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Chair: Mr. David Sweet



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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC)): Good morning, colleagues.

We have three members present with me here: Mr. Sorbara, Mr. Kurek and Madame Gaudreau. I'm going to be dancing with regard to the speakers list, because there will be some who come up on my screen, and some I will recognize here, so please bear with me in that regard.

Right now, I have two people on the speakers list: Mr. Angus and Mrs. Shanahan.

Mr. Angus, please proceed.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): We are now at about the 40-hour mark of the Liberal obstruction of this committee. That represents 20 ethics committee meetings that could have been held, 20 meetings where we could have gathered witnesses. We could have prepared reports, and we could have been on to many other studies.

What we're witnessing here is unprecedented.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I can see the interpreters, but I can't hear them, unfortunately. Can we start again?

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Angus. We weren't having translation.

Please begin again.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Is it working?

The Chair: Yes, please proceed.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We are now at about the 40-hour mark of the Liberal obstruction of the ethics committee. Forty hours of obstruction represents an unprecedented interference in democratic accountability. Forty hours translated would have been 20 meetings—20 meetings to gather witness testimony, to prepare reports, to move on to other issues—and yet the Liberals have decided to shut down the work of this committee.

Now, some people might not think the ethics committee is a committee that people pay much attention to. Certainly, we've had Liberals come in and say that nobody cares what happens here. But one of the fundamental features of the ethics committee is that it's

one of the “check and balance” committees. That's why it has always had an opposition chair. Contrary to the misinformation by Liberals that this committee exists to help the Ethics Commissioner, that this committee is there just to review laws and make sure everything is good and easy and straightforward for the government, this is actually a check and balance committee. That is why oppositions always chair it.

The decision by the Prime Minister's Office to shut down this committee is telling. I say this because the stories for why the Liberals are obstructing our committee continually change, but last week it became crystal clear. Once we got past their arguments about boxer shorts and underwear and PPE and gloves and everything else, they were very clear. They said that an investigation into the conflict of interest dealings on this pandemic was a direct attack on great Canadians, great Canadian charities and great businesses.

This morning I'm going to look into one of those great businesses that they're protecting—Palantir. Palantir Canada's mission statement says, “We're bringing cutting-edge Silicon Valley technology to the most important government...institutions in Canada.” How did they set out to make those connections with government? Well, they hired as their president one of the top Liberal insiders in Mr. David MacNaughton, who is as close to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as you can get, much closer than the Kielburger brothers. He co-chaired Justin Trudeau's election campaign. As Liberals always do, they give great benefits to their buddies. Mr. MacNaughton was given pretty much an unprecedented gift in being made ambassador to the United States, which I think we'd agree is our most important trading partner. Mr. MacNaughton came back from his work representing us and began to open doors into the inner workings of the Liberal government for the company Palantir. There were meetings with Chrystia Freeland, meetings with Navdeep Bains and meetings right into the Prime Minister's Office with the Prime Minister's close confidant Rick Theis.

So what is Palantir? I think this is something that Canadians really need to know. They need to know who it is the Liberals are allowing in the back door. Peter Thiel founded this company. He is a very, I think, disturbing public figure. On April 13, 2009, he wrote a statement where he said, “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible”. Peter Thiel is an extreme libertarian billionaire who has made it clear that he does not believe in democracy. This is one of the great companies that the Liberals want to protect.

Now, the BBC has described Palantir as “the 'scariest' of America's tech giants”. Why is that? Well, we'll get into that, but I'd like to talk also about Mr. Thiel and his connections to the extreme, and the extremist, right in the United States.

I would refer you to a June 2018 article in *The Public*, which says the following:

Peter Thiel, a Stanford grad and Silicon Valley billionaire.... Notable for his far right-wing, libertarian views, Thiel first came to national attention when he gave a prime-time speech at the 2016 Republican convention supporting Donald Trump, virtually the only Silicon Valley entrepreneur to back Trump.

• (1110)

Now, PayPal made Thiel a multi-millionaire. His early investments in Facebook in 2004 made him a billionaire. He has invested in companies like LinkedIn, Lyft, Spotify, Reddit, Airbnb and SpaceX, but it's his work in establishing Palantir with the CIA, in targeting insurgents in Iraq, that created this technology that is now being used in the United States on its own citizens.

One of Palantir's co-founders is Joe Lonsdale. I think my co-leagues in the Liberals will be interested in him too, because this is another one of the great people they feel I am somehow attacking by asking for an investigation into how this company managed to get right into the Deputy Prime Minister's office.

Lonsdale was a protege of Thiel. He was banned from campus at Stanford in 2014. This is according to *The Public* in June 2018. I'm giving a direct quote, because I don't know the facts of the case myself: “He was...banned from campus in 2014, after he was accused of rape and Stanford concluded that he had 'engaged in sexual misconduct and harassment.’”

In October 2016, a week after Trump's famous *Hollywood Access* tape was released, in which he bragged about grabbing women's private parts, Thiel contributed \$1.25 million to the campaign of Trump. At the same time—again, this is from *The Public* in June 2018—Thiel apologized for saying things in his book, *The Diversity Myth*, such as that alleged date rapes were “seductions that are later regretted”. For a government that ties itself to being the feminist Prime Minister and the feminist government, such a comment I think is really, really concerning.

What's interesting is that Mr. Thiel made a public statement where he apologized for making these comments about date rape. He said, “More than two decades ago, I co-wrote a book with several insensitive, crudely argued statements.... As I've said before, I wish I'd never written those things. I'm sorry for it. Rape in all forms is a crime. I regret writing passages that have been taken to suggest otherwise.” I'm very pleased that Mr. Thiel said it. People do grow up and change their views. However, the article in *The Public* states that three months later, at a 30-year anniversary for the *Stanford Review*, Thiel said to one former editor that “his apology was just for the media” and that “sometimes you have to tell them what they want to hear.”

So Donald Trump gets elected, and Peter Thiel and his so-called buddy network are huge in the transition: “It was said that he was 'deeply involved in the transition's internal workings,' and that his 'fingerprints are all over the administration.’” As well, many of his “San Francisco employees started calling him 'the shadow president.’”

This is the company the Liberals have blocked our work from shining any light into.

I'll refer you to a September 11, 2020, BuzzFeed article, “Peter Thiel Met With The Racist Fringe As He Went All In For Trump”. That article talks about how he held a dinner for influential, vocal, extremist white nationalists in the United States. I find that very concerning.

What does this have to do with Canada? Well, Palantir's specialty is the data mining that they established working for the CIA. In fact, the CIA was one of their first investors:

...through its venture capital arm, In-Q-Tel (yes, the CIA has a venture capital arm). It was Palantir's only customer for years as the company refined and improved its technology.... By 2010, Palantir's customers were mostly government agencies, though there were some private companies in the mix. By 2015, Palantir was valued at \$20 billion.

