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Chair

Mr. James Rajotte

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•(1715)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC)): Order, please. We are now live and on the public record.

I want to go right to Mr. Byrne. Mr. Byrne, you can read and move your motion, and everyone should have a copy of the motion.

Do you have a point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Chairman, for the public record, we have been seized with a motion that I would like to raise with our parliamentary leader first. I think that is how the Liberals proceed, as well as the Bloc and the NDP.

This document should normally have been submitted with 48 hours' notice. You tabled it today because we were in camera. We are no longer in camera. The rules changed because our meeting is now public.

In fact, I would suggest that this motion... If it is in order, it is in order, but I see that the translation is not correct. I'm sorry. Just because I'm asking for the French version doesn't mean that I'm not bilingual. Don't take us for idiots.

The words "*loi*" and "*statutaire*" do not have the same meaning. Right? If you don't understand English or French, I would point out that the words "*loi*" and statutory and regulatory do not mean the same thing. I'm sorry, but this document should be submitted to our parliamentary leaders and should then be translated by the House translators.

[English]

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Is that on the same point of order?

Hon. Dan McTeague: It's the same point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Petit, it would be preferable if Mr. Byrne presented the wording in his motion to the committee because the motion has not yet been discussed.

His point of order refers to a few words in the motion. I think that the motion should be debated and I don't think it's fair for our listeners to be debating something that has not yet been officially put forward.

[English]

The Chair: Just let me respond to Monsieur Petit.

My understanding is that even though we've moved from the in camera session, I did rule the motion in order. If the motion were to be presented, the committee business is the same in camera as it is in public. Therefore, the 48 hours' notice is not needed. I'm not an expert on translation, but my clerk is very good, and he certainly advises me that this is close enough to a translated motion to be in order.

Do you have a point of order, Mr. Van Kesteren?

•(1720)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): It is on the same motion.

I have a question for the clerk. Do we not need unanimity if we use this motion rather than going for the 48 hours? Doesn't it have to be unanimous?

The Clerk: The routine motion adopted by the committee stated that 48 hours' notice is required for any substantive motion, unless the motion is directly related to the business item under consideration.

Does that answer your question, Mr. Van Kesteren?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Yes, it answers my question. I don't know if I quite agree with that.

The Chair: Well, those are the rules the committee adopted.

Go ahead, Monsieur Petit.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: I would like to continue on the point of order because I was interrupted, and I would like to point out to you that the clerk's decision is not your decision.

You need to rule on this: Is this a motion? It has to be tabled first. I think that it will be tabled soon. Second, you have to accept it. Third, we have the right to debate it before it is accepted, even if the text has been submitted, in order to determine whether or not this is a substantive motion.

If it is a substantive motion, then my apologies to the clerk but it has to be tabled for 48 hours' notice. If it is not, if it is simply a procedural motion, if it has been submitted merely for the sake of submitting a motion... We must decide this.

Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, this document cannot be submitted as it stands because it has not been formally translated. It's all very well to say that it is a "reasonable translation", but I don't need a reasonable translation, I need a true translation. I'm sorry, but it cannot be accepted.

[English]

The Chair: You have a point of order, Monsieur Crête.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): In my opinion, in order to debate a motion, the motion has to be moved. Let's move it and then everyone can use the parliamentary tools at their disposal.

[English]

The Chair: On another point of order, Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: To the clerk, can you give me a definition again of what is standard procedure? You said that it's the business.... Can you give me that one more time?

The Chair: Okay, I will answer your question, Mr. Van Kesteren.

This committee agreed, in May 2006, that 48 hours' notice be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, and that the notice of motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and distributed to members in both official languages. So my ruling as the chair is that because this committee business was to discuss deregulation of the telecommunications sector, this motion that is going to be presented is in order. That is my ruling.

I think we should let Mr. Byrne read the motion. If members have procedural points or if they want to debate the motion, we can do so after the motion is read into the record.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The presentation of the motion having been ruled in order, I move that the committee report to the House recommending that the Minister of Industry withdraw the order varying telecom decision CRTC 2006-15 and table in Parliament a comprehensive package of policy, statutory, and regulatory reforms to modernize the telecommunications services industry.

The Chair: The seconder is Monsieur Crête.

Okay, we have debate. We have Monsieur Petit.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Given that the motion has been tabled and that we are no longer sitting in camera, I would like to point out to the mover of the motion that the translation of the words "*réforme aux politiques, aux lois et aux règlements*" is not acceptable. I do not need a reasonable translation; I need a true translation, unless Mr. Gerry Byrne can tell me that he understands the French that he has just written. I imagine he is the one who had to write the French version, because it was translated into English. That is my first major point.

I have a second important point to make and I'll tell you why it is important. If there's no agreement to support this proposal, then I

want to know which of the two versions stands, under the interpretation rules.

If the English version stands, then I want to know exactly what it says. I will therefore consult my whip and my parliamentary leader who will tell me what this means in English, based on how it has been drafted. If, on the contrary, the French version stands, because the translation will have to be the version that is accepted... In fact, when we vote, the vote will be on the French version and the English version.

If there is a problem, how will you rule, Mr. Chairman? Will you rule in favour of the English version or the French version? You have a problem. We should therefore be consulting people who are much more knowledgeable than we are on this matter.

This is a substantive motion. It is very serious and very important. If it weren't, he would not be tabling the motion. It's very important. Therefore, those who wish to, have a right to understand exactly what this means, even if people say they understand, because if there's a problem, who will rule? Will you rule in favour of the French version or the English version? At some point you are going to have to rule. Therefore, the translation must be reliable and the text must be clear in both languages, which is not currently the case.

Therefore, we don't need a reasonable translation, a translation done by our interpreters who, in passing, are excellent. This is a legal text with implications. Therefore, if the two versions of this legal text are not consistent, then I regret to inform you that the motion, in fact, cannot be accepted, in its current form, that is. It has to be submitted to our whip or our parliamentary leader, who will then consider the issue and be able to advise us. We belong to the House. In fact, we have the authority of the House. That is why I am telling you that this is a substantive motion and not simply a procedural motion.

• (1725)

[English]

The Chair: Okay, *merci, monsieur Petit*.

I have Mr. Byrne, Monsieur Arthur, and Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Byrne.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the correct course of procedure here, if there is concern that the translation is incorrect in the motion I've put in both official languages, the only possible course of action by any honourable member at the table would be to table an amendment. So an amendment would be coming forward. Notwithstanding that, this is the motion I've tabled for consideration by this committee, in both official languages.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Byrne.

Mr. Arthur.

