



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

PROC • NUMBER 030 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, April 19, 2005

—
Chair

The Honourable Don Boudria

All parliamentary publications are available on the
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Tuesday, April 19, 2005

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.)): Order, please.

We'll start as soon as the televisions finish.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Yes, you have a point of order.

Go ahead, colleague.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chairman, I have a motion that I want to put forward as follows:

That, given the official opposition supply day was cancelled by the government yesterday, the committee give the House the opportunity to hold the government to account by recommending that Standing Order 81(10) be amended by adding:

(d) For the supply period ending no later than June 23, 2005, if the government has not designated any of the remaining six allotted days so that an opposition motion can be considered on or before May 18, 2005, that May 19, 2005 shall be so designated, and if a recorded division is demanded on May 19, 2005, the vote shall not be deferred beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on that day.

That, on May 30, 2005, this new section (d) of Standing Order 81 (10) shall lapse and be withdrawn.

And that the committee instruct the chairman to table this report on Wednesday, April 20, 2005.

• (1110)

The Chair: Okay. You're moving a motion?

Mr. Jay Hill: I am.

The Chair: Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): I'll second the motion.

The Chair: Seconded by Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Jay Hill: I don't think a seconder is required.

The Chair: No, no. You're right.

Now, could I have a copy of the motion, please, which I will read into the record? Then I'll ask colleagues to examine it to ensure it is in order. Let's do that first.

The motion would read as follows:

That, given the official opposition supply day was cancelled by the government yesterday, the committee give the House the opportunity to hold the government to account by recommending that Standing Order 81(10) be amended by adding:

(d) For the supply period ending no later than June 23, 2005, if the government has not designated any of the remaining six allotted days so that an opposition motion can be considered on or before May 18, 2005, that May 19, 2005 shall be so designated, and if a recorded division is demanded on May 19, 2005, the vote shall not be deferred beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on that day.

So that's the motion part. So that would end quotes.

Next, it says:

That, on May 30, 2005, this new section (d) of Standing Order 81(10) shall lapse and be withdrawn.

And that the committee instruct the chairman to table this report on Wednesday, April 20, 2005.

So that is the proposal, then, to amend the Standing Orders.

Mr. Clerk, we do not require advance notification of motions in this committee, so certainly on that score the motion appears to be in order.

Now, maybe we could have an examination of the text to ensure that it is in order. Do you wish to debate that right now, or do you wish to hear our witnesses and resume that after a fixed period of time, say half an hour from now, or an hour from now, or as you wish? I'm in the committee's hands here.

Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: With all due respect, I think it's a motion that pretty much speaks for itself. I would suggest that we just go to a vote on it. I don't know how long we'd need to debate this.

Clearly what happened yesterday, last night, when the government reneged on a commitment for tomorrow to be an official opposition supply day, an opposition day, was extremely unusual, to say the least. I would say it was unprecedented, in the sense that the obvious reason it was cancelled was due to the motion itself, not because of any other reason. Therefore, this particular motion is simply to have this committee present to the House a report that would clearly show that we believe the official opposition supply day should be held no later than May 19.

The Chair: Does anyone else wish to speak on this?

The chief government whip.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the spirit of putting yesterday in context, I would point out to the committee that Marleau and Montpetit make it clear that opposition days in fact come under government orders and that it is the responsibility of the government to determine on which day an item of government business should be called. I would direct honourable members' attention to page 407, which states: "Although the government does not select the subject matter to be debated when the House considers a motion moved on an allocated day pursuant to the Business of Supply, it designates which day the item is to be taken up."

So the government was certainly within its rights to make the decision that was made yesterday.

Marleau and Montpetit also goes on to state on page 723: "...allotted days may also be designated during the 'Thursday Statement' on the House Business for the following week. However, the date so designated is not binding on the government and may, like the scheduling of any other Government Order, be revised at any time."

The Chair: Is that it? Okay.

Does anyone else wish to speak?

Monsieur Guimond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wish to inform the committee at the outset that the Bloc Québécois agrees with the motion tabled by Mr. Hill on behalf of the official opposition. What happened yesterday evening has left a bad taste in our mouth. No respect was shown for procedures or for the good relations that existed between the government and the three opposition parties.

People will remember that this calendar was presented at the House leaders' meeting last Tuesday by the Government House Leader. Things proceeded in a completely normal fashion. I think that the Government House Leader's attempt to muzzle the opposition parties in this way, particularly in a minority government, shows he was playing the sorcerer's apprentice. He will have to take responsibility for the decisions he made. Consequently, we agree with the motion put forward by Mr. Hill.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Guimond.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I think we should vote on the motion, because we have some important witnesses here, particularly if there is an election.

I also agree with the opposition's motion. Attempts are being made to remove the democratic right of members to speak in Parliament. Personally, I have always thought that the voice of Parliament should be heard. What has been done is a way of preventing Parliament from expressing its views on the motion put forward by the opposition.

I have said what I wanted to say. I would just like to state that our party does not view this tactic favourably, in light of the agreements that we had reached. Our party will also be affected by the decision made by the government yesterday in the House of Commons. Ours

is a democratic system. An agreement had been reached, and it should be respected.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin.

The chief government whip.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to speak to one of the issues Mr. Hill brought up and then to the other comments that were made. Actually, on February 11, 1982, if you look in the *Debates* for that year on page 14,898, the leader of the government in the House of Commons did announce that the following day, which had previously been designated an allotted day, would not be. So there is a precedent for this.

I'd also point out that we have all come to this Parliament trying to work in a consultative, cooperative manner, and despite the fact that there had been communications at the whips' level of the whips' offices speaking, the substance of the motion for the Conservative opposition day was actually unilateral and non-consultative and undertook to actually change the Standing Orders for how we allocate days.

I'd also point out, Mr. Chair, that while it's proper that the government be given notice and the deadline is 6 p.m., a number of journalists had told the government they already had the wording of the text. When it seemed likely that the opposition was taking a partisan decision to depart from the long-followed practice and again, as I already indicated, was changing the Standing Orders without prior consultation and discussion with all parties of the House, the government came to the conclusion that it was necessary to change the allotted day in these circumstances.

• (1115)

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I agree, first of all, with my two colleagues from the Bloc and the NDP, who both support this motion, in the sense that I don't want to see this unnecessarily drag on throughout the morning and inconvenience our witnesses.

That being said, you'll note during the preamble I made in introducing this motion, Mr. Chairman, that at no time did I say the government didn't have the right under the existing rules to do what they did. I said it was unprecedented, and I believe it's unprecedented that upon learning the content of an opposition motion, because they were opposed to the motion, a government would then pull the opposition motion—in other words, not allow the opposition to debate that. That, I believe, is unprecedented, despite the government whip going back to 1982 to dig up a time when a government actually deferred or postponed or cancelled—"cancelled", I guess, is the right term—an opposition supply day.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I believe this is of such profound importance to the future survival of this Parliament.... It's very clear that this government's moral authority to govern has now been, if not lost, called into question and is being called into question daily with the testimony that's taking place at the Gomery inquiry.

The last calendar, which the House leader presented us with a week ago, showed that Bill C-43, for example, the Budget Implementation Act, did not appear anywhere through the next couple of weeks. Now, with what I believe is the unprecedented action of last night, where they took away our supply day, clearly what the government is attempting to do here is to prevent any possibility of the House expressing a lack of confidence in the government.

It's completely within the power of the government and the House leader to designate the six remaining supply days well into the latter stages of this session. There's no requirement under the Standing Orders that they be parcelled out on a weekly or biweekly basis, as has been, shall I say, the norm in how we deal with supply days. So very clearly, that is the government's intent, and when they saw the move to get some certainty for the opposition that we have our supply days scheduled in advance, as is the norm, they moved to prevent us from having our supply day tomorrow and having that debate.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I believe we should go to the vote, and you should report this back to the House as the wishes of this committee or certainly of the majority of this committee.

The Chair: Does this conclude debate?

Oui.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): I'd like to add a point, Mr. Chair.

I do agree with my colleague across here that we have been working collaboratively over the past months. I've participated in the House leaders' meetings, and it has been working very efficiently.

Now, this notice of motion is a fundamental change. It's actually a change to the Standing Orders, and it seems to me that, in the spirit of collaboration, this would have been discussed with the other parties in advance. I'd just like to be on record as saying the collaboration was not there in this case and it seems to me the reaction from our party was totally justified.

Thank you.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Does anyone else wish to speak?

[*English*]

Is the committee ready for the question, or do you need me to read it again?

Mr. Jay Hill: No, I don't think you need to read it unless there's a requirement.

An hon. member: I'd like to hear it.

Mr. Jay Hill: Okay, but I would like to ask for a recorded division on this.

The Chair: We'll get to that in a minute. I've been asked to read it again.

It reads: That, given the official opposition supply day was cancelled by the government yesterday, the committee give the House the opportunity to hold the government to account by recommending that Standing Order 81(10) be amended by adding:

—this is the actual amendment to the standing order now—

(d) For the Supply Period ending no later than June 23, 2005, if the government has not designated any of the remaining 6 allotted days so that an opposition motion can be considered on or before May 18, 2005, that May 19, 2005, shall be so designated, and if a recorded division is demanded on May 19, 2005, the vote shall not be deferred beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on that day;

That, on May 30, 2005, this new section (d) of Standing Order 81(10) shall lapse and be withdrawn.

And that the committee instruct the chair

Do you mind if I write “chair” instead of “chairman”? It's just to make it conform to the way we usually do it.

to table this report on Wednesday, April 20, 2005.

There has been a request for a recorded division.

Mr. Jay Hill: If it's acceptable, Mr. Chairman, for further clarity I have just one friendly amendment in the opening sentence: “given the official opposition supply day was cancelled by the government yesterday, April 18th”. It's for further clarification.

The Chair: Do you want me to reread it with the words “April 18th”?

Hon. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Oshawa, Lib.): Mr. Chair, my understanding was that they were just deferred, not cancelled.

The Chair: Well, I can't tell the author of a motion what to write in the motion.

Hon. Judi Longfield: But he's asking for clarification. I understood it was deferred, not cancelled.

Mr. Jay Hill: The government House leader—who unfortunately isn't here today, because it would have been good to ask him directly—when pressed, indicated he had no other date in mind as yet. It's not a deferral if you don't know when you're going to postpone it to. That's why I say that for all intents and purposes it's cancelled, and I would call the question on it.

The Chair: Madam Redman.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you very much.

I just feel it's very important to get this on the record. Members on all sides have talked about the collegial nature of this government, and I have to tell you I have never before in any campaign been met at the door by people who talked about the fact that they wanted a minority government.

We all came to Ottawa acknowledging that we needed to act like adults and we needed to make this government work. I would tell you that up until now, Mr. Chair, I think it actually has worked fairly well. I've attended the House leaders' meetings, I've seen give-and-take, and I've seen substantive issues brought forward by Mr. Hill, by the leader of the New Democrats, and by the Bloc. We've taken them under advisement.

I think of today as probably a typical day of doing business and making this government work. One of the members of Mr. Hill's party came over and was inquiring about some pending travel arrangements; that came to the last House leaders' meeting, Mr. Chair, and we dealt with it. We took it away under advisement because, I think, there were a couple of changes that were new to some of the whips; we hadn't seen them before. We all undertook to take them away, recognizing that the work of committees is very important, that this is where a lot of the heavy lifting is done in this government, and that if they wanted to travel, so be it.

We, as a matter of fact, were walking around this travel request when I came down here to make sure everybody was in agreement, and then I would table that in the House. It's that kind of cooperation that has gotten us where we are today.

Mr. Chair, need I remind this committee that when we brought forward a budget, the Prime Minister was in the middle of his budget speech when the Leader of the Opposition walked out and said there were elements in it that he recognized were very consistent with how they saw Canada and this was not a budget they would vote against.

Mr. Chair, that doesn't happen by accident. I happened to sit on the finance committee for the first three years of my tenure as a member of Parliament. I know that particular committee worked very collegially and I know we did consultation. Despite all of that, the working together and all of that consultation of Canadians, I would tell you this finance minister in this year had unprecedented collaboration with the members of all parties, saying, how can we bring forward a budget we can all live with and we can all support?

I would have to tell you that in the main we did that. We brought in some tax cuts. We brought in investment in child care. It's an ambitious agenda, one I know the NDP must have a lot of resonance with. Certainly it spoke to a lot of the priorities the Bloc members have discussed in their philosophy, and we have continued to bring forward that fiscal balance, which has actually been the keynote of this government, and was of this Prime Minister when he was finance minister. I am sure I am speaking to people who have heard these discussions before.

This government in 1993 inherited a \$42-billion deficit, and we have brought in surpluses since we wrestled down that deficit. We have the only surplus in the G-7 countries. We are continuing to create jobs.

Those are the kinds of things Canadians want. Those are the kinds of things about which this opposition party said yes, we can support that. They support it to the point that when we had a vote, their members sat there. They sat, I would tell you, in a group effort to make sure this government could continue, that we could continue to move forward on our ambitious agenda, to bring forward a vision that is collegial in nature, and to bring forward a vision all of us could support.

Mr. Chair, when this member talks about the fact that we may have deviated from a discussion that had taken place with the House leaders, I would point out to him that it very clearly is written "draft" on the top of that, and there have been from time to time some other changes, perhaps not this dramatic, but changes all the same.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm just wondering whether the government is obstructing the motion. Normally the opposition is accused of doing this type of thing, and we are always told that it is not acceptable.

Is that where we are going here? I remember sometime around 1982, the Conservative government was ousted by the Liberals for increasing the price of gas by 14 cents.

The Chair: You are debating the motion, Mr. Godin. If you wish to do this once Ms. Redmond has completed her remarks, you may do so.

[*English*]

Is that it?

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Chair, it's not. I have long been of the view that this place needs to outlast all of us, any one of us, any one government, and any one party.