The Intercept's Sam Biddle, who has covered Palantir for years, said, “I think it's worth keeping in mind that Palantir sees itself not alongside Uber, Twitter, and Netflix, but alongside Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and Booz Allen.” As well, he said, “Palantir wants to be a defense contractor”.

Now, what we've been told, in the accusations against Palantir's specialty, is that they are a “monstrous government snoop”. This is from a Vox.com article:

• (1115)

Palantir's work, the government agencies that contract it, and the relative lack of details about the company's inner workings mean it's often seen as [a] secretive, all-knowing, and even malevolent [organization].... Bloomberg...ran [a really interesting article on them called] “Palantir Knows Everything About You.” In a book with the phrase “destroying democracy” in the title, Robert Scheer called Palantir a “monstrous government snoop, mining our most intimate data.” The company's software has been criticized for its dragnet ways, pulling in records about millions of innocent people so it can catch a few possible criminals.

“Palantir's data-mining software is used to analyze vast amounts of personal data held by the federal government to make determinations that affect people's lives with little to no oversight,” said Jeramie D. Scott, senior counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center...which successfully sued Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to get records on its work with Palantir.

I would think that Deputy Prime Minister Freeland, given her intense knowledge of the international market, would know exactly who she was dealing with when she invited Palantir into her office. She would know that there are major human rights violations that have been levied against Palantir, yet the Liberals on this committee do not want us to make those connections to Deputy Prime Minister Freeland and this company, Palantir.

I would ask them—I would beg them—to stop talking about underwear at our committee and actually read the 2020 Amnesty International report on Palantir.

Amnesty wrote a damning article about Palantir's technology, technology that was created during the war on terror—that was created in Iraq and in the battlefields of Afghanistan—to target citizens and people in the United States. Whom did they target? Well, through the police, they targeted racialized communities and they targeted immigrant families.

Michael Kleinman, the Director of Amnesty International's Silicon Valley Initiative said:

"Palantir touts its ethical commitments, saying it will never work with regimes that abuse human rights abroad. This is deeply ironic, given the company's willingness stateside to work directly with ICE, which has used its technology to execute harmful policies that target migrants and asylum-seekers."

"We could close our eyes and pretend that contrary to all the evidence, Palantir is a rights-respecting company or we can call this façade what it is: another company placing profit over people, no matter the human cost."

On September 10—

This is not very long ago. I urge my Liberal colleagues, while they're filibustering, to actually Google some of this stuff, so we can maybe talk about this instead of all the prevarications they are making at our committee.

—Amnesty International sent a letter to Palantir raising concerns about its contracts with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for products and services for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In its response, Palantir emphasized that its contracts are only with the criminal investigative division of ICE, called Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and as such its software "does not facilitate" civil immigration enforcement by ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) unit. However, this claim [according to Amnesty International] is [absolutely] inconsistent with other evidence indicating that Palantir's technology has indeed been used in this context, including U.S. government records which the company now disputes.

It continues:

In 2017, ICE relied on Palantir technology to arrest parents and caregivers of unaccompanied children, leading to detentions and harming children's welfare. Similarly, ICE has used Palantir technology to plan mass raids, as with raids that ICE carried out in Mississippi in August 2019, which led to the separation of children from their parents and caregivers, causing irreparable harm to families and communities. These raids in turn led to cases of prolonged detention and deportations.

I'm sure my Liberal colleagues have seen the horrific photos of children being held in cages in these ICE detention centres. It is a human rights abuse of striking and terrible magnitude. The fact that Palantir is one of the companies that have been used to identify and break up these families is, I find, very concerning.

• (1120)

I find equally concerning that David MacNaughton—who Francesco Sorbara said is a great Canadian and was shocked that we would even mention his name at this committee—went and worked his way through all the senior levels of the Liberal government to promote Palantir and nobody raised questions. In fact, Mr. MacNaughton, as far as I know, did not meet with Deputy Prime Minister Freeland once; he met with her three times. She would have easily had time to check out who she was meeting with.

On March 2, 2020, he met with Rick Theis, the director of policy and cabinet affairs, right in the Prime Minister's office. Palantir was invited right into the Prime Minister's office.

On March 5, he met with the Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. On

March 6, he met with Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister. On March 12, he met with Hon. Chrystia Freeland.

Is this how the Liberals do business? All you have to do is hire a Liberal insider and you can take any company that has the most terrific human rights abuses and they will walk right in and be treated with total respect—and members of this committee will attack a member of Parliament for daring to raise questions about these great companies and the great Canadians involved with them.

On March 22, 2020, the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, arranged a meeting between individuals from Palantir and Public Services and Procurement Canada in connection with Palantir's offer of work.

On March 27, 2020, there was a meeting with Ryan Dunn, chief of staff to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry: "Explained what Palantir was doing in other jurisdictions". David MacNaughton was showing all the work Palantir was doing in other countries.

On March 29, 2020, Leslie Church, chief of staff to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, was meeting with David MacNaughton. Leslie Church is the classic Liberal who went from the Liberals to work for Google and then was embedded into the Department of Heritage, which was supposed to oversee Google. Needless to say, nobody has ever really done anything to hold Google to account. Leslie Church, I believe, is now in with Chrystia Freeland.

On March 29, Leslie Church met with David MacNaughton. On the next day, March 30, Leslie Church met with David MacNaughton. I want to point out that David MacNaughton could have pretty much written the book on lobbying. He knows the lobbying industry. He probably knows the lobbying industry as well as the Kielburger brothers seem to. Like the Kielburgers, he never bothered to register to lobby—but again, he's a Liberal. He's a good friend. Who cares if the laws are being ignored here? He's representing this really great company called Palantir.

On April 1, 2020, it is Jody Thomas, the deputy minister of the Department of National Defence. He reaches out to her "to see what Palantir could do to help". On April 5, 2020, there is more correspondence with Jody Thomas, deputy minister of the Department of National Defence. On May 1.... My God, David MacNaughton is a busy boy. I don't know what Palantir pays him, but he sure is giving them their money's worth.

On March 31, 2020, Bill Matthews, deputy minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada has a meeting with Palantir. On April 3, 2020, Bill Matthews, deputy minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada.... I tell you, Palantir has the all-access pass to the Liberal government. All you have to do is buy somebody, put them to work for you—somebody who is really close to Justin Trudeau—and Bob's your uncle. On April 9, 2020, Bill Matthews, deputy minister of Public Services and Procurement Canada, has more meetings to talk about the software that's available.

It is amazing. This is how they figured they were going to get around it. Palantir, this company known as the scariest company on earth, was going to give the Liberals their massive data machine pro bono. They were going to help. They just wanted to help Canada. They were going to give it to them pro bono and they figured that was how they were going to evade the Lobbying Act.

