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Chair

The Honourable Judy A. Sgro

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.)): I'm calling to order the 60th meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, in the 42nd Parliament.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will continue with our study of aviation safety.

We have our witnesses today from the Office of the Auditor General: Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada; James McKenzie, principal; Martin Dompierre, principal; and Lucie Talbot, director.

Mr. Ferguson, we turn it over to you.

Mr. Michael Ferguson (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Thank you.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with the committee our office's recent work related to aviation safety.

This work includes our fall 2015 special examination report on the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, our spring 2012 performance audit report on the oversight of civil aviation by Transport Canada, and our spring 2017 performance audit report on civil aviation infrastructure in the north.

[English]

In our 2015 special examination of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, we wanted to know if the authority's systems and practices were working as intended. We issued the special examination report to the authority in June 2015, and we have not audited any actions taken by the authority since then.

In the special examination, we looked at the authority's screening operations. We found that the authority delivered screening services effectively, efficiently, and consistently across Canada and met its regulatory requirements. We also found that the authority tested, maintained, and planned for the replacement of its screening equipment.

However, we did note areas for improvement. For example, we found that the authority did not ensure that its screening contractors consistently communicated changes in operating procedures to screening officers. We also found that, when security incidents occurred, the screening contractor often did not submit security

incident reports. Furthermore, we found that the authority did not ensure that all elements of the training and certification of its screening officers were completed as required. These findings are important because screening services are critical to the authority's mandate.

[Translation]

In 2012, we examined the oversight of civil aviation by Transport Canada. We presented our report to Parliament in April 2012, and we have not followed up on actions taken by the department since then.

Transport Canada is responsible for ensuring that Canada's aviation safety framework meets minimum international standards and that Canada's safety record compares favourably with other countries.

We found that Transport Canada's regulatory framework was consistent with standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization, but that the department took too long to address new risks — in some cases, more than 10 years.

As for Transport Canada's surveillance program, we found significant weaknesses in how the department had planned and conducted its surveillance of aviation companies. For example, we found that most of the inspection files that we reviewed did not follow the department's methodology. In addition, we found that the department completed only two-thirds of the inspections it had planned for the 2010-11 fiscal year. This is significant because the department selected only higher-risk aviation companies for inspection. Furthermore, the information the department used to assess high-risk companies that should be inspected was not always available and kept up to date.

We also found that Transport Canada should have identified the number of resources and competencies it needed to plan and conduct inspections and develop a strategy to obtain these resources and competencies. Senior management needed to ensure that staff applied the established methodology.

• (1110)

[English]

The audit on civil aviation infrastructure in the north focused on infrastructure needs of remote northern airports and Transport Canada's leadership in assessing and addressing these needs.

Airports in the north are critical to their communities, particularly those in the 117 remote northern communities that we identified air travel as the only reliable mode of year-round transportation. These airports supply the delivery of essential goods and services, including emergency medical evacuations. The infrastructure challenges of northern airports have been well documented in various reports and assessments. Many remote northern airports need improved lighting, runways, navigational aids, and better information on weather and runway conditions.

We found that Transport Canada had not taken an active leadership role to facilitate collaborative efforts to assess and address the infrastructure needs of remote northern airports. The department's airports capital assistance program has provided some funding for projects that help remote northern airports meet the department's safety regulations and standards.

Since its inception in 1995, the program has provided about \$140 million for infrastructure projects at 67 of the 117 remote northern airports we examined. In 2016, Transport Canada surveyed airports across Canada that were eligible for program funding on their infrastructure needs.

The airports that responded identified almost 800 million dollars' worth of projects over the next three years to maintain and enhance airport safety. This included about 100 million dollars' worth of projects at remote northern airports. Between the 2014-15 fiscal year and 2016-17 fiscal year, remote northern airports received about \$15 million in funding from the airports capital assistance program. It's clear that demand for infrastructure funding exceeds the program's annual budget of \$38 million.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, this concludes my opening remarks. We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Ferguson, and thanks to your entire team, for the work you have done.

I am going to yield the floor immediately to my colleague Mr. Eglinski, who will not be with us for the whole meeting, but had some questions for you.

You have the floor, Mr. Eglinski.

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

Welcome, gentlemen.

There is a movement under way to try to comprise all of aviation into one category in terms of flight duty times. I was wondering if, during your study, you had looked into flight duty times. Does any

part of your report deal with the differences in flight duty times? I'm trying to break that down between the smaller northern operators, fixed-wing operators, the rotary-wing operators, and the separation I see that is needed between the airline corporations, or corporate flying.

Mr. Michael Ferguson: No, actually the flight duty was not something that was part of the audit that we did on remote northern airports.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: All right, thank you.

I'm going to let Luc go now.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

Mr. Ferguson, in your last report, you referred to problems getting certain information from the Department of Finance.

I would like to know your assessment of your relationship with Transport Canada in relation to these analyses.

Mr. Michael Ferguson: We did not have any trouble completing those audits. In all cases, we received all the information that was needed from all the organizations involved.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Could you clarify your thinking?

You say that Transport Canada has lacked leadership. That is a very broad statement. Could you tell us precisely what Transport Canada could have done better in this regard? What are the serious failings that have been identified? Saying that Transport Canada, the organization responsible for managing our civil aviation, lacks leadership is a little concerning for the public who have to use airplanes and civil aviation facilities on a regular basis.

Could you clarify what you mean by that statement further?

• (1115)

Mr. Michael Ferguson: The question of leadership came out in the audit of aviation in the north. We saw that Transport Canada had no plan for trying to solve the kinds of problems we discovered in that audit. Various studies done in the past had identified various problems with lighting and navigation systems, among other things. Transport Canada had no plan for solving those problems, even though they had been known for about two years. In our view, that indicated a leadership problem when it comes to aviation infrastructure in the north. It is important that Transport Canada find a way to plan the improvements that need to be made to these airports.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Have you made a connection between this lack of leadership and safety problems? Our study deals primarily with aviation safety. There are a number of things, in certain areas, such as a lack of lighting, that may be problematic in terms of airport safety.

Are you raising a red flag in some places and saying something has to be done quickly, or else safety will be jeopardized?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: It is not a question of flight safety; it is rather a question of flight availability.

From time to time, people need flights for medical emergencies. We observed that in some situations, companies have cancelled or delayed some flights. Those flights are important for people in the north, because these are isolated communities, so they have to be able to count on those flights for various emergency situations.

It was therefore not a question of the safety of the flights themselves, but it is very important that these communities have the necessary infrastructure. The people who live there count on these flights for situations like medical emergencies.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Sorry, Mr. Berthold.

Go ahead, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Berthold, that was a perfect segue into what I wanted to ask.

I understand from reading this report that it goes back quite some time. It goes back to 2005. You mentioned there was no plan in place and there was no leadership. Quite frankly, I would have to agree with you.

With that being said, it's 2017 now and an attempt is being made to address a lot of the recommendations you're making. I had put forward a motion at the beginning of the session and continued on at the beginning of the year, with respect to the committee going to northern Canada to study infrastructure needs, to collaborate with our northern communities and territories and folks there to address some of these issues. Unfortunately, it was turned down by the opposition members. We have yet to do that.

Do you think it would be advantageous that we as a committee, as an overall team representing this country, travel and speak with our northern partners to address immediately the infrastructure needs they currently have in place?

• (1120)

Mr. Michael Ferguson: Madam Chair, I think it is extremely important that the community understand the challenges related to civil aviation infrastructure in the north. We have identified a number of issues related to runway lighting and weather condition information. One company that supplies medical emergency flights in one of the territories had to either cancel or delay 30% of its flights over the course of a year.

I think it is important for the committee to very much understand the issues with these isolated communities that are served by these airports, many of which are indigenous communities. I think that's very important for the committee to understand. How the committee goes about doing that, I guess, is up to the committee to decide. I would say that getting a real understanding of the issues is extremely important.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you for that. I will make that attempt again in the very near future.

My second question is with respect to what has been announced in this year's budget. The Minister of Transport announced in the 2017 budget that his desire is to address the critical transportation needs of

Canada's north, including improving northern airport infrastructure by committing \$2 billion over the next 11 years.