I would tell you that by bringing forward a grab bag of changes to the Standing Orders when there has not been consultation with all parties is out of the ordinary. It is something that is fundamental to this place, and is something that should not be taken lightly. As a result, as my colleague Monsieur Simard said, it's very appropriate that this government took some action. Changing the Standing Orders is something that should not be done lightly. It's something that should not be done without consultation.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, I am a bit appalled to work with the knowledge that the press actually had the wording and the substance of this motion before the government did. I can only speculate if my Bloc colleagues and my NDP colleagues had it, but I can tell you for sure that we as the government did not have it. That kind of discussion and give-and-take are absolutely fundamental to how this place works.

I've sometimes been asked how I got to be Chief Government Whip in such an interesting time as a minority government. I'd like to share with the people at this table, not the least of whom is Mr. Hill, because he too was a whip when I took on this role. I had a very interesting tenure as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment.

• (1130)

Mr. Jay Hill: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Point of order, Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: As my colleague Monsieur Godin has indicated, it's pretty clear that the government whip intends to filibuster for the remainder of the meeting. If that's the case, I just wonder, out of respect for our witnesses, Mr. Chairman, whether we should release the witnesses. There's no point in their sitting here listening to what motivated Ms. Redman to enter politics.

The Chair: If I may, colleagues, at the beginning of the meeting, I did ask if we could suspend the discussion of this for half an hour or an hour and listen to our witnesses and then resume consideration. Mr. Hill, with respect, I offered that, but that's not what you asked. Does the committee still want our witnesses to remain?

I want to remind you of something regarding the witnesses. Mr. Kingsley was not supposed to be in the country. He delayed a trip in order to be with us this morning at the request of this committee. I remind you of that, but I'm in the committee's hands. If we unanimously want to suspend consideration of this motion for half an hour or 45 minutes and get back to it later, that we can do. Obviously we're in the middle of debating a motion. If we're going to suspend that for a little while to hear our witnesses, which I would recommend, then we'd have to do so unanimously and perhaps with the understanding that immediately after that set period of time, we would resume consideration of the motion.

Mr. Hill, it is your motion that we're considering.

An hon. member: Call the question.

The Chair: With respect, we can't call the question if people want to debate the motion. There's no closure in committee.

Mr. Lee Richardson: With respect, you already did call the question.

The Chair: That doesn't stop the debate. At one point we were about ready to vote, and then another point was added and that continued the debate. I'm in the committee's hands. I'm perfectly comfortable with taking the vote right now, if members no longer want to speak, but if they do, I must recognize them.

Speaking of which, Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: Certainly out of respect for our witnesses I would be prepared to consider that, if the government members present would indicate to the committee that they intend to filibuster this motion until the normal time of adjournment for the committee. If that's their intention and they so indicate, then we could consider your suggestion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Well, look, I'm in the committee's hands here—

Mr. Jay Hill: And we're in their hands, obviously.

The Chair: I'll continue.

Monsieur Guimond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: I would like to suggest a compromise that could both meet Mr. Hill's objective and release the witnesses as quickly as possible.

We could vote on the motion immediately and then hear from the witnesses. In that way, everyone would be satisfied.

The Chair: I'm sure that all members have noted the compromise you are proposing, Mr. Guimond. The fact remains that if there is no unanimous consent to suspend this discussion for a certain length of time, we have no choice but to continue it.

Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That is correct.

Personally, I will agree if the government side decides to suspend this discussion so that we can hear from the witnesses. Otherwise, I think members can discuss a motion for an unlimited length of time. We must not lose the privilege of debating a motion. What we need to know now is whether Ms. Redman and the members of the Liberal Party wish to hear from Mr. Kingsley.

The Chair: I conclude that the committee members do not unanimously agree to suspend the debate.

Ms. Redman.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do appreciate the witnesses, but I think maybe Mr. Kingsley would like to hear about my experience as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, because it's actually quite riveting.

During that time I was faced with species at risk legislation, Mr. Chair, and that legislation got kicked around for 10 years. Can you just imagine the kind of opinion and the entrenchment and whether or not we were taking the right approach? I have to say, this is protecting fish, trees, birds, little fuzzy animals, and whales. It was all kinds of pieces of legislation across Canada. There were different approaches. All of us are from different provinces and there was a variety of approaches and we were trying to bring about a framework from the federal perspective that would bring some continuity to this.

Mr. Chair, it was a—

● (1135)

The Chair: On a point of order, Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: I would ask that the chair consider ruling on relevance at least, if this debate is going to continue.

The only species at risk here is the Liberal Party of Canada, so I would suggest that you provide a ruling for the committee to make sure Ms. Redman's comments are on the subject at hand that deals with this particular motion.

The Chair: One moment, please.

As we all know, the rule of relevance in committee has not been interpreted very strictly in the past. I've sat on committees around here for over two decades. But that being said, I invite members to refer to the content of the motion in their remarks nonetheless.

I believe Madam Redman had the floor.

Hon. Karen Redman: I actually was going to get to that point, Mr. Hill, and I appreciate your attention to this discussion.

As a matter of fact, not only did we collaborate with the provinces and territories to bring in, I would say, an absolute groundbreaking piece of legislation that does protect species at risk, but we did that with scientific input from COSEWIC. It's independent. It's thoughtful. It's terrific. We also did it with the input from members all around the table. I have to tell you that Roy Bailey and Bob Mills from your party were participants, absolutely. They helped shape that piece of legislation.

We had more aboriginal input in that piece of legislation than any previous, to the point where aboriginal peoples were saying that this was the best practice, in their view. We looked at partnering with the fishers, the ranchers, and the farmers of this land to give them their rightful place along with aboriginal peoples. They knew the habits of these species. They were able to provide this kind of valuable input. You see, Mr. Chair, we don't think that the government has the only good ideas, or in fact all of the good ideas. It's that kind of collaboration that led to an amazing groundbreaking piece of legislation.

Also, when I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, we ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Not only is it essential that we have the kind of collaboration and the shared vision that can happen from the give-and-take among parties in Canada, and between the federal government and our provincial and territorial counterparts, but indeed we play that role on the international scene. We were seen as one of the leaders in that protocol. Even when one of the large players, one of the prime polluters, the United States, walked away from that—

• (1140)

Mr. Yvon Godin: And the Liberals.

Hon. Karen Redman: —we, being a sovereign nation, stayed and we negotiated. We helped change the face of the Kyoto Protocol so that it recognized that there was a cost that needed to be borne by the large emitters, by manufacturers, by industry, by individual Canadians.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Where are your plans?

Hon. Karen Redman: I would point to the one-tonne challenge, Yvon. We have asked all Canadians to be engaged in something that isn't just about cleaning up the air or improving the environment for today. It is about the gift that we leave those who will come after us. It's a gift for those future generations.

Clearly, it's not just a Canadian problem. Pollution and greenhouse gas emissions don't ask for a visa when they cross any international border. It's something we're doing as a member of the international community.

It's that kind of collaboration that is absolutely essential. It's that kind of collaboration that we came to Parliament in this minority government to bring forward. There have been many times when I have talked to my fellow whips and we have negotiated very important issues that help with the functioning of this government, that help with making all parties' voices heard. It could be as simple as deciding the membership on individual committees. We do that in agreement. We sit on the Board of Internal Economy and we talk about issues that are very important to all parliamentarians—

Mr. Yvon Godin: Talk about the cuts to EI.

The Chair: Order, please. Colleagues, these things are difficult enough already. Perhaps members should not interrupt each other too much.

I want to ask the committee if there would be an interest on our part either to suspend consideration of this for 45 minutes, or to release the witnesses so that we could continue. My preference would be to hear the witnesses for a limited period of time, if there's an interest, and then resume consideration automatically thereafter.

I'm not trying in any way to avoid this. I'm trying to establish a way to proceed.

For the benefit of colleagues, I made a personal communication to Mr. Kingsley in order for him to alter his plans to make himself available to come here this morning, and all of these things occurred. I put myself in the position of the witness, and I invite members to reflect on that.

It wouldn't stop us from considering it immediately thereafter, but do you wish to suspend for 45 minutes, or do you wish to simply release the witness? I can do it either way, but if you start putting conditions on one another for doing so, I just don't think it will happen, if I may say respectfully.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, I would respectfully ask you to seek assurances then, if we were to proceed in such a way, that the committee would not adjourn at 1 p.m.

The Chair: It does. The committee will adjourn at 1 p.m.

Mr. Jay Hill: Why is that? If the majority of the committee wants to continue to sit until we've dealt with this motion, why does it have to adjourn at one o'clock?

The Chair: That is the time reserved for this committee—until one o'clock—but either way, we would have to adjourn at two to sit in the House, of course. But if we decide by unanimity to continue, that's fine.

But look, I think we're once again putting conditions on one another. I'm just trying to help out here, colleagues. I'm not trying to.... I don't want to be part of—

Mr. Jay Hill: I already indicated that out of respect to the witnesses I was willing to go to their testimony and the questioning of them, if the government was willing to indicate whether or not they intend to use up the entire time for this meeting, until the normal hour of adjournment and possibly past it. If the committee were to decide to continue this, they should just so indicate that they intend to use up that time. That's not an unreasonable request, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm in the hands of committee. I'm just trying to find an alternative.

Yes, Madam Longfield.

Hon. Judi Longfield: I find this quite appalling. We all have determined that we want to hear Mr. Kingsley. Our ridings, on all sides, all members, are concerned about their rebates. They're concerned about information that they need, given that we probably are going into an election some time soon.

As you indicated, Mr. Kingsley has postponed his travel arrangements. He's extremely busy. Not only does he have a personal life, but he has a duty to report to this committee when we ask him to do it. He's prepared to do it today.

There are questions that my CFO needs to have answered. I know certainly on the other side I've heard those same things.

I don't think that while we play silly games back and forth on the other side, Mr. Kingsley should be forced to have to reschedule. I think we should hear Mr. Kingsley, and once we've heard Mr. Kingsley and we've been able to put our questions forward, we then continue on with committee business.

If colleagues on either side have points they want to put on the table, I don't think they have to explain why or how long they're going to speak. They should be able to do it. I notice that what Mr. Hill is asking for on this is that they want an opposition day some time before May 17 or 18. This is April 17 or 18, and this doesn't have to be decided today. We have a meeting on Thursday. We have another one following up.

But in terms of Mr. Kingsley—

The Chair: We're stretching away from the point of order here.

Hon. Judi Longfield: I'm simply saying that what we're asking Mr. Kingsley to do can't be put off for another week or two.

The Chair: We cannot entertain another motion. We have a motion that's being considered now. If by unanimous consent you want to do something else, that's fine. Right now I don't see it, so let's continue with the debate, and if at some point there is unanimous consent on the part of some to do something else—such as listening to the witness and resuming this afterwards—well, fine. But I cannot receive another motion to do something else when there is already a motion on the floor, the motion being that which was proposed by Mr. Hill. So at the present time that's all we can do, unless we unanimously do something else, which doesn't appear to be happening right now.

• (1145)

Hon. Raymond Simard: Do we have to have unanimous consent?

The Chair: No one has sought unanimous consent.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, I would seek unanimous consent that we do hear from the witnesses now and adjourn this debate, to be taken up later, as long as there is an agreement among all of us that there will be a vote on this motion before we adjourn today.

The Chair: Okay, so you're seeking unanimous consent to do that. Is there unanimous consent to do that? No.

All right, let's get back to—

Mr. Jay Hill: The government wants to filibuster, then, obviously.

The Chair: Madam Redman.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I was saying, in the spirit of collegiality, there are many—

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Point of order, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: —I just think we ought to establish whether we're going to require Mr. Kingsley to come before us again or if we're going to dismiss him at the end of today, or if the intention on Ms. Redman's part is to force him to keep on coming back to future meetings.

Can we at least have a motion before the committee—and I'd seek unanimous consent for this—that if we don't deal with Mr. Kingsley

today, we don't keep him around permanently at every future meeting, waiting for us to deal with the business that Madam Redman is filibustering over?

The Chair: What is it you're seeking unanimous consent for?

Mr. Scott Reid: That we don't drag him back on future days if we're not going to deal with him here today.

The Chair: Okay. So you're seeking unanimous consent that we release the witness for today, is that it?

Mr. Scott Reid: That we don't drag him back here tomorrow, if the government is unwilling to—

The Chair: I'm not clear about what you're seeking unanimous consent for precisely, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: My understanding is that Mr. Kingsley has to stay around and deal with this at our next meeting. Am I wrong on that?

The Chair: We're not there yet, Mr. Reid. First of all, the next meeting is already scheduled on Thursday for electoral reform, and there is this motion, which of course has to be brought back—it's being debated now—if it's not concluded today. There's also a question of privilege that was referred to this committee by the House yesterday, and we haven't even gotten to it yet. So I cannot indicate to you—

Hon. Judi Longfield: How do we deal with this, then?

The Chair: I cannot indicate to you that—

Mr. Scott Reid: We could have dealt with it long ago, Judi. You could have voted.

The Chair: I cannot dictate to you what we will do for future meetings. At the conclusion we normally take a few minutes and establish what the program will be for the next meeting.

In any case, meanwhile—

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Chairman, will we take the time to do that at the end of this meeting? Otherwise, we do leave our witnesses in the awkward position of not knowing.

The Chair: Five minutes, at the end. I always propose that to you, and I'm prepared to do that again today if that's what the committee wishes.

But at the present time we're debating a motion by Mr. Hill. Madam Redman has the floor.

Hon. Judi Longfield: I have a point of order.

The Chair: One moment, please. We're dealing with a point of order. I'll just finish responding to it.

On the point of order, Mr. Reid sought unanimous consent, but it's not clear to me—perhaps it is to the committee—just what it is he sought unanimous consent for.

Perhaps you could restate it—

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Chairman, in all fairness, perhaps you could provide us with.... I confess that I may be confused here. My impression is that we requested Mr. Kingsley to come here, and that he basically has to stay here at future meetings until otherwise released by us because we haven't dealt with the matter. Maybe I'm wrong on that. Am I incorrect in that assumption?

The Chair: Certainly we have not scheduled or unscheduled anything for the next meeting, so I can't tell you what we will collectively decide in the future. Anyway, I guess you're not seeking unanimous consent for anything, because I haven't heard it.

Mr. Scott Reid: Just confirm to me that there will be no requirement for him to come back. Am I wrong on that?