• (1125)

April 3, 2020, Simon Kennedy, Deputy Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, is meeting to discuss the Palantir software. This is the software that can track people. This is the software that has been accused of being involved in extrajudicial killings in the Middle East, a massive Palantir software that has taken children from their families and put them in cages.

Then, guess what happens? It all comes crashing down because I wrote to the Ethics Commissioner and I asked the Ethics Commissioner, how is it possible that a former public office holder such as David MacNaughton could ignore his legal obligations to register to lobby, and why is he meeting with Chrystia Freeland?

We actually didn't know who he had met with at that point; we just knew that he had met with Navdeep Bains. However, then we see this massive pattern. Therefore, the Ethics Commissioner has written an unprecedented report where he barred.... Chrystia Freeland is not allowed to talk to David MacNaughton for a year. Rick Theis is not allowed to talk to him for a year.

Oh, and I forgot this: On March 14 and March 30, General Jonathan Vance, chief of the defence staff of the Canadian Armed Forces, has been barred from talking to David MacNaughton, after having these meetings about getting Palantir's help—on a pro bono basis, mind you, but getting Palantir's help—when none of this was registered under the Lobbying Act.

Now, my Liberal friends are going to tell us that these are great Canadians, these are great companies and I'm just being scurrilous; just back off and let the Liberals continue to filibuster. What really shocks me is the so-called Liberal values here. You can take what might be one of the scariest companies on the planet, put a Liberal in front of it and the Liberals will open the doors.

There has been no effort to maintain the law of the land in terms of the Lobbying Act and any questioning about why we would turn over sensitive data of Canadians to a company such as Palantir.

In the U.K., at the same time, the Boris Johnson government gave Palantir the same type of deal that the Liberal government was looking at getting them until we managed to expose this. There was a huge backlash in the U.K. They were saying, why in God's name would we give sensitive medical information to Palantir?

Is it possible that Palantir would do anything nefarious with this? According to the Liberals, certainly not. These are good companies that are being needlessly attacked by the NDP.

I would refer you to the article in Bloomberg, April 19, 2018: "Peter Thiel's data-mining company is using war on terror tools to track American citizens. The scary thing? Palantir is desperate for new customers."

Yes, they're desperate. They were going to do anything. They were even going to give their technology for free to the Liberals so that they could embed themselves in Canada.

I want to read to you from this, because it shows you how insidious this technology is. This is from Bloomberg, April 19, 2018.

High above the Hudson River in downtown Jersey City, a former U.S. Secret Service agent named Peter Cavicchia III ran special ops for JPMorgan Chase & Co. His insider...group—most large financial institutions have one—used computer algorithms to monitor the bank's employees, ostensibly to protect against perfidious traders and other miscreants.

Aided by as many as 120 "forward-deployed engineers" from the data mining [giant] Palantir Technologies Inc., which JPMorgan engaged in 2009, Cavicchia's group vacuumed up emails and browser histories, GPS locations from company-issued smartphones, printer and download activity, and transcripts of digitally recorded phone conversations. Palantir's software aggregated, searched, sorted, and analyzed these records, surfacing keywords and patterns of behavior that Cavicchia's team had flagged for potential abuse of corporate assets. Palantir's algorithm, for example, alerted the insider threat team when an employee started badging into work later than usual, a sign of potential disgruntlement. That would trigger further scrutiny and possibly physical surveillance after hours by bank security personnel.

• (1130)

Over time...Cavicchia himself went rogue. Former JPMorgan colleagues describe the environment as Wall Street meets *Apocalypse Now*, with Cavicchia as Colonel Kurtz, ensconced upriver in his office suite eight floors above the rest of the bank's security team. People in the department were shocked that no one from the bank or Palantir set any real limits....

It all ended when the bank's senior executives learned that they, too, were being watched and what began as a promising marriage...of big data and global finance descended into a spying scandal. The misadventure, which has never been reported, also marked an ominous turn for Palantir, one of the most richly valued startups in Silicon Valley. An intelligence platform designed for the global War on Terror was weaponized against ordinary Americans at home.

I read that and just shudder to think that my Liberal colleagues are obstructing our efforts to get answers from David MacNaughton and Palantir. I shudder to think that this company developed an intelligence platform for the global war on terror that could be used and weaponized against ordinary citizens in North America. Yet they had this insider access, and we would never have found out, if I hadn't contacted the Ethics Commissioner.

Another really telling story is this. The role that Palantir...was used to attack progressive groups and unions. On February 10, 2011, in a ThinkProgress article called "US Chamber's Lobbyists Solicited Hackers to Sabotage Unions, Smear Chamber's Political Opponents", we find that Palantir was hired as part of a disinformation campaign to attack progressive opponents in the United States.

The proposal called for first creating a “false document, perhaps highlighting periodical financial information,” to give to a progressive group opposing the Chamber [of Commerce], and then to subsequently expose the document as a fake to undermine the credibility of the Chamber’s opponents. In addition, the group proposed creating a “fake insider persona” to “generate communications” with Change to Win.

And from WikiLeaks:

Feed the fuel between the feuding groups. Disinformation. Create messages around actions to sabotage or discredit the opposing organization. Submit fake documents and then call out the error.

Create concern over the security of the infrastructure. Create exposure stories. If the process is believed to not be secure they are done.

Cyber attacks against the infrastructure to get data on document submitters...[to] kill the project. Since the servers are now in Sweden and France putting a team together to get access is more straightforward.

Media campaign to push the radical and reckless nature of [groups like] wikileaks...[and use] [s]ustained pressure.

Now, this is really concerning. We have actually dealt with this idea of using disinformation tactics. I raised it last week, concerning why the Keilburgers had hired the group Firehouse Strategies, the liberal attack group that does disinformation campaigns, and why they're tied in to Israeli disinformation.

I know that seems to be just a passing connection, but Ms. Latanzio accused me of attacking a great Canadian charity for raising questions about why so much money that's supposed to be helping children was used to attack and discredit potential political threats or journalists.

That Palantir is being used, with their massive data machine, to create organized disinformation to undermine WikiLeaks, undermine progressive groups, undermine labour unions, is deeply concerning.

Of course Palantir has denied their involvement in the Chamber of Commerce campaign, and of course Palantir has said that whoever was involved has been fired, but it shows the enormous power of a data giant that is up there with Google in terms of the amount of information it has on individual citizens.

• (1135)

This is a company that came into Canada to set up contracts with the Canadian government, that hired a close friend of Justin Trudeau because of his contacts. The Liberals let this company into all the top areas of decision-making, very much like how the Kielburgers were able to walk in, and \$912 million later they were walking out, Bob's your uncle, everything was great. That was, of course, until we started to say, “Hey, how did this deal go down?”