Is that a good step in the right direction? Obviously, we think it is. As well, what do you think that \$2 billion would attach itself to in the more immediate future?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: What we were looking for was Transport Canada to put together a plan that would identify and perhaps inventory all the types of issues that need to be dealt with, and put together a plan for how that would be dealt with. Obviously, having resources to deal with the issues would be important. We don't audit announcements; we audit things once they're actually being put in place.

The challenge we see in departments is that they often have a lot of difficulty actually implementing what they are asked to implement. When there are going to be steps made on this file, when there's a plan prepared and financing identified for it, the next step will be to make sure that whatever departments are involved actually do a good job of implementing that plan.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I'll end with a statement.

That's, in fact, what we're trying to do. We're trying to remove the politics of these committees and enforce the efforts we're trying to put forward together with our partners in the north. We go up there to communicate with them and identify what those challenges are, especially as they relate to infrastructure. Beyond that is then putting enablers in place, not only as you say, the \$2 billion, which is an amount that was announced, but making an inventory, recognizing and putting a strategy forward to actually invest in that infrastructure. Part of that strategy is to alleviate the pressures on the taxpayer, whether it be the income tax payer or the property tax payer, again, by putting in enablers such as the infrastructure bank to then compound those dollars being made available to communities such as those in the north.

We're on that track, as you say, and I'm glad you solidified that. It really gave us some comfort and confidence that we're on the right track, in fact, to do exactly what you're actually reporting on, and that's paying some attention to the northern communities with respect to their infrastructure.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Ferguson, did you want to comment? There are 45 seconds left.

Mr. Michael Ferguson: No, I don't think I have any comment on that. Thank you.

The Chair: All right, thank you very much.

Monsieur Aubin.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank Mr. Ferguson and the members of his team for being with us this morning.

The study we are doing of aviation safety is the result of concerns expressed by various groups in the last few months, if not years. Apparently, we all thought it important to get to the bottom of the situation in order to reassure everyone, if there is no problem, or take the appropriate measures.

I would like to make some connections between your 2012 audit and the testimony we have heard. For one thing, in your last audit of the civil aviation program, which dates from 2012, you noted a number of significant weaknesses that had to be corrected and were related to how the department plans, conducts, and reports on its surveillance activities.

I would like to quote you:

While we found examples where surveillance activities met our audit criteria, most inspection files that we reviewed fell short and did not follow Transport Canada's own established methodology.

Also in that report, you observed that the number of inspections done was lower than planned. In our study, we have learned that on August 17, 2016, Transport Canada terminated exhaustive surveillance of safety management systems without informing the public or parliamentarians.

Should we be concerned about this approach? Do you think it has a direct impact on aviation safety?

• (1125)

Mr. Michael Ferguson: We presented the audit we had done in 2012. That was the last time we worked on this issue.

At that time, we had detected significant weaknesses, and you have mentioned some of them. In my opinion, it is important that Transport Canada implement the necessary improvements in order to solve the problems we identified at that time. However, I cannot comment on any department activity since 2012, because that is the last time we examined the situation.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I understand that, Mr. Ferguson. You cannot track every matter that you do a study of. However, in 2012, did it seem to you that there was an obvious correlation between the weaknesses you detected and potential problems with aviation safety?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: Yes, we mentioned that this system for surveillance of practices in these organizations was really important, to guarantee safety. In fact, that is the main reason why we did the audit. So I can say that there is a connection between Transport Canada implementing the system for surveillance of these practices and the results of the system as a whole.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Would your conclusion be the same on another aspect that much has been said about, which is training?

Your office has done two audits of Transport Canada's aviation safety surveillance program, in 2008 and in 2012. In 2016, Transport Canada's internal auditors noted that the lack of training for aviation inspectors was a weakness that your audit had identified in the past and that the department had not yet corrected or addressed.

Could you explain how the lack of training for inspectors, or at least insufficient training, involves a risk for aviation safety?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: Of course, training for employees who have specific duties is very important. We determined here that some

training was necessary for the people in certain positions. It is therefore important that training be taken by all members of personnel who are assigned to those types of duties.

In this type of program, the department draws up a list of the training that it is important for employees to take in order to do their work. It is very important that the department ensure that all employees receive all the necessary training.

• (1130)

Mr. Robert Aubin: I have a third question, also relating to the audit of civil aviation surveillance done in 2012 and the one on railway safety done in 2013.

You said that Transport Canada did not have the information it needed in order for the department to make sure that airline and railway companies comply with the regulations.

We have heard testimony in the course of this study telling us that Transport Canada did not always know whether the air operators that it supervised were complying with Canadian aviation regulations.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Aubin, I'm sorry to interrupt, but your time is up.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Is that right? It was too short. Maybe we will have a second round.

The Chair: You always manage to get in an extra 30 seconds.

Mr. Hardie, please.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the work that the Auditor General's department does. I wanted to read into the record some information from the assistant deputy minister of safety and security at Transport Canada.

According to ICAO's universal safety oversight audit program, Canada is currently ranked fourth best in the world, a score of 95.28%, as opposed to 64.71% for the average across the world. I mention that simply because some of the testimony we've heard has been quite alarmist. I also think there's a whiff of enlightened self-interest in some of the stuff we have heard, because certain people would like certain things to be happening on behalf of their membership, or whatever.

When it comes to the whole issue of safety and security, to use a commonly used phrase these days, better is always possible. In that regard, if we look back at some of the work you have done and the recommendations or observations you've made, I want to bring up something about security.

We had a discussion here on screening for staff that have access to high-security areas. This may not be something that you've had an opportunity to look into, but some information came my way that there's a scan of 80,000 people per day to see if there are any hits, any new flags that have to be paid attention to.

I'm wondering if, in some of your past work, perhaps for other reasons, you came across information that CPIC, the Canadian Police Information Centre, is currently 14 months behind on entering incidents into their system. That isn't very helpful if you're looking at this as a flag for possible security issues at our airports. Were you aware of this, sir?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: That issue has come up a few times in the audits that we have done of corrections services. Having some of that type of information is important when somebody shows up at the door of a federal penitentiary and they have to identify at what level of security to put the individual. One of the things that corrections services needs is a history of that particular individual, and lots of times they're not able to get that.

I don't believe it's an issue that has come up in any of the work we've done in terms of transport, but the inability to get access to that type of information on a timely basis certainly has been an issue that has come up in our audits of corrections services.

Mr. Ken Hardie: It was cited that staff cutbacks to save a few dollars were really behind this. I haven't confirmed that, but it is something worth examining.

SMS, safety management systems, are something that have come up quite often in our discussions. The balance between basically auditing company paperwork and actual feet on the ground inspections seems to, again, be focused on.... What were your observations with respect to that balance?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: When you look at these types of systems...and I think it relates very much to exactly the type of work that we do. We do audits. When we do audits, lots of times what we do is look at systems. Obviously, when you're dealing with safety systems related to aviation and that sort of thing, making sure that those systems work properly is extremely important.

In this type of work, one of the main things that needs to be done is making sure that the system is properly designed, and then the system executes the way it should execute. Part of making sure that a system executes is doing some on the ground testing. That can be part of auditing, but fundamentally, the way that audits tend to work is to look at systems to determine whether the systems are reliable and are operating the way they are supposed to operate.

• (1135)

Mr. Ken Hardie: What were your conclusions after examining this aspect?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: We could go into a number of the details, but we found that they didn't do all of the audits they had planned to do, and that type of thing. At the time—and remember, we issued this report in 2012—there was still a lot of work that the Department of Transport needed to do to make sure that they were doing all of those audits of the safety management systems of the companies the right way, in the right quantity, and within the right time frame.

Mr. Ken Hardie: At this point, I'd like to share a bit of time with my colleague Mr. Iacono. Do we have time?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Mr. Ken Hardie: You have 45 seconds.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): I will let you respond to the question by Mr. Aubin in that time frame.

A voice: What was it?

Voices: Oh, oh!

A voice: I would, but I have forgotten it.

Voices: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: We will come back to that later. It would need 30 seconds for that alone.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Sikand.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): After my two questions, I'll give the rest of my time to Mr. Tootoo.

In regard to your comments in paragraph 10, you identify that Transport Canada doesn't follow its own methodology. Could you perhaps elaborate on what its methodology is?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: That was, I guess, related to the planning of the inspection files.