The Chair: I can't do that. That is for this committee to decide. When we decide on setting the agenda, that's for this committee to decide. You, sir, are a member just like everyone else. You will assist us in deciding if you want to hear this witness again, and if so, when you want to hear the witness again. That's not for me to decide.

Hon. Judi Longfield: On a point of order, we received an agenda. The agenda calls for, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), main estimates 2005-06, vote 15, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, under Privy Council, referred to the Committee on Friday, February 25, 2005; that we hear Mr. Kingsley, the Chief Electoral Officer, and he would bring two officials with him. When we get in here, we find there's a motion that needs to be debated.

My view was that when you have an agenda, when it's circulated, when members come prepared to talk about what is on the agenda, any item of new business would fall after the regular business. If this is not the case, then at any time members could bring motions forward and totally usurp the agenda that we have before us. I'm not saying that you can't add new items to the agenda, but, Mr. Chair, one should expect that when you have an agenda, when it is circulated, when we have witnesses called, the least we could expect is that we would deal with what is before us on the table. That is something that I think you need to rule on, Mr. Chair.

• (1150)

The Chair: Madam Longfield, with respect, this committee has no such rule. We adopted initially that there was no notice of motion here—

Hon. Judi Longfield: I'm not talking about the notice of motion. The notice of motion can be dealt with. Certainly procedure says that you deal with your agenda, and at the end of the agenda you can add new items. This committee says you can add new items at any time, but I don't think it ever said that you'd throw out the agenda you currently have in front of you. You add to it, not take away.

The Chair: We adopted our own rules of procedure at the beginning. We did not adopt them in as formal a way as did other committees. It's up to this committee as to what it wants for rules. We decided, rightly or wrongly, at the beginning that there would be no notice here. Therefore, once a motion is introduced, the motion is either adopted without debate or it's debatable; it's one or the other.

In the case of the present one, members have chosen to speak to the motion, and we're still speaking to the motion. The only way to stop that process is to either withdraw the motion, or by unanimous consent do something else and come back to it later. I'm in the committee's hands.

I cannot invent a rule that does not exist before this committee, even if I think we should have such a rule, which we don't. We have not decided to have one. I seem to remember that in the beginning there was a bit of a discussion as to whether or not there should be such a rule at this committee. There did not seem to be any appetite to have one, unless my recollection of the first meeting we had is incorrect, and I don't think it is. There is no notice of motion in this committee. I have been informed by research staff that is a decision we took.

We're now back to debating. Madam Redman has the floor.

Hon. Raymond Simard: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to respond to Mr. Reid's point.

The Chair: Well, if you're responding—

Hon. Raymond Simard: I'd like to address it in terms of being fair to our witnesses.

I think we're all very conscious of Mr. Kingsley's effort to be here today. I think a reasonable solution was proposed by Ms. Longfield in terms of hearing our witnesses and then resuming debate and resuming committee work after.

The Chair: Are you seeking unanimous consent to do that?

Hon. Raymond Simard: I am seeking unanimous consent again, because Mr. Reid has brought it up again.

The Chair: If you're seeking unanimous consent, would you please state it.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I would like to seek unanimous consent to deal with our witnesses immediately and then resume committee business after we finish with our witnesses.

The Chair: Can you tell us for how long?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Stopping at one o'clock.

Mr. Jay Hill: For the vote?

Hon. Raymond Simard: No. We can go until 12:30 or 12:45. I'll leave it to the committee to decide.

•(1155)

The Chair: You're seeking unanimous consent that we consider the testimony and questions of our witnesses until 12:30, at which time we will resume consideration of this. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Raymond Simard: It seems like a fair—

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to do that?

Mr. Jay Hill: Not unless they indicate they are not going to talk out this motion.

The Chair: There's no unanimous consent.

Madam Redman.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you.

The Chair: Point of order, Monsieur Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I might as well raise a point of order. I'm not getting anywhere anyway.

I don't know if this is possible, and I don't know if we have the consent of everybody, but I feel this is important. I'd like to thank Mr. Kingsley for being here. I've seen before where he had left the country and he came back to help us to clear up some things.

The Chair: Mr. Godin, is what possible?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm getting there.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm not as fast as you, Mr. Chair, but I'm getting there.

You told me the rules and normally the schedule is that at one o'clock we will be stopping anyway. Would it be possible for us to agree that at one o'clock we will resume with a new meeting of this committee, which we have the power to do, if we all agree. Room 112-N almost belongs to this committee anyway. Then we could have the meeting with Mr. Kingsley. If they don't agree to that, this means they don't really want to find a solution to this. I find this to be sensible. I think we would have the okay for this on this side.

The Chair: Again, I'm trying to interpret what you're asking. You're seeking unanimous consent to have another meeting from 1 until 2 to discuss the motion or to hear the witness?

Mr. Yvon Godin: To hear Mr. Kingsley.

The Chair: Mr. Kingsley, are you available at 1 p.m. if this works out?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kingsley (Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer): Sure.

The Chair: I'm going to ask members of the committee, because the ordinary hour of adjournment is at 1 p.m., do members of the committee agree to have a second meeting of the committee from 1 to 2 p.m. to consider the testimony of our witness, Mr. Kingsley?

Mr. Scott Reid: I'm assuming one can have debate on it. Am I wrong? I have a question to ask Mr. Godin about this puzzle. Does this mean that if Mrs. Redman continued her filibuster and we didn't have time to get to the vote, at that point we simply would be unable to deal with the item of business because this meeting had ended and we would go to a second meeting?

Mr. Yvon Godin: It doesn't matter. At one o'clock we're stopping anyway.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's not true, actually.

Mr. Yvon Godin: That's what he said.

Mr. Scott Reid: I know, but he's incorrect.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm sorry. He just said that you were incorrect. Did you clear that with the table?

The Chair: I'm sorry, I'm trying to.... I missed something. I apologize. I was consulting with the clerk.

Mr. Jay Hill: On this motion by Mr. Godin, I would ask for clarification, Mr. Chair, to this extent. Obviously now we are well aware that it's the intent of the government members of the committee to talk out the time rather than have this motion come to a vote. Is it the intent of the committee to ensure that this particular motion would come back as the first order of business when the committee reconvenes, whether it's this afternoon or whether it's Thursday? Is that the intent? That's my understanding of the rules. We're dealing with this now. We will continue to deal with it until such time as it comes to a vote.

The Chair: We're debating the motion, and my understanding—and I hope the clerk can assist me here—is that it continues to be our order until we dispose of the matter; and even if it didn't, there's nothing that stops the author of the motion from moving it again, because we haven't finished considering it. But my understanding is that it doesn't matter, because it remains with us.

Mr. Jay Hill: You can obviously understand my particular concern here, Mr. Chair, that if we, the opposition, since we're united on this, were to agree to suspend this debate or to delay it or postpone the debate and the government obviously continues its filibuster to talk out the motion, I wouldn't want to see this die. I would want to see it come back as the first order of business on Thursday, and then the next Tuesday, and then the next Thursday, until effectively, at some point in time, the government decides to allow a vote on this and to have you proceed back to the House to report this motion. If that is what will transpire, and you can assure me of that, Mr. Chair, then I would be willing to entertain Mr. Godin's motion.

The Chair: Mr. Hill, just to assure you that, regardless of what the committee decides by majority or otherwise to do at the next meeting, given that we have no notice of motion, your motion is free to be moved again at the next meeting until disposed of. So in fact what you're saying is correct, because—unless of course you decide you no longer want to do this—no matter if we decide to do other business at the next meeting, and you move this motion again at the next meeting if the issue hasn't been decided, because we don't require notice, well, of course it continues to be debated.

Mr. Jay Hill: Of course, the problem there, Mr. Chair—and as you say, you've been around this place a lot longer than I have, I've only been here for going on 12 years and you've been there for probably twice that—but the issue there will be who gets recognized first on Thursday, if there's not prior agreement that we will continue debate of this motion. If there's agreement to that, then I'm open to hearing other potential motions.

Do you want to say something, Michel?

• (1200)

The Chair: Okay, maybe we'll hear another person.

Madam Longfield.

Hon. Judi Longfield: Mr. Hill actually is proposing something that I said we should be doing, and that is, when we have something before us we continue with it and that we don't throw something else inside. Now he's saying that he wants to make this one the continuing debate, which is what we're doing here. This is a continuing thing on estimates, and we are continuing this. This is a continuation of it, and I think we should be continuing on it. He says, well, no, he's got a motion that he thinks should take precedence and it should continue over everything else that we have on our agenda.

You can't have it both ways. I think we have an agenda. I believe we need to—

Mr. Jay Hill: Let's just continue this then, Judy. If that's your attitude, let's just continue it till the cows come home.

Hon. Judi Longfield: No, no, but I think we need to establish what we're doing—

The Chair: Colleagues, even if we're disagreeing with each other very fundamentally, I would ask that we remain respectful to one another, if that's possible.

Monsieur Godin, you sought unanimous consent. Is there something we can...? And then perhaps we can resume debate if we haven't had unanimous consent for anything.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: I would like some clarification. Mr. Hill raised a point. I asked whether the debate would stop at 1:00 p.m., if we were to continue in the same way, or, given that Ms. Redmond has not stopped presenting her arguments, it would last longer. You stressed that it would end at 1:00 p.m. As I understand it, Scott Reid said that the chair was incorrect.

I have seen committees debate day and night for three days. They stopped only for question period and then resumed their proceedings. So I would like you to clarify what you said, because that will make all the difference. If we stop at exactly 1:00 p.m., I think it is unacceptable that we will not hear from Mr. Kingsley. If a different decision is made, this could have an impact on the way we vote.

The Chair: The clerk tells me that if an adjournment motion has not been passed at 1:00 p.m., we will continue the meeting. We will suspend it for question period.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill: Then we continue.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: In the meantime, may I ask the committee what it intends to do with respect to the witnesses we have before us?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Chairman, here's a suggestion.

If at 1 p.m. Mrs. Redman or one of her colleagues, or all of her colleagues, have not wrapped up their filibuster, then I suggest at that point I'll come forward with a motion for unanimous consent to let Mr. Kingsley and his colleagues leave.

The Chair: In any case, I think the long and the short of it is that there's no unanimous consent right now.

Madam Redman, you have the floor, I believe, under debate.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do appreciate, Mr. Kingsley, the personal arrangements you had to make to get here, and I'm thrilled you can be here to hear this interesting discussion. I think somebody in your position absolutely understands the importance of dealing with this institution and with institutional change. It's your truck and trade as you bring forward reports between elections, and I would tell you it's this kind of fundamental change that is the substance of the opposition day motion, and that's why the government took it so seriously and did what it did.

I would just reiterate that this, unlike what Mr. Hill had said, has actually occurred. It was February 11, 1982, when the leader of the government in the House of Commons announced that the following day, which had previously been designated as an allotted day, would not be one. The opposition argued that they'd already filed a notice of motion for consideration on that allotted day and that the government did not therefore have the authority to change the designation of the day. But the Speaker ruled very definitively that a notice was only a notice and did not constitute an order. It was clearly subject to the provisions of Standing Order 40(2), which reads: "Government Orders shall be called...in such sequence as the government determines".

I'd also point out, Mr. Chair, there are other venues. We meet regularly as the House leaders team, where we talk about issues of great import. I would suggest that the substance of this opposition day motion by the Conservatives could easily have been discussed in that milieu, yet it was not. I would underscore again that from our information, it was indeed leaked to the media, so the media had notice of this motion before the government did, and I find that greatly troubling. I find that somewhat indicates there may be partisan issues.

I'd also like to point out that this BlackBerry that keeps us working as a team comes from Waterloo County, which is where I'm from, and my colleague has just gotten a note saying there is white smoke and we do have a new Pope.

A voice: You're kidding!

Hon. Karen Redman: I think that's of great import.

I would point out it's that kind of innovation and that kind of collegiality, Mr. Chair, that lead to the kind of result that makes us all proud.

The kind of cooperation we have enjoyed to this point in time seems to have in some way been identified as not working anymore for the Conservatives. Somehow, as to making Parliament work, they've given up on their commitment to be productive members of this Parliament. They have chosen to be adversarial. They have chosen to take a tack that is very unusual.

I go back to the fact that while this is not the first time it's happened, it is a recurrence of something that has not happened since 1982, which I think again underscores the absolute seriousness with which the government took this assault on this institution, this ad hoc change to a set of rules and a modus operandi, if you will, that has worked well for years and years, since the beginning of this nation. It is actually predicated on the ability of different parties with diverse philosophies coming together to talk about a common set of issues and come up with a consultative resolution or remedy to these kinds of issues that concern Canadians.

I know in my riding they're greatly concerned with child care, affordable housing, and social housing, and these are issues, again, I have heard reflected in the elements of priorities the Bloc has stated, as well as the NDP. The commitment to not running deficits and the commitment to continuing to bring tax relief to middle- and low-income families, especially families with children, are things the Conservatives also support.

So we brought in a budget that was supported by the Conservatives. They sat in the House while we brought it forward, so as not to defeat the government, because they too recognized what an important piece of legislation this was.

The new deal for cities is a huge issue in my riding of Kitchener Centre. Kitchener and Waterloo Region people are looking forward to getting that gas tax rebate, which is not something my opposition colleagues have been supportive of. Indeed, they've gone forward planning, being good stewards of the public purse and having a set of priorities and a vision for Kitchener such that they are now partnering with the federal government to make sure those priorities come forward for the benefit of the people in Kitchener Centre, for the benefit of people in Waterloo Region.

●(1205)

I think those are hallmarks of a government that is very much in touch with its electorate, very much in touch with the priorities of Canadians. It's those priorities that saw this government put \$41 billion into health care, in partnership with our provincial and territorial partners, in order that the first ministers and the health ministers can go forward with this. This, again, is the kind of collegial working together on a shared mandate we have to have in this place.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Redman.

One moment, please. We have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, we are hearing talk about the environment, cities, and so on. Human beings are like cars: we need fuel in order to run. Perhaps a lunch could be brought in for us: some sandwiches or something like that. It does not have to be expensive. I think we need that to keep going. So I would ask the chair to see to that.

●(1210)

The Chair: I will consult the staff and see what arrangements can be made.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you.