[Translation]

Mr. André Arthur (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Ind.): Mr. Chairman, I cannot understand why Mr. Byrne is suggesting that we can vote on two differing French and English texts. It is not up to the committee to make this kind of decision.

[English]

It's not up to the committee to decide if the translation is right or wrong, and a vote cannot make it right if the translation is wrong. The French translation is wrong. Some words are poorly chosen, and there is a contradiction in terms that does not reflect what you meant by your text, which is very clear. So I cannot understand why we would send text to the House that is so poorly written in French that it is laughable.

The Chair: Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): This is not about the English or French text. I guess we can go to the House for anything we want to do—regulatory or legislative—but we usually go to the House for legislative changes rather than regulatory changes.

This motion would basically direct the minister to forgo, avoid, and neglect his responsibilities and legislative obligations for April 6. Is that what it means?

• (1730)

The Chair: Mr. Byrne, would you like to address that?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: The report to the House would recommend to the minister that he withdraw the order varying the telecom decision CRTC 2006-15—not avoid the date of April 6, but actually terminate his decision to vary.

The Chair: Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: We can vote on this and the outcome will be obvious. It says: “That the Minister of Industry withdraw the order varying Telecom Decision CRTC 2006-15 and table in Parliament a comprehensive package of policy, statutory and regulatory reforms to modernize the telecommunications services industry.”

It's asking us to do the exact same thing the minister has proposed to do. It's redundant and is not going to accomplish anything. The only thing it's going to accomplish is embarrassment, in the case of the minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. It is 5:30 p.m. and under the committee standing orders, I have other things to do. I'm requesting that we adjourn, and adjournment is automatic.

[English]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I want to finish my statement.

The Chair: Is this on the same point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Crête, you may speak on the same point of order.

Mr. Paul Crête: I would simply like to know what the standing order is. I do not think that that is the standing order.

Mr. Daniel Petit: No? Tell me what it is.

Mr. Paul Crête: The chair will tell you.

[English]

The Chair: The clerk has advised me there has to be a motion to adjourn, even though the meeting indicates 3:30 to 5:30, and even though we have votes at 5:45, which I hope we all make. If the

committee keeps discussing the business as long as members want to keep discussing it and there's a quorum, there has to be a motion to adjourn.

The Clerk of the Committee: The motion is non-debatable, and the question must be put immediately.

The Chair: It's non-debatable and the question must be put.

M. Petit, have you moved that we adjourn?

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: I move that the committee adjourn its business.

[English]

The Chair: M. Petit has moved that we adjourn.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: I would like it to be in the record that I move this because it is past 5:30 p.m. There is a vote in the House that I must participate in and I think that that vote takes precedence over the committee's business.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: The motion is defeated. We continue.

We will continue with Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: We are, in essence, asking the minister to do exactly what he has done. He has given us policy direction and statutory and regulatory reforms, and he's modernizing the telecommunications service. He's doing exactly what we've asked him to do.

The order of business—and that's the reason I asked on my point of order whether or not this motion was in order—was to prepare for the minister some direction based on what we've discovered from our witnesses. We've listened to—I don't have the exact number—witnesses for a number of months now. I understand that Mr. Crête has forwarded some objectives and some concerns. We have also looked at these. We've listened to the witnesses and come to some conclusion as well.

I feel this is redundant, that this is a waste of committee time. The minister needs to have some direction. We know what his timeline is. It is April 15. He's going to rule on this thing. We're going to stand in a couple more days.

We need to give the minister something more substantive. We need to give to the minister the direction that we see as a committee and the conclusion that we've come to as a committee from what we've heard from our witnesses.

I stated at the outset too that my first impression, when this was first brought to our attention, was that this would be the next part of our study. I had some serious reservations. I had some serious problems with questions that I didn't have answered, and yet in my mind, having listened to those witnesses and most of those concerns, with the exception—I'll state this publicly—of the smaller businesses, the ones that need some protection, I personally feel that the minister is going in the right direction. Not only do I feel that, but I think that opinion can be found among the witnesses we interviewed and in the statements they made.

Mr. Chair, I feel that this motion is out of order. Unless we accept the argument that the language is inadequate or that it hasn't been properly drafted, and I'd have to trust my francophone friends when they say that—if that's been overruled, and if my point of order that the motion is out of order... The order of the day says committee business; it doesn't even say that we're going to rule on whether or not we're going to come up with a committee report.

My argument is that if we're going to insist on this we are wasting our time, and we'd be far better served if we came to the minister with a concrete proposal, something we could all agree on. I really believe that even if we don't have a majority report—we can offer a majority or minority report—it won't be that far removed from how committee members opposite feel we should move and from the way we should instruct the minister to move.

Mr. Chair, that's what I think, and I'd like to discuss this further. I would like to hear some other committee members' opinions on this, but you have to convince me that this is the right direction to go. Quite frankly, I don't believe this is where we need to go with this.

•(1735)

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

I have Monsieur Petit.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: First, on the current motion, if you have the text in front of you, you will note that on the fifth line something has been crossed out and the same has not been done in the English text. When a text is submitted, the way it is presented must be identical in both languages. Why has something been crossed out? Is it because there is a word missing?

Second, the fifth and sixth lines say this: "...ensemble détaillé de politiques réforme..."—one can see he was writing in English and in French at the same time—"...réformes aux politiques, aux lois...", but I can't find the same in the English text. Do you have a version that I do not have? The current version is different. That is why I am telling you that, with all due respect to the mover—and I don't think he holds this against us—this motion is not consistent. This is important. We can't send a document with words crossed out like this.

Why did he cross out the words "*politiques réforme*" in the French text and not in the English text? I am not familiar enough with English; you are more familiar with it than I am. However, you are not familiar with French; I am more familiar with it than you are. That is why I am telling you that the two versions of this motion are not identical.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Petit, I'm advised, with respect to translation.... I mean, there are situations that come up in committee, notably during clause-by-clause, when members will put forward an amendment or a motion in their own language, whether it be French or English, and the translators, at that time, will do their best to translate the motion. So that is allowed in committee. It's certainly allowed in clause-by-clause. That's standard practice.

I think that whoever pointed it out was correct to point out that obviously the translators, who are excellent at oral, may not be as good as those who translate specifically in terms of written translation. So it's a challenge, but we have to stay to the practice here that we would have in a clause-by-clause on a bill, when what might happen is that even perhaps a government member would introduce a motion in one of the official languages. I have to ensure, as chair, that we adhere to the rules.

So there may be problems. And if you have specific problems, Monsieur Petit, with a specific word or two words or three words, you can certainly bring that forward, and we can certainly address those one at a time and perhaps try to correct the translation.