Actually, I'm going to ask Ms. Talbot to give us some details about the planning and the execution of the inspections.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lucie Talbot (Director, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Good morning.

Transport Canada has a procedure to follow for doing surveillance of civil aviation companies. We have selected a certain number of companies to evaluate the extent of the surveillance performed by the department. We found that the department was not following the prescribed methodology. During the period when the department was supposed to be conducting surveillance, the number of companies examined by the department was insufficient.

The department also has a procedure to follow for carrying out its surveillance activities, for example, audits of safety management systems and inspections. The procedure to be followed is very detailed. It explains what elements are to be examined, what information about risks is to be collected, and what must be examined when an aviation company receives an inspection or audit visit. When we looked at the department's inspection records, we found that there were a lot of deficiencies in the application of the methodology. Inspectors and auditors were not following the methodology prescribed by the department sufficiently.

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Thank you.

[*English*]

You actually answered my second question as well, so I'd like to give the rest of my time to Mr. Tootoo.

The Chair: Mr. Tootoo, you have the floor.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr. Sikand.

Welcome, Mr. Ferguson. It's a pleasure to meet you and to work with you. I'm very pleased to see this report.

I've had the pleasure over quite a few years of working with your office, with Ms. Fraser and with Mr. Campbell, in your office's capacity as auditor for the Government of Nunavut. I've always enjoyed a good working relationship with your office.

You indicated that Transport Canada has well documented what these issues and challenges are for the north. Could you give an idea of how far back and what kind of documentation?

• (1140)

Mr. Michael Ferguson: Madam Chair, in the audit we recently issued, "Civil Aviation Infrastructure in the North", we have an exhibit in there. We traced the timeline back to the transfer of smaller airports back in 1995. At that time, the federal government established the airports capital assistance program. Then in 1997 it increased the funding to the capital assistance program. As we move forward, there have been various studies done by territorial governments, Senate committees, standing committees, and others throughout the years, identifying some of the capital needs of these airports or some of the problems in the airports. It goes back easily well beyond 10 or 12 years, that type of thing, that these issues have been known.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

You also say that the department hasn't taken adequate leadership. We all know that the cost of doing anything in the north is much higher than it is in the south. It's almost three times the cost to do anything up there. You mentioned the airport capital assistance program as one vehicle to address some of these needs. If my understanding is correct, a lot of these smaller airports don't qualify for funding under that program. Is that something that has been pointed out as an issue?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: I'll ask Mr. McKenzie to respond to that.

Mr. James McKenzie (Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Madam Chair, one of the issues in terms of eligibility really rests between whether an airport is registered or certified. Many of the airports that we looked at were eligible. They were certified. Some registered airports would be eligible on a case-by-case basis if they were close to becoming certified or if their project would allow them to become certified. In terms of the eligibility, that wasn't a major issue with respect to the program. Certainly from the work that Transport Canada has done recently to understand demands, it's more a question of the size of the demands versus the funding in the program.

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

Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, I have some questions for you.

I apologize to the witnesses, but it will take only 30 seconds.

You know that I will be in the chair for the last hour, so I would like some clarification on two questions, Madam Chair.

First, we had unanimously agreed to invite representatives from Aéroports de Montréal and the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal for our study of aviation safety. I have had an opportunity to speak with representatives of Aéroports de Montréal. They told me that they were prepared to come here, but today's date did not

work for them. However, they were interested in appearing. Is it possible to plan an additional meeting so we can hear from them? I think it would be useful, for the purposes of our study.

Second, I have learned from my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Finance that you had sent a letter concerning the response of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to Bill C-44. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy. In the letter, you stated that the members of our committee have until May 19, that is, tomorrow, to inform the Standing Committee on Finance of their recommendations. How do you want us to make recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance if the members of this committee itself have not been informed that this possibility was open to them?

I would like some clarification on those two questions, please.

[English]

The Chair: I think we made it quite clear that the finance committee in their letter to us said that any amendments or comments had to be provided to them by Friday the 19th, so you have until Friday the 19th. There was no indication that the committee was going to move any amendments when we had the meeting on Tuesday. We have until Friday to submit any of those amendments.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Is it possible for a copy of the letter from the Standing Committee on Finance to be distributed to the members of our committee?

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Yes, we'd be happy to do that.

The clerk tried to get the folks from Montreal. They were invited. I think we made that clear. They were unable, as you said, to come. We had agreed to seven meetings on aviation, and we've had seven and a half. We don't have the time for another meeting on aviation unless it's the desire of the committee to have another. There would need to be a motion from you asking for unanimous consent to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Chair, the motion adopted provided for holding one or two additional meetings on airport safety, so we already have a motion that allows us to hold a second meeting to hear from representatives of Aéroports de Montréal and the Montreal police service. We do not need another motion. The motion was adopted by all members of the committee. It is very easy to make one last effort to organize a meeting with them, perhaps the first day we are back from the recess week. If that does not work, we can forget it.

[English]

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Go ahead, Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

I would just like to make one observation. In the past, with other studies when witnesses were not able to attend on the dates we had set aside for a study, we worked very hard to accommodate them later on in the calendar. The study was really important at the time, and once we had finished listening to the witnesses who could attend within that time frame, we set the study aside and we waited until we could hear from other witnesses.

If we were willing to do that, for example, with the Navigation Protection Act for certain witnesses who wanted to provide testimony but couldn't be here during the exact time we were holding the study, I think we should be willing to do the same in this circumstance.

The Chair: We don't have a motion on the floor, but the suggestion is that we add another full meeting or half a meeting to the aviation study.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Sorry, to do what? Please repeat that.

The Chair: We had a motion that was for one additional meeting and we had that. There is no—

Mr. Luc Berthold: No, the motion was for one or two, not just one, so we have the motion and we have all the—

The Chair: It was an informal agreement that we would have.... I don't want us to waste a lot of our time trying to decide this.

Mr. Luc Berthold: No, neither do I.

The Chair: I certainly have no concerns with adding another hour, if we're able to accommodate that, if it's the wish of the committee, but it has to be agreed by everyone—

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's okay; one hour is okay.

The Chair: —that we would add one more hour onto our aviation study so that we have an opportunity to have the Montreal folks come to speak to it.

What is the wish of the committee? Is everybody in favour of adding an extra hour onto the aviation study? Do we have unanimous consent to add on an extra hour?

Go ahead, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): I thought that, if it had been convenient to have them come today when we are all here, that would have been fine. I don't have any reason to believe they're going to offer any different testimony from what we heard from the Canadian Airports Council.

We have a lot of things we want to go through. I feel we've been adding on, and I feel this could drag on, so my personal preference would be to say that we've invited them and, if they can't make it, I have some sympathies but I don't believe it's going to offer new and helpful evidence that informs our study, personally.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Block.

Mrs. Kelly Block: I have two points, Madam Chair.

First, the motion to invite these witnesses was made by a member of the Conservative Party as well as a member of the Liberal Party. Two motions were moved. There was an informal agreement. If these informal agreements don't stand, we will always have to have formal motions on the table. If the spirit of an informal agreement is not going to be upheld, that's fine and we will take that into

consideration as we move forward with committee business and studies.

The second point is I don't believe that the parliamentary secretary has a vote at this table, so it is totally inappropriate for her to say that we cannot add another meeting or day.

Thank you.

• (1150)

The Chair: Are there any further comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's just a question, Madam Chair.

The agreement—I don't think it was a motion, but more of an agreement—by the two parties, or possibly by the three, and I don't want to speak for Mr. Aubin, was it not to have the witnesses here today? That is my first question. My second question is whether they refused.

The Chair: They were unavailable to come today.

Mr. Vance Badawey: They were unavailable.

Third, just to comment, quite frankly, I find it hard to believe that they couldn't find somebody within their organization to come to this meeting. If we offer them the opportunity again, are they going to come or are they going to give us the same answer?

It's not a question for you, Mr. Berthold. It's a question for the chair.

The Chair: The reason they were not able to come today is that they were out of the country.

Mr. Vance Badawey: The whole organization, the entire group was out of the country.

The Chair: They did not want to send just anyone, so they have asked, through Mr. Berthold, to have the opportunity to come back.