I certainly appreciate the fact that when my valued colleague—with whom, I have to say, I very much enjoyed working—was referring to “gas”, he wasn't referring to my discourse. It was merely the fact that he was so engaged with my amazing presentation and my discussion over this motion before us that he wanted to get some energy in there so he could listen with both ears—

Merci beaucoup, mon ami.

An hon. member: I'm waiting for EI.

Hon. Karen Redman: We have looked at EI and we have brought in changes. Madame Robillard had brought those in just around the time we brought the budget out. We looked at some tension points. Again, Mr. Chair, I will tell you that this is the indication of a government that is in touch with the needs of Canadians.

Interestingly enough, my riding happens to have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, which I find quite stunning. I can tell you why that exists, in part. We have been historically a manufacturing-based community, but there has been an amazing partnership—a partnership even before that became a catch phrase, “partnership in government”.

Indeed, what we have seen is that when the University of Waterloo was founded, it was done with a great deal of broad-based support by the business community. It was one of the first post-secondary institutions that had cooperative education. And fundamental to its organization was the fact that individual professors owned their own intellectual property.

As a result of that, we have seen an amazing explosion of the high-tech industry. We have seen Research In Motion. We have seen PixStream. There have been many great news stories of intellectual property that has moved out into the commercial sector and become commercially viable. It's that symbiotic relationship among government, business, and the private sector as well as academia that has allowed Waterloo Region to continue to be on the cutting edge of the economy.

When my parents grew up in Kitchener, if somebody had said to them, Schneider's meats will no longer be a family-owned company; Labatt will have closed down; Seagram's brewery will have left town; and Kaufman Rubber Company and Kaufman shoes will no longer be viable enterprises, I think that people of my parents' generation would have said, there'll be soup lines; what will we do? The unemployment will be so rampant. As a matter of fact, we have reinvented ourselves much the way the modern economy is doing worldwide and Canada-wide, and we have a microcosm of it in Waterloo Region.

We also have seen industries such as Toyota settle in Waterloo Region. One of reasons is because of the high skill level and the abundance of skilled workers in our area. Again, that's a testament to governments working with the private sector and levels of governments working together. There is no doubt that no one level of government can do everything.

Mr. Chairman, again, that's why it's so important that we continue to work collegially. I would underscore that I think we have demonstrated to date that we have been able to work collegially; that we have been able to work cooperatively; that there has been give-and-take; that there has been respectful discussion despite the fact that some of the issues we've dealt with of late have been somewhat divisive, I would tell you, among most parties, if not all parties, and certainly between parties.

Mr. Chair, this is a dramatic departure from the kind of opposition day motions that we've dealt with. I would underscore again that's why this is perhaps a new time for this Parliament, a new approach by the Conservatives, a new attitude perhaps towards the stated desire of Canadians to have this Parliament work. I would tell you that there has been a shift of winds, as far as I can tell, in Parliament.

It was very unexpected to have this motion come forward from the Conservatives. There had been no hint of this in the past. We have been very respectful about talking about a lot of days during the supply periods. We had even had a gentleman's agreement that, with all-party consent, it would be possible to defer votes—because it's very difficult for some of our colleagues who live in some of the more distant areas of Canada to get back for Monday votes—so that we would have votes on Tuesdays.

• (1215)

Mr. Chair, these are all things that have been discussed at the House leaders meetings. These are things that have been negotiated among House leaders and among my fellow whips and me.

Until this point in time, I think this Parliament has worked because, Mr. Chair, we've been respectful. It doesn't mean there hasn't been diversity of opinion. But I have to tell you, Mr. Chair, to have this kind of opposition day motion presented to the government is quite shocking. Again, I would underscore the fact that...

I'm smiling at Jay. Let the record show.

Mr. Chair, this is a new dynamic in the House of Commons, and again I would underscore that changing the Standing Orders is not something that can be done lightly. As a matter of fact, we have brought in some changes to the Standing Orders after consultation, after discussion, certainly with the knowledge, if not the participation, of opposition parties. It has been thoughtful. It has been

measured, as I would tell you that all things in the House of Commons should be. The decisions we make on a daily basis profoundly affect some group of Canadians, if not all Canadians, and that's why you can't do these one-offs. To bring this kind of motion in is a breakdown of some of the goodwill that we've enjoyed, some of the give-and-take that we've been able to acquire in the House.

Mr. Chair, I often tell people when I talk about my role as whip that I'm actually a member of two teams, and I mean that quite sincerely. Clearly I'm a member of the Liberal team. It's the party I was elected with. I'm very proud of my government and my Prime Minister. But I'm equally proud of the team I represent in the whips of all parties. We've worked together to make sure shared goals are met. There's a great deal of consultation on a daily basis. One of the joys of this job is the fact that we never know when a crisis will occur, but we can wait until one does, and it happens on a daily basis.

I know you're hanging on my every word. Thank you, Dale.

Mr. Chair, I think that give-and-take, that collegiality again, whether it's who's on committees... Each whip was charged with striking the committee. We've dealt with issues such as where committees would meet, and I know there was a great sensitivity as to where the health committee met in fact, Mr. Johnston, to accommodate one of your members who has some mobility challenges. We're very happy to do that, very happy to give that kind of support, because Parliament should indeed reflect the greatest diversity of Canada. I'm thrilled to think we could get past any partisan wrangling to do that.

Mr. Chair, I would tell you it would be in the best interests of Canadians and this Parliament if we continued to put partisan wrangling aside. It's saddened me to see this partisanship starting to take over. Again, I would contend it is certainly evident in this opposition day motion.

Mr. Chair, one of the issues we deal with—and I would say the views of Monsieur Godin and my views overlap quite a bit—is around how we deal with private members' bills. There has been a new approach to private members' bills. I have been in this House only since 1997 so I'm even less tenured than Mr. Hill over there, but I would tell you that it used to be almost like winning a lottery to get your private member's bill to see the light of day. We're in a brand new day. We now have opted to have all private members' bills votable. Of course, that comes with more than a little bit of consideration as to how that impacts the fisc on the government, and those are all issues we have to think about.

Mr. Chair, I would tell you, a great number of colleagues in every party have come forward with issues that are very important to them, issues that may be important to a segment of broader society or indeed for their riding. I know today in the House I heard my colleague Paul Szabo talking about fetal alcohol syndrome and his absolutely firmly held belief through his research that we need to put warning labels on beer and liquor because that may help prevent a disease that's very preventable. Members on all sides have brought forward thoughtful motions under private member's legislation.

• (1220)

Also, Mr. Chair, I would remind this committee that there have been some very important things done that I would say all parties would agree with.

I can think of the Atlantic Accord and how important that is—

Mr. Jay Hill: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I'm uncertain at this point what the ruling of the chair was, whether it was to adjourn at one o'clock.... Is that the ruling? Is that your understanding of the ruling of the chair, that we will be adjourning at one o'clock?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC)): No, that's not my understanding. What the chair expressed to me was that we would go right through until question period. However, we can get him to clarify that. He'll be back in just a very few minutes.

My understanding when he left here was that we would continue right through until two o'clock.

Yes, Mr. Godin.

Mr. Yvon Godin: On that point, we're going to wait for the chair, but as I understand it—and I raised the question again, and then he had doubt—I believe that when we have this going on, you can't stop it. If we're here for three days, we're here for three days. She's doing a good job. I'd like to continue to hear what she says.

She's telling me, Mr. Chair, how important it is for the employment insurance of \$46 billion missing to the working people....All of that was a good program that they cut off in 1996. I'd like to hear her some more. She's doing really well.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dale Johnston): Very good. I think that was more a point of debate, actually, Mr. Godin, but that's allowable, too.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I agree with you.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, when the chair returns to take over, my understanding is that he will clarify what his ruling is about adjournment.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dale Johnston): Yes.

Mr. Jay Hill: That's agreed. Okay, thank you.

• (1225)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dale Johnston): Ms. Redman.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are other issues on which we've had input from all parties. Minister Volpe quite recently this week has talked about some of the changes to the immigration system that are improvements.

I know members of all parties have had trouble with the waiting times, had trouble with some of the rules changing mid-stream, and we've always stated that family reunification was a priority of the government. It's created problems when new Canadians have come over, become Canadian citizens, and wanted to bring aging parents over. The priority has been to bring over spouses and minor children. So of course parents then took a longer period of time to come over.

We've also been very attentive...and I know our colleague Hedy Fry has been dealing with the certification of foreign-trained professionals. Again, I have many of these in my city of Kitchener as well as in Waterloo Region.

For a very long time we were an under-serviced area for physicians, which seems amazing when, if you'll recall, Mr. Johnston, I was just talking about the fact that we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We have this amazing high-tech explosion—yes, in my riding—and one would think that doctors would just be streaming into my area, and yet that wasn't the case.

We've had some wonderful enhancements to two of the local hospitals. The cardiac care unit at St. Mary's Hospital and the oncology department—the special wing—in the Grand River Hospital have allowed people in our region to no longer travel outside. That's been done in partnership with the federal government and obviously with a great deal of participation by the provincial government as well as private individuals who have donated. It's made a huge difference to the quality of life.

Speaking to the priority of Canadians that I've heard since 1997—that health care is their major priority—those new departments have attracted some new physicians, some radiologists, obviously oncologists, and that has really improved the quality of life for people who live in my area.

Another issue that has been near and dear...and again, I would say that we have shared this priority with all parties, and with their input and their interest, we have brought forward issues on the aboriginal file. As a matter of fact, we have invested \$700 million in health care for aboriginals. It's shocking, absolutely shocking, when you look at the research and the incidence of diabetes in our aboriginal peoples—up to 50% in some cases are suffering with diabetes.

We have to look at housing—

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: You have a point of order, Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: Yes. Mr. Chairman, while you were out of the room, I raised an issue of your ruling about adjournment of the committee at one o'clock. It was indicated there was agreement that you would let us know your ruling when you returned. What is your ruling about adjournment?

The Chair: I have had a chance to confer with our committee clerk. I'm told that, in fact, we don't adjourn; we continue. We would suspend for the duration of question period, and then we would resume.

Mr. Jay Hill: And we will continue to debate this particular motion that I've put forward?

The Chair: We will, unless we state otherwise, but need I remind you that we've also been notified by one colleague, Mr. Reid, that at one o'clock he might seek unanimous consent—

Mr. Jay Hill: To release the witnesses.

The Chair: Yes, or anything else he wants to do at that particular point, if he's so inclined, of course.

Mr. Jay Hill: Thank you for that clarification. I think that was important for all members to know.

The Chair: That's the latest information we have.

Mr. Jay Hill: So we will be continuing this, with the exception of question period.

The Chair: If I receive any different information, I will endeavour to let the members know, as soon as that is available. If I perhaps have to interrupt someone to do that at some point, I beg the forgiveness of members of the committee.

Madam Redman, I believe you had the floor.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to see you back, although I have to say our colleague Dale Johnston did a fine job as fill-in chair—a heck of a job. He is a heck of a guy doing a heck of a job.

One of the greatest exports we have, as Canadians—and I'm really pleased Mr. Kingsley is still here to hear this—is our system of government, our system of elections. We send observers over to places like Ukraine. Democracy may be a flawed system—I can't remember right now who the author of this was—but it's the system that's better than all rest. I would have to tell you there are certainly areas in which we can improve. This committee itself has looked at a citizen engagement consultation process in relation to how we may refine our electoral system. I think that all speaks to a country that has clear values. We have the independence of the judiciary, we have the rule of law, we have a tradition that is probably one of the finest.

One of the things that cause me to pause from time to time when I walk up on Parliament Hill is to think there are 308 people representing Canadians all across Canada who come from all walks of life. I am often asked—as are, I'm sure, all colleagues here who go to talk to school groups—who I really work with. My answer is that I work with former educators, I work with farmers, I work with actors; I work with lawyers, accountants, a miner, former fishermen, former car salesmen. What makes the House of Commons magic for me is the fact that, if we're old enough to vote and we're Canadian citizens, we can then be elected to one of the finest democratic processes in the world.

I would tell you it's that dynamic, that diverse background, that ability to bring forward life experience, that makes this such an incredible place. There isn't a corner of Canada or a group of Canadians that is not represented in some way. Certainly, we have a diversity of faith communities. We have several members of our first nations who are members of Parliament. It's one of the strengths, I also think, of the Senate. As much as we may, as parties, agree or disagree on how we appoint senators and whether or not we should look at a full Senate reform, again, Mr. Chair, I would tell you that just as we cannot support this opposition day motion because it's a one-off and changing the Standing Orders, we also cannot do one-

offs in how we deal with the Senate. If there comes a point in time when Canadians and, indeed, the electoral process are engaged—

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Do you wish to raise a point of order, Mr. Sauvageau?

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): I would just like to tell the committee that since a new Pope has been elected, I'm wondering whether we will need white smoke in order to get out of here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sauvageau.

We were informed of that about an hour ago. We are waiting to hear the name as well. Unfortunately, that is not a point of order, even though we do thank you for the information.

You have the floor, Ms. Redman.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you.

I appreciate your attention. We've had smoke, we've had gas...

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Do you wish to raise a point of order, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: I asked for some food a little earlier, Mr. Chairman, but I didn't want to be just for us. We should offer some to our guests as well.

The Chair: We will take a few minutes to try to have something brought in, but the meal will probably arrive about the time question period is beginning. For the time being, it might be preferable for colleagues to take turns and go up to the lobby to get some food. However, if committee members have a different view, I am prepared to try to order a lunch. However, I would not want to order food that will arrive around 2:05, five minutes after the meeting is over.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I understand, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Is that all right for today?

Mr. Yvon Godin: We could perhaps avoid the expense and invite our visitors to go up to the lobby to have their lunch.

The Chair: We thank you for your concern about our visitors.

[*English*]

Hon. Judi Longfield: With all due respect then, Mr. Chair, I know you've been chairing meetings for a good time, but I put a motion to challenge the chair's ruling. I think it's very clear that committees have a set time, from 11 to 1 o'clock. We're very busy around here, and I have things to do. I would like to continue—I find this riveting—but with all due respect, Mr. Chair, I challenge your ruling.