Now I'll move to Mr. Shipley and then to Monsieur Arthur.

•(1740)

Mr. Bev Shipley: I am actually disappointed about the way this thing is going. When I came today, I thought we were going to sit down and talk about recommendations put forward by the Bloc.

When I asked about this earlier, nothing moved forward other than the fact that we'd gotten off track into a discussion that took us away from any direction or moving ahead, other than trying to set up something that led to a motion that's going to request that the minister withdraw his order. There was nothing about discussing the witnesses we had in front of us.

We had set up 14 new witnesses to come in. I don't know what this does with them. I suspect we won't carry on with them. I would see that as a direction from the opposition that we don't want to do that.

We even had some discussion around this table today about whether we would put out a report or wait and hear all the witnesses. That makes sense to me. In fact, when you're in the middle of something, to pull a report before you're finished raises some questions.

We just went through a manufacturing committee. It was very complex and came out looking like we were a committee that wanted to see the government...but mainly see our manufacturing industries flourish, by going across Canada and visiting these people and their plants, and hearing them when they come here.

I forget how many recommendations there were in total at the end, but we've been able to focus on about five of those as a group. We pulled them together and were able to focus on them. We spent a good time talking and negotiating about some of those recommendations that came out of that report.

We didn't agree on everything on that manufacturing tour. We didn't agree on all the witnesses who came in. In fact, if I were to reflect to you the witnesses who came before us in terms of the manufacturing, I suspect that if we wanted to summarize it, we could have easily said that we have this group on this side, these ones on that side, and some in the middle. Yet we were able to come to a consensus on what was best for our Canadian manufacturing industries to be able to move ahead in this country. We went ahead with a good report.

We've asked the minister to consider these things in the upcoming budget. Some of those things may get addressed—we hope—but that's what the committee actually worked on. That's how this committee pulled together and worked.

When I came today, the Bloc recommendations came forward. We didn't have recommendations from anyone else, but we did from the Bloc. I thought we were prepared to sit down and have those negotiations and discussions. I'm fairly disappointed in that part.

Now we have an obligation as individuals to be in the House to vote, and we're going to sit here and debate about whether we should pass a motion that was put together willy-nilly today, without forethought, for us to consider voting on tonight.

I think that for the members opposite who sat through the committee on industry, this isn't how we operated. We built an amount of trust and security with each other when things came forward. If we knew it was going to be good for the committee and good for the industry, we were able to move ahead on it. This particular motion actually stops everything we're doing in its tracks and takes away the value of the report that came out over two years ago, or a year ago, whenever it was.

• (1745)

Everybody agrees that the report's recommendations are good; we're just in a bit of a match about how to implement them. As a result, we're now sitting here landlocked, I guess, in our discussion.

Mr. Chair, we obviously can't support a motion like this. It doesn't take this committee forward. It does not take telecommunications forward; in fact, it puts it on the back burner for I don't know how long. We had an option where we could actually take telecommunications and do what the report says and move ahead on those areas that are good for the country, good for the consumer, and good for telecommunications, and then work through the legislative part to the rest of it.

If we're going to go backward on this whole thing and put it through legislation, I've been told it'll be at least a year, or maybe two, before the legislation will ever get brought forward, and I don't think that's the intent of this committee. But for those of us who sit at the table, we may have some difference of opinion on how we get there. Obviously we do.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I have a point or order, Mr. Chair. I know this falls within your discretion or ruling, but this is going to go on forever. We have important votes to get to, and there are people who have to travel tonight.

I would ask that the chair rule this is going to take some discussion and that we adjourn the meeting. It's at the chair's discretion.

The Chair: Well, Mr. Van Kesteren, it is absolutely my preference that we adjourn and go to vote. That is my preference, but I am bound by the rules. As the sitting chair, I am bound by the rules. And my understanding, based on the advice of the clerk, who's excellent on procedural matters, is that the committee must decide, and that if the committee decides, as it did on Monsieur Petit's motion, to continue debating this matter, we are going to continue debating this matter. So my understanding is that I do not have the option to adjourn this on my own and that the committee has already decided to continue.

If you want to introduce a motion to adjourn, you can introduce a motion to adjourn. We can have another vote and perhaps we might have a different result in that vote.

Mr. Van Kesteren, do you want to make a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I move that we adjourn.

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: I have Monsieur Arthur next on the list.

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Chair, I would like to express my disappointment, as Mr. Shipley did, but I won't try to take much more time.

I'm still scratching my head at your ruling that we should vote on a motion that is defective in French. If we vote and accept it and send it to the House, will somebody correct the motion we voted on—which I find totally unacceptable—before it gets to the House?

The Chair: There's an option, Monsieur Arthur, for you to vote against it. In fact, you can also put forward an amendment if you want to, or you could do what I suggested, which is to put forward and identify your concerns with respect to the translation, and we will try to rectify it.

The clerk gave his advice, but I've also been through this practice, where in fact I, as a member, have introduced motions at committee stage with respect to bills. an, frankly, the translations I presented were not perfect. I don't want to limit the opportunity of any member of this House, opposition or government, to introduce an amendment, especially at clause-by-clause stage. And frankly, that happened to my private member's bill before Monsieur Petit's committee. I would not want to limit members in that way.

I understand your concerns about the translation. If you have any specific points you want to make in terms of changing it, I would welcome those completely.

• (1750)

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Chair, I am not a translator. I know this is wrong and I would have liked somebody who is experienced and competent to do it, and then we would have voted on something that we could send to the House and not have it laughed at.

But I respect your decision, and I understand the motivation behind your ruling. You want this committee to work, and so do I and everybody else. So I'll just shut up at this point.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Petit.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Chairman, you read the motion. You most certainly noticed that on the fourth line—and I hope you noticed this—it says: "...et dépose au Parlement...". However, one does not table in Parliament, one tables in the House. But what is indicated is "...in Parliament...".

You don't know how to draft the motions. That is why we have people helping us, in our offices, to draft true motions. One doesn't table in Parliament, one tables in the House.

There are two different texts. That is why I humbly suggest that we do our homework properly. We will end up with proper wording. We are federal members of Parliament and we're making a mistake about where we are supposed to send this motion! We're sending it to Parliament, but there is a House of Commons and a Parliament. Imagine!

Where would we send it? The House is the House. That's the problem. You cannot accept this because the motion is already being sent to the wrong place.

I have said this from the beginning, and that is why I'm telling you that I'm not demanding a French version simply because I don't understand English. I do know where this motion should be sent, and that is to the House.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Petit.