The question we have on the floor is to have one hour more dedicated to the aviation study so that we can allow the folks from Montreal to come to speak to the committee. I think it's a reasonable thing to ask. It's one hour more that we're asking and in the interests of our trying to get along together, what's the problem with asking for another hour?

I'm not supposed to talk, so I'm sorry; my apologies.

Let's just move on with it. We have a request from Mr. Berthold to add an extra hour onto our aviation study to allow the folks from the Montreal airport to come.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: If we have another witness to hear, what happens to the drafting instructions?

The Chair: They will just have to wait until we've completed the study.

We don't have a deadline on the study. We're delaying it an extra hour, so the question is whether we delay it for an extra hour in order to call another meeting.

All those in favour of having one more hour on aviation study?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Good. It carries. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll accommodate that.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Ferguson, given that there are still a lot of questions in the air, so to speak, since the aviation safety study started, in particular concerning pilot training and fatigue, do you think it would be useful for your office to do a little more in-depth study? That would mean updating the 2012 study and seeing whether Transport Canada has acted on the various recommendations in it.

At present, the aviation industry is experiencing extremely rapid growth. I believe it is one of the fastest growing industries. We can see this from the investments being made in airports in big cities.

I note in your report that the situation when it comes to investments is not the same in the rural communities in the north, and that those communities need investments.

Do you think it would be useful for your office to do a more in-depth analysis of the state of aviation safety and inspection processes in this important industry in Canada?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: That is a very broad subject that involves a lot of aspects. Certainly, it would be useful to consider doing follow-up on what we did in the past. I think that is a reasonable request.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Ferguson, how does the process normally work? I am a little new in Parliament and I am asking the question in all sincerity. When you do an analysis like the one in 2012, what process do you follow for checking whether the recommendations have been followed? I am talking about this case, but it might apply to another one also.

In the department's responses, it says that Transport Canada will continue to work with the territories and provinces, but continuing to do something can mean continuing to do what was being done before.

How does it work, in general, in your office?

• (1155)

Mr. Michael Ferguson: Each time we present an audit, we make recommendations, and then we receive responses from the department. The department always prepares an action plan that sets out the steps to be followed to solve the problems.

From time to time, we may also do a follow-up a few years later: another audit on the same subject. In particular, the objective is to give the department time to resolve the situation.

We often observe that there are deficiencies in how the departments react to our recommendations. We do not often find that improvements have solved all the problems, but we do fairly

often follow up on the same subject, although that is not the case for every audit.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Do you think it would be useful, at this time, to do a follow-up of the 2012 study, in view of people's concerns about aviation safety and of the growth in this sector of the industry? Our committee has heard a lot of testimony that has raised concerns.

Mr. Michael Ferguson: In our audit planning, we can consider the possibility of doing a follow-up on this subject, certainly.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Berthold.

Go ahead, Mr. Iacono.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Madam Chair, I'll be sharing my time with Sean Fraser.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ferguson, you think that Transport Canada spends too much time solving certain safety problems. Do you think the department can implement an expedited process? Does that kind of process exist? Is it effective elsewhere — for example, in another department?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: I will ask Ms. Talbot to answer that question.

Ms. Lucie Talbot: We made recommendations for expediting the implementation of procedures to respond to the safety problems. In response to that, Transport Canada modified its framework for consultation and response to safety problems, to expedite the process. If that framework is implemented, we should be able to expect that the time needed for responding to safety problems would be shorter.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Perfect.

[*English*]

You also mentioned in your opening statement, in point number 10, that you “found significant weaknesses in how the Department had planned and conducted its surveillance of aviation companies”. You also referred to the years 2010-11. You also mentioned that the information the department uses to assess high-risk companies was not always available and up to date. We're looking back at 2010-11. What about today? What's more recent? Has that changed? Do you have data being collected? Is this surveillance being upgraded, or is it still below?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: The audit that we did, that we released in 2012, was based on mostly what was going on in that time frame of 2010-11. We haven't been back to do a follow-up on the audit, so I can't tell you exactly what the department has done. It would have prepared a response, an action plan, but we haven't audited the implementation of that action plan. That's something we could do if we decide to go in and do a follow-up audit.

We felt it was important, though, for you to be aware of what we found at that time for Transport Canada in order, perhaps, to inform your study. Perhaps Transport Canada could provide you the details of its action plan, and what it's done on it, but we haven't been back in to do a follow-up on that.

•(1200)

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Indeed, the assistant deputy minister has provided us, actually, a table where she illustrates that certification activities in 2014-15 were in the average of \$10,000 and that for 2016-17, they are in the average of over \$118,000. So there's been change. I was just trying to figure out why, in your report, you've only referred to particular years, and have not come to something more recent.

Thank you both.

I'll give my remaining time to Sean Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much for being here. It's very helpful to have objective information as to some of the shortcomings in our northern air infrastructure.

One of the things I've learned over the course of this study and in my own consultations with stakeholder groups, which was a complete surprise to me, is that in addition to safety processes and infrastructure, one looming factor is that there's a pilot shortage in Canada, and that we might be implementing systems of rules about fatigue that we don't necessarily have the capacity to meet because there's not that human or logistical infrastructure with pilots. Is this something that came up at all over the course of your audit of northern infrastructure, and have you considered the...?

I stopped because I saw a headshake "no". I'll let you jump in.

Mr. Michael Ferguson: Certainly.

No, it wasn't, because what we were looking at in that audit was simply the infrastructure, and the state of the infrastructure. We didn't get down into all of the operational side of it. It was just the infrastructure we were looking at.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Certainly.

With respect to the audit, I note you have suggested Transport Canada should work with stakeholders to identify sources of funding to potentially boost the infrastructure that would help safety. That's something I could see a committee of parliamentarians also being helpful with. Is there a process that you think we could use to identify the greatest stakeholders? I find if we have an open call, we tend to get the same people who know how parliamentary procedures work. In particular, you mentioned the prominence of indigenous communities in the north, who may not be familiar with Ottawa parliamentary procedure. Is there a way that we, as a committee, could help Transport Canada, or perhaps ourselves, better engage with the stakeholders to identify these sources of funding?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: I'll first admit that I'm not an expert in organizing stakeholder engagement types of exercises, but I think it would need to identify specific groups, working perhaps through the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to identify some, working through Transport Canada to identify some, working even with perhaps territorial governments to identify stakeholders. We must remember, however, that when we're talking about remote northern airports we're not just talking about airports in the territories; many of these airports are also in the northern parts of provinces. I think what you would need to do on this file would be to try to identify specific groups that you want to talk to, rather than issue a straight open call for people to come forward.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I think that's my time. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

Ms. Block now has the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ferguson, I appreciate the opportunity to have you here to provide us with comments on your 2012 audit.

I want to follow up on some of the comments that my colleague Mr. Hardie made. I think he quite rightly noted that regardless of which witness we've heard from on the safety management systems that our transportation system has implemented, whether they are departmental officials or service providers or those who work within the industry, we get a different view of what safety management systems are, how they are appreciated or not, and whether or not they are working.

In the 2008 audit, it was found that in planning for the transition, the department did not document risks, such as the impact of the transition process on oversight of air transportation safety, and did not identify actions to mitigate these risks. It did not measure the impact of shifting resources to SMS activities, and the department has not yet identified how many inspectors and engineers it needed.

In your remarks, you make some similar comments about your findings in 2012, when you say, "We also found that Transport Canada should have identified the number of resources and competencies it needed to plan and conduct inspections and develop a strategy to obtain these resources and competencies.

In your estimation, have these failings been remedied?

•(1205)

Mr. Michael Ferguson: You are right that in the 2012 audit we pointed out some of the issues that we had found in 2008. I guess one that was consistent between 2008 and 2012 was the need to identify how many inspectors and engineers and such types of resources were needed to make sure that the oversight of the SMS activities was being conducted properly at Transport Canada. We haven't been back in since. Transport Canada would have to give you the details of what they have done.

It's always concerning to us when we do an audit like the one we did in 2008 and then come back later on, in this case in 2012, and find similar types of issues. It's something that happens in a fair number of audits. I can't, however, speak to what the department has done since 2012. Given, though, that we identified it in 2008 and 2012, I think it would be reasonable to get some sort of comment, if they haven't already given it to you, from the department about whether they now know how many inspectors and engineers they need to oversee the SMS system and whether they have those people in place.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you.