What I think is really concerning, though, even more so than that these things happened, is that we are now dealing with a deliberate obstruction campaign by my Liberal colleagues to stop this committee from doing its job, to stop getting answers for the Canadian people, to be forced into a situation where we have to pretend that these things never happened because the ethics committee has been made functionally inoperable by the Prime Minister's Office.

I urge my colleagues to stop the obstruction and allow us to finish this report so that we can get the real information on how David MacNaughton was able to work his way inside the corridors of

power, promoting a company that is to me as frightening, undemocratic and un-Canadian as Palantir.

Thank you.

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

I have two people on the speakers list right now: Madame Shanahan and Mr. Ferguson.

Madame Shanahan, go ahead.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair, and I thank my honourable colleague for his remarks. They're always interesting.

I want to make an intervention because, as colleagues may have noted, I was on the speakers list on Friday, and I'm sorry, but I had to leave. Members will know that sometimes we are unavoidably obliged to be elsewhere.

I would like to take a moment now to talk about where we are and where we thought we would be able to get to. I ask colleagues to indulge me just a little bit. Again, I'm sorry that I missed the proceedings Friday afternoon. I did try to look at the blues, and I thank the clerk. I had technical trouble accessing them, so I was not able to go through them at length.

It seems to me that the work was continuing, the work that we have been trying to do in the last little while to get to a place where there can be a path forward on the motion that is before us, and with good reason, because, as members know, we do have other business that we need to get to.

Just offhand, members of this committee and other committees are right now having to look at the main estimates, or are deciding how much they will look at them. Those reports have been put forward and are generally allocated to committees, and indeed the supplementary estimates are as well. This is usually a good time for any committee, particularly ours, to look at one of the main functions of an MP, and that is the accountability function and the ability to recommend and to vote as members on behalf of our constituents on spending estimates. I believe there's a due date for that, and I know that it's something that the committee would like to entertain.

I think we've had a number of notices of motions as well, some of them very interesting, in that they bring up many of the challenges that we're having now in dealing with the pandemic. Chair, who would have thought even as little as five years ago, and certainly not 10 or 15 years ago, that the issues of privacy, the issues of access to information and the issues around how citizens are identified by public and private sector entities would become such compelling issues in this day and age, particularly in regard to dealing with a pandemic? I think that a number of colleagues here have already either brought forward notices of motion that would deal with those issues or may be contemplating them, because it is a constantly evolving field that I, for one, am learning a lot about.

• (1140)

When we return to the motion here on hand, one of the last interventions that I made to this committee had to do with looking for that path forward. Indeed, when Mr. Angus first presented the motion and Mr. Fergus was able to bring forward an amendment that just sharpened the focus on that motion, I thought we were in a very good place and that we would be dealing with exactly the issues that Mr. Angus brought up earlier. We would already be in those meetings.

However, then we had the amendment that was brought forward. I have to say that I, for one, still had trouble with the scope, with the timeline, on that amendment that was reintroduced and ultimately passed here. I understand that on Friday there was considerable discussion and that new amendments were proposed that would take into account the problem—which actually came to light, I think, in the last 10 days or so—regarding Speakers' Spotlight. You yourself had mentioned, Chair, that there were constraints around the production of the documents that were outside their control, if you will, constraints that had to do with the legal and regulatory framework around how documents are dealt with. I think that was the spirit of one amendment that was brought forward by my colleague Mr. Fergus around addressing the documents that Speakers' Spotlight would have in their possession going back to 2013, and any other relevant documents, as referenced in their public letter shared on November 10, 2020.

I think members here know the letter that I am referring to. I believe it was made public on Twitter. It had to do with, and I can quote here, “We let Ms. Burke know”—this is from the third or fourth paragraph—“that because all of the speaking engagements took place more than 7 years ago, we did not have hard copies of the files, as these had been purged in the normal course of business. We also let Ms. Burke know that we do have some digital copies of documents that we would produce, along with records of all the speaking engagements dating back to 2008 that were legally required by the Order.”

I understand from the blues that the amendment was voted down and that there was an additional amendment that was recommended by my colleague, Francesco Sorbara, which was more in line.... I guess I don't have to read it out, but just for the sake of clarity, Mr. Sorbara moved that:

we add after section B, section c) that in order to comply with Canadian and Provincial privacy laws, that any request for documents be limited to those documents in the organization's possession, as well as other relevant documents they may have.

I think that too was voted down, but I think that amendment too was in the spirit of complying with the request while working with the constraints, the limitations, that any business would have in the course of complying with the multitude of legislation and the requirements and good practice that any business must work with.

• (1145)

Chair, I just want to leave that there.

I think that we want to get to that good place. In the spirit of doing so, I appreciate the numerous hours that we have spent debating this, but it was not for naught, in that we did make some good

progress and some changes. I think that all colleagues here can appreciate that we're always doing this balancing act.

Contrary to what my colleague Mr. Angus said toward the top of his remarks today, it's not that we're here to help the Commissioner of Ethics and Conflict of Interest to do his job; we're here to make sure that the tools that are available, the framework that anyone holding that office must work with, are in fact more than just adequate and are commensurate with doing the job at hand.

Chair, I'm going to leave that there. I again regret my sudden departure on Friday. I felt like that's the way we do things here in committee, but I'm glad that I've had the opportunity today to speak to what I wanted to share last Friday.

Thank you so much.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Shanahan.

I have two people on the speaker's list now, Mr. Fergus and Mr. Kurek.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I thank all members. I will endeavour to be brief today. Mr. Chair, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak.

Last month, on October 21, the House defeated a motion that in our view included a clause, (E)(xx)(B), that is substantially the same as the amendment of Madame Gaudreau, which is now part of the motion before us.

Mr. Chair, the following week, on October 26, this committee negated, in our view, a substantially similar motion as the amendment of Madame Gaudreau, which is now part of the motion before us.

Another week later, for the third time, it was again negated by this committee, due in part to an acknowledgement by the NDP member that it is against the rules to allow a redo on the same motion

There were three decisions—one by the full House, two by this committee, but all three the same—that this motion should not go forward.

Upon reflection, the second decision should never have had to take place in the first place, something I will get to in a moment. However, it does help to further our objection to this issue now coming before the committee for a second time, and before parliamentarians an unprecedented third time.

When section (c) of this motion was proposed by Madame Gaudreau, Liberal members challenged the decision of the chair, as is our right and privilege to do. We did so not out of malice to Madame Gaudreau nor any skepticism of your ability, nor any skepticism of your authority, Mr. Chair. Rather, we did so based on our reading and understanding of the procedure, rules and precedents that guide our work, both in our committee and in the House.

