we have before in situations when witnesses haven't appeared.

I do think there are outstanding questions. We've been highly critical of the role of high-priced consultants, particularly the impact it has on the public service. I am very keen to ask questions about McKinsey's role, but I want to make sure we're not covering ground that is being covered more appropriately at OGGO currently.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Chair, and hand the floor back to you.

• (1145)

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

I have Mr. Badawey, followed by Ms. O'Connell.

I just want to add to your point, Mr. Bachrach, or to clarify. Because we knew we wouldn't have the witnesses for this Thursday, we actually have moved to begin Mr. Chahal's study on sustainable and resilient infrastructure. The clerk has done an exemplary job of trying to secure witnesses for that. I think we're already at three or four, and we're going to be picking up the phone to try to get more so we don't lose, as you said, the important time of this committee.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I mentioned it only 20 seconds ago. Our clerk is incredible.

The Chair: There have been thorough discussions with Dr. Lewis over the weekend trying to make this work out.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Badawey, followed by Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity.

The first thing I'll say is that I appreciate the efforts of OGGO. They had 11 meetings, I believe, on this issue, with a lot of content, I'm sure, gathered throughout those 11 meetings. Mr. McCauley, from the Conservatives, as well as Mr. Barrett, Ms. Block and Ms. Kusie, along with the Liberals and the NDP deserve a lot of credit for bringing a lot of the information forward.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the clerk, I am hoping that we would have the opportunity to collect some of that information to complement what we are going to accrue over the next three meetings.

Other than that, my interest right now is with the two individuals who took their valuable time to come here today. I am hoping we can deal with this motion and move on with the meeting so that we can hear from the two witnesses and do the work we should be doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

We'll have a final word from Ms. O'Connell, because I don't see any other hands up.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to get some clarification. With this motion, as well as the witnesses who are already lined up, as well as the amendment that was moved, how many witnesses are we now requiring? With some rough math, I'm thinking we're at 18 being proposed, plus you may have additional ones who are not actually on this list.

The Clerk: Do you mean the names in the motion and the amendment in total?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Yes.

The Chair: As well as, I believe, what Monsieur Barsalou-Duval had put forward, which is supported....

The Clerk: In the four names added by Mr. Barsalou-Duval, there is actually one name that is already involved in the motion of Ms. Lewis.

In total it will be—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I think I counted eight in the motion. I didn't know how many Mr....

The Clerk: I'm just double-checking.

I think I have 11.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

We have six more for next Tuesday.

The Clerk: I have five fully confirmed.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Okay. That will be 15. We have two here today. How many are on screen? There are two more, so that's 19. If we're extending the names, then I would think that, for equity, the Liberals, and the NDP, if they have additional witnesses, would be able to put forward additional names. I would assume that's the process in which the committee operates in terms of inviting witnesses.

With some rough math, we're at 19.

You have approximately four witnesses per meeting, so taking that into account, and the fact that on Thursday the availability wasn't there, and also taking into account that if the minister is reinvented, usually that is a stand-alone hour, or whatnot. That's generally the practice. The committee can determine however they want, so let's take away half a meeting for witnesses. Now you have approximately 20 to potentially 25 to 30 more witnesses for a study that OGGO has spent 12 meetings on.

Does anybody know how many witnesses, in those 12 meetings, OGGO called? Maybe not offhand—that might not be a fair question—but I think that would be a good question to answer.

Let's say we're at about 20 to 25 witnesses. We have maybe eight committee meetings left. I'm just trying to figure out if this is going to be the priority study of the committee. With about 30 more witnesses potentially, 12 meetings at OGGO.... If we look at having the same kind of spectrum that OGGO had, 12 more meetings for this committee to study it, and always taking into account taxpayers' value of committee work, we see potentially 24 meetings on this, and we only have eight more meetings, maybe more, given timing and witness scheduling.

This study would essentially eat up the remainder of this session, with the exception of maybe Thursday, since there's already been another study confirmed. Again, the motion is to summon these witnesses—it's not a request. If that motion passes, we would be potentially, again, in fairness, adding on the appropriate number of Liberal witnesses, which we'd put forward. We have the potential of eating up the rest of this committee's time on this study.

Is that a generally fair assessment, given those numbers?

I just think the committee should understand. Twenty witnesses summoned, plus give or take, plus Liberal witnesses for, like, fairness—eight, potentially.... My math on how many meetings, give or take, because I think we don't have a day for.... There are two Fridays of committee time that are going to be eaten up for conventions, so I don't know if resources will be redistributed for committees overall. I'm saying eight as a safe number, but give or take.

With this number of witnesses, at four witnesses, roughly, minus half a meeting for a minister, if that should happen—usually half a meeting if there are officials—so that's a full meeting, we're at.... This is the entirety of this committee's schedule. I just think that's a fair thing to put on the table before we vote.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thanks very much, Ms. O'Connell.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Bachrach.

I want to ask that we all consider whether or not this discussion will go on much longer. If it does, out of respect for the witnesses perhaps we will let the witnesses go for the day. I just want to put that in the minds of members. It's not my decision to make. I want to put that out there.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do think that's something we should address, as it's coming up to the top of the hour. My hope would be that we could proceed with testimony for the second hour.

