



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 005

Monday, October 26, 2020

Chair: Mr. David Sweet



Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Monday, October 26, 2020

• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC)): Colleagues, I actually have a gavel here, but I think it's inconsequential considering how far away everybody is. Consider the meeting officially gavelled in.

Colleagues, up until now our tradition has been to begin with a new speakers list, but because of the nature of the way we ended last time and finished with—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Excuse me, Chair, on a point of order, just because you mentioned the last meeting, I would like to have explained and to understand a bit more about how that....

I heard a bit of echo in my sound. Has that been resolved? Can you hear me without echo?

The Chair: I don't hear any echo from you, no.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Okay. I'll continue. I just want to understand for the benefit of everyone here exactly how that happened and that we were adjourned, because there was still a discussion going on and the potential for a vote to occur. I'm the first one to say that I am happy to adjourn when there's a hot lunch waiting, and we did meet in the lineup over at West Block—

The Chair: I was just going to remind you of that, but that's okay.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: You're right. Then I thought that I do need to understand how that happened. Maybe we'll want it to occur again. Who knows? All joking aside, I think it's important for the members to understand just how that went down.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Sure. I'd be glad to explain.

First off, to go back, generally, except for extenuating circumstances like we've had where the committee has not agreed on particular issues and we've continued on past the published time, the chair would exercise their opportunity to stick within a time. That meeting was scheduled for eleven to one. I think it was about 12:40 when Mr. Fergus, on a point of order, alerted us to the fact that all staff had been cut off from the meeting. The technical crew got on that, and it took quite some time.... In fact, it wasn't resolved until five minutes after we adjourned the meeting, actually.

That was how it happened. We got into technical difficulties. I asked the committee whether they wanted to adjourn because it was five minutes to one and our scheduled time to adjourn was one.

There were no dissenting voices, so we adjourned our first meeting on time.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: All right. Thank you, Chair.

There was a question of the vote, though. I know that my colleague Mr. Dong asked about whether there was consensus for voting, so was it for technical reasons or—

The Chair: No, that was not the case. In fact, I have the speakers list beside me. The speakers list was not exhausted, and there was not unanimous consent to go to a vote.

As long as there are people on the speakers list, colleagues, then my job as the chair is to make sure that everybody has their voice heard. In fact, right now, I was going to review the list with you, so I might as well do that now while we're dealing with how the eventuality of that meeting happened.

Monsieur Gourde was speaking when the technical difficulty happened. That's why I think that because of this eventuality I'd like to go with the speakers list, because it terminated due to a technical difficulty, not because of any ongoing debate of the committee.

Presently, I have Monsieur Gourde, Mr. Barrett, Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Dong and Mr. Fergus. Also, is that Blaney that I had on there? Yes, it is, and Mr. Drouin, neither of whom, of course, are on right now, I think, and Madame Shanahan. That was the list when we adjourned subsequent to the technical difficulties. Right now, I think the best way to proceed is that we'll start with Monsieur Gourde, and then we'll ask all these others who are on the list if they want to remain on the list.

• (1105)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Are we addressing the amendment?

The Chair: That's correct. We're still on debate on the amendment.

Let me go through these names right now. Monsieur Gourde has already reached out to me and has said that he wants to continue, because he had the floor, so let me just go through these names. Anyone who does not want to be on the list can just say no. If you want to be on the list, just give me the affirmative.

Mr. Barrett, do you want to remain on the list? Okay.

Madame Gaudreau? Okay.

Mr. Warkentin? Okay.

Mr. Dong? Okay.

Mr. Fergus? Okay.

Ms. Blaney is not on the call, and Mr. Drouin is not on the call.

Madame Shanahan? Okay.

We will begin with Monsieur Gourde.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

Good morning, everyone.

I've heard that the phones are not working and that people are trying to dial in. Is that true? Can the clerk check?

The Chair: I hope that's not true, but that's what we finished with. We're going to check into it right now. The technical crew is going to check into it at the moment.

Mr. Gourde, could you just wait so we can see if our staff is able to dial in?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): It should be good now.

The Chair: Okay.

I am told that it should be good now, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Okay. I heard that the toll-free number, the other line, isn't working. I guess it's working now, right?

The Chair: Yes. IT has just checked. They say it's all good to go.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

The Chair: Please alert me if anything is different, colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gourde, you have the floor.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We are all going to become specialists in these virtual meetings. Personally, I'm starting to find it fast and enjoyable. We may be able to do it more often in the future, especially during the weeks when we are not always in Ottawa.

Last week I was interrupted, unfortunately, when I was almost finished. Today, I will only take a few minutes, because there are still a lot of speakers who want the floor. I was talking about the

importance of the work we did last summer, and it has a lot to do with the amendment. We need to give the witnesses we invite to appear a chance to explain themselves. It gives them a voice. Often, documents are requested and the documents sent by the department are redacted. Witnesses can speak to us, especially in parliamentary committee, because it gives them some immunity. Tongues are loosened and we get other bits of history. That is why our committee is important. In fact, it has become even more important since last week, when the motion to establish a special committee was defeated in the House.

At the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, we all have a great responsibility to shine a light on ethics issues in Canada. This is our mandate, and our committee is growing in importance.

May I remind you that in politics, one week is a long time. Last week, we learned that there had been problems with the appointment of judges. We also learned that special contracts had been awarded with large margins. We have a lot of questions. I also hope that our committee can function. Perhaps there will be an outcome, in the short term or the long term, so that we can undertake a study.

Mr. Angus also made a very interesting motion. I hope we can vote today on the amendment and the motion, and then move on to another motion that might finally let us get to work. We have a duty to Canadians to shed light on ethical issues in Canada.

That's it for me, for now. I'm looking forward to hearing from the others, and I hope today's meeting goes fairly smoothly.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gourde.

[*English*]

We'll now go on to Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

For about 15 hours over the course of three meetings, we've heard from members of this committee and many substitutes who have carried the debate—the filibuster—over those many hours and days.