To follow up on that, and also to follow up on a similar question to the one asked by my colleague Mr. Berthold about the cycling back by your office to do a follow-up audit, is there anything that triggers your office?

For example, as you've noted, there were issues in 2008. They came to the surface again in 2012. Does that trigger your office in considering whether or not you need to cycle back more quickly to follow up to ensure that these things are being dealt with, or could it be another nine or 10 years before we actually hear from you whether something has been remedied?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: When we are selecting our audits, and our audits that are following up on work that we have done previously, we look at the risk that the program is not functioning the way it's supposed to be functioning.

We certainly would take into account things like seeing the same problems happen over and over again. Quite frankly, we will also pay attention to whatever comes out of this committee and all of the work you do and the types of issues or improvements that you identify have happened since that time frame. We will take that into account. Obviously, when you're dealing with something like aviation safety, that's something that is important to Canadians, to parliamentarians, so from that point of view it's also something that we will be paying attention to. This would be the type of subject matter that we would seriously look at from the point of view of trying to decide to do a follow-up audit. We take all of those factors into account in making that decision.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

Thank you, Ms. Block.

Mr. Aubin, you have three minutes.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are making big efforts to rise above party politics on this committee, and sometimes we succeed. This study is excellent proof of that, as is the motion just now.

However, when it comes to figures, I like to have an objective and independent opinion. Could you tell us how much the federal government invested in aviation safety programs, according to the Public Accounts of Canada, in 2015 and 2016? If you do not have the figures at hand, you can send them to us.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Michael Ferguson: I obviously don't have those numbers with me right now. We can go back to the public accounts and see if that level of detail is there and could provide you with that information, if it is.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

I would like to come back to your remarks at the start of the meeting. In paragraph 10 of your opening presentation, you say that the information the department used to assess high-risk companies that should be inspected — meaning the ones that are assessed, obviously — was not always available and kept up to date.

Documents that are not kept up to date: we know what that means. However, what does it mean when it says that the information was not always available? Does that mean that the information was missing or that you were denied it?

Ms. Lucie Talbot: It means that it was missing at the department. The inspectors therefore did not have that information so they could identify the companies most at risk.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

You also say that the department completed only two thirds of the inspections it had planned for the 2010-11 fiscal year.

Were you able to reach any conclusions based on the two thirds of inspections, without all of them? Does that seem to you to be connected with a lack of funding, a lack of personnel, or both?

Ms. Lucie Talbot: In the report published in 2012, we drew no conclusions and did not try to make any connection, because the department had not done so at that point. That is therefore not a subject that we covered in our audit.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you.

The next question will be my last one.

I would like to talk to you about the incident involving Air Canada flight 624 at Halifax Stanfield International Airport. We will all recall that tragic incident, and if there is one thing we need to learn from incidents like that, it is how to make sure they do not happen again.

This is the conclusion stated by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada regarding that incident:

... Because company procedures did not require the flight crew to monitor the aircraft's altitude and distance to the runway, the crew did not notice that wind variations had caused the aircraft's flight path to move further back from the selected flight path.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Unfortunately, Mr. Aubin...

Mr. Robert Aubin: I will not have time to ask my question?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): That will also have to conclude your question.

Mr. Robert Aubin: A sad end.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Rayes, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for travelling here. I had some questions to ask you, but, unfortunately for you, I am going to begin by making a motion.

Imagine my surprise, when I arrived here, to learn of a letter that the chair of our committee had sent to the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance before today's meeting, although the letter is dated...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Rayes, forgive me for interrupting, but I would like to know whether you are now using your speaking time or you are speaking to a motion. If you want to speak to a motion, you need to move it first.

Mr. Alain Rayes: I would like to move the motion with the text you have in hand. However, I would like to make some changes to it, given that the deadlines have passed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Rayes.

We will distribute the text of the motion.

I am going to read the motion for the committee members:

That the Committee commit the full two hours of its Tuesday, May 16, 2017 meeting to witness testimony on the Infrastructure Bank, that the committee invite three additional witnesses to appear in the first hour of the May 16th meeting, with the Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP each proposing one witness, and that the committee write a letter to the FINA Committee to request additional time to conduct its study of the Infrastructure Bank.

The motion was received within the time allowed.

Mr. Rayes, you have the floor.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you see, there are dates that need changing. Naturally, I am requesting an amendment to the motion so that it reads: "That the Committee commit two more hours to additional witness testimony on the Infrastructure Bank before finalizing its study, and that the Committee invite three additional witnesses." I would strike the rest...

• (1215)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Rayes, I am interrupting you because you cannot make an amendment to your own motion.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Even to correct the dates?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): You cannot do it. The motion that was introduced is the one we have to talk about today, even if, I agree, half of the motion is no longer valid.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Therefore, I will keep the end of my motion, as it is the only part that is still valid: "That the committee write a letter to the FINA Committee to request additional time to conduct its study of the Infrastructure Bank."

Allow me to explain this request.

I have, in my hands, a letter which is curiously dated tomorrow, Friday, May 19, 2017 but was sent yesterday to the Standing Committee on Finance. Does everyone have a copy of this letter? It is signed by our chair, who, unfortunately, is not present. What a shame, because I would have liked to hear what she has to say about this.

The letter reads as follows:

Upon your request, the Standing Committee of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities undertook the consideration of clauses 403 to 406 (Division 18, Part 4) of Bill C-44. In doing so, the Committee heard testimony from the Canadian Electricity Association, the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, the Canadian Union of Public Employees as well as officials from Infrastructure Canada and Finance Canada.

So far, everything is true.

The problem is when the chair speaks on our behalf and says the following:

I am pleased to inform you that the Committee has no recommendations....

I would like for the clerk to confirm whether we all made this decision together, as a committee. To my knowledge, this is not the case, and I do not believe I have missed any discussions about this subject.

The letter continues as follows:

... or suggested amendments for clauses 403 to 406 of Bill C-44.

I don't know whether my fellow members across the table will have the courage to confirm my statement, but I find this very peculiar. This is the first time since I became a member of Parliament that I have experienced such a situation, that someone speaks in my name, sends a letter two days before the date indicated on the letter, which is already a peculiar way of doing things, and decides for me, in the name of all the committee members, that there will be no amendments.

The letter continues:

Please note I invited Committee Members to contact the Parliamentary Counsel and Legislative Clerk assigned to bill C-44 should Members wish to draft amendments on their own initiative and to submit them directly to the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance before Friday, May 19, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.

I have searched all of my emails and letter mail without finding anything in writing in either official languages offering me this possibility.

The letter concludes:

Yours sincerely.

The Infrastructure Bank is a big issue. Many witnesses were of the opinion that such a bank was premature. I will repeat what the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy official said: we are putting the cart before the horse.

I want to make clear that we are talking about \$35 billion. That's 35 billion taxpayer dollars that will be used to enrich investors, for the most part foreign investors, to the detriment of Canadians. This is simply a way for the government, and therefore taxpayers, to secure the investments of these businesses or foreign investors.

Our committee chair, a Liberal member, is speaking in my name, in a letter dated tomorrow and sent yesterday, to announce that our committee will not propose any amendments. I just cannot believe it. I hope that our discussion is on the record and that it is not taking place in camera. Are we in camera? No, we are not. I want to try to highlight the inconsistency in which we find ourselves.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I would also like to say that the letter—

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: You can't. No, that's not your call.

I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): One moment, Mr. Rayes.

Mr. Alain Rayes: —that I want to send to the Standing Committee on Finance....

May I continue?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Rayes, one moment please.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Badawey, if I may, I would like to say a few words before giving you the floor.

Since we will most likely be discussing the motion for at least 10 minutes, I would like to have the committee's unanimous consent to thank the officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. I do not think it would be appropriate to keep them here needlessly. They have already been more than generous by taking the time to meet with us.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's what I was getting at.