At issue is a fundamental aspect of parliamentary procedure, what Speaker Milliken called, on November 7, 2006, "...a key principle...namely, that a decision once made cannot be questioned again, but must stand as the judgment of the House."

The green book, which we would all do well to pick up and read more often than, I am sure, most of us do, says in chapter 12, and I quote again, "...if a bill or a motion is rejected, it cannot be revived in the same session, although there is no bar to a motion similar in intent to one already negated but with sufficient variance to constitute a new question."

It goes on, "This is to prevent the time of the House being used in the discussion of motions of the same nature with the possibility of contradictory decisions being arrived at in the course of the same session."

In a footnote to this passage, footnote 375, it continues. Referencing Bourinot's fourth edition of *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice*, I quote, "a motion that has been negated cannot be proposed later as an amendment to a question". This seems to me to be precisely what has happened in this instance, in direct contradiction of parliamentary rules, procedure and past precedent.

Let me now repeat a previous quote that I just read. It is that "this is to prevent the time of the House being used in the discussion of motions of the same nature with the possibility of contradictory decisions being arrived at in the course of the same session." Mr. Chair, we are now faced with exactly the predicament that the rules were set out for us to avoid: the possibility of contradictory decisions being arrived at in the course of the same session.

It isn't necessary for me to go through in great detail how we got to this point, skirting decades and decades of rulings and precedents. Our rules are quite clear: A decision once made cannot be questioned again, but must stand as the judgment of the House.

• (1155)

I understand—actually, rather, I can't say that I or my colleagues on this side fully understand the opposition's obsession over litigating this again, and we continue to disagree with the attempt to do indirectly what they failed to do directly—that is, by inserting as an amendment something from a twice-defeated motion into what was previously, in our view, a reasonable motion. It is unfortunate that with all the issues facing our country and the world—not just the pandemic, but many other issues of rights and privacy, among others—members opposite would rather pursue this fishing expedition.

While they have accused this side of obstruction, our goal all along has been to stand up for the rules and privileges of Parliament and parliamentarians. Mr. Chair, before you assumed the chair, I spoke at length about this in our meetings over the summer. Unfortunately for the opposition, it appears that partisanship, pettiness, personal agendas and the Conservatives' decade-long obsession with the Trudeau family now take precedence over rules and procedure.

If this motion ends up passing, as the opposition holds majority at the committee, its validity will be immediately questioned and there will be serious questions about the ability to enforce it.

Mr. Chair, this is very important. Let me repeat. If this motion ends up passing, as the opposition holds the majority at this committee, its validity will be immediately questioned and there will be serious questions about its ability to be enforced.

Mr. Chair, we remain opposed to this motion in its current form, containing paragraph (c). It has already been decided upon three times, already twice more than should have been allowed. We leave it to the opposition if they would like to ignore the rules yet again.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. Charlie Angus: On a point of order, Chair, before we go ahead, I'm not contradicting anything my colleague said, but I think he's laid out a statement that is very concerning, and I'd like you to clarify it.

You did make the decision to allow the motion to go forward as it is. The Liberals seem to be hinting that this would be an invalid vote if the committee took it and that it would be open to challenge. I don't know if they mean a legal challenge. Could you look into this to tell us whether, if a committee with a democratically elected majority votes—and I'm always of the understanding that the committee is master of its own house—that this vote can be threatened or undermined if the Liberals decide to take this to another level?

The Chair: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Angus.

Look, when I ruled on this, I made myself very clear as to what the premise was. In fact, Mr. Fergus just now actually mentioned the exception that we had to deal with, which was that although there were similarities to the previous motion, because it was framed as an entirely different motion, there was a significant enough variance that I ruled it in order. My ruling was challenged, and it was sustained, so I think we'll just proceed in that fashion and if there's any mechanism that a member here wants to pursue in order to assure that their point of view is heard, they can certainly do that.

Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I certainly have found the discussions here today further enlightening.

I do have a few comments to make. However, in the comments that Mr. Fergus made, I think he was calling for a vote. He said, time and time again, not to do indirectly what you wouldn't do directly. Well, I think he was referring to it being time to move on to a vote.

He laid out the position of the government, and that's fair. That's entirely fair. If the Liberals want to oppose this motion, that's fine. However, I know that I and other members of the opposition have opinions on the matter. and if there was a willingness, I would move that things go to a vote. Pending the outcome of the vote, I might have a few more things to say, but I would ask if the chair would indulge that question.

• (1200)

The Chair: Okay, I'll check and see. I have two members who aren't visually on screen right now, but I'll see if there's some consensus among those people who are currently in the room and on screen to move to a vote.

I don't see any objection.

Mr. Warkentin, are you online or are you having trouble with your Internet? Do we know if he's actually still connected?

Okay. All right, colleagues, it looks as though there's consensus, so we'll move to a vote.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): We're voting on the motion of Mr. Angus as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll now move on to the details of the study. We still have some time in this meeting, so we might as well use it in order to talk about where we'll go in regard to witnesses.

I'll just refresh the screen here that's in front of me, unless that is refreshed already. Is that a new speaker's list in front of me? Okay.

Mr. Warkentin, do you have your hand up?

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): I do.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead—

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: From the list I can see in front of me, at the time I raised my hand, Mr. Fergus was the only one with his hand up, and I think he has spoken to that opportunity. I believe, at least from what I'm seeing on the screen here, that I was the first one to raise a hand. I just want you to double-check with the clerk as to whether that was the case.

The Chair: I certainly don't want to put the clerk in a tough spot. We had a problem with the hands being up from the previous speakers' list and people were putting their hands up at a time we were actually trying to refresh the list. In fact, you don't see Mr. Warkentin's hand because his came up as we were refreshing the list and then was taken off. I saw his come up after it was all refreshed, and now I have a new list, so I—

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pretty sure I put my hand up right after the vote. I don't know at what point the list was refreshed, and I just have a feeling that.... I clearly raised my hand to speak. It was not on the previous motion. It was something new.

• (1205)

The Chair: I will recognize you second, Mr. Dong. I'll go with Mr. Warkentin, and then it will be Mr. Dong, Madam Shanahan, Mr. Angus and Mr. Fergus.

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: My name was on the list, and then it went off, and then I had to put it back on. I'm going to accept the list, but I just think Mr. Dong's trying to jump the queue.

The Chair: I agree that it was messy. I saw it flickering a couple of times. We are trying to do the best that we can here, colleagues, and I apologize. I cannot even guarantee that I have total accuracy. The only thing I can do is actually refresh everything, and then everybody would just have to race to the keyboard.