My desire would be to vote on the motion and the amendment proposed by Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

I'm going to hazard a second amendment, and I'll ask you, Mr. Chair, if it's in order at this time. I would ask that we amend the motion to include, "(c) and that the study comprise a total of four meetings".

This would require all parties to prioritize their witness lists, put forward their most important witnesses and allow the committee to conclude its work on the study in a timely way. We've talked about a lot of very important topics at this committee and have allocated only four or five meetings to those topics and then concluded with a report.

There are huge swaths of Canada that lack passenger bus service, yet how many days of witnesses did we hear from on that issue?

An hon. member: Four.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Yes, it was four. I just think it's a reasonable amount of time. We've already lost one meeting. We have wit-

nesses here today, and my desire would be that we complete the study in a timely way. I'll make that amendment and look forward to voting.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Just for clarification on the four meetings, would those be above and beyond the meeting we're having today and the meeting we've booked on Tuesday? The second point would be, how many maximum will we have at each meeting? You can have four meetings with 10 witnesses at each meeting, or are we putting a cap at, for example, four, five or six, which would give us a number of 24 or 20 in total?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'm agnostic on the number of witnesses at meetings. My preference would be that we schedule as many as possible, and we have two panels of three to five witnesses per panel. We've done that in the past. I think we should act efficiently, try to get the information that Canadians deserve and then move on to our other work.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I want to get to the witnesses as well, but on this procedurally, I just think.... At the finance committee, we used to have six or seven witnesses per hour, and it's really difficult. You have witnesses there who don't get a single question in a round. I'm proposing that perhaps.... I actually support the idea of capping the number of meetings as well, as then every party will have to prioritize witnesses. If we're into the 30-witness range, potentially, I think there has to be a prioritization.

The committee has already agreed to do this study for four meetings, so I don't have a problem with that. It's the getting out of control and the taking over of committee business for a study that's already had 12 meetings, so I propose that we move this to a subcommittee meeting where members can determine the appropriateness or the procedural functioning of a four-meeting.... This is one and this eats into that, but these are witnesses who were listed. Then, for the remainder of three meetings, you need a prioritization in terms of whether you want six witnesses, knowing that you probably won't be able to get questions to all of them.

It allows us to move on with this meeting, and you can, most appropriately, Mr. Chair, between you, the clerk and representatives from all parties, determine that prioritization of witnesses, as well as that fairness for each party to have their number of witnesses in a fashion that actually makes the meetings have a point to them, where you're going to have enough time to question every witness. I would propose, because I think it's important, that we work on that discussion at a subcommittee meeting where we can really iron out those details, and then we can move on with this meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Just briefly, I would note that the original motion called for at least four meetings. We envisioned that this might go longer. We did the same with Mr. Chahal's infrastructure adaptation study. We said that it would be at least four meetings. We envisioned at the time that this might require a little bit more, which is why we worded it that way.

If this were simply about a witness list, perhaps we could take it to subcommittee. This is about a summons, though. We are talking about summoning witnesses here. I don't know that we can take that off-line because then that would happen Thursday. At best, we take time out of the Thursday meeting. I think the risk, then, becomes that we lose that Tuesday meeting if we don't deal with this now. It's 11:59, and I'd like to give an hour to this panel.

I just raise those two points. In the original motion we dealt with timing, and I worry that, if we don't pass this now, we will end up in a similar spot where we don't have witnesses for a future meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Dr. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Since this is the motion that I've put forth, I'm going to ask that, if there are no other comments, we proceed to voting on the motion.

• (1200)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order.

While I appreciate the attempt to vote on the motion, we've actually had two amendments, so we would actually have to deal with each amendment first. We've all been speaking to everything, but realistically we should be speaking to one amendment at a time and then voting. We can't actually shut down debate on a motion that has been amended three times, including by the mover herself.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

I believe that the amendment put forward by Mr. Barsalou-Duval—and I just conferred with the clerk on this—was a friendly amendment. I believe it was even supported by Mr. Bachrach, so I think we don't have to deal with that one. We do, however, have to deal with the amendment proposed by Ms. O'Connell, which we'll deal with first, followed by the amendment proposed by Mr. Bachrach for four meetings.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I'd like to refine mine a little bit to reflect the conversation we just had, if you welcome that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It might—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have some procedural questions before we vote.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It might build some consensus based on the comments. I believe that if we worded the amendment as the following, "That the study comprise a total of four meetings, excluding the May 2 meeting, with a maximum of six witnesses per meeting", that would address the concern that we've already eaten up a meeting and the concern that, if we have 12 witnesses per meeting, we're not going to do them justice. My hope is that we could come together around that and move on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

I'm looking around and seeing some nodding heads.

Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

While I appreciate the attempt to clarify, the "excluding" part is concerning. This is what we already agreed to as a committee, the four meetings. That's going to change again the makeup.... I would like to see the amendment that the Bloc made in terms of those additional witnesses.

