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Chair: Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia



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• (1205)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to move the following motion:

That the committee undertake an in-depth study of the impacts of an emergency decree on the lumber and forestry industry and that this study focus on identifying:

The socio-economic impact of an emergency decree on communities across Quebec, given the economic dependence of many communities, such as Sacré-Coeur, on the lumber and forestry industry;

The impact of an emergency decree on lumber and the forestry industry, given that the Quebec government has assessed that at minimum 2,000 jobs will be impacted; and

A plan to protect caribou with minimal disruption to the lumber and forestry industries and Quebecer's livelihoods.

To this end, that the committee hold a minimum of 6 meeting and that the committee invite the Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Canada, Minister of Transport, and Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry for a minimum of 2 hours respectively, with priority given to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada within seven days of the motion being passed, as well as:

Invite the Boisaco Group for 2 hours with other major forestry groups, companies, unions representing impacted workers, representatives of the First Nations concerned, community representatives and any other witnesses the committee deems necessary;

Order that the government produce all socio-economic analysis completed on the impact of the federal decree, including all projected job loss analysis, within 14 days of the motion being adopted;

The committee write a letter to natural resource committee asking the chair to immediately recall the committee in order to plan a study on the federal decree;

Committee denounces federal government interference in provincial jurisdictions;

Report to the House that the federal government immediately abandon all plans to impose the federal decree in order to save jobs and resource development in regions of Quebec; and

Report its findings and recommendations to the House.

Mr. Chair, we know that nearly 2,000 people work in the forestry industry—

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

First of all, we have not received this motion. I hate it when we start discussing things like this.

Secondly, in the world I come from, the union world, someone who submits a proposal has the floor to present it. It may not be the

same thing here on a committee or in the House of Commons, but there is already a motion on the table. There are very similar things in what Mr. Deltell has just presented, and amendments may be necessary, but I find it hard to understand why we are not discussing the motion for which we travelled here today.

Is it normal for us to all of a sudden do something other than what we were asked to do?

The Chair: That's a good question. I can't say whether it's normal, because this is the first experience I've had of a meeting requested under Standing Order 106(4). I believe that Mr. Deltell can move his motion because it relates to the subject we intend to discuss today.

I think we need to debate it and decide what to do with it, do we not, Madam Clerk? Ms. Pauzé can then move her own motion. I don't think Ms. Pauzé's motion takes precedence over Mr. Deltell's, but we'll suspend for a moment to confirm that.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): I would like to speak first, Mr. Chair.

Since you gave my colleague the floor and he introduced his motion, his motion does indeed take precedence. The debate must be on the motion before us that is related to the subject for which this meeting was requested pursuant to Standing Order 106(4).

• (1210)

The Chair: You're probably right, but I just want to confirm that with the clerk.

She is confirming that Mr. Deltell has the right to move his motion. We'll open it up for debate. Then we can debate the other one.

Mr. Drouin, I've added you to the speaking list. I assume you want to speak to the motion.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I do, yes. Out of respect for our Bloc Québécois colleagues, since they are the ones who—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, if we're debating a motion—

The Chair: Hold on.

Mr. Deltell, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Yes. From the moment I introduced a motion and started talking about it after I indicated that I wanted to talk about it, I believe it goes without saying that I can continue talking about it. The mover of the motion has to start the debate.

The Chair: Have you moved it?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Yes, but I started talking about it, and then I was interrupted—

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Okay. Hold on.

We're off to a good start.

On the speaking list, we have Mr. Deltell, who has just spoken, as well as Ms. Pauzé and Mr. Boulerice. We also have Mr. Martel and Mr. van Koeverden.

A voice: It's the other way around.

The Chair: It's Mr. van Koeverden and then Mr. Martel.

Mr. Deltell has moved his motion and he can debate it.

Are there any other points of order before Mr. Deltell begins debate?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, I think my point of order takes precedence over all other speakers.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Boulerice.

Ms. Pauzé, do you also have a point of order?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: No, it's about something else.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: It's just a matter of procedure, Mr. Chair.

I don't think we should debate Mr. Deltell's motion, because it hasn't been distributed to committee members in both official languages.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It has just been sent out in both official languages. So you should have received both versions. If not, you will be receiving them shortly. So—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I'm asking for clarification. I travelled here to debate another motion. So I don't understand why you immediately gave the floor to someone who wanted to move another motion.

The Chair: It's because he raised his hand. He was quick enough to do that. Also, his motion concerns the topic at hand, which is why we are meeting today. So he didn't have to give notice.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: What happens to the motion—

The Chair: We will debate Mr. Deltell's motion. Then Ms. Pauzé can move hers.

Ms. Pauzé now has the floor.

Hold on. There's another point of order.

• (1215)

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'm asking for clarification. Are you recognizing Ms. Pauzé on a point of order?