If you keep your comments brief, we can be as fair as possible, and we'll go through the list. My apologies; there was no attempt to short anybody. I'm just trying to deal with the technology that we have in front of us, colleagues.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I feel that I must speak up on this because you have shown flexibility in accepting blue hands raised prior to gavelling in, for example. Given that we now have people in person and are using the hybrid system, I appreciate your flexibility and I count on your fairness in that regard. However, I have to agree with my colleague Mr. Dong, and I saw Mr. Angus's hand go up as well. I think, frankly, that Mr. Warkentin wasn't even on screen, so I think we would appreciate your fairness and flexibility in dealing with the speaking list. Could you name it now again?

The Chair: Sure I could. It's Mr. Warkentin, Mr. Dong, Madam Shanahan, Mr. Angus and Mr. Fergus.

Go ahead, Mr. Warkentin.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you, Chair. I won't be long here.

I think that it's important for us to quickly proceed to a work plan for the motion we just passed. Obviously documents will come to us and we'll have the opportunity to see those documents, as was prescribed in the motion, but there are significant other elements that I think we need to proceed with in the interim.

There is the will of the committee to complete the WE study. There was significant work on that before prorogation, before the Prime Minister shut down Parliament and the investigation into this matter. Of course, we would like to expeditiously move on that. While the Liberal members may not want that, I think it's important for that to be resolved.

In conjunction with the documents coming forward, I guess I would seek the chair's direction in terms of submitting additional witnesses for the completion of the WE study. Then, as prescribed in Mr. Angus's motion, I think we could probably weave in other witnesses as they become available for some of the other elements as well.

I'd be very interested in other committee members' perspectives on how we should submit witnesses and what that all looks like, but I think it would be important for us to move expeditiously to complete the WE study. We will be submitting at least initial witnesses within a day, if that would be helpful to the chair and other committee members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Warkentin.

Now we will move on to Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

We have the long debate on the previous motion behind this. I would like to move on to something that I think is of importance. I think a lot of Canadians are wondering about it, and we must address their concern.

I talked about previously doing a bit of research and finding out that there were 14 opposition motions being considered and voted on. None of those motions were from the Liberal side. I'm going to give another try to moving a motion.

• (1210)

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

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Angus, on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I know Mr. Dong continually wants to do his own projects, but we just voted on a motion and now we're talking about the business of that motion. We have a responsibility to pick our witnesses and talk about the scope of it. Mr. Dong can wait until we bring motions in committee business. That's how our committee works. It is completely inappropriate for him to once again try to hijack our work to do his own project.

I have motions that are waiting. Those motions will wait until we get to committee business. The work we're doing right now, as you instructed, is to get the parameters of this plan in place.

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Chair, it is committee business time here.

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

I believe notice of this motion has been given to the committee. I move:

That the Committee study ways to further protect Canada's democratic and electoral institutions from cyber and non-cyber interference. This includes studying how new domestic and international stakeholders, as well as other orders of government, can work together to strengthen Canada's whole-of-society preparedness, resilience and civic engagement in the face of evolving threats to democracy.

The reason I want to move this motion is that we all believe that free and fair elections are the backbone of our country. Advancements in technology, especially online technology and technology to collect information and build a database, pose a serious concern and threat. I heard Mr. Angus speak about this early on today. I believe there are a lot of concerns and risks to Canadians' personal information. We've seen how in political campaigns, there is micro-targeting of online advertising based on big data, but who's securing this data?

We've seen investigations out of B.C. into AggregateIQ. There was an article about it. Just to refresh the memory of members of this committee, the investigation was into how AggregateIQ failed

to meet its obligation under Canadian privacy laws when it used and disclosed the personal information of millions of voters in British Columbia, the United States and the United Kingdom. It was conducted by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia.

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

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, there are two things.

One, I'm very shocked that Mr. Dong has just heard of AggregateIQ. The previous ethics committee did an entire report on it, so that work's already done. However, it was done within a very clear context of personal information. Mr. Dong's motion does not belong at our committee. When Minister Gould brought issues of electoral protection, she did not send that to the ethics committee; she sent it, I believe, probably to PROC. Electoral issues have nothing to do with our committee.

I know Mr. Dong is attempting to derail the WE study, but I would say that before we can even rule on his motion, he has to rewrite his motion so that it actually meets the parameters of our committee, because the motion as it is written is not within the purview of our committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Once I get a copy of the motion, I'll be able to tell you whether it's admissible here, but I don't have a copy of it right now. Mr. Dong's still speaking to it. He does have a right to do that.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

• (1215)

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Angus for his point. I think it's a valid point, which brings me to the second example I want to give.

In the 2018 provincial election in Ontario, there was a case in which the personal information of, I think, up to 60,000 Canadians was stolen and provided to a Brampton East candidate.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

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

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: With all due respect, I'd like to point out that we have spent almost 40 hours discussing this issue. To make up for all the time invested, I would like us, right now, to consider setting up the subcommittee so that it can begin working. Ultimately, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics will have to get on with its business. A number of notices of motion have been put forward about this.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gaudreau.

Right now, Mr. Dong has the floor legitimately. We are in committee business, so any member is free to move business when they like. We will certainly attend to the motion that was passed by the committee, but at present Mr. Dong has the right, as a member, to do exactly what he's doing right now with the moving of his motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Dong.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Chair.

I understand that the members of this committee are eager to do a study of their own, based on what they hear from their constituents about things that are important. I completely appreciate that. That's exactly what I'm doing right now.

Especially in a minority government setting, an election can take place at any time, and protection of privacy is so important, because we've seen cases of personal information being used illegally. There's an ongoing investigation happening. That speaks to privacy and the protection of privacy. I think it falls 100% under the mandate of this committee.

I've tried to convince my colleagues, Liberals and opposition alike, to give consideration to the motion I'm proposing and to perhaps see from my perspective how important it is to protect the privacy of Canadian voters, especially in preparation for the next election. I don't know when it's going to be, but I think there's quite a bit of urgency to it.

Let me read the motion again. I don't want to take up any more time.

I move:

That the Committee study ways to further protect Canada's democratic and electoral institutions from cyber and non-cyber interference. This includes studying how new domestic and international stakeholders, as well as other orders of government, can work together to strengthen Canada's whole-of-society preparedness, resilience and civic engagement in the face of evolving threats to democracy.

I yield the floor. I hope the members of the committee would consider my motion and help me to address this very urgent concern.

Thank you.

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Just so we don't waste any more time, I believe the issue of election preparedness is something that is under the mandate of PROC. Could you determine if that's the case, so

that we're not tying up our committee with something that is not within our mandate?

The Chair: Mr. Angus, I'm going to suspend for a minute or two so we can get a copy of Mr. Dong's motion. It will be distributed and I'll rule on it.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Chair, could you make that a break of five or 10 minutes?

The Chair: Sure. We'll suspend for 10 minutes.

● (1215)

(Pause)

● (1250)

The Chair: All right, colleagues, I've seen the motion and there are two significant things in relation to it.