There's no opportunity clarified in this motion for the Liberals to put forward their appropriate witnesses. If we're just adding names from the floor, that's not how committees put forward witnesses—keeping in mind that we always do it with a proportionality based on seats. To leave this meeting here today without the opportunity for us to move forward with names is not how things are done. That is why I suggested that it go to the subcommittee, where there's an opportunity to see all the lists—all the priorities.

I think it's not realistic to have 20 to 30 people. Even if you want four meetings moving forward, you'll have panels where there are people summoned who will not have questions in a one-hour panel. What happens on days where there are no witnesses available? I think the clerk already spoke to some where, on the dates that witnesses were offered, they weren't available, but they were willing to appear. You're now getting into a situation of how many meetings this will go into. Will you have panels of six people and a panel of one person if there isn't availability on a certain date?

I think that making this substantive committee decision in terms of how a meeting will look based on witnesses is really the job of the subcommittee. There isn't an ability for the Liberals on the floor to bring forward names to respect proportionality of witnesses. I don't think that's how this committee should get into....

The Conservatives moved a motion, but now we're adding amendments, adding additional names without the ability to also do that ourselves. We're limiting it to another four meetings without the ability to have that discussion around how we would fit in that many witnesses in four meetings. I don't think it's realistic. I was willing to move on with this meeting for the sake of the witnesses who are here, but I'm not prepared to be rushed through a motion without being able to put forward our witnesses and our perspectives on what functions well.

I'd like to discuss each amendment as they move forward, so right now, I'm discussing the amendment by Mr. Bachrach.

I'm concerned that we are moving to four meetings excluding this one, which is the wording. I think it should be four "in addition to", but I get it. We're making up motions as we go. Again, there's no opportunity.... Usually we have motions with "additional witnesses must be provided by this date or that date". I'm concerned, procedurally, with how this is going, so I'd like to speak to each amendment moving forward.

I'll stop here. As I said, I was prepared to move forward with these witnesses, but I also think that having witnesses here and drafting motions on the fly is why we don't do that. That's why we have a subcommittee to work out these details. If members don't want to move in that direction, then I think we're going to have to get into the nitty-gritty, and that's going to take as much time as it's going to take.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Mr. Bachrach, did you have your hand up?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bachrach has the floor.

He will be followed by Mr. Badawey, then Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: My concern is that, if we go to a subcommittee, we're going to eat up more time and it's going to land back here anyway. My desire, if it's at all possible, is that....

Maybe folks around the table can just tug their ear if they plan to talk out the clock. If that's the case, then we can adjourn and go on to better things with our day.

The intention here is to nail this down, empower the clerk to move forward on the administrative side of things and then get to a place where we're actually asking witnesses questions. We've had lots of panels. We have a two-hour meeting. We have three witnesses per panel. That's six witnesses per meeting. Some of the witnesses don't get questions. That may be because their testimony is either complete or doesn't prompt members to ask them any questions. I don't think that's the end of the world.

To Ms. O'Connell's point about how witnesses are brought forward, parties have submitted lists to the clerk before in order of priority. The clerk has started at the top of the list and invited the witnesses. We have a limited number of meetings. Once all those spots are filled up, then that's the study.

My desire is to get to a point where we have some certainty around the length of the study. I think the wording "in addition to" is more clear than the wording I proposed on the fly. I'm happy to accept that as a friendly-ish amendment.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: It's as friendly as I get.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It's as friendly as she gets; that's right.

My desire is to vote on this thing so that we can hear from Mr. Cory and Mr. Duguay and hopefully have some testimony at this meeting.

We have four more meetings. Let's talk about the Canada Infrastructure Bank, talk about McKinsey and then put forward a report and move on to another topic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Badawey has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There's a lot to think about. I do have some concerns with respect to the direction that this is all going in. There has to be a level of fairness here where, if we're going to start summoning people, we have that opportunity to do so, and of course really nail down that list that we might in fact be doing that with.

I would ask, Mr. Chairman, that we maybe take a breath here and ask for a five- or 10-minute suspension just so that we can discuss with our teams the direction we'd prefer to take.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Chair, could we get a written copy of the witnesses submitted by Mr. Barsalou-Duval? I didn't write them out, and I just want to know who they are. Perhaps we could take a break and get those names so that we can actually discuss the contents of the amendments on the floor.

I appreciate that amendments can happen on the floor—I have no issue with that—but I would like to see those names to see what I'm actually voting on.

The Chair: Colleagues, I think it might be a good idea for us to convene on the sidelines to try to work this out and perhaps avoid a lengthy discussion on this and also a subcommittee meeting.

With that, I will adjourn for 10 minutes. Hopefully, we'll come back to the table with something that we can all vote on and possibly move on to the witnesses.

Actually, that's a discussion.... They're here for two hours. If we come back in 10 minutes, it will be 12:20. If we vote by 12:25, we'd still have 35 minutes of witness testimony.

Does it still make sense, colleagues?

An hon. member: They're here for two hours.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Just as a point of clarification, we're suspending and not adjourning.