The Chair: No. I asked her if it was a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Okay.

Mr. Deltell had asked to speak to his motion.

The Chair: True, he hasn't done that yet.

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Then it will be Ms. Pauzé's turn and Mr. van Koeverden's.

Mr. Drouin, you have already spoken.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, I haven't spoken yet, but let Mr. Deltell speak, and then I'll speak.

The Chair: Okay.

After Mr. Deltell, it will be your turn, then it will be Ms. Pauzé's, Mr. van Koeverden's and Mr. Martel's turn.

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I wasn't any quicker than anybody else. I simply applied the standing orders. We have a standing order allowing us to move motions and debate them.

I want to point out that we're gathered here to talk about the Liberals' excessively harsh order involving forestry workers and the lives of the caribou. This is an important matter, and the motion I put forward is entirely related to it.

We see that the federal government unfortunately has a bad habit of imposing orders and, above all, imposing itself in areas of provincial jurisdiction. We're talking about 2,000 jobs at stake here. Two thousand jobs is two thousand families. Those 2,000 people, their families and loved ones, are waiting. We have a federal government that's meddling in areas of provincial jurisdiction, while the Government of Quebec has all the jurisdiction it needs to act. Beyond all the legal battles that could arise, there is a human reality, and that is the reality of workers.

We in the Conservative Party believe that we can properly combine the economy and the environment. We certainly believe that the caribou need to be saved, but the jobs need to be saved as well. This doesn't just affect one part of the province. On the weekend in my riding, on Racine Street, during an event called Racine au coeur des arts, I met people who were affected by this situation. They demanded that we do the right thing for workers and at the same time protect the environment.

Mr. Chair, this motion that we're putting forward will get to the bottom of things, with four ministers who have to testify here—most of them are members from Quebec, by the way—so that we can do the right thing for the workers while saving the caribou.

This motion seeks to do that.

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

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you.

Out of respect for those who signed the letter requesting this meeting pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Chair: So we have to go to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor. I assume that it's about something other than Mr. Deltell's motion.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Is it my turn to move my motion?

The Chair: Yes, if you wish.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

I want to start by saying that I'm a bit surprised to see the Conservatives table an emergency motion this morning, when I've been trying to reach them since August 2 and there was no indication that they were online or available in any way.

The Bloc Québécois worked on the motion that was introduced and signed—

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: The floor is yours.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, let me set the record straight. People can't attribute motives to their colleagues. I'd like to point out that since the beginning of July, the Conservative Party has been asking for emergency meetings on the situation surrounding Mr. Guilbeault's radical order on the Boreal caribou, which could kill 2,000 jobs—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, I don't know if he wants to tell us about his vacation, but I don't think that's a point of order—

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify that it's the Bloc—

The Chair: Order.

I don't know if it's against the standing orders—

• (1220)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I will move my motion.

The Chair: Yes. I don't think that's a point of order.

Ms. Pauzé, you may continue.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Thank you.

The Bloc Québécois has been working since the beginning of August to introduce a motion, the one you have in front of you. Should I take the time to read it all out?

The Chair: Yes, of course.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: People also received it in advance, which will make things easier. It reads:

That the committee undertake an in-depth study of the means to be taken to adequately protect caribou by avoiding or minimizing the effects on economic activities arising from the forestry sector. That this study focus on identifying:

- i) the issues that threaten the caribou and the means and measures that could be put forward to protect it;
- ii) the impact of an emergency decree on lumber and the forestry industry;
- iii) the socio-economic effects of forest fires on communities; and

iv) the role of the forestry sector in achieving carbon neutrality targets.

That to this end, the committee hold a minimum of three meetings and that the committee:

- a) Invite the Minister of the Environment and officials to respond on the subject of the emergency decree and the elements he intends to take into account;
- b) Invite, in particular and without limitation: environmental experts, companies, unions representing forest workers, representatives of the First Nations concerned, and any other witnesses the Committee deems necessary; and
- c) Report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The minister postponed the consultations for a month, so we were able to dig to the roots of this motion and to perfect it as best we could. We felt that members could not be heard in the context of Minister Guilbeault's consultations. This motion was therefore the best way to allow members to be heard on this matter, which is being heavily debated right now and concerns the people affected. We felt that this debate, which is central, should take place on the committee, hence the urgency of holding this meeting today.

Basically, this motion takes everything into account. One is that it's a species at risk. I don't think anyone here would want to be a willing participant in the Boreal caribou's extinction. Then, we also have to think about the forestry sector, forest fires, the pulp and paper sector's well-known transition to something else, with all our IT tools, as well as customs tariffs, which are increasing. There's no subsidy for that sector. We have to try to look at the big picture.