But this committee has in fact passed motions previously to table or to send a report back to Parliament. And Parliament, in terms of this committee, can in fact refer to one chamber, namely the House of Commons. So we have in fact done this in the past. This has been the practice as long as I have been a member.

Now I have Mr. Dhaliwal on the list.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am substituting on this committee. I have been to many committees, but I can tell you one thing: I commend you. You've been a very fair chairperson. I think all members know you have ruled this motion in order. We can keep on going forever, for days and nights, here.

I think if we really want to talk, we should talk about the content of this motion and achieve something, instead of filibustering this committee.

I would request all members to talk about the motion itself, and then we can have a vote and go from there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal.

We go to Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Sukh, I appreciate that. You're absolutely right, and I'd like to pick up where I left off the last time.

The minister's direction, the very proposal we're talking about, addresses the very concerns that we see in this motion: "That the Minister of Industry withdraw the order varying Telecom Decision CRTC 2006-15 and table in Parliament a comprehensive package of policy, statutory and regulatory...". This is exactly what the minister has done. He has given us this. So what we've done here is take what the minister has proposed and we've said no, we don't want you to do that, we want you to do the exact same thing.

Where the area of discrepancy lies—and I think this is something we can agree on right here, tonight—is in the fact that as a committee we can talk about the areas that concern us.

Mr. Crête, you had some concerns. I'm reading, from your presentation, the areas that you wanted to talk about: "We agree the telecommunications sector needs in-depth reform. However, owing to the limited time provided, we are proposing change to the local telephone"—and I'm just reading what you've given us—"service only and would like to rework the report on the telecommunications regulatory framework and submit a more detailed version in the near future."

Let's talk about the first recommendation: "The industry committee recommends using local forbearance regions as the geographic component for establishing levels of competition. The minister also defines new regions for the establishment of deregulation, known as local interconnection regions, LIRCs and local exchanges. In Quebec alone, there are 102 LIRs. In its surveillance report on the status of competition, the CRTC used only 20 local forbearance regions for local telephone service in Quebec. By using the LIRs rather than the LFRs"—with all these acronyms, one of the first things we have to do is determine what these are—"the order increases the number of reasons making it substantially easier to ensure minimal competition in simplifying the regulation forbearance requirements. It decreases the number of competitors. The surveillance report on telecommunications states that 11 LFRs where competition exceeds 10% account for 39% of all residential lines. The minister stated 60%–40%, not...". I guess that means "60%, not 40%".

All right. That's a good recommendation, and we've considered this. It's not like the government side is saying we're going to ram this thing through, that we're going to accept all these proposals. This is why we went through this procedure.

We could have saved two months' time. When we came back from China, Mr. McTeague, I know it was my recommendation that we start talking about the issue of China and trade. To my knowledge, that's a study no one in government has begun yet. Instead, we decided to take up all this time. It was very educational, but the result of all of it has been that we're not even listening to what the minister is saying. We're not even giving him any direction. Instead, we're going to try to embarrass the government.

•(1755)

We on the government side are offering our hands and are saying we should talk about it. My recommendation, Mr. Crête, is that we respond to your recommendation, first of all. We can go through these recommendations: “We believe local interconnection regions and local exchanges should be maintained. Local forbearance regions are too broad, in the sense that competitive conditions vary widely across the area. With such a geographic area, two types of regulatory errors can arise. Number one, deregulation is granted over an area where there are many customers that have few alternatives available. Number two, deregulation is denied even though there are many customers that have no need for regulatory protection and would benefit from a competitive process encumbered by regulations. These errors are avoidable if smaller areas, which have reasonable competitive conditions, are considered as a geographic market. Using smaller markets, the decision may be to continue to regulate or to refrain from regulation, but in either case, the risk of making an error is significantly reduced.”

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: The interpreter is having trouble following. The document that my colleague is reading should be given to her because she can't translate everything. You understand the difference between French and English, that's the problem. So give her the document.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Crête. We'll give the interpreters the document.

Mr. Van Kesteren, please continue.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: To continue on this first recommendation, Mr. Crête's recommendation is a great recommendation. We recognize his concerns, and we need to talk about this. Rather than throwing the baby out with the bathwater, let's see if we can't get the baby scrubbed down.

This is our response, and that's your recommendation, so let's talk about them. Can we not come up with a recommendation to the minister that addresses this concern? And if we don't get consensus, what's wrong with having a minority report and a majority report?

If we want to talk about that one first, I can go on from here, but let's let some of the other members speak at this time, Mr. Chair. Or maybe we'd like to discuss that.

•(1800)

The Chair: I have Mr. Shipley on the list.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you.

I'm just trying to review where I left off. I'm going to carry on a little bit with what Mr. Van Kesteren has talked about, because the whole purpose of this committee is not to delay and make things more difficult for our telecommunications people, it's not to take away the advantage for our consumers; it's to give them the best that they can have in telecommunications.

I know my friend Mr. Brison has raised the issue of rural Canada. I come from rural Canada, and I would have to share those same concerns. I think that's why, in terms of the recommendations and the

discussions that we've had, there is absolutely a protection for rural areas. It's all about competition. If there's no competition within a designated area, within a rural area, that doesn't meet the criteria, then obviously, Mr. Chair, the regulations stay. There's great protection, and we need to have protection for our rural communities.

One of the things I have learned a fair bit about—and I think all of us have—is that we start to understand the significance of our wireless systems. Are they going to be the answer for everything? Right now, obviously they aren't.

It shocked me the other day to learn that, at least in some areas, and maybe in more areas, 5% of the consumers have absolutely no way of talking other than their wireless. They don't have any wirelines coming into their house, and if they do, they don't buy a phone. I think one of them said their house doesn't need a phone; they're the ones who needs a phone.

Are there concerns about quality out there at this point in time? Absolutely. There are. But in my area where it's maybe not as hilly and as mountainous as some parts of the country, we do have a lot of tree cover. I know trees eat up some of the signal, and I know they block the signal in some areas. But we've gone from where we were five to ten years ago, when you used to carry a phone around in a bag that weighed five pounds, to where we now have them almost as.... The BlackBerry that I have is now out of date, and I've only had it a year. They now come a lot smaller than this. So we obviously need to be cognizant of the changes that are going to happen.

I want to go to Mr. Crête's first recommendation. Those are the things we want to talk about today. He talks about defining regions and moving them into the larger regions for local exchanges. He used the example that there are 102 LIRs in Quebec, which I guess are local interconnected regions. Can we work with those? Some suggestions are that having larger ones may not be as good as having them broken down into smaller ones. With smaller ones, you don't get caught with a.... You may have an urban area within that region that will have great service—

Hon. Dan McTeague: I have a point of order, Mr. Shipley, and you'll appreciate this.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Will I?