The Chair: We're suspending for 10 minutes.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay.

The Chair: The meeting is suspended for 10 minutes.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1215)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I believe that there have been discussions and that we have come to some form of consensus.

I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Bachrach, to read the revised version that we hope to be able to vote on.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, the revised amendment is that the motion be amended by adding, after the words "Thursday, May 11, 2023", the following:

c) That the study comprise a total of four meetings in addition to the May 2 meeting, with a maximum of six witnesses per meeting.

The intention here would be that, once we've set those parameters, we defer this discussion to a subcommittee meeting where the parties can discuss the prioritization of witnesses and the precise list of witnesses who would be appearing at those meetings.

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

We've all heard the revised amendment, so let's have a vote.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: We can now move....

Yes, go ahead, Mr. Badawey.

• (1220)

Mr. Vance Badawey: As part of that amendment, are we adjourning debate to go to a subcommittee meeting?

That wasn't in the motion. Okay, we'll go with that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Procedurally, Mr. Chair, because this is an amendment and not a stand-alone motion, I think we have to deal with the other amendment and the main motion as amended.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: He's moving that we adjourn debate on that to move to subcommittee.

Mr. Vance Badawey: What I'm asking for, Mr. Chairman, is to adjourn debate so that we can go to subcommittee and follow the direction that Mr. Bachrach has already mentioned with respect to—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

An amendment by itself does not convey the will of the committee unless the motion it amends is also carried. The clerk can correct me on that, but that's my understanding. If we adjourn debate at this point, we have an amendment that's been carried, but we have nothing to attach it to. Therefore, the terms of the amendment would not be binding on the committee.

I appreciate that we want to have the subcommittee meeting to hash out some of the business matters, but to the very first point I made, it seems like the summons is also somewhat germane here. The witnesses have not proven to be co-operative in the absence of a summons. I do think that it behooves us to deal with the Conservative's main motion in order to get those witnesses queued up.

I also acknowledge that their list of witnesses in this summons is quite long. The amendment sets a limited number of meetings, so we might not hear from all of the witnesses who are summoned. Some of them might get a "thanks but no thanks" message from us.

I don't think we can move to a subcommittee at this point and adjourn debate. I'll leave it at that. That's my impression of where we need to go.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

There's a point of order from Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

I was trying not to interrupt Mr. Bachrach in the interest of moving along. However, it's my understanding that Mr. Badawey moved a motion to adjourn debate, referring the motion to subcommittee. It's my understanding that there's no debate on the adjourning debate motion.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: That is correct, but he didn't move that as a motion. I heard him ask if that was part of the amendment that we had made, and it wasn't.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I thought he moved the motion to adjourn debate. If he'd like to—

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It would be in order. I'm happy to vote on a motion to adjourn debate.

The Chair: The clerk just informed me that it is not debatable to adjourn.

We'll entertain Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: To the clerk, just for clarity, can I have a comment before I put the motion? I know I can't do it after. I'm asking if I can do it before.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Can you clarify that a vote "yes" means that we adjourn debate?

Mr. Vance Badawey: I would put that motion forward so that we can carry on with Taylor's direction. I would put a motion forward to adjourn debate.

The Chair: It's a recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We have gone forward with Mr. Bachrach's amendment. Are there any hands up for discussion?

Yes, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Are we moving to the next amendment?

• (1225)

The Chair: The amendment was a friendly amendment.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'm sorry. No, it's the Bloc amendment.

The Chair: The Bloc amendment was a friendly amendment.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I'm sorry. With all due respect, Mr. Chair, there's no such thing as a friendly amendment.

The Chair: I know there's no such thing. If you would like to speak to it, you definitely can.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: No. Could we first hear the amendment and the names again?

The Chair: Sure.

[Translation]

Go ahead, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: My intention was to add Steven Robins, head of Strategy at the Canada Infrastructure Bank, Aneil Jaswal, director of Sector Strategies at the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and Bill Morneau, former minister of Finance.

Those are the three people I'd like to add to the Conservative motion list.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Are there any other questions, thoughts or concerns?

Go ahead, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): I'm trying to make some sense of this in terms of the number of witnesses we are talking about bringing forward to the committee. Mr. Bachrach suggested three per panel or whatever, so we're going to add more names to what appears to be a long list.

How do we determine the priority for the list and the proportional representation for each of the parties at the table?

I'm not sure if this amendment makes a lot of sense when we're trying to restrict the number of people we're bringing to the committee for four meetings.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Go ahead, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Ultimately, that's the concern I had, hence the reason for the motion I brought forward to end debate. It was because the Conservatives have quite a lengthy list here. Trying to fit just those people into four meetings is going to be a challenge.

The reason I wanted to bring it to business planning was to give all the parties the opportunity to look at the people they would like to summon to come out within those four meetings. With the limited amount of time that Mr. Bachrach has put forward in his motion—by the way, I might add, his supported and past motion—we should all, as per the usual practice of this committee, have that same opportunity that the Conservatives have now presented to us with respect to their wish to have these individuals summoned to come out to the meeting.