The second question I was going to ask is, what are we discussing? There was a motion presented, and now there is discussion on the letter. I'd like to know, Mr. Chairman—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): We can only—

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: If I could finish, please—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Badawey, just before we begin the discussion of your point of order, I would like to excuse the witnesses. You may then continue. It is simply out of respect for those who took the time to come to meet us. It is very important that we thank them.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: If I may continue and finish my point of order, the third thing I was going to mention is, are there any more questions for the witnesses? You're making an assumption that the next round of questions may be stifled. I'm just wondering whether members of the committee have an intention to ask the witnesses any further questions before we allow Mr. Rayes to go on with his commentary.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr.—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Would you like to speak about the point of order, Mrs. Block?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, if there is a point of order, could we ask the clerk to rule on what happens when there is a motion on the floor? That is probably where we're going. As soon as a motion is introduced on the floor, what happens? Do we go back to questioning, or does this motion have to be dealt with before we can continue—

Mr. Vance Badawey: Are we dealing with a motion or are we dealing with a letter? What are we doing?

He's all over the place—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): First, the point of order—

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: If I may, Mr. Chair, I just want to know whether that's—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Mr. Badawey, let me answer, please.

First, we discuss the point of order; we are no longer discussing the motion. We are discussing the point of order, which takes precedence over the debate.

The purpose of the point of order was to find out whether others had questions to ask the witnesses. It's a point of order, so we do not need to vote on it, I should think.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I asked a question—

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Second, you had a question. That's exactly what I was about to ask at the same time as you. I wanted to ask whether we had the consent of all the committee members to allow the witnesses to leave. If the committee does not consent, it is because the members have questions. We will therefore ask the witnesses to stay. That's exactly what I was getting at.

Do those present want to have the witnesses stay until 12:30 p.m., as was planned, or to excuse them?

Mrs. Block, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: My question for the clerk would be, because Mr. Rayes has moved a motion during his questioning time and now there is a motion on the table, do we have to deal with the motion before we resume our questioning of the witnesses?

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): The answer is yes. We must first take care of the point of order and then the motion. Then, we can come back to the debate.

The question that Mr. Badawey and I are asking is this. Do we want to excuse the witnesses, yes or no? Is their agreement to excuse the witnesses? No?

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: We have more questions.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Perfect.

Mrs. Block, you have the floor.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Just for clarification then, we're not going to excuse the witnesses for the next five minutes. Mr. Rayes is going to be speaking to his motion. Then the witnesses will leave at 12:30, at the appointed time they were scheduled to do so, and no more questions will be asked anyway.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): That's the way things are done.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: May I answer that, Mr. Chairman?

Yes, it is unfortunate that a member on that side has taken up the time for us to ask the witnesses questions, which was the plan in the first place, so what I would suggest is that Mr. Rayes may want to wait until after 12:30 to bring up his commentary, as well as his motion, as well as his concerns with the letter, and allow us to continue where we started with the witnesses; hence the reason for the point of order, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you very much, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Rayes, you may defend your motion.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you.

I apologize to the witnesses, although this will allow them to understand a bit what is currently happening in Parliament.

I would like to say to my fellow member on the other side that what is regrettable is the chair's decision to send a letter dated tomorrow, but sent yesterday, in the name of an independent committee.

I would like the committee to adopt this motion, which asks that we write to the Standing Committee on Finance. This is what is asked at the end of the motion: that our committee write a letter to the Standing Committee on Finance to ask for more—

[English]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the motion is not receivable because it refers to a date that was two days ago.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): The clerk, whom I consulted, said that the second part of the motion, the part without a date, was in order. Moreover, when Mr. Rayes began discussing the request to amend the motion regarding the dates, I told him that it was impossible to change a motion he had already proposed. However, there is a part of the motion that is in order, and that is the decision I made after speaking with the clerk.

Mr. Hardie, you have the floor.

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie: On a point of order, don't we need to have agreement to split the motion?

A voice: He's speaking to half of it.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): No one has asked us to do it. We are still debating the motion. Mr. Hardie, if you wish to propose this amendment, you can do so when your turn comes. For the moment, the mover is still proposing the motion.

Mr. Rayes, you have the floor.

Mr. Alain Rayes: The second part of the motion, which, in my opinion, is still very valid and which I would like the committee to support, proposes that our committee write a letter to the Standing Committee on Finance to request that more time be dedicated to the study of the Infrastructure Bank of Canada. In reality, this directly contradicts the chair's decision to send, on our behalf, a letter yesterday—a letter dated tomorrow, I might add—stating that the committee has no amendments or recommendations on this issue.

With respect to this letter to the Standing Committee on Finance, I would like to remind the committee of this:

The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities recommends that your Committee permit more time to study the design and implications of the proposed Infrastructure Bank by removing Part 4, Division 18, and other references to that Bank, from the rest of Bill C-44.

In reality, it's about splitting Bill C-44 to remove the part concerning the Infrastructure Bank of Canada.

I would like to point out that it is not sufficient to examine an issue this important, which affects all Canadian taxpayers, for an hour and a half. Important questions were asked concerning the interests of this bank, the real benefits relative to other existing financing options, and even the evidence supporting its creation.

In order to believe in the merits of the proposed bank, we must be able to further examine the issue. I remind you that we are talking about money belonging to all Canadians, which is not to be taken lightly. We are talking about \$35 billion that will line the pockets of businesses, investors, and firms. Who will incur the risks associated with this money? Canadians will.

As someone representing Canadians, I find what is happening unacceptable. An attempt was made to muzzle us by stating, on our behalf, that there were no recommendations to be made. To imagine for a second that we would not make a single recommendation in the report on the study the committee is currently undertaking, one would have had to be oblivious to everything that was said during the question and comment period and to what the witnesses who came here told us. I am speechless. It is the first time that I see such a situation. I am furious. We are talking about our fellow citizens. We were elected to gain their trust.

An attempt is being made to put one over on us, as they say. This is too big. It's like trying to push a train through a mouse hole and thinking that we wouldn't notice. A letter dated tomorrow—because that's the deadline—was sent yesterday on our behalf. I'm not sure whether you realize. It said that we would have the opportunity to have our say, but that's false.

I do not know how we will deal with this, but it is clear to me that we must, at the very least, contact the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and ask them to give us more time to study the issue so that we can get to the bottom of it. If this bank is to be created, it will not be because the Liberals used their majority in the House to push it through under our noses, unbeknownst to Canadians. What we are experiencing is completely ridiculous.

I hope that the government members will at least be embarrassed by this situation and agree to this motion so that we can have more time, especially because we have a letter speaking on our behalf.

I don't know how to react to all of this. I sincerely hope that everyone will agree and that members across the table will support this motion. We would then have more time to ask questions, as we should, and to make recommendations so that the government can make the best decision possible, without smuggling this under our noses.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1230)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Rayes.

Mr. Aubin is requesting the floor. However, as it is 12:30 p.m. and we asked the witnesses to stay until then, I will now thank them for being here and answering our questions.

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair, our apologies to the witnesses, and I would ask them to stay a little longer, if they can. We have some more questions.

Would they be willing to stay a little longer?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: We are at the pleasure of the committee, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Luc Berthold): Thank you, Mr. Iacono.

I want to tell the witnesses how much we appreciate their being so understanding.

We will continue with Mr. Aubin.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Barely ten minutes ago, I was complimenting my fellow committee members on our non-partisanship research. I admit that now, we will have to perform miracles to maintain our non-partisan approach. The content of this letter, and especially all of the confusion it brought, has left me baffled as well.

At the same time, sadly, I will say that I am not surprised. It seems that this approach comes from the top. In the House, we are debating a bill that has not yet been approved and most certainly has not received royal assent. In the meantime, in the backrooms, the hiring process for employees and the future direction of this bank are being discussed. What the government is trying to do is becoming ever more obvious. This letter is, in my opinion, another example of arrogance—I have no other word for it, so I apologize for the harshness, but that is the only word that comes to mind—of a

majority government that knows that, in the end, it will get its wish because it has a majority.

Instead of obeying the democratic rules of our Parliament and making sure that everyone, in the House as well as in committee, can express their views on important topics, thus allowing the voices of Canadians all across the country to be heard, this government seems to work in a bulldozer fashion. The situation is totally unacceptable.

I want to believe that the date on the letter is a mistake; I want to believe it. I would tell you that, for the good of our democracy, if my Liberal counterparts told me that the letter was not sent and that it was a simple dating error, I would almost believe it, because this manner of doing things is so absurd to me. I hope we will be able to find a solution. It seems to me that the proposal put forward by Mr. Rayes makes total sense.