The Chair: Order, please.

The chair's ruling of some moments ago that the committee sits until the item is disposed of or until the committee decides to adjourn, with the exception of suspending for Standing Orders in question period, is being challenged.

All those in favour of the motion—

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Chair, I would move that the ruling by the chair be sustained. Let's do this properly.

The Chair: There's already a motion on the floor. We have to vote for or against that motion. I believe it's not debatable.

Mr. Jay Hill: That motion is not properly worded, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The motion is to challenge the chair's ruling.

● (1235)

Mr. Jay Hill: The motion has to be that the chair's ruling be sustained, not overturned.

The Chair: I'll ask members to be patient while our clerk finds me the appropriate reference, and I'll read into the record. Obviously the two motions contradict one another. One will be in order, and the other one will not. We'll take a moment and then we'll deal with the one that is, and that will deal with the issue.

[Translation]

After consulting page 857 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Marleau and Montpetit, I conclude that Ms. Longfield's motion is not in order. However, the motion moved by Mr. Hill is in order.

[English]

Mr. Hill, will you please state your motion?

Mr. Jay Hill: I move that the chair's ruling be sustained.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We're now resuming consideration of what was being said by Ms. Redman.

Ms. Redman, you have the floor, speaking to the motion presented earlier this day by Mr. Hill.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It has been an interesting interlude.

I notice you're consulting Marleau and Montpetit, and it is exactly the attempt to circumvent these rules with the opposition day motion and changing in a one-off the fundamental rules of how this House works.... We rely on these rules. These rules allow us to go forward with the business of Canadians and the business of Parliament, which is why this needs to be taken very seriously.

The cooperative efforts, the initiatives that happen, the reason this is such a fundamental—is it too strong a word to say “insult”?—digression, a change in how we've done business to date in this minority Parliament...it needs to be taken so very seriously.

You know, Mr. Chair, when you look at homelessness, at social housing, at the vision this government has brought forward—these are initiatives that I know Bloc members support and I know the NDP supports.

Mr. Chair, it was the Liberal members of caucus, when I first came to Parliament in 1997, who championed the cause of remedying

homelessness so that people weren't freezing to death, being frozen to sidewalks, or dying in farmers' fields because they had no place to live. It was the members of Parliament who championed that, and we got back into social housing.

CMHC has partnered with places, Mr. Chair, like Heartwood Place, which is a renovated former textile warehouse in my riding of downtown Kitchener. Mr. Chair, one of the top producers of real estate in Canada, who deals with the half-million-dollar homes and the big commercial deals, decided she was going to champion the conversion of this factory into affordable housing, affordable housing that had supports with it, and through the supporting community partnership initiatives program, which is known as SCPI, we supported that initiative. We supported this woman entrepreneur who has a thriving business and very little spare time, but who saw a need that she wanted to be remedied. We now have beautiful apartments where people are getting their dignity back, where new Canadians are able to learn our language and are then able to get jobs. People are raising their children. They're sending them to school. All of those things make a real impact in the communities each of us represent. All of those have had support and input from different members, not just government members.

Mr. Chair, that's why it is such a sad day to have a fundamental shift, when all the earmarkings are that the Conservative Party is no longer willing to make this government work. It is no longer willing to acknowledge that Canadians sent us here less than a year ago to make Parliament work.

That includes things like investing in the CBC. I've talked to diplomats, people who have come to Canada for two or three years; I talked to a gentleman from Taiwan who told me he had crossed paths with his predecessor, and his predecessor said the one thing he was going to miss was the CBC when he went back home. He said he thought it was a little bit of nudge, nudge, wink, wink; now I am a Canadian, and you're not. He said that after he had been here for a few months, he realized how much having the CBC makes our national identity, and that's something the government continues to support.

The government gave the largest historic grant when it gave funding for Cultural Spaces. We've invested in the CBC, but supporting Cultural Spaces...again, my community is very much into adaptive reuse of downtown buildings. I have a huge department store; it used to be called Goudies, and it sat empty for the longest time. There was an investment of a couple of million dollars from the city; private enterprise came in and supported it; as well, it got one of the largest grants under Cultural Spaces. We now have an amazing children's museum, and what's so exciting about this children's museum is that there are partnerships from all of these high-tech companies—these firms, these individuals. They're sitting on the board. They're not just investing money, and they deal with the day-to-day operation. They deal with the exhibits, and there are fascinating exhibits.

• (1240)

It's a four-storey building, with a huge atrium in the middle. I think there are children in my community who are borrowing other people's children just to go and play with the toys. It is amazing. Again, it is not something this federal government did on its own; we did it in collaboration, we did it in partnership.

Mr. Chair, that is the way of the future. No one government level is going to be able to possibly fulfill the needs, or indeed come up with the kind of necessary vision, the kind of vision Canadians deserve.

You know, Mr. Chairman, just to reach back to the SCPI initiative for one moment—the SCPIs, the supporting community partnership initiatives—when Claudette Bradshaw was put in charge of the homelessness file and went across Canada, she came back to Ottawa...and I know we're not supposed to ever divulge things that happen in camera, and certainly not in caucus, but I would make an observation that I have only ever seen one person make the former Prime Minister tear up, and it was Claudette Bradshaw.

She told the stories of Canadians, of young people, of families living in homeless shelters—families who sleep there every night, who send their children to school and go to minimum-wage jobs, where they're underemployed, because they can't afford the first and last months' rent. She said, we don't have to invent solutions, because Canadian communities and volunteers across this country already know what they have to do to address this; we have to get back into this and partner. It's that kind of acknowledgement of a shared vision that...maybe we need to share the vision in order to meet the needs of people.

That's how this government came to Ottawa. We came as a minority government. We came acknowledging that there needed to be more consultation. Again, I would reiterate, just in case Mr. Hill has forgotten, that there was more consultation before this budget with opposition parties than I have ever seen. I would venture a guess that the amount of consultation we had was probably historic.

You talk about the high-tech sector. I'm going to go back to Kyoto and look at the investment we've made, the investment in renewable resources. Technology Partnerships Canada is a program through Industry Canada. What it does is give repayable loans to companies that have commercially viable technology.

In my community, TeleflexGFI, ATS, and ARISE Technologies have cutting-edge technology. TeleflexGFI is dealing with factory conversion kits for dual-fuel trucks and cars, and they're also providing one of the components to the Ballard fuel cells. This government has been very supportive of the Ballard fuel cell. We have hydro in Manitoba and Quebec, as well as our investment in wind power.

We are making substantive investments to be partners in technology that will keep us on the cutting edge. This is the kind of technology we are going to be able to export to allow countries around the world to meet the Kyoto targets. It's realistic, it's doable—plus, Mr. Chair, we're also asking Canadians to look at the one-tonne challenge. We're asking them to look at more energy-efficient washers and dryers. We're asking them to take the bus.

There's another amazing proposal from my area of the Waterloo Region. I know there is one out west and I know they've gone to look in, I believe, Washington. That's the light rail transit initiative. We have partnered with the provincial government, looking at doing an environmental assessment as well as a technological study. This won't just be light rail transit that moves people, Mr. Chair; this is a planning tool—to use the existing infrastructure to intensify people living on that route, and to stop paving over and digging into some of the best farmland in Canada, so we will be able to sustain....

• (1245)

As well, Mr. Chair, we've made investments in helping farmers. I know that's something that's very important to our Conservative colleagues, but it's very important to Canadians. Canadians enjoy some of the safest, most cost-effective food on the globe. We can buy a lot of groceries for a very affordable price. Those are the kinds of things that give us the quality of life Canadians enjoy. Those are the kinds of things in which we need to continue to be partners with the fishers, the ranchers, and the farmers on this land, to make sure we don't deplete those non-renewable stocks, to make sure, when we're dealing with our wild life and domestic industry, we have the safeguards through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

You know, Mr. Chair, we've worked really hard around the globe and with our American partners to find a long-term solution for BSE, which is the mad cow issue. It was two summers ago that I went with the then Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific to argue our case in Japan. One of the things people came to realize over time, something the ranchers had known in Canada and United States forever, is how incredibly integrated our two countries are when it comes to livestock. You can quite easily have a calf born in Canada go to a feedlot in the United States, or vice versa, and then go across the border to be butchered.

It's those kinds of issues we have to address on the international stage. We had the international community in. We said, let signs dictate what is going on. I tell you it's the right approach, it's the defensible approach, and it's not unlike the approach we've taken through the whole public health issue. I know Carolyn Bennett was very excited when she was given the charge to look at public health. We've learned lessons through the SARS issue. I went with Carolyn Bennett to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, and I visited the Washington health institutes and looked at how they funded their public health initiatives.

It's very important that we have a comprehensive response, whether it's avian flu, SARS, or BSE, so that the public can rest assured that we are safeguarding their health and the checks and balances are there. Whether it's doing clinical trials on new drugs, whether it's dealing with generic drugs versus name brand pharmaceutical companies, it's very important that we always have what is in the best interest of Canadians at heart and always acknowledge that.

[Translation]

The Chair: There is a point of order.

Mr. Sauvageau, go ahead.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: I'm sure the whip will be interested in what I have to say. Under Standing Order 11(2):

The Speaker or the Chair of Committees of the Whole, after having called the attention of the House...

• (1250)

[English]

Hon. Judi Longfield: What page?

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Standing Order 11(2) reads as follows:

The Speaker or the Chair of Committees of the Whole, after having called the attention of the House, or of the Committee, to the conduct of a member who persists in irrelevance, or repetition, may direct the member to discontinue his or her speech, and if then the member still continues to speak, the Speaker shall name the member or, if in Committee of the Whole, the Chair shall report the member to the House.

I'm convinced the member will bear Standing Order 11(2) in mind as she continues to speak, but she will not stray from the motion nor persist in repetition.

The Chair: I'd like to add, for my colleagues' information, that the Standing Orders are those of the House of Commons and of committees of the whole, not those of parliamentary committees. Nevertheless, the point is well taken. I'd like to quote page 527 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, in order to move things forward. And I quote:

The rules of relevance and repetition are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The requirement of relevance is necessary in order that the House might exercise its right to reach a decision and to exclude from debate any discussion which does not contribute to that process. The rule against repetition ensures that once all that is relevant to the debate has been presented, the question will be determined once and for all, at least during the current session. To have one rule without the other would seriously limit the ability of the House to use its time efficiently.

That being said, colleagues know that this does not apply to committees. However, House of Commons procedure generally applies to committees. I'll now read from page 857 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

The Chair may, at his or her discretion, interrupt a member whose remarks or questions are repetitious, or not relevant to the matter before the Committee. If the member's comments continue to be repetitious or irrelevant, the Chair may recognize another member.

That says it all. Clearly, it's at the chair's discretion. I expect members to make remarks that are relevant to the motion before us. Regardless of whether one is in favour or against it—I'm not the one to say—but at least members should refer to it and indicate why comments are relevant, especially when they don't seem so at the outset. I would therefore like to invite all members to do so.

[English]

Now I will be out of order myself. I indicate to colleagues that we do have the name of the new Pope, if you want to hear it. It is former Cardinal, now Pope, Ratzinger. He will bear the name of Benedict XVI, I believe.

The Chair: I don't think I'll comment on that.

Mr. Reid, is this a point of order?

Mr. Scott Reid: Are we finished with this point of order or are we still on it?

The Chair: We've disposed of this point of order now, I believe.

Mr. Scott Reid: In that case, I have a new one.

The Chair: On a point of order then, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

It being very close to 1 p.m., the time at which we had intended to deal with our original witnesses, and given the fact that there is at least a possibility that we will take longer than the cardinals' conclave to come to our decision and that Mr. Kingsley has a pretty tight time to get on his rescheduled flight, I move and seek unanimous consent that we dismiss our witnesses, with our thanks for their having come here.

The Chair: I respectfully request that we add something to this, if colleagues are agreeable. Could we ask Mr. Kingsley to table with us the document I'm told was going to be the subject of his presentation? Perhaps that could be tabled, so that at least we have the benefit of some of the testimony he was to share with us. Do you wish to add that?

• (1255)

Mr. Scott Reid: If you'll forgive me and my lack of knowledge about procedure, Mr. Chairman, am I correct that this in no way affects our ability to carry on with everything else we're doing here? In that case, absolutely.

The Chair: It's just that given that we have given quite a bit of work to our witness, it sounded like the respectful thing to do in the circumstances, if you all agree. It doesn't affect anything else we're going.

Mr. Kingsley, on behalf of the committee, I want to thank you and all your officials for your presence today. We will ask you to table the document you have brought with you. I understand the staff had it ready for distribution.

[*Translation*]

Thank you once again, Mr. Kingsley, for having appeared before us today. I can say no more, because for the time being, the schedule for the committee's future business remains unclear.

Thank you, Mr. Kingsley, Ms. Davidson, Ms. Vézina and Mr. Thibodeau.

[*English*]

This disposes of this particular point of order. I want to thank colleagues for their cooperation in that regard.

Now we will pick up where we left off. Again, I'm asking colleagues to relate the discussion to the motion that is before us.

On a point of order, Mr. Hill.

Mr. Jay Hill: It's a point of clarification, with the indulgence of all committee members, so we all understand what's happening here. The ruling of the chair was that in a couple of minutes, when we reach one o'clock, we're going to continue to deal with this subject. There is no indication from the majority of the committee that there's a willingness to adjourn. We will suspend for one hour for question period and reconvene. I'm hopeful that arrangements can be made so that we can reconvene in this room at 3 p.m. and continue this until such time as the motion is dealt with. I just want to have clarification that such is the understanding not only of the chair, but of all committee members.

The Chair: On the first part of what was raised, Mr. Hill, there was a ruling that your chairman handed down a little earlier, sustained by the committee, as we will remember, which said just that.

As to ensuring that the same room is available, our clerk will work on that. Right now I notice other staff are conferring with him to do everything we can to keep the same room. Please remember that the rooms are allocated by way of agreements between the whips. I'm not one of them, but that will be worked on as we speak. We are sitting again, and I hope it will be right here, but the minute we can confirm that, perhaps I can share it with the committee, if we haven't adjourned yet.

Is that satisfactory, Mr. Hill?