Therefore, we, the Bloc and the NDP should have that same opportunity. Hence, once again—I apologize for being repetitive—it's for the business planning meeting in the subcommittee to establish that. That way, everyone has a fair opportunity to bring members they would like to summon, as the Conservatives have put forward now, for transparency. We can have that same opportunity to bring members we may be interested in summoning.

That's the problem I have right now. If we move on to this motion, we're going to have these people being asked with no opportunity for the Bloc, the NDP or the Liberals to do the same thing. I know we can do that at a future meeting, but it's very hard, because we're going to get into the same debate we're in right now, wasting the time of witnesses we should be listening to. That is the irony behind all of this discussion.

We can just nail it down during a business planning session, which, by the way, wouldn't count as a meeting. It would simply be

a business planning session. We can nail down everyone's wishes to have those summoned to come out to this meeting, or to one of the four meetings, and be dealt with. It's very simple.

Now, here we are, spending an hour and a half discussing an issue that could have been dealt with very simply by adjourning debate, dealing with it at the subcommittee and then moving forward with the wishes of all parties in terms of the people that they, all of us, want to present to then be summoned to come out to the committee meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

I have Monsieur Barsalou-Duval, followed by Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Bachrach, did you want to add your name to that list?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Absolutely.

The Chair: Before I do that, it looks like this discussion may go on a little longer. I'm wondering if there's any objection to my asking the witnesses to leave for the day, out of courtesy.

Seeing no objection, I would like to take a minute to thank the witnesses who are joining us virtually, as well as our two witnesses in person today, for their time. We apologize that we were not able to ask the questions and hear your testimony. We hope to have you back at another point, but for now, unfortunately, we have to continue with the discussion we're having.

I thank you once again. You're free to leave.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, the floor is yours.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a brief comment on what has been said. I'm trying to understand the Liberals' discomfort with the motion. It seems to me that many of the things they asked for or raised have been incorporated into the motion through amendments, including one by Mr. Bachrach.

The motion doesn't propose a list of witnesses for the committee's study, but rather a list of people summoned to appear. Those are two different things. All parties have already had the opportunity to submit their witness lists to the clerk, and I assume that in the way she sets up the witness panels for our committee meetings, she is taking into account the way it is traditionally done.

In my opinion, it's not a question of inviting more witnesses proposed by one person or another, but rather of ensuring that the witnesses who have already been asked to appear and who didn't seem to want to co-operate will be present so that the committee can do its work properly.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Go ahead, Mr. Strahl.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: There are a couple of things. I agree with Mr. Barsalou-Duval that these are not new witnesses we have table-dropped here today. These are witnesses that were submitted by the deadline to the clerk and from whom we received indication that they had declined or ignored the request of this committee.

I would invite, as the Bloc Québécois has done.... They also had witnesses, three witnesses here, on their list who either ignored or declined the request. They have added them. We're not pulling these people off the street all of a sudden. The clerk has these witnesses.

I would encourage on the Liberal side, if the clerk has witnesses, to add them to this motion. That is what we're talking about here. We're not talking about reopening the witness list. The witnesses in this motion, both from the Conservatives and from the Bloc, were invited before the deadline and, for one reason or another, did not agree to appear. Those are the witnesses we're talking about. We're not talking about reopening the call for witnesses, as far as I'm aware.

I would also indicate, now that Mr. Bachrach's amendment has been accepted, that the date in the motion would need to change to May 18 in the two places, in part a) and part b). If we're going with a meeting on climate adaptation for infrastructure on Thursday, that would then need to be four meetings by May 18 as opposed to by May 11. That amendment necessitates a change to our original motion.

I know we indicated as well that we would be willing to consider that amendment if the clerk had firm acceptance from the witnesses who were on our original motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Chahal.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

There were substantial changes made with the amendment and it's my understanding that some witnesses were dropped today, from what I heard from our colleague, Monsieur Barsalou-Duval. From what our colleague, Mr. Strahl, said, I think we do need an opportunity to review the witnesses and some of the conversations we've had today.

My concern is that now we've gone into a lengthy debate and really wasted the committee's time. Unfortunately, we had to send the folks who were testifying home. I wanted to hear from them today. That's why we started this. We could have done this post-meeting or through committee business. It's extremely unfortunate that the theatrics here have led down a path of wasting our time at committee and not getting any work done. Working on building consensus together has been completely disregarded.

We have another report we're working on and a study that we've been preparing for. I know the clerk has also been preparing to get witnesses. We've all been working on that in good faith by working together.

There's a substantial change with the amendment that was made by Mr. Bachrach. That does also change things. New names were added. We do need to have a conversation on the proportionality and the number of witnesses. With that, I have a number of other witnesses that I think we may need to look at as well.

A lot of conversation has been going on. For the record, could we get a clarification, Mr. Chair, of all the witnesses that are being proposed or have been previously proposed through the study, just so we can have a better idea of the parties and the witnesses' names that have been put forward? It's just so we can be clear.

I got Mr. Barsalou-Duval's witnesses. I believe there are three names. Is that correct?