Hon. Dan McTeague: Yes.

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

Hon. Dan McTeague: It is a very salient one. It's riveting and it's up there with *Ich bin ein Berliner*.

I wanted to point out that I think Mr. Shipley,

[Translation]

Mr. Arthur and Mr. Petit would probably agree. If they don't, then obviously they will not participate. However, I would suggest to the chairman that he ask for a meal for several people, including our clerks and the committee members sitting at the table.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, on this point of order, Monsieur Petit,

•(1805)

The Chair: Perhaps, as the chair, I can get a sense of whether we are going to be here for a while. Is that the sense of the committee?

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): I'm ready to vote anytime, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I know, but....

Okay, it looks like we may be here for awhile. I understand the Conservatives have some more points to make. Am I correct on that?

Mr. Bev Shipley: I thought Mr. Masse indicated he wanted to have a vote.

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes, I'm ready to vote anytime.

The Chair: I think the opposition would like to vote, but my understanding is that the Conservatives have some more points to make.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Actually to the first point of order, I would suggest that we could eat at some point in time, but I think at this time when we're actually not doing any physical work, eating would likely not be in our best interests, because we wouldn't have an opportunity to wear it off.

Hon. Dan McTeague: I see Mr. Shipley's lips moving.

Mr. Bev Shipley: But at some point in time we may want to consider that.

I want to go back to the point of the local interconnection region.

The Chair: I think we'll continue with the debate for now, Mr. McTeague. I actually have another dinner I'm supposed to be at.

Mr. Shipley, continue.

Mr. Bev Shipley: On the issue of the local interconnection regions, I agree that we need to have those, as Mr. Crête indicated in his first recommendation. I think having regions is important, so that we can make sure we can supply the telecommunications to our consumers within the regions.

My only concern with the way this one is written—and I think we could actually sit down and work something out—is that if there were more regions that were smaller, rather than larger, because in the larger ones.... As I was saying just before the point of order, you're liable to have an urban area within that region that will have excellent and good service, and then on the outside or on the fringes of that, quite honestly, you're likely to have those areas that would not have as good a service. Part of this whole discussion is obviously about making sure, even through our forbearance, that we have good service for our rural areas and those areas on the outside.

So I would hope that in our negotiations and discussion around that recommendation we could have some talk about this. Why not make those smaller so that in fact those larger regions wouldn't leave out those areas that didn't have the same type of service? In those areas that fall out of it, obviously they would fall under the regulation, and that regulation then would protect them and make them able to stay in the business and have good communications.

So I think maybe we could have that type of discussion. In fact, I think yesterday one of the witnesses—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Shipley. Mr. Byrne has a point of order.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Chair, for the information of committee members, one of our colleagues, Maurice Vellacott, has booked this room for 6:30 for the parliamentary pro-life caucus, so I want to inform our colleagues of that point.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Byrne, and that has been brought to my attention. Obviously it's problematic, but I understand that if the committee chooses to go on, the committee has precedence in terms of the room.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I thank you for raising that.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: We can bring our beds here too tonight, maybe?

The Chair: Yes. We'll have a sleepover here.

I go to Mr. Shipley.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Even yesterday we had witnesses come forward and indicate those types of suggestions, having smaller areas, so that those that may not have the same competitive advantage as the urban or larger areas would be protected. I think that's a very strong argument for talking about having smaller areas for servicing.

Mr. Chair, that is only one recommendation, and we agree. I think the telecommunications sector needs to be reviewed and it needs reform. But unfortunately the recommendation that has just come forward today without preparation—and the way it's been put forward indicates it doesn't have preparation—is a way to get in the way of moving ahead, and not only for the government. The government is secondary to this whole issue. The consumers are truly important to this whole issue. This motion is really going to put everything we're trying to do here on the back burner.

At one point we wanted to move ahead on telecommunications as a committee, right from the start in April. That was certainly the desire of the government. Certainly the Conservative Party wanted to move ahead. It wasn't the wish of the rest of the committee. The rest of the committee opposed that and said manufacturing, because we had the high dollar at that time. It was reaching toward 90 cents. We had high fuel prices. We had a number of issues within the auto sector, the textile industry, and a number of those across this country were raising some issues with everybody in the opposition.

That being said, we went into a manufacturing study, so the manufacturing study put telecommunications on the back burner. Even though we had a telecommunications report that had been started by the past government, the Liberal government, and that had come forward with recommendations that I think we all agree are good recommendations, we've got into a bit of a match about whether there's something we should be providing by...some call it cherry-picking. Actually, it's very informative for the consumer and to the telecommunications people that we move ahead in a very professional and forthright manner and start to work for the consumers of Canada, start to work for the people up and down our roads, and start to give the people in this country the advantage of savings in the telecommunications industry.

So we forgot it or forgave it, I guess, and went ahead with the manufacturing report so that we could get that out of the way. Well, it was a great report, and this committee worked well and worked hard to make that happen.

I am on two committees, and this is the first one that came forward with a unanimous report on manufacturing. I sit on another committee, veterans affairs, and we set aside our partisanship, we set aside our political affiliation and we work for the people, the veterans. We have a concern for the veterans and what we can do to make their lives better, to make their lives as good as other Canadians' in this great country.

Some things have been neglected over the last number of years; in fact, not just a few, a lot. Arguments could have come across the table—you know, for 13 years you haven't done that—but we didn't say that.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: For 200 years.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Sir, you haven't been there that long.

●(1810)

We set that aside, and we were able to work for the veterans. And in the manufacturing, we were able to work on a unanimous report. So now we've had two. I thought we were, and hopefully we were, working in the same system in the telecommunications report as we had been in the manufacturing.

So when Mr. Crête brought forward these recommendations that we have in front of us today, I thought, this is good; this is what negotiations are about. Is there a principle that's right within these...? I think there are five of them. We might even have to spend some time and read through these a little later.

●(1815)

Hon. Dan McTeague: There's a whole report you can read.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Well, I might have to come and borrow that report.

But in saying that, I was hoping we would have that talk about how we can negotiate to move this ahead.

So with that, my disappointment rises again in terms of having a motion come forward that's really going to just stonewall this, and I don't think that's the intent. I know it's not the intent of my colleagues opposite to do that. I think they have got tied up and wound up in a scenario where they have their backs up. It's unfortunate if that has happened, because really what we want to do is work for the consumers of Canada and work for the people up and down your street and up and down my side roads in rural Canada and in urban areas, because telecommunications are about everything that we seem to live on.