We have the amendment that Mr. Angus has moved and, of course, the main motion; both are to be voted on. The opportunity to move expeditiously to deal with this amendment and with the main motion, and to allow this committee to do its work is important. I think that if there were a point to be made by members of the Liberal Party, the point has been made. Their objection is definitely a matter of public record now, but there does come a point when we need to advance the business of this committee. I see that a number of motions have been put on notice.

The members of this committee have given various reasons for the days-long debate. One of the reasons was that the House leaders would have to have a discussion about the work we're doing. I can tell you that for a period of successive days—we'll close in on a week this week—our House leader's office has reached out to the government House leader's office on this issue, and a proposal has been made. The response from the government House leader's office has been that, "We have no response". There was no counter-proposal, no claim that there was no room to negotiate or that their position was firm, just simply, "We have no response".

If we're locked up at the House leader level; that is, that the government House leader refuses to dialogue with the House leader for the official opposition, and that's what the Liberal members of this committee are waiting for, resolution at that level, well, it doesn't sound as if it's coming. I think that members are going to need to vote based on the merits of the motion. If they don't believe it is meritorious, then they should vote against. If they believe there is merit to the motion, perhaps if the amendment carries and then they support the motion as amended, then they should vote to support that.

Mr. Chair, after three days and 15 hours, and starting another week, another meeting, I ask if you could canvass the committee to see if there's a will to call the question on the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: We still have Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Dong, Mr. Ferguson and Madame Shanahan to speak, but if they're willing to surrender their position and go to a vote on the amendment....

No. There is no consensus.

Next is Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Good morning, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge in the last few days. In fact, at the outset, I sensed a unanimous willingness to shed light on this, and a compromise was proposed to allow us to move forward. I can see today that we will be ready, and I hope so, because there are people waiting for us to look at issues that affect them as well, such as fraud and privacy, among others.

By the way, I won't take much time this morning because I'm ready to vote on the amendment. I just want to point out to the clerk that motions have been tabled. I sent three other motions several weeks ago, even before the committee was reconstituted, and I sent them back afterwards. I don't know if I have to do it again, so I'd like to know what their status is.

One of these motions concerns measures to prevent conflicts of interest. This is something that is very relevant for the future. Another motion asks the committee to undertake a study of the commissioner's powers and make recommendations. We talked about this for hours. Finally, the last motion, which was discussed in the last session, is about the need to end the correlation of social insurance numbers and to find ways to protect the identity of our citizens.

I just want to make sure it's still on the agenda. I'm ready to vote.

• (1115)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Gaudreau. Of course, we have to dispose of the amendment and the motion first before we get into.... There are lots of motions on notice that we have to deal with, but we will.

Now we'll go to Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Can you hear me all right?

The Chair: Not all right; we can hear you, but it's quite broken right now.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I'm just working on some connectivity issues here. I think I'll allow the next speaker to go ahead of me—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Madame Gaudreau, on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I want to make sure that I get an answer to my question about the motions that were tabled beforehand. Perhaps the clerk could answer me.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is your question, Madame Gaudreau, whether or not you have three additional motions that you've tabled? Okay.

I will ask the clerk to check on that. We'll let you know how many have been tabled. I know you had tabled one motion and that we began a debate and the debate was adjourned on the one motion. We'll get back to you on the total very shortly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Warkentin, am I correct that you want me to pass over you and come back to you once your connectivity issues are dealt with?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Then we'll move on to Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, members. I enjoy listening to all of your input, whether on the main motion or on the amendment.

Over and over again I hear from opposition members that there is a need to vote. I almost feel as if I'm being rushed into making a decision on the main motion; there's such a hurry and rush. I want to remind the members that it is through debate that we listen and share our individual perspectives on the motion on the floor, and then we consider it.

Sometimes we act to improve the motion through amendments for it to best fit the mandate of this committee. In fact, we've seen from Mr. Angus that this is true. I think all of our points are being heard, whether we're in the opposition party or are government members. Our points are being considered.

Debate is very important. No members of this committee should feel they're being rushed into voting or into being on the record taking a position on a motion without being properly heard or completely understanding the motion.

I go back to my main point about my concerns regarding the original motion, which is not only about the time frame of 24 hours, but also about opening up access not just to members but also to staff. All of the safeguards from the previous motion in July have not been kept in this new motion. I kept asking these questions in the last few meetings, and I have not heard any solution put forward to address them.

I'm very pleased that Mr. Angus' amendment is going to address at least one of the four main concerns I had, which is to leave Margaret and Alexandre out of this motion. I think that's the sensible thing to do. It's a result of the debate by committee members that we come to this step today. I'm very pleased with this.

Going forward, obviously I'm going to support that amendment, and I urge all members of the committee to support it as well. I think it's much better for the committee's work if we can try to reach a consensus, and I know that the chair works really hard to get us there. Yes, I'm pleased with the amendment, but there are other parts of the main motion that I still feel need to be addressed. These are quite important points to protect one's privacy and also to make sure it's possible for the motion to be executed by those involved.

With that, I want to voice my support for and urge all members to support this amendment. I think it's a good improvement to the main motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1120)

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

I will go to Mr. Fergus now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I would like to express my support for this amendment. It is not perfect, and I would have proposed some changes. However, I think Mr. Angus moved this motion in good faith. It deserves the consideration and support of this committee. It allows us to continue our work more effectively.

I must also say that I had some concerns, in that we should not get into the habit of investigating our colleagues. However, we have to accept this situation, since some members of the committee are totally committed to this bad idea. I participated in a little debate with my colleagues Mr. Barrett and Mr. Angus, I believe, a few weeks ago on the radio. I gave the example of an argument with a neighbour. In such a situation, the neighbour's husband or wife is not asked to act as an arbitrator. Rather, one turns to a third party, who is impartial and has no vested interest in the outcome.

Despite everyone's good will—that of all my honourable colleagues—the temptation to play our cards right and seek political advantage is enormous, if not irresistible. People will pursue their own interests instead of thinking about the interests of all members of Parliament, not only current members of Parliament, but also those of future generations. That is why I insist that we should give this responsibility to the Ethics Commissioner, quite simply.