We are talking about an important measure. I would even say that it's about a revolution in the way we do things and in the way we invest in infrastructure. Notwithstanding this letter and the quagmire in which we find ourselves currently, the fact that the committee was given so little time to examine the project constitutes, for all intents and purposes, a form of contempt for members and our role as the voice of Canadians. It is totally unacceptable that the committee was not permitted to properly examine the issue and that it was imposed in such a bulldozer fashion.

It is therefore with pleasure that I will support Mr. Rayes' motion calling for more time or, rather, calling on our committee to write to the Standing Committee on Finance to ask for more time. You see that we are putting on kid gloves to do something that should be a right, and not a privilege. It is the role of the opposition to ask questions, and thank God, in our democratic system, the people also elect members of the opposition to demand accountability from the government. That is the first responsibility of both opposition parties: to make sure the government, regardless of its political stripe, is accountable for its decisions and respects the democratic process that allows us to show this accountability.

Currently, the government is pushing the envelope on arrogance even further by eliminating the responsibility of the opposition and taking away our right to speak and even our right to propose amendments. We know very well that when we propose an amendment in committee, we must have solid arguments to change the government's mind and shift the pendulum. It's our role, it's our responsibility, to develop solid arguments to show a) and b), in point form, our position. It does happen that the government faces the facts with well-supported arguments. However, when we don't even have the opportunity to propose an amendment, which could very well be rejected by a majority Liberal government, as allowed by the rule book, I will say that we are no longer following the rules of the House at all.

• (1235)

Allow me of making an analogy between hockey and our current situation: we are at the Stanley Cup finals and it's the third period, there is still no score. But there are no longer any referees on the ice.

I think it is your responsibility, Mr. Chair, to ensure that we have the required time to discuss this motion, which you have indeed done well.

I hope that I have shown, with these arguments, the necessity of following the process, regardless of the outcome and the results of the amendments we wish to submit.

I will end it here for now.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Aubin.

Mrs. Block, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I guess I need some clarification. I know that when this legislation, these clauses, were referred to our committee, there were motions to add additional time to the meeting, which were perhaps not tabled, but I would venture to state that as with any other piece of legislation that may be referred to this committee, it is understood that the committee would undertake a study of the legislation, hear from witnesses, and then contemplate any amendments that any member might want to make to those clauses that were referred to committee.

It is my understanding that we heard from witnesses, the meeting was adjourned, and there was absolutely no opportunity to bring forward amendments. In fact, there was no attempt made to even discuss whether or not there would be any amendments coming forward from any of the members of the committee. I think that in itself is egregious when we're dealing with a piece of legislation that's been referred to us. Perhaps there is not an understanding that we look at the legislation, hear from witnesses, and then seek to understand whether or not anybody at the table believes there should be an amendment.

I recognize there was an unwillingness to lengthen the study. It was felt that all we needed was two hours to study this issue which, as my colleague has pointed out, is worth \$35 billion with many, many questions surrounding it. That first point is one that really does need to be remedied.

The second point would be that this letter, obviously dated for tomorrow, was not copied to any of the members of the committee. I did not see this letter until I got here today. To make the statement that we had no recommendations or suggested amendments when there was no opportunity to do so is a further offence, as is to not send the letter to the committee.

The chair has stated that she has invited committee members to contact the parliamentary counsel, but we were not made aware that this was even within our purview. I was not at the meeting on Tuesday. I'm a member of the committee, but I did not receive this letter to know that I needed to do that by tomorrow.

Those are the three points I would make. I'm not sure how we remedy this situation, but I certainly want to get my comments on the record. I have to agree with Mr. Aubin that unfortunately, this is yet another indication of the government's attempt to control what's happening in committees and to ram through legislation that it doesn't really want to take the time to understand or to hear from witnesses and opposition parties on as to whether or not there need to be changes made.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll end there.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mrs. Block.

Mr. Fraser, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much.

I do appreciate where members of the opposition are coming from, and I do admit that there's some ambiguity, specifically with the date here. I'd like to suggest that this is not some grand scheme or anything intentional. Like you, Ms. Block, I was not familiar with this letter before today.

I think the paragraph that seemed to give Monsieur Rayes some real concern was the one about the committee's not having recommendations. I think that could be taken to mean that the chair hasn't received them. We had set aside a meeting because of the time constraint to get this to the finance committee for the 19th to deal with it. I assume the chair has included language to that effect, because she didn't receive recommendations on behalf of the committee.

If members of the opposition do have proposed amendments, I would encourage them to send them to the parliamentary counsel and legislative clerk, as is outlined in the final paragraph.

I know this is a contentious piece of legislation. We've heard witnesses here. We've had the minister here. We've debated the infrastructure bank specifically for one full day in the House as the result of an opposition motion, and it's come up a number of times over the course of the debate on Bill C-44.

Although there may be disagreement, and I understand there is disagreement, I've heard evidence in our committee and argument in the House that convinces me that this infrastructure bank belongs in the budget implementation act, and I'm personally supportive of it.

Although there is a procedural difficulty with the dates in Mr. Rayes' motion, the motion is a request to add time to conduct the study. I personally don't feel that extra time is necessary because I feel we have on the table what we need to satisfy me that this is a good idea that is going to help the communities I represent.

I do appreciate that this is a point of disagreement, but I would ask, as a sign of good faith, that we don't take this letter to be some piece of malfeasance by our ordinary chair because I sincerely do not believe that was her intention.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you, Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Iacono, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Chair, I simply move to adjourn the debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

As I have learned from last time: we must immediately put the motion to adjourn to a vote.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Normally, after a motion to adjourn is adopted, we move on to the next issue on our agenda. We currently have two options. It's not exactly standard to the agenda, according to the convening notice, but that will be up to the committee to decide. The period given to witnesses was supposed to end at 12:30 p.m., and we were supposed to be in closed proceedings since then. Logically, the next item on the agenda is to proceed, behind closed doors, to the instructions for the drafting of the project report. However, as we have asked the witnesses to stay, I cannot give priority to one element or another. I will therefore let the Committee members decide on the next step.

Mr. Badawey raised his hand first, then Mr. Rayes.

You have the floor, Mr. Badawey.

[English]

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

It has been 20 minutes, so I would like to now carry on with what we started, with questions for the witnesses. I believe you have the speaking order—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: There is a point of order, Mr. Badawey.

Mrs. Block, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Kelly Block: Do we not have to vote on the motion that was tabled?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: No. We must immediately pass to the next item on the agenda. Mr. Rayes' motion will not be put to a vote because the debate was adjourned. According to the procedure and the verifications we made last time, we must pass to the next issue on the agenda.

•(1245)

Mr. Alain Rayes: So, when will my motion be put to a vote?

Mr. Luc Berthold: You did not ask for the floor, Mr. Rayes.

I will give the floor to Mr. Badawey.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's a dilatory motion.

If I may continue, as I was saying, Mr. Chairman, I recommend that we actually continue on with the dialogue and the questioning of the witnesses which we were diverted from 20 minutes ago.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: So we have a proposition from Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Chair, I would like some clarifications on this situation. I bring out the fact that I have a clear feeling of being gagged. I want to know what will happen to my motion.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Rayes, before you take the floor, I would like to know why, specifically if you are raising a point of order or if you want to discuss the proposition that we resume talks with the witnesses. If it's a point of order, it's not the same thing. We are currently discussing Mr. Badawey's proposition.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Chair, I raise a point of order.

I want to know what is happening with regards to my motion. You speak of adjournment, but I don't understand this technicality. I would like for the clerk to elaborate on the topic.

Mr. Luc Berthold: At the moment, Mr. Rayes, we must continue with the issues as prepared on the agenda. You may put forth your questions to the clerk immediately after, but as for me, I will follow the agenda. It is our responsibility.

Do you want to raise a point, Mr. Aubin?

Mr. Robert Aubin: No, it's about Mr. Badawey's proposition.

Actually, I want clarification so that I may take a position on the proposition.

In the thirty minutes during which we must give instructions on the drafting of the report to the analysts, will the draft be postponed to the next meeting, or indefinitely? Will the Committee request an extension?