There are days when I have this thing that I wish I didn't have it. But it's now become a reality of life. It not only talks to me, it writes to me, and I don't know what else it might do in the future.

Mr. Chairman, I don't know if my other colleagues happen to have any other comments or not, but I'd be glad to carry on, because we haven't quite finished with the recommendations yet.

The Chair: The only person I have on the list right now is Monsieur Arthur.

Monsieur Arthur.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Given that I promised to be quiet, obviously I should apologize to you for not remaining quiet at this time and for going back on my word. However, I must do what I must do and take this opportunity to explain to the committee members how this is related to my disappointment about what is happening currently.

I am an independent member of Parliament and I was invited by the Conservative Party to join the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, and that is what makes me most proud since having been sent as a member of Parliament to Ottawa.

Usually an independent member of Parliament is not a full-fledged committee member and I'm very aware that I am the beneficiary of an exception that was probably made out of some sort of sympathy. Allow me to say that even though I do not know why I was invited, I know full well why I accepted the invitation.

I accepted the invitation because after 35 years of experience in telecommunications and broadcasting, I became a member of Parliament and I knew that the Minister of Industry, Maxime Bernier, was going to take steps that would potentially reduce the disastrous impact of excessive, abusive, and above all capricious regulations established by not very honest people in the CRTC, that I had an opportunity to become familiar with.

The pride I had in participating in your debates, was that of showing you that after having worked for 35 years in the communications sector I could perhaps contribute to reducing the power held in Canada by a regulatory body, one that I lost all respect for a while ago.

During our recent hearings, we heard the Vice-Chair of the CRTC, Mr. Richard French, and you probably heard me ask him about the commonly held and inappropriate relations between members of the CRTC and the clients that they are responsible for supervising, regulating and monitoring on our behalf.

I was trying to get Mr. French to comment on the relations that existed not so long ago between certain CRTC commissioners and an extremely powerful organization in the cable and broadcasting sector in Quebec, Quebecor, Videotron, TVA, Mr. Péladeau's group. I tried to get him to comment on the fact that three years ago, all the CRTC members except one had attended an extremely luxurious gala that was held in Montreal by the TVA network. All the CRTC commissioners were celebrated, transported, dressed, lodged, and fed by the Videotron, Quebecor, TVA organization, for the Star Académie program's gala.

When some reporter friends of mine discovered this and published it, the CRTC members, who were embarrassed and ashamed, decided to provide retroactive expenditure accounts in order to create the impression that they had paid for their own participation in the Star Académie gala. They accounted for the rental of their suits, their hotel rooms, their airplane tickets, their meals and other amenities that some convention delegates sometimes receive from powerful people.

I was not trying to prove, through my questions, that Mr. French is a dishonest man. I was trying to show you—

• (1820)

Mr. Daniel Petit: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

When a colleague is speaking could those who wish to speak please do so in the hallway, if that's what they want to do.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Petit, on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Yes, point of order, please.

I would ask that those who want to speak with each other do so in the hallway, out of respect for those who have the floor. I think that is normal in any committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Dhaliwal, Mr. Bevilacqua, if we could have members, especially at the table.... If there are conversations, people can go outside for their conversations.

Monsieur Arthur has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Point of order again, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you have another point of order, Monsieur Petit?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit: The mover is not currently here. I would like to know from the chair if there is a standing order that requires that the mover remain here, at the committee. I would like the mover to come back and sit down with the committee cause we are currently discussing his motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Petit, once the motion has been moved, once the motion begins debate, then the mover does not have to be here. The committee takes ownership of the motion once it's debated. So the committee has ownership. The mover does not have to be here in order for that motion to continue being debated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Allow me to point out, Mr. Chairman, that the mover is the individual who drafted the text. If we need to make amendments at some point, the mover must be here. He is the one who drafted the motion in both English and in French.

When I table an amendment in French, I want him to understand the French, and if necessary, I want the translators to spend the whole night working on it, so that things are done the way they should be.

I don't want to tire you out with this but I do want to be specific: I feel that the mover should be here. It's too easy, otherwise: he just tables his motion and leaves. He is the one who drafted it. He even dictated it, earlier. He should be here, therefore. That is why I am asking for the mover to be present.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Petit, I know you raised a valid point. But I would just say that the procedure is that once the motion is moved, and once the motion is debated, it becomes the property of the committee. If the mover is no longer here and an amendment is moved, debate starts on the amendment and the amendment to the mover's motion is accepted or rejected. The mover may not like that, but that is acceptable under committee procedure.

So we will go back to Monsieur Arthur.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Arthur: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

When I asked Mr. Richard French about the strange contacts and unacceptable gift exchanges between certain individuals regulated by the CRTC and certain CRTC commissioners, I was not attempting to imply any guilt on Mr. French's part, but rather I was trying to demonstrate to committee members that by continuing to trust a narrow regulatory system in the broadcasting and telecommunication sector, we are creating illusions that may be very costly to us.

That is why Mr. Bernier's proposals, that I enthusiastically support, are absolutely necessary if we do not want to soon become a country that does not respect initiative and the free market, and that continues to entrust to the failed practitioners of this profession the monitoring of the activities of those who still practice it.

For 35 years I was governed by the CRTC in the radio broadcasting sector and I lost everything. For several years, while I was working on air with a radio station in Montreal, I was the only federalist radio host in Quebec. When people found individuals in the CRTC who could use that negatively, they did so. I won't give you all the details, even though some would like me to go into all those details.

I will tell you only that I even saw in the CRTC, under the authority of Charles Dalfen, who is on our list of future witnesses, a senior official in this regulatory body put pressure on licence holders to not use certain artists and hosts, in order to comply with a black list on which the CRTC kept the names of some radio broadcasters, including the one who's talking to you.

I had the opportunity of owning a radio station for a few months. After having built up that radio station for years, I received an offer of purchase from one of the large radio broadcasters in Quebec, Télémedia, and we accepted the offer. However, that offer had come from a lower-level official in the company, a vice-president, and in Mr. Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien's organization, everyone was a subordinate, everyone was less important, except himself. By accepting that \$5 million offer of purchase for our radio station, we ended up in a mysterious operation involving the CRTC—that everyone trusts so well—whose purpose was to cancel that purchase.

There are powerful individuals, capable of dealing with commissioners of the CRTC and their senior officials on an intimate, commercial and profitable level, who make mistakes and who see people make mistakes within their organization. I witnessed a situation where the CRTC was used to fix a vice-president's mistake. A sale that had been consented to was cancelled by the CRTC because it was in the interest of certain extremely powerful individuals.