Having said that, I don't want to sacrifice the good for the ideal. So I'm in a situation where I have to choose between two evils. I will certainly choose the evil that is less far-reaching. So I commend Mr. Angus for proposing this amendment.

Today, Mr. Barrett began his remarks by saying that we had debated the main motion in committee for 15 hours. That's funny, because it took him several minutes to express his opinion, while the clock was ticking. Also, at our last meeting, which ended unexpectedly, Mr. Angus moved his amendment. Several members of the official opposition then took a long time to express their opinion on this amendment. They did so until the end of the meeting, which was 20 minutes early because of a technical problem.

• (1125)

I assure you that I will vote in favour of this amendment. When everyone has had a chance to make their point, I hope we can proceed to the vote. I implore my colleagues from each political party to vote in favour of this amendment so that our vote will be unanimous on this. Then we can move on to the main motion. I hope that we will take the time to consider this properly so that we can then make a decision.

In closing, I would like to remind you that Ms. Gaudreau has tabled several other motions in the past. I am not only talking about recent motions, but also motions that are several months old. I consider them to be very important, since they concern facial recognition and the software that enables the development of this technology. A lack of guidance on this issue could cause a lot of trouble for many Canadians. I hope we will have the opportunity to look into it. In order to do so, I recognize that we must first deal with the motions that are now before us. With time and good faith, I am confident that we will be able to deal with this issue. It is truly in the best interests of Canadians.

• (1130)

[*English*]

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

We're now going to double back to Mr. Warkentin. I see he is back on the screen, and we'll see if he has some good audio and give him the opportunity to speak to this amendment.

Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: This is very good.

Mr. Chair, I do believe, having heard Mr. Fergus' demand for us to move expeditiously on this, that I wouldn't want to take up as much time as he did in delaying this vote.

I would suggest that we move to a vote. There have been day after day after day of delays by the Liberals on this motion and the amendment. I would suggest that maybe we move expeditiously now to the vote.

The Chair: I canvassed the committee before. There are three speakers left: Madame Shanahan, Mr. Sorbara and Mr. Dong, who is back on the list.

Is there any consensus to move to the vote right now, colleagues?

No, there is no consensus, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Han Dong: On a point of order, my understanding is that we have an amendment on the floor and that the amendment has not been voted on yet.

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: That's what I am suggesting we vote on.

Mr. Han Dong: I just wanted to make sure that Mr. Warkentin's suggestion is on the amendment, and not on the main motion.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Chair, I may not have been clear. If I was not clear I would suggest that we move on—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I'm sorry, Chair, but there are still sound issues.

The Chair: Mr. Warkentin, your sound is breaking up quite a bit, but I think I understand what you want to say.

Mr. Warkentin wants to be clear that he was asking for a vote on the amendment, not on the main motion, so I will canvass the committee again as to whether there is a desire to go with a vote on the amendment.

No, there is no consensus, so I will move on to Madame Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much, Chair.

The reason I want to speak is that I take exception to the comments made earlier by my colleague Mr. Barrett regarding the conversations between the House leaders. We checked with the House leader regarding those comments, and I am sorry, but either someone is telling Mr. Barrett a story, or he is telling us a story, because no calls have gone unanswered.

I think it's very important, in the context of this committee and with the subject that we are discussing, that we understand the importance of having these fulsome discussions.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I'm not sure it's appropriate—and I look for your guidance on this—for a member to suggest to the committee that I'm lying. I'm prepared to

demonstrate evidence that what I've said is factual. Through you, I would ask the member to withdraw the inference.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

I didn't get that from Madame Shanahan, but I will give her the opportunity to respond to that comment.

Madame Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

Indeed, no inference was intended, but we understand that these types of discussions are ongoing. They're at different levels and maybe they were at cross-purposes, but certainly.... Indeed, that was the letter I read out last week from the government House leader Mr. Rodriguez to the other House leaders, where I think it is clear to my mind.

Don't worry. I'm not going to read it out again. It's in the record and in the public realm. Yes, indeed, on this side we would like to dispense with this as soon as we can, but we would like to make sure that it's on the record that these discussions are happening in good faith and that our government House leader has reached out to the other House leaders and that these discussions are ongoing.

We welcome the amendment on hand as a step in the right direction, as it goes to the point.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

We discussed ethical principles. The law defines close relatives and the entourage of an MP. As MPs, we have the opportunity to look at ethical principles in a more theoretical way, but here we have to deal with a real and topical case. My colleague Mr. Fergus said that it will take hours of discussion before we come to understand that we must distinguish between a member of Parliament and his or her family members. It could apply to any one of us. I don't think the original intent of creating an office of the Ethics Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Act was to target family members.

I am still having difficulty with the main motion because of its broad scope, intent, short time frame and respect for confidentiality, which is extremely important. For the moment, I agree, but I am pleased that Mr. Angus has moved an amendment so that, at the very least, we respect the fact that the brother and mother of a public figure should not be subject to investigation or oversight by our committee.

Nevertheless, it is important that we had these discussions. We cannot take shortcuts. We have to have a good understanding of things when it comes time to vote. For my part, I am in favour of the amendment as it is worded, because it is a step in the right direction.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Shanahan.

We will now move on to Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, colleagues. It's great to see everyone.

Unfortunately, I wasn't at the last meeting, but fortunately everything went quite well with my daughter's appendix removal. I want to give a shout-out to the folks at SickKids and say thank you so much for the great care and attention we received down there, which folks in Ontario, and for that matter people in Canada receive when they visit SickKids

I do want to say thank you, through you, deputy Green, when you speak to your colleague Mr. Angus, for listening and for working together in the House last week during debate. After one of my speeches during questions and comments, MP Angus asked me about the amendment he had put forward, saying it was a reasonable amendment, namely, to remove the Prime Minister's mother, Madame Trudeau and brother's names from the motion — something that was supported and spoken about by the leader of the New Democratic Party, deputy Singh.