Please remember, colleagues, that I have also asked for further interpretation by the office of the Clerk of the House, should there be anything different. I don't foresee anything, but that's what we've heard so far.

Mr. Jay Hill: Thank you very much for that clarification, Mr. Chair. The reason I raised it, obviously, is that if arrangements had to take place over the next hour before we suspend for question period at 2 p.m. to have us reconvene at an alternative site, there's time now, during that one-hour period, to make sure that if we don't have this room, we have another room somewhere else made available to us at 3 p.m.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would ask anyone who is not at the table, staff, journalists, and whoever, to keep the noise down to a lower level. A committee is in session.

Madam Redman.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would just say, Mr. Chair, for what it's worth, the announcement of the new Pope was actually quite in keeping, because it also speaks to the international face of Canada and the fact that we are a country of immigrants. I know, being whip, that I was able to send a few of my Liberal colleagues to the funeral of the Pope. The leader of the Conservative Party went and invitations went to the Bloc and the NDP as well, a real acknowledgement that this Parliament is made up of a diversity of views, a diversity of philosophies for very different parties that have to date worked very well.

This again is why this motion, this fundamental shift in doing business among a group of individuals who have for almost a year—but I would underscore, Mr. Chair, less than a year—in large part done what Canadians sent us to Ottawa to do, make Parliament work.... This ratcheting away, as it were, of something that is within the purview, and has historically always been within the purview, of the government, the allocation of supply days, is a fundamental shift and one, again, that cannot be taken lightly. It has to be taken very seriously.

Mr. Chair, on the theme of Canada's role in the world, one need only look to Canadians' response to the tsunami and the partnership with CIDA in matching, for a defined period of time, that incredible outpouring of generosity, which, I would tell you, is very typical of and very much defines Canadians and puts an international face on who we are as a nation.

•(1300)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Ménard, you had a point of order.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I simply wanted to know your interpretation of the rule on relevance.

The Chair: We've just read the rule on relevance as set out in Marleau and Montpetit's *Procedure and House Affairs*. We've discussed the rule in the House of Commons and how it applies to committees. That was just done two or three minutes ago, Mr. Ménard, perhaps before you arrived.

However, if you'd like me to repeat it, I'd be glad to.

Mr. Réal Ménard: I could see no connection with the comments made. I know that the honourable whip is a very cultured person, who has vast knowledge on a number of subjects, but I must admit I couldn't see the connection. However, if you wish to let her proceed, I am in your hands. I imagine she will get back to the motion on this historic day.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madam Redman, the floor is yours. We're back to consideration of the motion proposed some time earlier by Mr. Hill, and Madam Redman was speaking to the motion.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Monsieur Ménard, it's wonderful to have somebody hanging on my every word, as it were. I actually thought I was speaking to the relevance of the motion.

Mr. Réal Ménard: I love your lips.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Getting back to relevance, let's focus on the debate, because I think it may be more relevant than other comments made.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is not unlike the discussions that went around earlier, when we were dealing with government motions, as to who defines confidence. Marleau and Montpetit and other sources would tell us that it is within the purview of the government, as is the allocation of supply days, which is why this is such a fundamental shift and why the government is taking it very seriously. There is a shift in the dynamic of how we go forward on a day-to-day basis. We discuss at a weekly House leaders meeting a draft proposal as to when legislation will come up, whether votes will be deferred, what's in the best interest of all parties. That is the milieu in which we discuss these things proactively.

I would just underscore again for my good friend Monsieur Ménard that this issue was not discussed by House leaders, and I can't presume to say whether opposition parties had knowledge of this, but the government certainly didn't. Yet we heard from people in the media that they already had the substance of what the motion was. I would say that's a fundamental breakdown in the deference, the kind of gentlemen's agreement, if we could call it that, in how we go forward consultatively, the back and forth that is necessary, the give-and-take, not the thrust and parry we see in the House, but the ability to find issues of common interest and to build consensus. We all know consensus, Mr. Chair, doesn't mean unanimity. It means everybody walks away from the table in the room knowing they can live with that outcome. Again, this is something we take very seriously.

Concerning Canada's place in the world and this Parliament working and bringing forward issues that reflect Canadian values, I was talking about the tsunami before the point of order. We need to look at our peacekeepers, we need to look at governance building and how we send people to officiate for elections, even exporting our systems to other countries, because we are successful, we do have objectivity. I think those are things that speak to a Parliament that works, to a Parliament that has parties that are willing to put the welfare of Canadians before political partisanship. We have peacekeepers all over the world. That defines who we are as a nation. We've made an investment to have more peacekeepers and more soldiers. Those are all things Canadian people say they want. We've invested an additional \$11 billion in defence. We are a sovereign country that believes in multilateralism. We are proud members of NATO, we are proud members of the United Nations.

I attended this morning, as colleagues from all parties did, the teachers' institute breakfast. They talked about the partnership they have with CIDA in bringing about one of the UN resolutions, to end by 2015 illiteracy in developing nations. Fundamental to that was educating women and girls, because we all know that educated mothers have a much higher rate of successful families, of having

children live to be teenagers. They have better health care. It's the mother who creates the family. It's the women, internationally, who are carrying the water and the sticks and doing back-breaking work, and they need to be educated so they can fight for minority rights in their countries and help build those countries and their systems of law.

• (1305)

I was a member of the foreign affairs committee, and again members from all parties travelled, and we did it collegially. We were in Washington, I believe, listening to some academics from America talk about developing countries, specifically the Muslim countries. After September 11, as a parliamentary response, we wanted to go around the world to find out exactly who occupied this Muslim community and understand them better, so we could break down some of the natural reaction, which was to be absolutely horrified by the terrorist act. We needed to look further at the larger picture.

When we were in Washington, one of the academics was talking about what I believe is an Indian saying—of course I can't give it in their language—that when you cook rice cakes you have to have heat from the top and the bottom so they cook evenly. And really in so many ways—with our peacekeepers, our CIDA investment, and UNESCO—we in Canada are empowering the people who live in the villages. We're educating them, and we're also working with governments so the form of government and the rule of law, the judiciary, can then work together. Then if we have empowered and educated people, they will be able to take advantage of the kinds of structures that we in Canada very much take for granted.

One of the other committees I had the privilege to work on looked at senior citizens' issues. We've invested in New Horizons, and we've incorporated a secretariat to look at seniors' issues. Those are very important things to move forward on, because seniors have contributed to and helped build the country we all enjoy, and their issues need to be attended to.

It's also very important to focus on the child care investment and the partnership we are working on with both provincial and territorial governments. I know my Bloc colleagues have had the advantage of an outstanding example in the province of Quebec of \$7-a-day child care. Maybe my colleague Françoise Boivin would like to speak to this. But it's the kind of choice that gives young families the ability to stay home and raise their children, or find regulated child care, where you can leave your children and go off to work and feel comfortable about it.

I have to tell you, Mr. Chair, as the mother of four children I certainly recognize the kind of trade-off one sometimes feels forced to make, either because you've invested years and years in an education and you now want to go out and be the accountant, engineer, or lawyer you are trained to be, or because you feel for financial reasons that you want to be in the workforce. The issue of having good child care, where you can drop your child off and not worry about them for the entire day, is probably one of the greatest gifts we can give families who choose to be in the workforce.

So our investment in child care of \$5 billion over five years is what we're hearing young families need and want. It is not up to us to dictate what families do, but it is up to us to facilitate the kinds of choices individual families make.

There's another very large issue, and that's our relationship with the United States. I've already mentioned it in the context of BSE, but the whole issue of border security after September 11 is a huge one. I don't think there is a member around this table, and I know there are many members—

• (1310)

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: We have a point of order from Mr. Blaikie.

Reverend.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Chairman, there have to be some rules with respect to relevance. I wonder if the member can tell us, because she's outlining all these issues, whether her opposition to this motion, which she's demonstrating through this filibuster, is based on the premise that if there is an opposition day and a motion of non-confidence.... She seems to be working on the assumption that the life of the government is limited, indeed over. Otherwise there would be no reason for her to go on like this, enumerating all the various things that may, in her judgment anyway, be at risk if this motion were to carry. I wonder whether she'd care to explain why she has so little confidence in her own government.

The Chair: For the benefit of honourable members, perhaps I'll just remind us of the rule of relevance for committees. I did so some time ago in relation to both the Standing Orders in the House, and I read it about committees as well. I don't intend to go through all of it, so I'll limit what I have to say about the committee's work. This is on page 857 of Marleau and Montpetit. It says:

The Chair may, at his or her discretion, interrupt a member whose remarks or questions are repetitious, or not relevant to the matter before the committee. If a member's comments continue to be repetitious or irrelevant, the Chair may recognize another member. If the offending member refuses to yield the floor and continues speaking, the Chair may suspend or adjourn the meeting. A point of order calling attention to a departure from the Standing Orders or from the customary manner in which the committee has conducted its proceedings may be raised

—and I gather that's the kind of point of order we're hearing right now—

at any time, by any member of the committee. In doubtful or unprovided cases, the Chair may reserve his or her decision.

Then it goes on to discuss when the chair's rulings are subject to debate. They're not subject to debate. They may be appealed to the committee, and the appeal is that the chair's ruling be sustained. We had one of those earlier today and the chair's ruling was sustained—not on this issue, but on a different one.

All of this then is to remind all honourable members that their comments must pertain to the issue at hand, recognizing that in the context of the committee that is usually interpreted in a manner that gives somewhat more latitude than it does on the floor of the House. Even on the floor of the House, as we all know, every now and then the subject being discussed is not perfectly concurrent with the motion before the House. It's known to have happened, albeit infrequently, even in the House.

• (1315)

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Chairman, I didn't want to provoke a filibuster on the part of the chair. I would rather my point of order not be abused in that way.

The Chair: Okay. So now that we've disposed of that item, Madam Redman has the floor.

It's just that this point of order, Mr. Blaikie, has been raised on a few occasions before and I've responded.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: I asked if she had confidence in her own government.

The Chair: Of course, points of orders are not addressed to the member across; they can only be responded to by the chair.

Madam Redman, you may resume debate. I remind you to be relevant to the subject at hand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Chairman, can we count on you to ensure that there are clearly established links between the comments and the topic of the debate? With all due respect, I would say that what we have here is verbal diarrhea with no common thread. We've been hearing about raisin bread, CIDA, everything. We're about to hear about Chef Boyardee. What else?

We're counting on your kind vigilance, Mr. Chairman. You have always come to the defence of institutions, but there is potential for abuse, which the opposition has always avoided. That is what is hardest to admit today, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Right. I would like to remind all members of the rule on relevance. As all members know, if the rule is breached, parliamentarians can indicate that to the chair through a point of order.

Ms. Redman.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I really do appreciate the question, and because my honourable colleague who raised the point of order hasn't been here, I am going to just skirt around it, maybe repeating just a little bit of what I said earlier. It would only be in the spirit of clarifying this for my good friend the Dean of Parliament.

I would say my discourse is absolutely relevant. The opposition day motion fundamentally changes how this place functions, and you, of all people, would recognize what I firmly believe, that this place needs to outlast all of us. To change a standing order as a one-off I would say is disrespectful to the institution and certainly a change in the dynamic of how we have operated, having come back to Ottawa with the firm understanding that while Canadians were embracing our government's vision of what the answers were for their priorities, they expected all parties in this House to make this government work. My examples, in the main, have been from the budget, and I would remind you that the leader of the official opposition left the House of Commons and held a press conference to say, there are so many good things in this budget, we will not defeat it. In fact, subsequently he actually requested his members who were in the House to stay seated because this was a budget that was too good to defeat.

Therefore, the relevance is in the fact that there has been a change in the dynamic of how our parties are working collegially. Albeit for less than a year, there have been several months during which there have been negotiations happening at House leaders meetings, in the corridors, in the lobbies, to make sure committees got struck and could travel, as we all know how valued the work of committees is. And within that budget bill are some of the instruments we need to achieve our Kyoto Protocol undertaking. This is an international undertaking that we have made on behalf of Canada. This will allow technology to be exported around the world. This is the collegial approach to these very forward-looking, important pieces of legislation that we deal with in the House, but also in committees. Mr. Chair, it's very important to point out that in committees the government no longer has the majority, so that much that comes back from committees is collaborative, representative of a diversity of views, and therefore evidence of the fact that this Parliament, until now, has been working.

We unveiled today an international policy statement, which again relates to Canada's place in the world. It's a very important piece of legislation reflecting Canadian values. There are issues coming up that need to be discussed in committee by all parties, and to fundamentally change the dynamic of how we work does a disservice, I would tell you, not just to the government, but to the House of Parliament. It is for that reason that the government has taken this very seriously.

I would also indicate, Mr. Chair, that it has not been a cancelled opposition day. There are opposition supply allocated days that will be held in the House. We have worked very collegially with all parties as to when those opposition days are allocated. I see Monsieur Ménard questioning this. I've been there and I know these discussions have taken place, and I would tell you that there has been agreement and consensus on any number of issues in this Parliament, not the least of which has been the allocated days. We've talked about committee travel, we've talked about the membership of committees, the composition of committees, whether or not some contentious issues would go to a standing committee or a legislative committee. The decision to put Bill C-38 before a legislative committee was certainly discussed at length in the House leaders meeting. It has not been this government's modus operandi to pull any stunts or try to provide any unpleasant surprises for any other party. We have tried to deal with this with openness and consultation.

•(1320)

Again, I would point to the budget bill and the historic kind of consultation that went on with the critics from all parties. As much as there has been consultation with Canadians over the years, to my experience, it was historic in the breadth and the depth of the consultation that took place to know exactly what issues were hills to die on for opposition members, and to put forward areas we were going to move on to make sure that if the opposition parties couldn't support them, they at least knew these were going to be in the budget.

One of the things we're dealing with in this committee—and some of you who are not regular members may not be aware of this—is to actually look at democratic reform. We had consensus on this committee; half of the members went to Australia and New Zealand,

and the other half went to Germany, U.K., and Scotland, to look firsthand at electoral reform.