Mr. Luc Berthold: That is a good question.

Mr. Badawey, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately you are correct that now that we're going to see an extra witness for an extra hour, the intent would be that, following that witness and following that hour of, I'm sure, testimony as well as questioning, we can then proceed to giving drafting instructions to the clerk and to the analyst.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: So, to clarify...

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's somewhat of a moot point now, because we have added an extra hour onto the process.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Aubin, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert Aubin: This is part of the operating rules of a committee. Thirty minutes were set aside, but we did not add time. As for me, I cannot add half an hour to my schedule today to participate in the discussion regarding the instructions to be given to the analysts. The session will have to end at the usual time.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That would indeed be the case if there were no unanimous consent from the Committee members.

Mr. Robert Aubin: There will be no unanimous consent. It's impossible, I have another appointment.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Really? Come on.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Is there a point of order?

No?

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: I'm just providing clarification, because it's obviously needed.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: There are two issues on the exact same level on the agenda. This is a peculiar situation. So I will ask now if you wish to continue listening to the witnesses.

I ask that all those who wish to continue listening to the witness raise their hand.

Who is against?

I conclude that we will continue with the questions.

Mr. Rayes, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Can you tell us where we stand? I admit I am still reeling at the idea that the report must be done and sent to the Standing Committee on Finance on Friday without having had the chance to express our views. Yesterday, someone decided on our behalf that we would not have any recommendations to submit.

Are we going ahead with the closed proceedings?

Mr. Luc Berthold: We just voted to continue listening to the witnesses until the end of the meeting.

Mr. Alain Rayes: So we will have absolutely no chance to share our recommendations before the end of the meeting. Is that correct?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Aubin, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert Aubin: I don't want to question your authority: I just want to understand why you gave priority, by way of vote, to the questioning of the witnesses instead of preparing the case. By voting for one, we are forced to vote against the other. That was likely not my intention, but I was faced with a dilemma.

Are we following the procedural rules?

Mr. Luc Berthold: It's quite simply that the first person to raise a point to ask to hear the witnesses was Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Luc Berthold: So, I did exactly what had to be done to decide on the next issue on the agenda.

For the moment, Mr. Rayes has the floor.

Mr. Rayes, you have five minutes remaining.

• (1250)

Mr. Alain Rayes: I don't know if the clerk could help us with this, but I truly have the feeling that we are in a dead-end.

From what I understand, the analysts must draft a report on the Infrastructure Bank by tomorrow and submit it to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Do we have until tomorrow to make recommendations?

Mr. Luc Berthold: The president decided to share the Committee's position with the president of the Standing Committee of Finance. It is therefore the decision of the president. There are no other reports on the agenda regarding the Infrastructure Bank.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Please excuse my questions, but I want to know if a document wrongly dated sent on our behalf without our consent has any legal standing.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: What are you doing?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I rise on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Can you get some control?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Badawey, Mr. Rayes is using his allotted speaking time to question the witnesses.

[English]

Mr. Vance Badawey: That's fine. Okay, thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: I am trying to follow the rules. Someone spoke on my behalf and I believe I have the right to express myself on this subject. There is indeed a letter, and the president used her right to send it. She has that power. However, this letter gives instructions and cited the Committee members on this, whereas the members did not consent to it. I simply want to know if this means that, if the president sends a letter, it takes precedence on everything that was said, whether the contents of that letter are true or not.

What can we do, as Committee members?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Rayes, I will clarify two points.

First, I remember that on May 11, the clerk sent a letter to all Committee members inviting them to submit recommendations or proposals for amendments directly to the Standing Committee on Finance. This email was sent to each Committee member on May 11. The clerk just confirmed.

Second, you could change something only if you call into question the president's decision. The question regarding this letter will therefore be put to vote. You may propose something else, you may do as you wish. The fact remains that the president made a decision and it is her right to do so.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Chair, I already took up too much time dedicated to the witnesses.

Before giving way to government Members, I would like to apologize, on behalf of all Members, for this unfortunate situation. I feel that my rights have been completely breached today.

I do not have any questions to ask. I will give up my time, regardless of what becomes of it. There is nothing else for me to say today.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you.

Mr. Badawey, you have six minutes.

[English]

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

I appreciate the opportunity to get back on track here. I am going to pass on some of my time to Mr. Tootoo.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Ferguson, I'm very happy to have this opportunity to take advantage of your valuable time.

One of the things you talked about was the ACAP. It's well known that these national programs like ACAP, social housing agreements, and health funding don't fit or work for the north.

Do you think that a specific northern ACAP would help the government and the Department of Transport address some of the critical needs of airport infrastructure in the north?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: That's a policy decision that the government has to make. Certainly what we noted was that when you look at the ACAP, when you look at the number of projects that have been identified that need to be done in the small airports, including in the northern remote airports, the demand for safety-related projects is significantly larger than the amount of money that has been in the ACAP in the past.

There have been other ways of funding some of these types of programs, so how that is done is something the government would have to decide. Fundamentally, our overall recommendation was for the Department of Transport to have a plan that identifies the needs in the remote northern airports and what needs to be done, for example, the resources needed, how those would be identified and found, and then how the issues would be dealt with. In the context of that plan, the government would have to make a decision about what tools could be used to implement the plan.

•(1255)

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

Another thing you mentioned in your report is that if the infrastructure is not maintained, it becomes very costly to repair and upgrade. If memory serves me correctly, it's actually through the Government of Nunavut that funding is flowed, through its territorial formula financing agreement with the Department of Transportation and the Arctic airports to maintain those airports.

In your work as auditor for the Government of Nunavut and with this report, do you think there may be issues with providing adequate resources to the Government of Nunavut to maintain the existing infrastructure that's in place?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: As you rightly point out, we have a role not only as Auditor General of Canada but also as auditor general of each of the three territories. We prepare audit reports for the Government of Yukon and report those to the legislature of Yukon. We prepare reports for the Government of the Northwest Territories and report those to the legislature of the Northwest Territories. It's the same thing for the Government of Nunavut. We always have the pleasure of doing a number of performance audits in Nunavut that we report to the legislature in Nunavut.

Regarding the level of funding, overall that's not something we've looked at in terms of how the federal government provides funding to the territories individually. Again, I think I would go back and say that in this audit we specifically identified the problem of the quantity of projects that have been identified as needing to be done for safety-related issues as compared with the funding that is available through the capital assistance program. There have been other ways of funding some of those types of improvements, but not through the regular program that exists to fund those types of issues. Certainly we have identified that within ACAP itself there is an issue between the identified need and the amount of funding available based on historical funding levels.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

You also noted in your report that just in Nunavut alone, with its 25 airports, close to \$500 million in 2014 dollars is needed, and a little over \$75 million is needed to relocate two airports in order to meet Transport Canada safety regulations.

With all these deficiencies that you pointed out in your report, and the quality of infrastructure and information that's there for pilots, if those conditions existed in an urban airport, for example, do you think they would still be allowed to operate?

Mr. Michael Ferguson: I think the issues that we've identified in terms of infrastructure at remote northern airports are very concerning. Again, when flights are authorized to fly, that's done within all of the safety approaches to authorizing flights, but in terms of remote northern airports, because of the problems with lighting or navigation systems or having accurate weather information, it means that they may not be able to operate as often.

When you're talking about airports in the north having appropriate lighting at certain times of the year, that's extremely important. I think all of the issues we've identified here are important. Regardless of how you would compare that with any conditions anywhere else, we've made the recommendation, and the Department of Transport needs to have a plan that identifies what needs to be done and then how those problems will be rectified moving forward.

•(1300)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much, Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Tootoo.

Mr. Ferguson, I thank you and your team for participating at today's meeting and having shown such great patience. In the parliamentarians' world, we know when we start, but we do not know how things will unfold. I thank you again for being with us.

I sense that we will not have unanimous consent allowing us to deal with the instructions regarding the report on aviation safety.

Trois-Rivières and I have to drive three and a half hours. It is simply impossible for me to stay.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

Would you like to rise on a point of order again, Mr. Aubin?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you everyone.

Mr. Robert Aubin: No, actually, I want to specify that, in my case, it was not a perfunctory attempt. I have an appointment in

The sitting is adjourned.

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