That was something that my colleagues know I had argued vehemently for as the right thing to do, to have those two individuals' names removed. They're not public office holders. Including them would have set a very bad precedent. Frankly, as I commented, I think we are all elected as public officer holders and it is a privilege to serve our residents first and foremost and to be their local voice in Ottawa. However, it's not something where we need to start going after family members of other members of Parliament.

I would be really happy, deputy Green, that through you, you could pass on my hellos and thank yous to MP Angus, because I thought his moving that amendment was very classy on his part, as acknowledged by the leader of the NDP at one of his press conferences.

With that, Chair, I would like to suggest that we canvass the committee to see if we can move to a vote on Mr. Angus' amendment.

• (1140)

The Chair: I am looking for faces. No, there is no consent right now.

I think Mr. Barrett is still on the list and he has indicated that he still wants to speak.

Mr. Dong, you were on the list and I see that electronically, your hand has been removed. Do you have anything more to say before I go to Mr. Barrett?

Mr. Han Dong: I was going to suggest to move to a vote on this amendment without further debate.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Barrett, I think you had put up your hand to say something. Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Yes, thanks, Chair.

Just in response to MP Shanahan's comment that I was telling a story, I'd invite her to speak to Mr. Louis-François Brodeur, who I believe is with their House leader's office. I have an email chain here that supports what I said. The Liberal Party, the government House leader's office, is being non-co-operative and disingenuous

in their comments that they were interested in reaching some kind of consensus.

We heard from Ms. Shanahan's colleagues that the filibusters would end when there was an agreement with the House leaders. Well, an agreement can only be reached if people respond and act in good faith.

I would add that it's not in good faith if someone told her a story that they didn't receive the emails and that there hadn't been an attempt in discussions. This proposal was circulated to all recognized parties—to the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals. I can tell you that conversations have been two ways with both the third and fourth parties, but we get radio silence from the Liberals. That's called “bad faith dealing”, Chair.

To come here today and suggest that what I have said—to put on the record that they're dealing in bad faith—is a story, is unfortunate. I think if Ms. Shanahan would like to see the evidence that her counter-claim was in fact false, I'd be pleased to present it to her. Otherwise I would invite her to correct the record and offer an apology. It is disappointing, to say the least that, when I can offer facts, the conjecture offered by the Liberals is not helpful when we're looking to deal in good faith and the government House leader's office is doing the opposite.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

My speakers list is empty at the moment, but since you mentioned Madame Shanahan, I wonder if she wants to respond to that.

Madame Shanahan, you have no desire to respond to that?

Okay, without any more people on the list, we'll go to a vote on the amendment.

I'll turn it over to the clerk to handle that, unless there's some objection.

Seeing none, the clerk will take over from here.

Mr. Han Dong: Are we going to a recorded vote?

The Chair: Absolutely. I would only trust the clerk to make sure that's accurate.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Clerk.

Colleagues, the amendment has passed, and now we'll move on to debate the amended motion.

Madam Shanahan.

• (1145)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

As I mentioned, I'm still getting an echo. Is that just me or does someone there have to do something?

The Chair: We're not getting any echo here, Madame Shanahan. I don't know if there's anything we can do to your system from this end, but the technical people are aware of it now that you've made them aware, and we'll see what we can do.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Okay, I'll continue speaking.

As I indicated in my earlier remarks, I am very glad to see that the amendment passed. I am sorry to see that our Conservative colleagues voted against it. However, I think that again shows how important it is to have these fulsome discussions on a motion, where indeed there are a number of issues within it that need to be discussed.

I have two main concerns. They have to do with the timing, the time delay, and that there has been—and we saw that in the last session—perhaps an unrealistic timeline put on it, and the fact that we're dealing with a private firm.

We are in a pandemic, and it seems to be something we need to remind people of. We don't have people working in their normal way, being present in offices, being able to pull documents up and make photocopies and to do that with all the due considerations. Of course, once documents are received, they are to be treated with the utmost care to ensure the privacy...because that is, of course, part of our *raison d'être* here, that we safeguard the privacy of Canadians. Regardless of what the context is, that is a principle we maintain, and indeed I believe there are a number of measures that could be taken to ensure this is the case.

Chair, could you clarify the speaking order, please, because I take it we're on a new list?

The Chair: I was thinking you had actually forgotten.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: The echoing threw me off.

The Chair: Presently, Madame Shanahan, if you've concluded, the remaining speakers are Mr. Fergus, Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Dong and Mr. Angus.

• (1150)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: All right. I have concluded. I'm very pleased to see that we are able to continue this discussion.

Thank you very much, Chair.

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Fergus, I will update you.

Just as I said that, I saw two electronic hands come up. Mr. Warkentin and Madame Lattanzio are after Mr. Dong.

Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I thank my colleagues for passing this amendment. Now we get to the main motion.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to raise an issue that is important to me, one that I hope you and my colleagues would also agree with. That is on the notion of what Ms. Shanahan just brought up in terms of the timing.

I think this main motion could easily be improved if we were to move away from the unreasonably tight time frame of 24 hours for the production of this material. I don't want anybody's alarm bells going off. I'm not looking to rag the puck on this one or to drag it out. I think it's eminently reasonable if we said, why don't we give

them seven days, maximum, to produce these documents? If they can get it done in 24 hours I'll stand corrected and buy everybody a coffee. I would be really surprised if they were able to do it. I don't think any organization that gets caught up in political circles and the political gamesmanship that we have here on the Hill deserves it. I think it would stand to the good sense of the fair play of Canadians if we were to offer them up to seven days to produce this material.

[*Translation*]

I don't know if we are willing to have another meeting this week, but none is scheduled at this time. So I don't think that will affect the work of this committee. If we were to agree to this time frame, we would be acting reasonably.

I would like to poll my colleagues as to whether I should propose an amendment to this effect, given its entirely reasonable nature. I look forward to hearing from them, especially those who were not in favour of the amendment we just passed.