I would tell you that our democracy is something that we export around the world. This doesn't mean that we can't make improvements. I think that engaging Canadians is a process we will embark on and discuss. It's very important that we do this, and again, it must be done in a thoughtful, holistic way; it's not a mere one-off. We are not going to throw out things that have served this country, Canadians, and democracy since Confederation.

I would maintain that's exactly the kind of fundamental shift that we were dealing with in this opposition day motion. I find it very troubling that the media knew the substance of this motion before the government did; I find that troubling. I think there has to be a sense of respect for the issues, whether they are in camera issues or some of the issues that we deal with at the Board of Internal Economy, where all parties are represented and where we deal with issues that impact parliamentarians, either as individuals or as a group. I think it's key that this kind of trust not be violated.

We have demonstrated a responsiveness to Canadians. Certainly the budget is probably the biggest piece of the agenda. It needs to be implemented.

It seems to be intellectually dishonest, if I could use those words, Mr. Chair, to—

•(1325)

Mr. Réal Ménard: Don't hurt anyone!

Hon. Karen Redman: I'm not; I'm being gentle, Réal.

It would seem to me that it would be intellectually dishonest to support a budget and then turn around and defeat the implementation bill, Mr. Chair, when everybody realizes—

Mr. Jay Hill: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman. Just for the sake of accuracy, the Conservative Party did not support the budget, but abstained to allow the survival of Parliament.

Mr. Scott Reid: Something that is very near and dear to the government....

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dale Johnston): Actually, I think that was a point of debate, but anyway, we'll continue.

Mr. Jay Hill: I just wanted to clear the record.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you.

One would think that if one did not defeat a budget and if one's party leader went out and said, we recognize a lot of very good things in this budget— which, indeed, they would perhaps like to take ownership for—then it would be somewhat hard, in my view, to reconcile their refusing to allow the implementation legislation to go forward, which as veteran parliamentarians we all recognize, Mr. Chair, comprises the wheels that make that bus move forward.

So to have this motion put forward taking away a traditional or historic or defined action, whereby it is the government's purview to decide when opposition days are allocated, is a fundamental shift. If one were to be a purist, I would tell you that it is somewhat of an assault on the democratic system as it exists in Canada.

Mr. Chair, did you want to jump in?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dale Johnston): Just an editorial comment.

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you. I thought you were gasping at my eloquence. I misinterpreted that. *Je m'excuse.*

Mr. Chair, just to continue on this very important topic, we take it very seriously. One of the true strengths of this country is the blessing of geography. I just spoke earlier of the trip that this procedure and House affairs committee took in its very important work looking at electoral reform. I'm sure that other members of Parliament, when they have travelled to Europe in this capacity as parliamentarians, have been struck that, as wonderful and multi-layered as the veneer of their history and as fascinating as their cultural developments are, the one thing that Canada, despite its tender years, enjoys, is an absolute embarrassment in blessings of our geography.

Mr. Chair, that's why it's really important that we recognize the regional diversity and some of the regional issues. We need only point to the western economic diversification fund to see that we are addressing specific issues in the western provinces. We can look at ACOA and recognize the issues that are necessary to address in the Maritimes.

One of the most fascinating activities I undertook as a parliamentarian was being a member of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. Mr. Chair, I have to tell you it was fascinating. Did you know that in Canada there are over 821,000 women-led and -owned businesses? They contribute \$18 billion to our GDP annually.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the engine that drives our economy. They create more jobs than any other sector. Women are creating jobs at four times the rate of their male counterparts. Some people might say, if they're doing so well, why are you studying them? It can't be broken if it's working this well. What we were going on was anecdotal testimony that we had heard from women entrepreneurs that traditional financial institutions were treating them differently because of their gender. We also recognized that if you were a man with no assets and no credit history, the financial institution would treat you as badly as they would treat a woman. But the reality was that there were far more women in this category than there were men.

We worked with ACOA and Western Economic Diversification, as well as Eastern Quebec Development and FedNor, and we saw some of the best practices. We saw women's enterprise centres that spoke to the needs of women, spoke to mentoring, and spoke to offering courses. We met amazing women right across Canada.

We also recognized that women are disproportionately represented in the service sector, and as a government we need to get better at how we deal with services. We're okay with people who make widgets or do manufacturing, but if we talk about women's representation in the export market, for instance, there's only about

11% of female-owned and -led businesses that export. Part of the problem is, if we're exporting an object we can quantify that, but if we're attracting foreign dollars, as one young woman in Charlottetown did.... She manages the culture of change within large corporations. She goes all over the United States and she gets paid in American funds, but she's not considered somebody who exports. Yet in a very real sense she's attracting foreign dollars. She should, in some way, be caught in some of the research and the statistics we provide for that.

It was these kinds of specific regional developments that were speaking to women's needs. We were in Charlottetown on probably the coldest day in their history, and we had 100 women come to talk to us about their needs and the kind of support they wanted from the government. It's that diversification, it's the collegiality of working with Canadians and other levels of government, and not dictating to communities and regions what they need, but working with them to make sure their priorities are facilitated.

•(1330)

There are success stories right across Canada. In Red Deer we met the most amazing young woman who is one of the few female farmers. She talked about how hard it was to be accepted by her male counterparts. It was truly gratifying.

The Chair: Order, please, colleagues. We have a member who's been speaking on a motion. Please keep the level of noise to a dull roar, so that we can have the benefit of hearing the honourable member's speech.

Madam Redman.

[*Translation*]

Sorry. Mr. Ménard has a point of order.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Given the wealth of information we have heard over the last several hours, perhaps it would be possible for you to check whether the committee is now ready to put the motion to a vote. Thanks to the wealth of information, we now feel we have a comprehensive understanding of the matter, and I think we would be ready to vote.

The Chair: Mr. Ménard is asking for unanimous consent to end the debate and vote now.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: You may carry on, Ms. Redman.

You have the floor, Ms. Redman.

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would continue, and I do appreciate—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: There is a point of order, Ms. Redman.

Go ahead, Mr. Godin.

• (1335)

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'd simply like to ask whether we can have unanimous consent to have the vote held this afternoon in a room where our meeting would be televised, I am enjoying the background...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Godin, but we have already established, further to Mr. Hill's suggestion, that we will be meeting in this room.

Mr. Yvon Godin: I'm asking for unanimous consent to change rooms.

The Chair: Mr. Godin is asking for unanimous consent so that, following question period, the committee may sit in a room where the meeting could be televised. Is there unanimous consent?

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: The meeting will therefore be held here following question period.

Ms. Redman, the floor is yours.

[English]

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I really do appreciate the input and the attention on the very important discussion of this motion that is before the committee.

The reason Parliament has worked is that there has been trust, there has been give-and-take, we have worked collegially. It is this kind of initiative, this coming together of a variety of philosophical remedies for some of the issues Canadians have identified as their priorities that has allowed us to move forward very important issues, such as, I would contend, the opening up of international trade. We have all read *The Economist*, we have all read magazines that talk about the emerging markets, the vast economic boom and the potential that exists in both China and India. We, as a government, do not want to be left behind. Canada has one of the best living standards in the world. We also can export our technology. Whether it is through the ambit of Kyoto or looking at exporting high-tech remedies to other economies, we can be a player, but we need to be in that mix right now.

This playing with when or if we will go to an election is brinkmanship, it's distraction, it's not what Canadians of any party elected us to do. This is why, Mr. Chair, it is so fundamentally important that we look at the substance and the ramifications of the motion the Conservatives have put forward for our consideration.

We have to continue to develop new markets to preserve our quality of life. We have to continue the kind of job growth that has given us the most thriving economy in the G-7 and the best job creation rate. There is no doubt that we also have to be very aware of our relationship with the United States on trade issues such as softwood lumber or BSE. It is absolutely critical that members of Parliament build these person-to-person relationships with our counterparts in the United States. I would just remind this committee that when that unfortunate ruling was made in the western United States to keep the border closed, it was President Bush who said he would use his veto power if that came before him. So it's important to recognize that we have friends in Washington. It's important to acknowledge that some of the members sitting around this table move that we travel to Washington on some of our points, because

we recognize the absolute value in having this person-to-person relationship with our counterparts in the United States. Mr. Chair, this kind of all-party initiative, this kind of acknowledgement that the \$2 billion daily two-way trade is crucial.

One of the places I went when I was on the Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs was Birmingham, Alabama. They were having a salute to Canada. Mr. Chair, did you know Canada was the number one trading partner of Alabama? They were doing a salute to Canada, and I went down there and met a lot of Canadians who were working, living, and creating jobs and wealth in Alabama. T

his group of women who had asked me to come down to speak on the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs had done a study throughout the United States, a listing of women's roles in the community, in politics, in the church, how far they'd gone up the corporate ladder, all of these kinds of things. Basically, Alabama was dead last in almost every category, but when they went further and disaggregated the data even further, they found out that there was a disproportionate number of women holding public office in Mobile, Alabama, and it caused them to collectively scratch their heads: why would Mobile, Alabama, be this enlightened, when the rest of Alabama is lagging terribly?

• (1340)

Interestingly, they came to the conclusion that there had been a fair number of charges for election misconduct and other things that unfortunately happen from time to time, and the electorate had just naturally turned to women, who they deemed to be honest. So I would never paint the brush of any of my male colleagues to say they were any more or less honest than I was, but I thought it was a bit interesting that the electorate in Mobile, Alabama—

The Chair: Order, please.

Madam Redman has the floor. The sensitivity is duly noted.

Madam Redman.

Hon. Karen Redman: I believe the honourable member is misting up a little bit.

An hon. member: Yes.

Hon. Karen Redman: There are issues before this government that we need to work on, and they are acknowledged by everybody around this table. One of them is the protection of children and vulnerable persons. It is the duty of all parliamentarians to make sure we're absolutely vigilant, whether it's the Internet, cyber-stalking, or any of these horrible new anomalies that are coming forward.

We can look at grow operations, which is a huge issue in my region of Waterloo. In one year alone we had 200 grow operations busted in Waterloo Region. It's due to our proximity to the United States. We need to work with the police forces across Canada to make sure it's not a slap on the wrist, to make sure we hit organized crime where they live, and that's in their pocketbooks.

I can't underscore enough that these are the kinds of issues members of Parliament need to bring to government, to their committees, and work out good decisions that are productive and will make a real difference for Canadians.

Every day issues come up that are very controversial. One of them in my own riding that was hugely controversial was missile defence—whether or not we would participate with Americans. The Prime Minister was very clear that we had to continue our role in NORAD, that we signed on to that, and that we were not participating in missile defence. That was very much welcomed in my riding of Kitchener Centre. It was a huge issue. I got all kinds of cards and letters from people.

We can look back at the aboriginal round table. The Prime Minister is looking to first nations for collaboration. Whether it's the investment of \$700 million for aboriginal health care...we have acknowledged that aboriginal people have needs that need to be attended to. We need to collaborate with them so any resolution to any of these problems is done with them, and not to them or for them.

Mr. Speaker, there are cutting-edge industries—

An hon. member: Chairman.

Hon. Karen Redman: Did I say Mr. Speaker? I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank my honourable colleague for listening with such attentiveness to my every word.

An hon. member: Hanging on it.

Hon. Karen Redman: Hanging on it.

May I just add a footnote? During these consultations I have had nothing but the highest praise for my fellow whips—and I would include the honourable member who just made sure I called you Mr. Chair and not Mr. Speaker—because these have been uncharted waters for very many of us.

His successor, Rob Nicholson, has proven to be adept and collegial, up until this motion that caught us unaware, this motion that fundamentally begs a different dynamic of this House. It has created a different atmosphere of working and is fundamentally changing the Standing Orders, which in many ways is certainly our rule book, if not our bible.

Mr. Chair, it's troubling and it's sad, because it seems to me that a dynamic we had all invested in and agreed to has been unilaterally changed. For that reason we take this very seriously—not to presuppose that were discussions to take place and we were able to get back on respectful footing again, converse with each other, speak with other, that consensus and the good will that has fundamentally been damaged if not lost could not be reinstated.

But there are many important things happening in Canada, and this Parliament wants to be part of them.

•(1345)

This happens to be the International Year of the Veteran. There is no group of Canadians who have committed more and sacrificed more for the values we all embrace, for indeed the democracy we

participate in on a daily basis, than our veterans. Mr. Chair, their contribution is just outstanding. We've had some international travel, and I believe there is some proposed in the near future. There's the 60th anniversary of battles that have been fought, and it may well be the last opportunity we have to honour and venerate these people who gave so much.

Mr. Chair, I lost an uncle, whom I never knew, in the Second World War, and my grandmother was a Silver Cross mother, so I always went to the Cenotaph. In my entire growing up, we never ever missed a Remembrance Day. I used to, when I was very young, look at what I thought were these old men who marched very slowly down the street. I'd think they were very elderly, and I'd think of their pride, their absolute pride, their medals, and this dignity that they had. But I have to tell you, it wasn't until I was a mother of teenage boys that it actually hit me that these proud, stately, albeit slow-marching gentlemen had lost and fought at an age that my sons were.

Mr. Chair, it's that kind of focus that we need to have in this Parliament, that we need to have nationally and internationally. That is why we are here participating in the democratic process, not circumventing or truncating it or using partisan ploys. We're here to carry out the work of Canadians.

Mr. Chair, we have also done a rigorous expenditure review, and there again I would think that my honoured colleagues in the Conservative Party would be absolutely in favour of this. We've reallocated money that is being expended to priority programs. We found up to \$12 billion that we are now reallocating to priorities that Canadians have said they wanted.

One of the books that get a lot of air time at the municipal level... and I have to tell you, Mr. Chair, that I have a great deal of empathy for this. I mentioned education before this day, as well as the municipal level. I actually served as a public school trustee for six years. I spent one term as a sitting regional councillor before coming in 1997 to this esteemed place. And I know all levels of government work really hard at defining their priorities, spending taxpayers' money wisely, and rolling out an agenda.

I find it puzzling that there is a party that wouldn't defeat the government on what they said was an excellent budget—or a budget, certainly, that I would say was excellent. They may say that they could support it. Indeed, their leader did recognize things in it that were very much in keeping with their priorities. To put in jeopardy those very levels of government, those municipal councils, my City of Kitchener, my regional council of Waterloo, which have, as any good government would, rolled out priorities, decided on investments, decided on expenditures...and now, because of political posturing, they may well have that rug pulled out from under them.