One is that there was a study done—before my time—in regard to Cambridge Analytica. The committee felt at that time that it was within the mandate of this committee.

Due to that historical precedent of this committee, as well as Mr. Dong's introduction, wherein he specifically referenced 60,000 electors who had lost their private information in an Ontario election, it appears to me—although it doesn't specifically say it in the motion—that one of Mr. Dong's intentions is around privacy, and that's particularly within the mandate of this committee. Therefore, I'll rule the motion in order.

Now we will go to Madam Shanahan, who will be speaking to this motion.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

If I'm to understand it, we will be speaking on Mr. Dong's motion now. It's not a new list.

The Chair: That's correct, Madam Shanahan.

I'm smiling because I know that every member has the right to say what they want to say, but you're right that it's Mr. Dong's motion that is on the floor right now.

I will give you the speakers list too, Madam Shanahan. It's Mr. Angus, Mr. Fergus, Madame Gaudreau and Mr. Sorbara.

I should alert you that it is 12:54.

Go right ahead, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: First of all, I certainly welcome the motion that my colleague has put forward, because it addresses some of the concerns we have seen evolving in recent years, as I said in my earlier remarks.

I commend your ruling on this motion, Chair. It really goes to how we are just starting to understand the implications of what it means when....

We think of Elections Canada and the admirable work it does, and how probably as recently as 10 to 15 years ago—maybe a little bit earlier—there was the move from paper-based documentation, which had its own issues, to computerized lists and then to lists that would be kept.... Forgive me if I don't always use the right lingo. This is something that is a learning curve for me as well.

I remember feeling very secure about any data that I had on my computer when I was working as a professional. Then all of a sudden, because we had moved to networks or cloud-based technology, we were warned about holding information that wasn't properly secured by password. Chair, I'm of that early generation that thought "12345" was a pretty good password, but that quickly stopped being the case, right? My children, who are in IT, certainly don't want to hear me speaking now. I have changed it since then, so not to worry, but there is indeed vulnerability of information.

I had the opportunity on the ethics committee in the last Parliament that did the study on Cambridge Analytica to also participate as a substitute when they were looking at the confidentiality and security of client information. The witness the day that I was there was from Equifax. That I could speak to, because I had experience with Equifax when it was basically a telephone service that was sharing credit information about clients and then issuing reports, and we were disturbed at that time.

Yes, it was back in the eighties, but we moved on to the nineties—

• (1255)

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

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I really don't want to interrupt my colleague going back to the 1980s, because I'm sure they will be willing, with Mr. Dong's leadership, to talk for hours and hours and hours and hours on this.

However, we did make the vote, so I'm just asking for clarification, because the meeting is going to end in about a minute and 30 seconds. Shall we just send our witness lists to you so we can begin this? Since this is now committee business, I would assume that committee business has to be taken up at a meeting on committee business and that we will actually be able to start meeting.

Since the Liberals don't want to talk about the parameters of the study, can we just send you witness lists and actually get down to work so that we don't have to deal with another 40 hours of filibuster on this motion?

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

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Yes, go ahead, Mr. Sorbara.

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

I believe that is not a point of order by member of Parliament Angus.

The Chair: You're correct that—

Mr. Charlie Angus: That's a question.

The Chair: You're correct.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

In regard to the timing, it's 12:59 p.m. now. Again, I will go to the committee. If there's a desire to continue on to QP, we'll do that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: No.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Actually, Chair, if you are looking to suspend the meeting at this time, I think that is something we can entertain. However, I am enjoying speaking to my colleague's motion. gain, it's exactly the kind of work we should be discussing here—

• (1300)

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm just trying to get clarification from you.

The Chair: Yes, sir.

Mr. Charlie Angus: We've allowed this motion to go forward. We are now no longer discussing a study on which we just spent the equivalent of 20 meetings trying to get this motion forward. I am asking you to show leadership here and tell us whether, if I send in witness lists, we can begin our study, or do we have to go through another 40 or 60 or 80 hours of Mr. Dong's and Ms. Shanahan's recollections about everything in life? We have work to do. I would like you to show some direction to our committee so that we know where we will be at our next meeting.

Are we on our study, yes or no?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus. I apologize that you feel frustrated. I'm trying to follow the rules of procedure. There's another motion on the floor, and conversation, but I am certain that if you send your witnesses in, then we will be compiling, as Mr. Warkentin said earlier, a witness list for the previous motion.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

Also, you'd need to move a motion in regard to adjournment, if that's what you desire.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair. I have the floor, and I would be open to you suspending the meeting if you could confirm that I would be first on the speaking list at our next meeting.

The Chair: I don't see any will, really, to suspend the meeting. I mean, if you wanted to move an adjournment, then it would go to a vote, but you can continue on with your comments, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Just to clarify, I am happy to speak to my colleague's motion, because I do find it very germane to the kind of discussion that we need to be having here at this committee.

I want to make some further remarks on how critical it was, at that time that I had the opportunity to sit on the ethics committee of the previous Parliament, to speak to the fact that Equifax, to the knowledge I had, was not always careful with the accuracy and the privacy of the information that was being collected on its customers.

This was even more critical in our modern day and age. I remember that other members of the committee at that time, particularly our colleague who is still in the House, Mr. Zimmer certainly took up that cause as well.

I am very pleased to see that we will be able to do further work in this area, particularly with regard to democratic and electoral institutions, because I think we are seeing that the technology, the ways of practice, the industry of data collection, and particularly personal data collection, is an industry in its own right.

That information and that way of working can be used to collect financial information or voter information, and the key elements of that type of collection are exactly those things. I know that my colleague Madame Gaudreau is very concerned about the issue of fraudulent identity occurring with the use of key personal facts about individuals that are collected in this manner by this industry. We're talking about name, address, date of birth, gender, social insurance number and other types of identifiers that can be harvested and then used in some kind of unintended or fraudulent manner.

Chair, I remember when the biggest concern of anybody, man or woman, with their wallet or their purse was that their money would be stolen if they were robbed. The money would be emptied out and the rest of the information—this was before credit cards were so common—such as personal identity cards, would be left behind.

At some point in time that was reversed, and it was almost that someone's money would be left behind but their credit cards would be stolen, and so would their identity cards. That became the real object of the theft.

• (1305)

I think that the motion before us is commendable in that we are talking about the protection of democratic and electoral institutions from something that is very new on the horizon. Well, it's new in that we heard about it in detail in 2016, but even prior to that with various national referendums that were occurring. I don't know if the jury is still out on what happened with the Brexit vote, but it certainly would be a case study in what that kind of cyber-interference could look like.