So I would like to know if my colleagues are in favour of this idea, especially Mr. Angus. It should not interfere with the work of our committee. I'll let the discussion run its course and then I'll come back at the end to propose an amendment. I hope my colleagues will support it.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I don't think my colleague can suggest that we talk about something different if it's not an amendment. I think he needs to move an amendment. Then we can discuss it. Otherwise, someone else could propose something else.

I think he's proposed something very interesting. Seven days would bring us up to next week anyway—our next meeting—so if he would make that an amendment, then we could discuss it. I think that's the proper order of how this goes.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Chair, I would certainly accede to the experience of my colleague Mr. Angus on that front. If it is correct with you, then I would propose an amendment that we permit the speakers bureau to have up to seven days to produce material that this committee has asked for.

• (1155)

The Chair: Okay.

I have meditated on this for the past four minutes, because I hesitate to ever enter into a debate, but since it's a process of the committee management, I will say that our clerk has done some great work. We've communicated with the organization. The present motion that's on the table right now would not be onerous to them, as they have stated to us that they're ready and prepared to send those documents.

You may remember, Mr. Fergus, that I had raised that as a concern myself. I did not want to have an organization's reputation blemished because we set too tight a timeline. But they have prepared the documents now and are ready to send them, should this motion pass. Certainly we can go ahead with the amendment, as you've asked for it to be tabled, but I thought it was right if I gave that information to the committee in that regard.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I appreciate that you and the clerk took that forward step, Mr. Chair. I'll still move the amendment, but I'll be very pleased to see them satisfy the conditions of that amendment because they can do it within 24 hours. That's great.

The Chair: Okay.

An amendment to the main motion has been moved with regard to the time frame in which the Speakers' Spotlight would have to deliver the documents to our committee. It would be seven days rather than 24 hours.

I believe it was 24 hours, Madam Clerk. Am I correct? Okay.

That's the debate on the floor at the present time.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: A point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Madam Shanahan, did you want to get on the speakers list?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, that's right. It's a new speakers list, is it?

The Chair: No, we are continuing on with the same list. It's just that now those who are on the list would have to be apprised of the fact that they are now speaking to the amendment rather than the main motion. If they want to withdraw their names, they can certainly do that.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Understood.

The Chair: Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, can we get the exact wording of the amendment?

The Chair: As I've received it, in the main motion we're simply removing 24 hours for them to surrender the documents to the committee and replacing that with seven days.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Actually, it's "up to" seven days.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus, for that correction. I appreciate that.

Mr. Sorbara.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, can you repeat the speaking order just for my memory please?

The Chair: Sure. It's yourself, Mr. Dong, Mr. Angus, Mr. Warkentin, Madame Lattanzio, Madame Shanahan, and Madame Gaudreau.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to check one thing. Can we just get clarification from the clerk if up to seven days is sufficient time. You had mentioned earlier, and I just want to make sure I understand correctly,

that there is no issue within the 24-hour period if that's within the clerk and the analysts' time frame as well. It is not too onerous?

The Chair: No, I made it very clear that they already have them prepared. The clerk and I have gone through that work. In fact, she's done most of the work really. They are ready to be surrendered to us at a moment's notice. I don't think I've overstated it by saying what format they're in. They're in an electronic format.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: I just wish to applaud the researchers' ability to get all of the information available to us. That's great work and great due diligence. I will stop there and surrender my time to the others who are to speak on this amendment.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: We'll move to Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

Just for myself and other members of the committee, I want to read the part that we're currently amending: "that these documents shall be provided to the Clerk of the Committee within up to seven days of the adoption of this motion; and that the documents be reviewed in camera."

I see some nodding heads. I assume that's how the amended text would read. If that's the case I think it's a good amendment. We're not prescribing seven days to the organization to submit these documents. If the documents are readily available and they see some of the information that's already been posted by various sources.... If they're readily available, I'd love to see them should the motion be adopted by the committee, and to my mind the 24 hours is a tight timeline. I'm happy to hear that the organization is prepared to meet that deadline, but I think that by giving them the comfort of knowing that there are seven days, we'll be assured that the documents they submit will be whole and everything required by this committee.

I think it's a sound amendment. I'm willing to support it. I think seven days is reasonable, but if these documents are available and ready for the members' eyes should this motion be adopted, then let's see them.

Thank you.

• (1200)

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

Also, to be clear to all committee members, when these documents are surrendered to the clerk, of course the formatting will have to be verified. They will have to be presented to the committee in both official languages. That's how we deal with documents. When the clerk is in receipt of them, it doesn't necessarily mean that immediately we'll have access to them. It will take some time for that to happen.

We'll now move on to Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your intervention on the availability of these documents, because I'm certainly someone who believes we have to give everyone fair process in a committee. We are not quite a court of law, but if we overstep our powers, it can have very negative consequences for people who don't have the power to challenge us. So we have to be judicious.

The fact that these documents were requested in the summer and efforts were made to gather those documents before prorogation and the organization is ready to present them means that I don't think this amendment is necessary, though I normally would have thought it would be a very reasonable one. If the documents are ready, I think we should vote on the amendment, and then we can get on to other business.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

We do have four other speakers, but I will canvas the committee and see if they want to go to a vote on the amendment.

No. There is no consensus.

We will go to Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Chair, these documents were supposed to be released to the committee by August 19. That had been the request of this committee. The motion had been passed. Obviously, you now know that the organization is prepared to release those documents because they were just hours away from giving them to the committee in any event. Of course, that was before the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament simply to ensure the these documents would never see the light of day.

Of course, as we see the Liberals desperately trying to filibuster this committee as well as use other mechanisms to delay these documents from being seen by the committee, obviously there is a bombshell included in these documents, and so I think it's important that we move expeditiously to a vote now. Having seen all of their arguments reduced to simple nonsense. I would suggest that we move not only to vote on this amendment but on the main motion as well.

The Chair: I don't see any consensus, Mr. Warkentin.

We will move on to the next speaker, Madame Lattanzio.

Just to review the speakers list, we have Madame Lattanzio, Madame Shanahan, Madame Gaudreau and Mr. Dong on the list right now.

Madame Lattanzio.

• (1205)

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Chair, before I go on I want to have a point of clarification.