Culture is a huge issue that has really come on the radar screen of any urban centre. Certainly rural communities can take great advantage of it, but for urban development, the bohemian index, as put forward by Dr. Florida, has had an amazing impact. If we invest in our culture, we get exponential dollars back.

In my own riding I have seen support for things like eyeGO to the Arts. Mr. Chair, eyeGO to the Arts is funding that is flowed from the federal government to local arts agencies. It's done through a central ticketing agency, and any student of elementary and secondary school in my region can go and see a performance for \$5.

• (1350)

Stop and think about what it's like for a child who may show great potential in the arts, but who doesn't have a family that participates in the arts and who maybe has never even heard the sound track to an opera, to be able to go to Centre in the Square and hear a production by Opera Ontario. We not only have exposed that child to his or her own potential, we are creating subsequent audiences that will continue to make culture such a vibrant component of all our communities.

I've talked a little bit previously about the adaptive reuse of the Children's Museum. There's the Waterloo regional arts awards. We acknowledge that this kind of investment is good for our community. That kind of investment is being made by companies like Research in Motion and other corporate donors, whether it's Electrohome or Sun Life or Clarica—Clarica is Sun Life, right—or Great-West Life. Companies like those are saying that this is a public good. This is an investment that is well worth making. We're creating broader horizons and a more varied and fruitful future for these young students.

We also have federal funding that is going to an Open Ears Festival. My community, up until 1916, was called Berlin, and the name was changed to Kitchener. During its years as Berlin, it had an amazing choral festival called Sängerkette; we had outstanding singers, we had male choruses, and it really defined who we were as a community. We now have an annual Open Ears Festival that is trying to build on that almost lost tradition of singing and enjoying music. And that again is part of what unites our community.

I had recent occasion to be with my husband at the Concordia Club, at the president's ball. They have the Concordia male chorus and a Concordia choir, and they do most of their singing in German. I don't understand a whole lot of German, but I always come away from it with a very light heart, because it's an amazing gift they share with the rest of the community.

So investing in culture is investing in Canada. Investing in communities is investing in Canada. This is the business the government should be in. This is the business that Parliament, quite rightly, should be dealing with, not this political posturing about whether or not they are going to support the government.

Being the mother of four children, I've spent more than a little bit of time on soccer fields and in ice rinks and in dance studios and ballet studios. I don't think there is a prouder moment for us as a nation than when we hail either our artists or our sports celebrities. Clearly, we are as a nation riveted to the television whenever the Olympics are on. In 2010, the Olympics are coming to Vancouver, and they are something this federal government has partnered in, and it certainly will be a huge investment in the local community. I know preparations are going on now and I think it will be a very proud moment.

We need to invest in our young athletes. If you've ever been in education and looked at children from troubled homes, or even children who are in trouble and eventually find their way out, they will tell you that in large part, and fairly universally, there's one adult who has been significant in their lives. It may have been a scout leader. It could be somebody from church. It could be a teacher, and more often than not, it's a coach or somebody they looked up to as a mentor during their sporting lives. So it's important that we invest not only in our young athletes who are of Olympic calibre to showcase them for Canada, but also in our young amateur sports, because it's very important to continue to invest in them.

Mr. Chair, when my daughter came to the University of Ottawa from Kitchener, I suggested to her that she try a sport she'd never tried before. When I was a first-year student at the University of Toronto I tried fencing because it was not something I'd ever been exposed to. So our daughter tried out for the rowing team, because as you know, the University of Ottawa has a rowing team and a beautiful river on which to practise. She didn't make the cut the first year, but they came to her—she's fairly petite—and asked her if she'd be the coxswain. She was the cox for that first year and was quite determined to make the team the second year, so she practised with our community rowing team that whole summer. When she came back, she successfully made it for two years as a member of the rowing team.

• (1355)

I sometimes smile, because I said to her at the time, you know, Laura, if I got to be in the boat and call the strokes, and everybody in the boat had to listen to me, I think I'd like being cox, and I have to tell you that I have revisited that statement, having been whip, because there is an analogy.

Mr. Chair, the distraction created by the kind of politicking that is absolutely obvious and that is in the motion before this committee is a distraction from very important issues, such as our official languages. Being both francophone and anglophone, having that duality, is part of what defines us as a nation, part of what signifies that we are the product of two founding nations. It is so fundamental to who we are and to our character as Canadians.

We've supported this for over 30 years, and yet our colleagues across are still struggling with this. Mr. Chair, two of my own children went through French immersion. It's why our oldest daughter decided to come to the University of Ottawa, because she wanted to practise her French. Two of our children have taken Spanish in university.

I have to tell you that the world is becoming a very small place, and the more languages we have—at least the duality of our languages, if not Spanish and Japanese—the more open the window to the world. I don't think any generation more than our children's has looked at the world as such an accessible place.

My children have friends in every corner of the world who are teaching English as a second language. As a matter of fact, when the tsunami hit, our second daughter, Abby, had a very close friend who was working in the United Arab Emirates but happened to be vacationing where the tsunami hit.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt the honourable member. According to some of the clocks around here, it's two o'clock. I want to remind colleagues that we will resume immediately after question period. Please try to be back in here at 3:05 or so. There are no routine proceedings; they were held this morning. Sometimes it goes overtime, so why don't we say 3:05?

This afternoon we will be in the same room at 3:05 p.m. Thank you very much. The committee is suspended until 3:05.

• (1359) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1510)

Mr. Scott Reid: This is not relevant to Ms. Redman's comments, but we have a subcommittee that I believe is also meeting. Am I right about that? I'm not sure how all this fits in. Are we not meeting on Thursday at 1 p.m.?

The Chair: The subcommittee is a different issue. I'm not a member of the subcommittee. Is it the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business?

Mr. Scott Reid: I shouldn't be asking you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize and I drop my point of order. I'll just ask the chairman of the subcommittee. I just didn't have my thinking cap on.

Hon. Judi Longfield: We were in consultation. I think Michel couldn't make it on Thursday, and we decided Thursday at 1 o'clock was when we were going to—

The Chair: That is tentatively the business we have at hand. Maybe we can get back to the order of the day, which is consideration of the motion that was put by Mr. Hill earlier this day.

Madam Redman, you have the floor.

• (1515)

Hon. Karen Redman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the attendance of all of my colleagues.

This is a very important issue, an issue that's fundamental not only to procedure in the House and how committees work, but also to how this government has worked.

In deference to the new faces I see around the table, I won't start back with my opening comments. Suffice it to say that the government was absolutely within its rights and was indeed obligated to react this way, given the fundamental change that this suggested to the Standing Orders, which are our rule book for operating in this place.

I will leave some time. I realize that time is a very precious commodity, Mr. Chair, and I will leave time for one of my colleagues to make some comments regarding the motion before us.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Redman.

Does anyone else wish to intervene on this motion?

Mr. Michel Guimond: We will put the question.

The Chair: Well, that's fine if people are finished. Is there somebody...oh, Madame Boivin, do you seek the floor?

Oui, Monsieur Godin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: The majority will decide if there will...

The Chair: Members may always ask to speak. Did you want to take part in the debate, Mr. Godin?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Michel Guimond asked to put the question.

The Chair: We are not forced to vote on the motion in the committee. We can continue. Of course, at some point...

Mr. Yvon Godin: There's no problem, Mr. Chairman. I'll learn more about the Liberals. That's fine.

The Chair: I don't want to rule on the relevance of hearing or not hearing any comment. That being said, we will now hear from another member who has asked to speak to Mr. Hill's motion. As I see no one on this side, I recognize Ms. Boivin.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I may not be as eloquent as my colleague. I found her very interesting, but I wanted to express my views on Mr. Hill's motion, Mr. Chairman.

As Ms. Redman said, this is an important debate that goes to the heart of how our parliamentary system operates today. I don't want to give you an extensive background here, even though each one of us thinks our own lives are very interesting. When I dreamt of going into politics at age 11, I was not dreaming of a day like today. That's very clear in my mind.

I arrived here on June 28, and I was really only able to meet all the colleagues from various parties in October. I will always remember that one morning, at an English-language radio station in Ottawa, I participated in an interview along with a new member from the Bloc Québécois—I think that it was Mr. Clavet—a new member from the NDP, Ms. Crowder, and a new Conservative MP, Mr. Poilievre. It was wonderful to see us all at that particular moment, Mr. Chairman, pleased as we were to know that our views would be taken into account during this 38th Parliament. We were all gung-ho. The population had expressed its will after a hard-fought campaign on the issues of...

• (1520)

Mr. Yvon Godin: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I would say to my colleague, the whip for the NDP, whom I like very much, that that was already in the picture. No one should assume that we, as new members, didn't have to run around during the election campaign and hear about things that we weren't necessarily part of at that time. I must admit that our baptism by fire was quite impressive.

I'm telling you all this to say that while listening to various interventions, including Ms. Redman, I had time to ask myself serious questions about the willingness of all members, from all parties, to really make this 38th Parliament work.

When we came here, we told ourselves that with a minority government, we would work together and would help things move forward. A little later, I will get back to the fact that I did see and experience such moments on various committees. When I arrived, I told myself that I was very lucky to be able to participate in a committee called the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I admit that sitting on this committee was not necessarily my dearest wish. I looked around the table and I saw the Chief Government Whip, the leader of another party, the whips of each of the parties. I can tell you that when you're new to politics, it's quite impressive the first time you sit on a committee. I'm sharing a rare moment of humility with you here.

I admit that I'm now very pleased with that experience, after *x* number of months. I stopped counting them because I get the impression that I've aged 10 years in your company here. I've learned a bit more on the operation of Parliament.

For those of you who don't know me, let me say that I used to be in radio broadcasting. I was on the other side of the microphone at the time and I sometimes interviewed certain politicians. I shook them up.

The Chair: There are several points of order. First, we will listen to Ms. Picard's.

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): I noticed that on three or four occasions this morning, you warned members of the committee who had the floor of the fact that we had to discuss the motion that was tabled, in accordance with a section of the Standing Orders that you quoted.

In my opinion, the Member for Gatineau should be reminded that she has strayed very far from the subject of the motion.

The Chair: I remind all members that they must speak to the motion. I am not telling members to be for or against the motion, that is up to them. However, members should speak to the subject of the motion. I am sure that the member was preparing to do so.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I was talking about everyone's cooperation, Mr. Chairman. You should have heard me out.

I am very happy to see that my colleague knows what riding I represent. That shows that I am doing my job. That is wonderful.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: There is another point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. Roy.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Chairman, the member does not need to share her résumé and her relations with us to speak to a motion.

The Chair: It has already been done.

The parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Monsieur le président, I had the chance to have a conversation with Mr. Hill, who proposed the motion that we're now debating at this moment. You, Mr. Chairman, could suggest the precise wording,

but I think if you ask for consent—certainly from our side—I would propose the following: that we adjourn the discussion on this motion now and reconvene at our regularly scheduled time Thursday morning of this week at 11 a.m.; that the continuation of the discussion we're having, the debate on this motion, would be the first item on Thursday morning; and from our side, we would commit that we would dispose of Mr. Hill's motion—all necessary questions from this committee would be deemed made—and it would be voted upon no later than one o'clock, the regularly scheduled adjournment, on Thursday of this week when we reconvene.

The Chair: Okay. We are, of course, debating the motion already. The only way we could consider what the parliamentary secretary is telling us is by unanimous consent, because we're already debating another motion. Then we will see this as a request for unanimous consent to adjourn until 11 a.m. on Thursday—we'll find the date, Mr. Clerk, so we have it properly worded—and that the first item of business on that date—that's the 21st—be the motion in the name of Mr. Hill, and that all questions be put no later than 1 p.m. to dispose of the said item.

So that's what we're seeking unanimous consent on by way of this point of order.

Mr. Hill.

• (1525)

Mr. Jay Hill: Well, there is just the one anomaly, and I've discussed this with the parliamentary secretary. The motion we are debating today, in the final sentence, says the committee is to instruct the chair to table this report on Wednesday, April 20, 2005. That would have to be changed to Friday, April 22, 2005. With that one change, I would agree to what the parliamentary secretary is suggesting.

The Chair: Okay. Of course, nobody has proposed an amendment to this motion yet, so that amendment is fully in order. Maybe what we could do is we could hold off for one minute on Mr. LeBlanc's motion, and then someone could amend the motion that's before us.

Mr. Jay Hill: I just did.

The Chair: Well, no, sir, we're debating your motion. Someone else would have to move the amendment, and then we could dispose of the amendment and do what we just said we would do.

Will someone move the amendment then?

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): I move the amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Jean will move the amendment to replace the words "Wednesday, April 20" with "Friday, April 22".

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Having disposed of the amendment, we're now back on the main motion. I will now recognize the point of order to seek unanimous consent on the issue with which we're familiar.

Do members of the committee wish for me to read the motion being sought by way of unanimous consent by the parliamentary secretary, or have you heard it sufficiently?

Mr. Jay Hill: I think we all understood it.

The Chair: Okay. Is there unanimous consent? There is unanimous consent. [English]

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Jay Hill: We'll get the recorded vote at one o'clock.

The Chair: That's a different item. We've disposed of that motion.

I now have a point of order before we adjourn or do anything else. [Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chairman, we had invited Mr. Kingsley to come this morning. Could we bring him back? I think it would be important for him to come back, perhaps on Thursday.

The Chair: He has already left the country. He was supposed to leave yesterday, but we made him delay his trip.

Do you want us to ask his assistant or someone else from his office to come on Thursday, between one and two o'clock, to answer questions?

There's a subcommittee meeting between one and two o'clock.

How about if I do this? We will inquire as to when Mr. Kingsley returns. I will report that at Thursday morning's meeting. For the time being, we will instruct our colleagues who would normally discuss electoral reform that we're not doing that on Thursday morning, but we're discussing this item. After we finish this item on Thursday, we will need an agenda-setting meeting, because we also have a question of privilege before us. Is that understood?

Will someone move the adjournment of the committee?

Mr. Johnston so moved.

This meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.