Could we get an accounting of the names of the witnesses and find out who, so we can make sure? Then I may have others to add as well, or maybe not, depending on what the list is.

That's just to start with.

● (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chahal.

Are you looking for information right now? Would you like the clerk to read that off for you?

Mr. George Chahal: That would be preferable, just so all our colleagues have an opportunity to have a direct and clear understanding of who they are and where we're at.

Madam Clerk, could you provide that to committee members?

The Clerk: Just to confirm, do you need the entire witness list for this study? It's 38 or 39 names.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Chair, I have a point of order. I'm just worried that we're dealing with something that typically isn't public during a meeting. I have no trouble with the witness list being read out, but it just seems not germane to what we're talking about.

If the Liberals have witnesses they're having trouble getting cooperation from, they can add them to the summons list. If there are other witnesses who are co-operative, they can be added to the list. We do have a very informal and effective process, with the clerk's help, of getting witnesses to appear and organizing their schedules.

It just feels like now we're well into the area of just trying to delay the meeting and talk out the clock. We have a motion in front of us. I'm sure the Liberals are going to vote against it. That's fine, but let's get on with voting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

With regard to your point of whether or not we should be doing this in camera, is it the will of the committee to move in camera?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I have a point of order before you move to that.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. O'Connell.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

In reaction to Mr. Bachrach's point, it was actually Mr. Strahl who said that these witnesses the Bloc have proposed were already submitted, that every party had the chance to submit and that they're only adding them to the summons list.

However, we don't see who each party proposes. That was the point of asking for all 30 witnesses. If the suggestion is that they followed the process, followed the deadline, submitted their witnesses on time and these three were already submitted, how do we know that? We don't see the list. That was what is triggering the request.

If you'd like to do it in a different format, that's fine. The clarity is that Mr. Strahl put on the record that these witnesses were already pursued, but I don't know that and I don't think other members of this committee know that.

The Chair: I'll go back to you, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Perhaps the clerk can simply confirm, for Ms. O'Connell's edification, that the witnesses that Mr. Barsalou-Duval added to the summons list were part of the original invitation list.

Mr. George Chahal: Chair, I believe I also have the floor, unless there's another point of order.

The Chair: In order to be able to speak more freely about this and ensure we're able to dive into a discussion about witnesses, can we move in camera? Is there any objection to moving in camera?

• (1240)

Mr. Mark Strahl: We'll move back out at the appropriate time.

The Chair: We'll move in camera, and if it's the will of the committee to move back out of in camera, we can do that, as well.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: On the motion to move in camera, if there is one, I don't see the point, because nothing we're talking about should necessarily be shielded from the public. The public deserves to see how the committee tackles issues like this.

What we've proposed is entirely reasonable. Mr. Barsalou-Duval added witnesses to the list. He has confirmed they were part of the original invitation and that they haven't responded positively to the invitation. We're at a point where we can vote on the motion. The motion is very clear. I don't want to move in camera just so that the decorum of the meeting can decline even further than it already has.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

We'll go to Mr. Rogers, followed by Mr. Chahal.

Mr. George Chahal: I had the floor, but I'll defer to Mr. Rogers and then I'll come back.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Chahal. That's fine, and Mr. Badawey will follow.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Actually, Mr. Chair, before we vote on any further motions, I'd like to see a written copy so we can see exactly what we're voting on in both official languages.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, for clarification, are you asking for the amended version?

Mr. Churence Rogers: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, the request has been made. We're just waiting on translation, so we're going to try to get that for you as—

Mr. Churence Rogers: Mr. Chair, I suggest we suspend for a couple of minutes while we're waiting.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, we will move on to additional speakers in an effort to save time, but we are adequately working on your request. We'll hopefully be able to get that for you as soon as possible, before the end of the meeting.

We'll turn the floor over to Mr. Chahal, and then I have Mr. Badawey, followed by Mr. Strahl.

Mr. George Chahal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It would be beneficial. I'm glad Mr. Rogers raised that, because I would like to see what has been amended and changed.

Just to go back to the point that a list was provided, we've had substantial changes made to today's meeting. Number one, we had a motion dropped on the floor to disrupt this meeting at the beginning of it, and we, therefore, wasted an hour and a half of our time for two witnesses. They were sent home. The Conservatives dropped a motion and spent a lengthy amount of time presenting and then discussing it.

Also, Mr. Chair, to Madam Clerk, I heard Mr. Strahl amend or change some dates, and I just want to be clear that we captured those and that at some point we could just make sure of that. I believe they were May 16 and 18, or that May 18 was going to be held for the other study we are doing, so that's going to impact the witnesses for that. I just want clarification with respect to this study and the date Mr. Strahl provided, the 18th, and what will happen at that meeting, because that does impact the work of our next study if that's the new order.

Going back to the list, it's unclear to me. It would be nice to have the list that was provided previously and the list added today to see if there are any changes to that list. I believe the clerk is working diligently to capture that information and to make sure it's provided to all committee members so we do have an understanding of the new individuals added and of whether any changes have been made to respect proportionality so that all parties and members have the opportunity to do so.