Did I understand you correctly when you said that the documents could be received rather expeditiously, but that there would be a question of having them in French and in English? If so, would that in itself result in some sort of a delay in obtaining the documents?

I want to have that clarified before I speak to the amendment.

The Chair: No. That wouldn't delay our obtaining the documents. They would be delivered to the clerk, but the clerk would

have to make sure they are in an acceptable format, based on the rules of procedure of our committee. That would be the delay; the delay would not be for any organization.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Okay.

The motion basically says that we want them ordered and produced. Is the delay then in the production of the bilingual documents, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: The delay would be with us.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Okay.

The Chair: We're not demanding the documents in both official languages from them or in any particular format, but we do have the committee's procedural rules that we have to abide by, and that's where the delay would be. It wouldn't be with the organization; they wouldn't be responsible for that.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: I understand that. You have made that point quite clearly. The delay would not be with the organization, but in making the documents available to us, as it is written in the motion, in both languages.

Having said that then, the words “up to seven days”—and I want to stress the “up to”—do not mean that we need to take the full seven days. All my colleague is saying is that if there should be a delay, whatever the nature of that delay, we just want to be cautious and give them a time limit of seven days, but if the documents and the translation and everything else is done within 24 or 48 hours, then we wouldn't have to have any discussion of any issues, and say it wasn't done within the delays.

I think the amendment by my colleague is a cautious one. It's just a question of “up to” and, therefore, would include that 24-hour window.

I don't see an issue with that. I think it's just a question of being considerate and opening the door should there be a delay for whatever reason.

I will be supporting the amendment, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Lattanzio.

Now we have Ms. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair, for your patience in following this due process, because, as I mentioned earlier, it is very important that we understand what the production of these documents means and what it means for us to be receiving them.

Maybe it's just a pet peeve of mine, but I'd like to have some clarification from you for further reference. When we say 24 hours or even 7 days, are we talking about business days, calendar days, including holidays or whatever? It is a pet peeve of mine, because sometimes it does come down to the wire, and we know how serious it is if a third party cannot produce documents for us in a timely manner.

Can we have an answer on that question?

The Chair: For all the time I've been on committees, traditionally, when you mention days, these are business days.

However, that said, Mr. Fergus did not specify business days in his amendment, but, generally speaking, the chair and the clerk would proceed on the fact that they would be business days, which is the framework in which we function generally.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Very good.

The Chair: Mr. Fergus may want to elucidate upon that after Mr. Dong speaks.

• (1210)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Very good, thank you for the clarification. I'll leave it at that, but I am certainly in favour of this amendment as worded and very pleased that our clerk and the team have already moved on this piece of business.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dong, I'm sorry, my apologies. I messed up on the speakers.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm happy to speak.

The Chair: Mr. Dong, I'm sorry about that. It is Madame Gaudreau and then you.

I apologize.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I take note of the open-mindedness that has been shown about the need for a time frame, although we have probably had everything we need since August. I just want to mention that I am prepared to vote on this amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gaudreau.

Mr. Dong, go ahead now. I'm sorry about that, sir.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

I spoke on the amendment and explained my position on it. I was ready to listen to other members' comments and perhaps move to a vote on the amendment if there were a consensus to move on.

I was listening carefully to what Mr. Warkentin was talking about. I have to say that as a new member of Parliament, and obviously a new member of this committee, I take what the chair says, the current and previous, to heart. We try to perform or behave as non-partisanly as we can on this committee. I really take that to heart. Repeatedly, though, throughout the discussion of this motion, every time the official opposition members talk, they try to slap the government members by labelling them with the word "cover-up". There is an assumption that they've already judged or decided what the outcome of the study or the investigation might be.

I want to remind all members that there is an ongoing investigation taking place by the independent officer of the legislature. The reason there is an independent officer of the House of Commons is that we all belong to a certain party. Even if we try to be neutral,

our position will lean towards the party that we're with. That's why there's an independent investigation happening.

Simply slapping on these labels and assuming that the government is guilty of whatever accusation the respectful members try to put on the government members, I don't think is helpful to the situation, especially when we are talking about a motion that's not quite the same as the one that passed in the summer. Given that the level of security and access to these documents is completely different, when these things are in place.... Try to frame a picture that it's the same motion and everyone should support it.

By the way, as a permanent member of this committee, I didn't vote for the motion back in August. I understand we're a minority government; we don't hold a majority on this committee. I understand and respect that. Simply trying to frame us as, "Oh, you guys have changed your position on this and have tried to cover up", I just don't think that's fair and respectful to other members. When we talk about the concerns and the questions, and we have vote on one amendment, at least, obviously the concern has been heard. All this debate is useful in my mind, but simply saying that the government members are just talking nonsense, I don't think is very helpful in this committee.

I just did a little research. Mr. Warkentin said the same thing back in May 2013:

You do know, Mr. Chair, that the Ethics Commissioner is currently reviewing the circumstances and the submission that has been brought forward. We also know that the Senate ethics commissioner is reviewing this. We also know that the Prime Minister has answered questions with regard to this and said that he knew nothing of it.

That's just one quote, and I can read another one that speaks to—

• (1215)

Mr. Charlie Angus: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Dong, we have a point of order here in the room.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Dong will have an enormous amount of time to filibuster. We're talking about an amendment, by his colleague, on seven days. I've never actually seen a government member filibuster his own party's amendment. We're speaking about whether seven days is reasonable. That's the question. That's what he needs to be talking about. It has nothing to do with Mr. Warkentin; it has to do with the amendment offered by Mr. Fergus.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Continue on, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair. I'm going to wrap up very quickly.

I don't mean to drag this on, but when I hear the Conservative members and Mr. Warkentin saying that the concerns we're bringing forward, including this amendment, are nonsense, I cannot accept that. I have these quotes available. I'll certainly share them with the committee members later on, but my point is that we're all trying to work together here to improve this motion.