I appreciate that Mr. Dong has included non-cyber-interference, because it's like there's new school and there's old school, but the bottom line is that there is interference. We are not strictly a technology committee; that's not our role. Our role is the principle of protecting privacy, the principle of protecting citizens' rights, so however those rights can be compromised is worthy of study by this committee.

As Mr. Dong further stipulates, this would include studying new domestic and international stakeholders, as well as other orders of government. I think this motion recognizes that this is not a problem specific to Canada—far from it—and it is not a problem specific to the federal order of government—far from it. This is not specific to even.... There are various types of elections that can occur. There are various democratic processes that can occur.

I think that it is useful to have a large scope for what we would be studying and the types of witnesses we could call. I take it that

there would be expert witnesses in that group, and it certainly is interesting that we will be able to see how this area is evolving.

Mr. Chair, I have my own motions that I would like to move, but I recognize.... As I say, I'm learning about this area, and there are different issues that come up regarding 5G and how all our devices will be connected and talking to each other and so on. As a driver of a fully electric car—I'm very proud of that—I recognize that there are software connections between my car, unbeknownst to me, and the dealership and the manufacturer.

As I say, these are areas that I'm learning about, but as a private citizen, I don't have all of the information, and maybe it would affect some decisions at those decision-making points.

• (1310)

Getting back to the motion at hand, I certainly agree that this is a very important motion and I applaud my colleague for bringing it forward, because we are talking about overarching democracy, and it would allow us to intervene in all these different areas. I'm not sure how many meetings the committee would like to spend on this motion, but I could certainly see it being an in-depth study. I would look for Mr. Dong's input there, as well as input from other colleagues. This study could help to strengthen Canada's whole-of-society preparedness, and I think that's where an in-depth study may be the most....

We're looking at the possibility of a federal election at any time, as we know. There are also other orders of government that are dealing with the possibility of an election during the pandemic, which of course will require even more reliance on digital means. I would suggest that this may be exactly the thing that we need to be looking at, because we have a tendency as legislators to react after the fact, whereas here, as a committee, we have an opportunity to do a study that would allow us to prepare and find ways to strengthen our electoral process so that citizens have confidence in those election results however they transpire.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Recently, people in Quebec and elsewhere have been watching the US election with great interest. For those of us who are not very familiar with the US electoral process, the main point is that each state manages the electoral system, and that the states have, I believe, made—

[*English*]

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

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm really trying to follow Madam Shanahan. She has explained all the things she's learning about electric cars. I don't know if she wants to make that part of the study, but if the Liberals are going to talk the clock into the coming weeks about the U.S. electoral system, I think that's very problematic.

Is the United States and what's happening in the States something the Liberals are trying to drag into our committee when we are the ethics and privacy committee? I'm not surprised. It's probably a step up from Mr. Sorbara's digressions into underwear, but this has nothing to do with the issues before our committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

I will remind colleagues to stay on the subject at hand and on this particular motion from Mr. Dong.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I feel the reference to the US election is very relevant. The motion proposes that we look at examples from other countries, as we usually do, right? That is part of our job as parliamentarians: we have to look at what is being done elsewhere, do a study, and learn what works and what does not work.

Coming back to the example of the United States, each state nevertheless prepared for and held a very important election during a pandemic. A great deal of public debate took place. I do not want to repeat all the politics, but a lot of questions have been raised about the integrity of advance polling, mail-in ballots and in-person voting, as well defining an eligible voter, confirming eligibility and counting votes afterwards.

I feel it's a good example, especially since we can study all 50 states. I imagine we can find experts who can tell us how to go about it, even under the current circumstances. I gather we can look at a lot of material to retrieve lessons learned that will help us prepare for our own federal or provincial elections.

Quebec will be holding municipal elections next year, I believe. We feel we have problems at the federal level, and Mr. Dong mentioned that we have problems at the provincial level, so we could very well see problems at the municipal level too.

• (1320)

That is where this committee can be of service to Canadians and to the election workers who are currently preparing for the next election. It's more important than ever that we assist them and help them do their job.

In addition, during the US election campaign, I heard the slogan asking people to vote as if their lives depended on it. It's truer than ever; at least, it probably has not been truer since wartime. People are realizing that voting is not just a civic responsibility.

In his motion, Mr. Dong mentioned the importance of civic engagement, which is always at risk. There have been times in the history of our democracy when people were jaded or sometimes even apathetic. People were sort of disengaged from the electoral process. I remember the first time I heard about the Rhinoceros Party, when I was younger. I think it still exists, actually. Maybe that's not a bad thing, because people need to participate in the electoral process.

• (1325)

[*English*]

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

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

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Chair, we are now in the midst of a new filibuster in which we're learning the history of the Rhinoceros Party.

I now understand that Ms. Shanahan wants to study every single state in the United States from the last election. That may be within our purview; I don't think it is. She wants to study every municipality. Now we're learning the history of the Rhinoceros Party.

Mr. Chair, I'm pleading with you. You said this motion was in order. Just how big can this motion get before we actually get back to the business of drawing our witnesses?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Look, Madam Shanahan is speaking to the motion. We're trying to keep it specific to this motion at hand, but Madam Shanahan has the floor right now, and she hasn't ceded the floor yet.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

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

I'm aware that we have spent a lot of time here, but I'm open to the idea of suspending the meeting, if you can confirm that I will be the first person to speak at our next meeting.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have the floor now, Madam Shanahan, so just continue.

Mr. Charlie Angus: No. No—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: All right, that's fine.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: On a point of order, if Ms. Shanahan is going to start the new 40-hour filibuster, she can talk all night. We will not suspend for her.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Then, Chair, I just want to finish on this point and—

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Chair, on a point of order—

The Chair: Sorry; is it Mr. Dong who has a point of order? Go ahead.

Mr. Han Dong: I just want to clarify that I'm watching the time closely. I know there is question period. Can we adjourn? Can we have unanimous agreement to adjourn the meeting but not the debate, so that we can start next meeting by debating this motion?

The Chair: I can already tell you, first of all, that you can't move a motion on a point of order.

Second, I can see the faces now, and I'm certain that Mr. Angus has been waiting quite a long time in the speaking order, and so has Madame Gaudreau, so I don't see any reason to suspend. My job is to allow members to speak, and that's where we're at right now.

Go ahead, Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

So, I will continue.

I know this is difficult for the committee. We have been talking about committee business for a long time. However, I wanted to explain why the motion Mr. Dong put forward is very important to us. I believe that, even when we have the opportunity to do a study on an issue that can affect all Canadians, we will need to continue discussing it.

We have still had a good meeting so far. I therefore move that the meeting be adjourned.

● (1330)

[*English*]

The Chair: A motion has been moved for the meeting to be adjourned.

Madam Clerk, do you want to record the vote?

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Colleagues, I'll be calling a subcommittee meeting as soon as we have some space to plot for our next meeting. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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