Obviously the CRTC is an organization that has not aged well and is a disgrace to the goals of the regulations that it could apply.

• (1830)

Several years ago, one of the radio broadcasting empires in Quebec—you'll forgive me for not naming it—figured out how to have all of its requests accepted by the CRTC. The very pretty lobbyist who is responsible for these issues also shared evenings with the CRTC chair. If anybody wants to know who this is, I will be happy to disclose that in private.

This organization, that can decide the fate of those working in an area I know well, radio, is not worthy of the trust that you give it when you ask it to protect consumers in the telecommunications sector. You're dealing with people who are just, generally, failed practitioners of their profession.

[English]

Those who can, do; those who can't, teach.

[Translation]

Wise people have taught us that. At the CRTC, the people who hold important positions are generally people who have failed in their own broadcasting profession, and who are picked up and placed somewhere where they are at the mercy of powerful people and organizations who derive millions of dollars from their regulated activities.

At this point, I cannot understand why an extraordinary report reviewing telecommunications regulations could not be taken into consideration; that our committee was unable to take these precious recommendations, to adapt them to the needs expressed by witnesses who appeared before us, to respect the fact that a member of the panel told us himself that it was normal to use a gradual approach, starting with the minister's action, and continuing towards a change in regulations, and eventually a change in legislation.

I am scandalized to note, after the Liberals had the courage to call for this study and the witnesses were generous enough to appear and make recommendations, having discovered problems—namely the situation facing the small cable distributors who run the risk of being crushed by competition that is too fierce and direct—that these people came here confident that we would propose amendments, modifications, adjustments, accommodations and that we, foolishly and with partisanship—and allow an almost-independent to tell you—would rather turn this into a prosecution of the minister's actions before the House of Commons. To my mind, that is profoundly disappointing.

I say this as the only independent member in the House, and as one of the only independents to have had the joy, the privilege and the honour of sitting on a House of Commons committee. I've

explained to you that I had accepted this invitation out of loyalty to Mr. Bernier and the reforms he is undertaking, because I know that in telecommunications, like in broadcasting, the regulator in whom you have confidence is unworthy of your confidence, even if you are the ones who appointed him.

Thank you.

[English]

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

We now have Monsieur Petit.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: I would like us to examine the member's motion. It says:

That the Committee report to the House recommending that the Minister of Industry withdraw the order varying Telecom Decision CRTC 2006-15 and table in Parliament a comprehensive package of policy, statutory and regulatory reforms to modernize the telecommunications services industry.

The words "*réformes aux politiques*" must be struck. You cannot say that in French.

We don't know what exactly a "comprehensive package of policy... reforms" means. Those are general terms. The word "statutory" is used; what statutes does that refer to, the ones affecting the Department of Industry, the ones governing the CRTC, or other acts in force? The scope is so broad that if we were to table this kind of motion in the House, we will also table all legislation affecting the CRTC, the Department of Industry, as well as all other orders.

It also talks about "regulatory reforms". Think about that. The regulatory power of a minister or a department is far-reaching. An act may contain five or six sections and a host of regulations.

For example, the act respecting the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec contains about 100 clauses mentioning that a person is not at fault in the case of an accident, and so on. Just to understand the act, you need of stack of regulations that is three or four feet high.

The motion is so broad that we cannot understand what these people want. They talk about amending an act or withdrawing a CRTC order. The CRTC, in the event that you are not aware of this, is the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. I thank the Bloc Québécois for doing such work for Canadian institutions.

Mr. Chairman, is there a point of order?

• (1835)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. McTeague, a point of order.

[Translation]

Hon. Dan McTeague: It is not really a point of order.

Mr. Petit, I think that you would agree to allow Mr. Shaw and Ms. Acharya to leave. Their presence is no longer necessary. We will continue on our side. I did not want to interrupt your speech. Since we still have a long way to go, I suggest letting them leave.

Mr. Daniel Petit: With all due respect to my Liberal colleague, we cannot let them leave: they are the analysts, and they are at our disposal. We must foresee the possibility of there being a problem during the discussion. It is regrettable, but I would agree only if two other analysts are provided.

[English]

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Petit, I have a point of order. Mr. Petit, I am not prepared to use any member as a hostage. You might want to do that; I don't. But I would like to see the bill.

The Chair: Mr. McTeague, let's not go there.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: There are no hostages here.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, let's not go there.

I'm going to suggest this as the chair. First of all, the clerk is Mr. Latimer. The two analysts are Mr. Shaw and Ms. Acharya. We have given instructions to Lalita. She is pregnant, and so she has the authority of the chair to leave if she so desires. I think that's the fair way to go. I think perhaps we might need Mr. Shaw's expertise if an amendment comes up or if we discuss a motion.

So I would impose on Mr. Shaw perhaps to stay, but Lalita can leave at any time. I think that is fair.

Mr. Petit, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

However, as I already mentioned, they are staff of the House who work for the members. I consider that you are depriving me of a privilege. I sit on the committee, and the committee answers to the House. The House makes staff available to us. You deserve an "A" for your compassion, but you are depriving me of something I am entitled to.

I could even call for an end to the discussion and for you to find someone to replace this woman or man. When I sit on the committee, that is my right. If you remove it from me, I do not know what may happen in an hour, in half an hour or in 15 minutes. I have absolutely no idea. I answer to the House, and the House gives me people with whom I can work.

If your decision this evening is valid, that means we can also do the same during the day. We just need to have less staff from time to time. We could do that. It would be possible. Whether the committee sits during the day or at night does not change anything.

You do deserve an "A" for compassion, but I think that you are cutting off my privilege as a member.

• (1840)

[English]

The Chair: Lalita has not asked to leave. Lalita has graciously stayed, as has Mr. Shaw and everyone else who's helping us in this meeting here. So I don't see it as an issue, and I don't want to make it into an issue.

If she feels the need to leave, she will indicate to me, and I will raise it with the committee. Perhaps we will decide whether we need another researcher, but I would just point out that if Mr. Shaw stays, which he's indicated to me he will, he is more than capable, by himself, of answering any and all questions on telecommunications, and I think all members of the committee would agree with that.

If it is an issue that arises, Lalita will inform me, and we will deal with it then. I prefer not to get into an argument about it now.

Monsieur Petit, you have the floor. We'll hear your points of view.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Thank you.

I want to clarify that I was interrupted. I don't have something to say, I must continue, that's all. I didn't stop talking, you interrupted me with a point of order.