I understand that we're in the minority position—I get that—but just because we're in a minority position, you can't bully us, saying, "Let's go vote for a motion. What's the point of debating?" I cannot accept that. We were all elected by our constituents, and going forward, if we can keep that in mind when we debate, that would be very, very helpful, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I moved my previous amendment in good faith. My amendment to the motion was put in good faith, as an attempt to break the log-jam. If we're going to see the Liberals interfering with questions about how many days are seven days, to claim that they're being bullied over the fact that one of their own members brought forward an amendment to the motion, I think it's going to burn up a lot of goodwill.

I offered this motion and my amendment in goodwill. I would never have bothered if I had a sense that they were going to just filibuster and filibuster. Either we're going to get to this vote, or they're going to make it clear that they have no intention of working with us in trying to get this committee off the ground.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Ferguson, I have one other person on the speakers list—Madame Shanahan—but you wanted to make a point regarding your amendment, so I want to give you a moment.

Mr. Greg Ferguson: Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. I would simply say that I meant seven calendar days. I did not mean seven business days.

The Chair: Okay, then we have some clarity around that. Very good.

Madame Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Chair, I think we're ready to move to a vote. I'd like to call for the vote.

The Chair: I think that is correct. I don't see anyone dissenting, so I'll leave it to the clerk for a recorded vote.

This is on Mr. Ferguson's amendment, to be clear.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Clerk.

The amendment has passed. Now we will return to debate on the amended main motion.

Mr. Dong.

• (1220)

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate that.

My apology to Mr. Angus. I wasn't prepared to rebut my own member's amendment, and as I said, I was ready to support it. It was just that I listen to all members very carefully—

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I wish to receive clarification that Mr. Ferguson's amendment did pass.

The Chair: Mr. Ferguson's amendment did pass. We are now on the debate of the amended main motion.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: I was saying that if we can restore some respect during our debate, that would be very, very helpful. I have more to say, but I'll surrender the floor to others to share their opinion now. I won't hold the floor any longer, Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Since Madame Shanahan is next, it reminds me that I should give the speakers list as Shanahan, Sorbara and Warkentin.

Go ahead, Madame Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

I also thank those members of the committee who voted in favour of the previous amendment, which did go toward the principle that I think this committee upholds, which is operating with the good faith that, when we ask for the production of documents, not only the third parties but also our clerk and team are able to work not only in timely way but also for the safe and secure production of those documents.

Mr. Chair, you heard me earlier talking about my other major concern here with this motion now amended for the production of documents. Indeed, once they are received, they must be treated with the utmost care. Again, I think this goes to the core principles of this committee on access to information, on privacy, and on ethics that we in turn treat the private information of Canadians, regardless of their place in society, regardless of the context in which the documents were produced when they're received here, with the utmost care. To that end, I move the following amendment. Bear with me because I'm just pulling it together here.

Mr. Chair, would you like me to proceed?

The Chair: Yes, please do.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: In order to ensure the privacy and security of Canadians, I move to amend the motion on the floor with the following text after the words “reviewed in camera”:

- that the documents not be emailed to Members, staff or anyone else;
- that for the consideration of the documents during in-camera meetings, numbered, paper copies be provided to committee members by the clerk at the start of any meeting at which they will be considered, and
- that they be returned to the clerk at the end of the meeting;
- that no staff and no mobile or electronic devices be allowed for the duration of the in camera meeting;
- that the documents be held in the clerk’s office, and
- that outside of in-camera committee meetings, members may only view the documents in the clerk’s office and that no mobile or electronic devices may be in the room when the documents are being reviewed.

Mr. Chair, I think I can send that text to the clerk if that's helpful, but we would need to suspend for five minutes, because I can't be on too many screens at once. I'm not good with that.

• (1225)

The Chair: We have quite a number here, but I can understand why that would be a challenge, Madame Shanahan.

I will suspend for five minutes. Right now it's 12:26 in our parliamentary system, and we'll come back at 12:31.

• (1225)

(Pause)

• (1240)

The Chair: Colleagues, we're back in session now.

I will go to Mr. Sorbara to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome back, everyone.

I'm going to be very brief with my comments in support of the amendment.

My understanding is that this text that my friend and colleague MP Shanahan put forward was also in the amendment back in the summertime, and that's why we'd like to put it in there.

Respecting people's privacy is obviously of paramount concern to me, and the nature of these documents speak to that.

The amendment is pretty straightforward. I'm sure others will have some comments on it.

My understanding, again, is that it was agreed during the summertime in the prior motion when the committee voted on it and approved it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We'll now move over to Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that the amendment includes information from the former amendment. The challenge is that when this text was first presented, the committee was meeting in person and we've now moved to virtual meetings. The challenge is that it will reduce the availability of these documents to many members of the committee because of the requirement that members must go to the clerk's of-

fice or be in the same room to review these documents. I suspect this is another attempt by the Liberals to reduce the availability of these documents to committee members. The cover-up appears to continue.

I do believe that reducing the ability of members to see these documents is what in fact the Liberals are attempting to do yet again.

Therefore, I oppose this amendment.

• (1245)

The Chair: Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you.

I share Mr. Warkentin's concern about the fact that MPs on the committee who are not in Ottawa now have to put themselves at personal risk. Before I thought it was perfectly reasonable for us to have one of our legislative assistants be able to see the documents. I think aspersions made by the Liberals that these would be untrustworthy people are just not credible. However, I don't want to hold up our getting these documents any further. This was the original text that we agreed on. I do have a concern about some of my colleagues being forced to come to Ottawa to see those documents, but if it means our being able to get this thing voted on so we can actually get on with our work and have no more tactics from the governing party, then I would say I will vote in favour.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

We'll now move on to Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

I have read the amendment. The changes address almost all of my concerns. I still question whether or not we should have a parallel investigation by members alongside the investigation taking place right now by the Ethics Commissioner.

I still question that, but I see that the changes try to address some of the logistical, or maybe technical, differences among members of this committee. Limiting the access of these documents to members only in person shows that the committee has gone the extra mile to protect individuals' privacy and that these individuals are just like us, like public office holders and their immediate family members. As colleagues, this is sensible and reasonable to consider.