I do want to note that we did ask to go into committee business to have these conversations so that we wouldn't be wasting the committee's time. Unfortunately, we wasted a lot of time today and in previous committees discussing matters that are for committee business. This committee has a process in place whereby it can go into committee business to have these conversations. I believe it's a waste of committee members' time here to not be hearing the testimony of witnesses and getting into the details of the studies that are approved.

I'm extremely displeased with what's happened today at this meeting. I hope we can work collaboratively through committee business and in future meetings to do the work of Parliament through this very important committee and through future studies that are extremely important, from what we've seen, in terms of building resilient infrastructure across Canada.

That's my focus for the next committee, because across the country we've all been impacted. I know parts of the country are still without power. I want to get to that study as well, because it's important for me and my constituents, but I do not want to waste committee time on committee business.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1245)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: On a point of order—

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

Dr. Lewis, go ahead.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I just want to state something as a point of clarification. The motion was not dropped today. It was brought on notice.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Lewis.

I have Mr. Badawey, Mr. Strahl and Ms. O'Connell, followed by Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Can I make a point of order, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You can always, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: The subcommittee cannot deal with a motion to summon witnesses. Can someone clarify that? Can a subcommittee summon witnesses?

The Chair: I will confer with the clerk, and we'll get back to you shortly.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: I want to make sure we are on the same page, because that was suggested.

The Chair: While the clerk is confirming that information, was your hand up to be added to the speakers list, or was it for that point of order, Mr. Bachrach?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It was for both.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: It was for all of the above and more.

The Chair: Just to confirm, Mr. Bachrach, before we turn the floor over to Mr. Badawey, no, it cannot be dealt with or adopted by a subcommittee. It has to be adopted by the committee.

Mr. Badawey, the floor is yours.

Is it a point of order, Ms. O'Connell?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Yes. Can I get that same clarification that subcommittees can make recommendations that committees then adopt? The discussion could actually happen at the subcommittee, and then the motion or the proposal would be adopted at committee.

I just want to make sure that procedurally, just so we're on the same page, it can in fact be dealt with at subcommittee and adopted by the whole committee after, or ratified, which would be the right term.

The Chair: I'll turn it over to the clerk for greater clarification.

The Clerk: It can adopt a motion and present it by a report to the main committee. The motion will need to be adopted by the main committee. Usually it's a report by the main committee and the discussion happens here, by the committee. This is presently what [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Clerk.

[*English*]

I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bachrach is correct, partially, in terms of the discussion at the subcommittee. However, as the clerk has stated, anything that happens at subcommittee has to be ratified at committee, period. That was my whole point of bringing it to the subcommittee. It's so we don't burn meetings.

Now that this motion was brought forward, and in fairness to all parties around this table including the presenters of the motion, it gives us all the opportunity to look at our list that we submitted to the clerk and revisit those lists to see who we would otherwise summon to this meeting.

The motion that I brought up earlier goes to Mr. Bachrach's point, which I think is valid. We just passed a motion, by you, sir, that limits us to four meetings. When are we going to have that discussion, in fairness to all the parties, to divvy up the time within those four meetings for the people that we all may want to summon?

We asked 11 witnesses to come out. Only one came out. We would like to revisit that and possibly summon one of those 10 to come out. That's fair. You may want to do the same. The Bloc may want to do the same. The fairness here is to go into a subcommittee meeting and, within that four-meeting time slot, give everyone the opportunity to put a list forward to summon. If we pass this motion now, we won't have that opportunity.

That's all we're asking for. It's to simply go into business planning in subcommittee. I'm looking at the list right now and I see names on here that I would love to summon to come out. Patrick Brown, the mayor of Brampton, didn't even respond. I would love to be able to summon someone like that.

• (1250)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I think he would be a wonderful witness.

Mr. Vance Badawey: My point is that all we're asking for with this motion is to have the same opportunity to populate those four meetings with some of our witnesses we may want to summon. Why can't we have that opportunity? If we pass this and we have to come back to this at the next meeting, we're probably going to burn another meeting. I don't want to do that. I want to get to work here.

With that said, while the Conservatives sit on the other side and laugh at this whole process, we're taking it seriously.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Vance Badawey: Can we hear the laughter across on that side? Mr. Chair, it's actually comical.

We were talking earlier on about respect. It's unfortunate.

Did you want the floor, Mr. Strahl?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Eventually.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Okay, then put your hand up.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I'm already on the list.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Perfect.

That's what we're asking for, Mr. Chair.

Again it's unfortunate that this committee can't look at respecting all the parties so that they have the same opportunity that's being proposed in this motion. It's that simple. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

Now, lo and behold, Mr. Strahl has the floor.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you very much. Isn't that convenient.

Mr. Chair, this motion has been on notice for several days. Dr. Lewis gave notice in advance of even moving the motion to the clerk and the chair that she was upset and was considering doing this based on what was happening with the invitations. The Liberal Party has had ample time to consider an amendment to this motion as the Bloc did.