As I was saying, the CRTC is the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. We had to confront the organization in the Quebec City region. For those of you who are not familiar with the region, I will remind you that some highly sensitive issues gave rise to a confrontation. The result was, because the CRTC is of a single mind, that the only radio stations allowed to express themselves were the ones broadcasting the message that people at the CRTC wanted to hear.

My colleague Mr. Arthur told you about his adventure. It is true. The CRTC literally came down on him like the wolf on the fold. These people did indeed gag our radio stations. They gagged CIME-FM, CKNU-FM and CHOI-FM, because the people at those stations were not saying the same thing as they were.

The CRTC has a very particular culture. It is collective, not individual. As soon as someone looks up and decides to undertake reforms, the CRTC immediately turns to its guidelines. Since the broadcasting licence is such a sensitive issue, the CRTC regularly threatens to withdraw or amend the licence, so that it is always right.

The CRTC wants to be right. You have confidence in it, but that is not our case, in the Quebec City region. In fact, many stations have literally closed because of CRTC decisions, because they did not think like the CRTC. They have always thought and continue to believe today that their views are the only ones that can apply.

The CRTC is truly an old institution. It has not updated itself and still uses exactly the same parameters. According to these parameters, the organization applies a strictly collective approach. Decisions are made by governments, for example as regards the reports that we have been talking about since the beginning. The problem is that they try to keep individuality in check. That is perhaps the reason why we are compelled to talk.

The Liberals are criticizing us for our individuality. They are a collective movement, like the Bloc Québécois. They are both collective, left-wing movements like the NDP. They have virtually the same views and these core beliefs underlie everything they do.

For our part, we are new here, in Ottawa. I am not an old member. On the other side, some have grown roots. They are still here after more than a dozen years. My philosophy is different. It is based on individuality. Can we be criticized for that? Yes, perhaps. I can tell you however that it enables each and every one of you to advance. Except that you are working collectively, and in so doing, you are hindering individuals.

You develop legislation. For about 30 years, I have been closely monitoring legislation adopted by the Canadian Parliament. Sometimes this legislation is so strange that we wonder if it wasn't adopted by the Duma, in Russia.

I am not all that old, but I do remember the time where certain investments were completely banned in Alberta. In fact, the Prime Minister of the day created the Foreign Investment Review Agency, the FIRA, to prevent more than 49% of stocks from being held by foreign companies. At least 51% of the stocks had to be held by Canadian companies.

• (1845)

What happened? In Alberta, it caused a collapse. In the 1980s and subsequent years, they literally broke the back of the Albertan economy. What was it all about? It was about programs like FIRA or companies affected by it. That also represented the CRTC's collective idea.

One of the reasons why Alberta revolted, as the province of Quebec did, is that they were no longer able to tolerate the centralization they had known for 30 years. For 30 years, Ottawa was bringing people down to their knees, in Quebec and Alberta, but not for the same reasons.

In Alberta, they broke the back of the economy. It has just started to recover. Albertans are currently very lucky: where does the \$9 billion surplus come from? It comes from the sale of oil that they want to prevent us from selling to the mean Americans. But that's what makes us grow. What will the \$9 billion translate into? It will take the shape of equalization, transfers to the provinces. It is thanks to Albertans that, in some cases, we have money in our pockets, for example in my province.

Moreover, there was a time when the province of Quebec was one of the richest, believe it or not. Specifically on April 14, 1958, when I arrived in Canada, the province of Quebec ranked second after Ontario. Fifty years later, we rank second last. We are on the verge of being overtaken by Newfoundland and Labrador. For 40 years, what kind of governments did we have? They were governments like the ones we know today, governments with a socialist bent, a communist bent, from time to time, that tried to follow France, Cuba and communist China.

Imagine this. Who was the first to recognize communist China? It was our Prime Minister of the day; his name was Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and it was in 1968. But today, he is being criticized. He ran to recognize communist China as a state. Today we are critical of him because China is selling us all of its textiles, in Quebec and Canada. But our province depended on the textile industry.

My colleague, Mr. Crête, knows something about that. There were textile companies in his riding. Now they are on their knees, as they

are in the Drummondville region. Why? Because communist China, that we recognized, or rather that they recognized, is currently knocking us off our feet. They are still socialist ideas, visions of grandeur: we are beautiful, we are nice, we love everyone. But in the mean time, individuals living in Canada are suffering as I am and as are my colleagues Mr. Crête and Mr. Vincent, who are from my province. We are suffering a great deal, because we have a problem that is a bit like the one in Alberta, but not for the same reason.

In about the 1950s, before I was born but about which I have read, we had the largest manufacturing industry in Canada. We didn't have cars at the time; then Ontario swallowed us. But we had the largest textile companies, we had the largest sawmills. We had all of that in the province of Quebec.

In the space of a few years, precisely because of the famous sorting of investments, companies began taking their money out of Quebec, because there were governments in Ottawa demanding that foreign capital not exceed 49%. What happened? These companies left us. Why? To set up shop in another country called China that is competing with us now. It is our own factories that we displaced that are now competing with us. That is serious. And that is attributable to governments that, to a certain degree, were so nice to everyone, governments that loved everyone.

• (1850)

Remember flower power? The Prime Minister liked to wear a flower in his button hole and to play football. He found that quite funny. It was flower power, and it was not serious. You see where it led us. They got us involved in such crazy systems that we are now grappling with them. We have a government that is attempting to fix their past mistakes. And very serious mistakes were made.

In 1984, the government of the day, Mr. Brian Mulroney and his team, decided to negotiate NAFTA, an agreement that would enable our products to go from Canada to the United States under a tax system and to transfer people without too much trouble. Do you know who was opposed to that? The Liberal Party. Once again, the Liberals were nice and cute. Each time, they expressed opposition. Why? Because the only province to benefit from NAFTA was Quebec.

For us, in the Beauce region, 80% of our goods cross the border in Jackman and are sold in the United States. The Liberals wanted to bring us down to our knees; that is what they wanted. We had such a serious problem that at one point, there was a change.

What do we have today? We have a government that they say they left with a surplus. They forget that we left them with NAFTA. It is thanks to NAFTA that they are making money today. That is why everyone has weathered the storm. If we had listened to them, we would not have NAFTA, we would have 10-foot high borders that we could not even cross. What would the good relations they had with the United States have given us? It would have led to never-ending squabbles with their president, and we would not even be able to go to the United States, because our Prime Minister did not like the president of the other country.

At some point, we really need to look at their record.

[*English*]

The Chair: There's no quorum.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: We can call quorum.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have no quorum. That's the rule. I'm sorry.

The meeting is adjourned.

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