I also heard Mr. Sorbara point out that this amendment was previously brought forward and passed by the committee in the summer. We had a COVID situation back in the summer and still have it, so the circumstances in that context are pretty consistent and there is a reason we should include these measures to protect people's privacy.

I trust my staff. I discuss a lot of policy issues with my staff. I don't think the amendment has any indication that we question the loyalty or the professionalism of our staff, but it shows clearly that the committee is willing to go the extra mile to protect people's privacy. It makes a lot of sense.

I am a Toronto member. I am in Ottawa this week to do my House duty and I'll be joining some of you in the House of Commons. It's been a while. I look forward to it.

It will perhaps be a little burden on members of this committee, but in exchange each person has access to these documents while protecting people's privacy. It's the right thing to do, so I would not only voice my support for this amendment, but would also urge members to reach a consensus on the changes, or the improvement to the main motion made by putting them in this amendment. These changes definitely address one of my concerns—I listed two of them—so I am happy to see the progress that would be made by this amendment to the main motion.

• (1250)

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

Now, Madame Shanahan, Madame Vignola, and as soon as we get clarification, it will be Mr. Housefather.

Do you have that?

It is Madame Shanahan, Madame Vignola and Mr. Housefather.

Go ahead, Madame Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much, Chair, for giving me an opportunity to speak just a little bit to why I brought forward this amendment.

Yes, as my colleague mentioned, these measures were passed at our summer session. I was very pleased and heartened to see, although I don't think it was unanimous—someone can correct me if I am wrong—that generally there was agreement that these were important measures to be taken. I remind fellow committee members that we were in the same pandemic situation, with travel restrictions and so on, but we were all meeting in person, in Ottawa, for the committee meetings as they were being called. I think we certainly all understood how it was important to do so. We made ourselves available.

We now have a little bit more flexibility, but indeed, as my colleague mentioned, we are each travelling to Ottawa to fulfill our duties. I think in terms of safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of documents in the way that it has been done—certainly in the time that I've been here, and from the research I've done—those are accepted and well-articulated measures that our staff have been well able to organize, just as they have on so many other fronts, as we continue to operate during this pandemic.

I welcome the remarks of colleagues. I am hoping that we will, again, pass these measures as an amendment to the motion on the floor.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Shanahan.

Madame Vignola.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Thank you.

This motion was passed, but not unanimously, during the summer period when we were affected by the pandemic.

Traveling to the clerk's office in Ottawa to view documents can indeed be a challenge for many of us. I'm thinking particularly of

our colleagues whose ridings are in remote areas. Round trips can result in repetitive quarantines.

I don't want to propose an amendment, just something to think about. We trust each other. Could we consider numbered, registered mailings and a time limit for consultation? This could be an option.

However, what is important? We have to protect ourselves, but we also need to have quick access to the documents to be able to consult them. We could coordinate to consult them at a given time while respecting distancing measures, which would avoid putting people in danger. That's another option. We are responsible adults, and we can organize ourselves. The important thing is to have access to these documents while respecting everyone's privacy.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Vignola.

[*English*]

We now go on to Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to sit in again on the ethics committee.

I just want to say that I had argued at the previous meeting that I thought it was reasonable for the committee to see the documents related to the Prime Minister and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, and not Alexandre Trudeau and Margaret Trudeau, so I do appreciate the amendment by Mr. Angus. I do appreciate the care with which the committee has now treated the documents.

I don't want to prolong any discussion on this amendment, which I support, but I do also agree with what Madame Vignola and Mr. Angus had said with respect to it. I don't want to prolong debate by proposing further amendments, but maybe there are other ways. For example, I do believe that members are allowed to have substitutes, and I would assume that any member is allowed to have a substitute in Ottawa to go to search documents in the clerk's office. As lawyers, we used to do due diligences with very secret documents, and there was a way to have a viewing on a website, where we couldn't copy or take screenshots of the document, etc. Maybe at a future date the committee will figure that out with the clerk and provide more access to members from northern Manitoba or regions of Quebec, which are harder to get to Ottawa from.

I think that's possible, but in the meantime I support the motion and I don't want to prolong getting to a vote on it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues. We've exhausted our speakers list, so we'll move on to a vote on the amendment as presented by Madame Shanahan.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The amendment is carried.

Mr. Han Dong: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, seeing that it's two minutes to one o'clock, can you clarify for us whether we are going to adjourn today's meeting at one o'clock, or going past it?

The Chair: That's up to the committee. I'm here to serve the committee, Mr. Dong. I actually wanted to canvass the committee right now. We've now had, by my count and more accurately by that of the clerk, who is more observant than I am, three amendments to the motion. We would be debating the motion as amended now. I have two speakers on the list right now, so it's up to the committee if you'd like me to adjourn right now, at our scheduled time, or continue.

I see a desire for the committee to continue, so I'll move to the next speaker.

Mr. Warkentin.

• (1300)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: I think that now having amended this motion extensively, having addressed what the Liberals have said are their concerns about the motion, I think it would be prudent for us to proceed to a vote. Obviously, anything other than moving to a vote would just extend the time frames by which this committee would be delayed in receiving those documents. Having now given in to the Liberal's request for a seven-day extension, I would request that we move to a vote.

The Chair: Colleagues, I'm just taking a look at the screen—

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

I'm sorry, but there is no more interpretation. I understand what Mr. Warkentin said, but I would like to hear it in my mother tongue. I can't hear anything anymore.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I can hear the interpretation here.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: I turned on the French channel, in my language.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm not getting any translation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: I can hear the interpretation very well, so maybe my colleague is having a computer problem.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Vignola, go ahead and repeat what your concern was.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: The interpretation just came back on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Let me canvass the committee again. Do you want to move to a vote on the main motion as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It looks as if we have consensus. Madam Clerk, would you do the honours then, please, for a recorded vote.

(Motion as amended negatived: nays 5; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I move that we adjourn now, unless there's some other wish. It's 1:03 p.m.

Seeing none, we are adjourned.

• (1305)

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>