Mr. Badawey keeps saying that the Bloc hasn't had time. They've done it. They've given us their list of three individuals they believe should be added to the summons list. That will be accepted at the appropriate time.

I do note that we are five minutes from the end of this meeting. Mr. Chair, I don't know if this will affect your future planning, but the expectation is that this will be the business of the committee until it is disposed of. I can inform you as a courtesy that this will be the first item of business at the Thursday meeting. We are not prepared to just let this continue to go on. We have a motion that could have been dealt with an hour ago, which the parties on this side of the table were all prepared to do.

We can talk out the clock here, as has apparently been the agenda from the Liberal side, but it will be brought forward again on Thursday, where we will continue to debate this until such time as

we have a final vote. Perhaps they will be prepared with their list at that time. That's fine.

We will not proceed with normal committee business with a motion on the floor. The expectation will be that we will either move this motion again or that we will deal with it on Thursday at 11 o'clock.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

I have Ms. O'Connell, followed by Mr. Bachrach, followed by Mr. Barsalou-Duval, followed by Mr. Badawey.

Ms. O'Connell, the floor is yours.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We just heard it. We just heard the not-so-veiled threats by the Conservatives that they want to hold up the work of this committee until they get their way on this motion.

Until they get what they want, they won't let this committee move forward on anything else. It's out there on the record. It's what we've been saying.

How many times did we say we wanted the witnesses to remain, to ask them questions? We all came prepared with questions for the witnesses. They sat here for nearly two hours. The members opposite could have moved this motion at the end of the meeting.

To summarize, we moved amendments to move this debate to the subcommittee, which would then report back to this committee with recommendations dealing with all of this. I spoke to that amendment, talking about how we could get satisfaction through working through these details in terms of the number of witnesses and the proportionality for parties. I said then that, if we move this to the subcommittee, we get the concerns addressed that we have and we can move on with witnesses, but no, the Conservatives didn't accept that. It's "our way or no way". That's not how committee works. That's not how Parliament works.

Dr. Lewis talked about the residents who sent her here. Guess what, residents sent us here too, and we have every bit of a right to speak and say we want additional witnesses for this study. The suggestion was made that the witnesses being proposed in the amendments being proposed to this motion were on the original list. We have no idea of knowing that.

Mr. Badawey rightly pointed out that there is a difference in every committee. I've sat on a lot of committees. In every committee, every party submits their witness lists. Sometimes witnesses aren't available. Sometimes they don't want to appear. The clerk moves on in booking and scheduling those lists and tries to keep it as proportional as possible.

What we have here is a very different process, because this is now demanding that witnesses appear and when they appear. In doing so, it's not the normal process. Therefore, every party needs that proportionality to be able to submit their same demands for the list. Mr. Badawey pointed out Patrick Brown. He'd be an excellent witness for this study. I really hope he's available.

The fact, again, that we don't actually understand whose witnesses were proposed previously versus whose they're now demanding appear.... We don't know that proportionality, because it's an entirely different process the committee utilizes, and that's why it requires a separate motion.

If this were the normal course of business of how committees invite witnesses, we wouldn't be spending two hours debating a motion. There was every opportunity to do this at the subcommittee, to work out these details and make sure everybody was comfortable, but again the Conservatives' "my way or no way" has prevailed. We had to let witnesses go who were here and ready to testify, which is what I thought they wanted for Canadians.

Mr. Chair, in lieu of all of that, I'm going to once again try to attempt, on our side, to move forward. I'm going to move an amendment and then I'll speak to the amendment after.

I move that:

Prior to the adoption of the motion and the associated summons being issued, the subcommittee be convened to discuss the scheduling of meetings, the construction of panels for the study, and to report back to the committee with the results of the conversation. And to add Mr. Patrick Brown, mayor of Brampton, to the list of summons.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. O'Connell.

We'll now start a new list to address the amendment put forward.

We'll start off with you, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: To go to that motion, Mr. Chair, again, I go back to the point I've been making all meeting. With the lists the

Conservatives have put forward, the amendment that Mr. Barsalou-Duval has put forward, the fact Mr. Bachrach may be going to put something forward, whether it be today or in future meetings, and of course our desire, who queues up within that four-meeting time frame? Who queues up? What gets preference? We have only four meetings. We have only so much time, six per meeting. Who queues up?

That's my point. We need a meeting to identify, within those four meetings, as per Mr. Bachrach's motion, who in fact would fit into those time slots. Again, it's about fairness. We have a list here from the Conservatives. That's great. Now we have a list from Mr. Barsalou-Duval. Okay. That takes the time slots from those meetings. Of course, we're going to come forward with a list. Who queues up? Who's the priority? This is why we are requesting a business planning session, a subcommittee meeting. Whether it's in camera or not is not my concern. The bottom line, however, is that we have to establish fairness in terms of who's going to be brought forward and, with that, who's going to have priority in queuing up. There are only so many minutes and hours in a meeting. Who's going to occupy those meetings out of the names that are going to be brought forward by all the parties?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Okay. It is 1:02, so if there's no objection, I'm going to adjourn the meeting. We'll see you all back here on Thursday.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, everyone.

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