I come from the education sector. In our classes, when a lot of students are struggling, we call on special education technicians, or SETs. When they walk into the classroom, the first thing they say to a struggling student is that there's no problem, only solutions, and that they will find them together. That's what the motion proposes. There are solutions to be found, and we want to be part of the debate to find them.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Martel, you have the floor.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, I would have liked to be there in person, but I'm attending by videoconference because, as you well know, our leader Pierre Poilievre is in my area. This afternoon, he'll be meeting with representatives of the Boisaco Group. That's why I wasn't able to travel there, but I was very happy that a meeting was being held today.

On two occasions, we tried to invite the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to address this, but the Bloc Québécois refused each time. So I was very pleased to attend today's meeting.

At our offices, we're getting calls from people who are almost in distress. We meet people on the street. Some municipalities are suffering and will suffer the effects of this order on the forestry industry. People are very concerned because it could put businesses and even some municipalities where the majority of people work in the forestry industry out of business. Our leader Pierre Poilievre and our party trust in Quebec. It's up to Quebec to protect the industry and caribou.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martel.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I would like to move an amendment to my colleague's motion.

In the first paragraph, right after “forestry sector”, I would add “given that the Quebec government has assessed that at least 2,000 jobs will be impacted”.

The Chair: Would anyone like to discuss the amendment?

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, we can do both, that is to say protect the Boreal caribou, but first and foremost, all the jobs. The provincial government has full jurisdiction in this area, and it has already released its plan. In fact, since 2018, it's been actively working on this situation, as the Quebec environment minister scathingly reminded us in a letter to Minister Guilbeault.

So we're quite prepared to find solutions, but the solution already exists and has been acted on by the Government of Quebec, precisely to protect those jobs. We believe in that solution and we trust the Government of Quebec on this.

The Chair: So you're in favour of the amendment.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You heard what I said loud and clear, and I thank you for that.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Greetings to my colleagues and I thank—

[English]

I'm sorry, but the interpretation is in my ear, and it's very distracting, so I think I'll just speak English. I don't know how to switch it. I guess it's because I'm on the English channel. I'm sorry about that.

I would like to thank Madame Pauzé for her leadership in recalling the committee for this meeting. She has been in touch with me a couple of times and with other members on the Liberal side of this committee over the last couple of weeks and months, but any effort to recall this committee by the Conservative side has happened independently of any outreach to me.

I thank my friend and colleague Gérard Deltell for reaching out during the Olympics to congratulate me on 20 years since I won a medal at the Olympics, but we didn't talk about committee busi-

ness, so I applaud everybody's enthusiasm and interest in this important issue.

I also had an amendment to provide, and I suppose I'll provide it after we conclude the debate on this—

The Chair: Yes, we'll vote on this one first.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Our efforts are to protect both jobs and caribou. I think they have to happen together, and not independently of one another. I also know that, like all aspects of nature, caribou don't vote and don't have the ability to hire lobbyists, so sometimes we have to consider their well-being as well from more of an advocacy perspective, because it's not as though nature always has its lobbyists on the Hill.

I share the aspirational component to ensure that it would protect jobs and our natural environment at the same time, and I'm certain this committee will continue its good work in consulting with stakeholders and experts in that regard so we can provide recommendations to the government.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'm a bit dumbfounded by what I've just heard, Mr. Chair.

First, I'd like to nip this thing about calls made regarding the Bloc Québécois motion in the bud. At the beginning of the summer, it was agreed that potential discussions would take place between the House leaders. We in the Conservative Party have respected that. We never received any calls from the Bloc Québécois House leader or the government House leader to hold this Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development meeting. We worked to obtain meetings of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources on two occasions, and the Bloc Québécois rejected our requests. I can't understand how and why they rejected them, because those meetings would have been very important for the workers, for the Boreal caribou and, above all, for respecting provincial jurisdictions.

Furthermore, I'm flabbergasted to hear my colleague say that the caribou cannot hire lobbyists. I don't understand how the Bloc Québécois is going to continue to support the Liberal position, because the caribou lobbyist right now is the Government of Quebec. The Quebec government itself has called the federal decree “unconscionable interference”.

I will read what the Government of Quebec said through ministers Blanchette Vézina and Charette when it learned that the federal Liberal government intended to impose this radical order: “Quebec shares your desire to ensure the survival of Boreal caribou...”. We agree with Quebec. That is its responsibility. I'll continue: “...your government's approach in issuing an emergency order under the Species at Risk Act is an unspeakable affront... The management of public lands, and of the species found therein, falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Quebec government...”.

I hear my Liberal colleagues practically calling the Government of Quebec a lobbyist, when that is its area of jurisdiction and responsibility. We trust the Government of Quebec to respect and protect both forestry jobs and the caribou. My Liberal colleague's comments are somewhat insulting. I don't understand how the Bloc Québécois is going to support the position—

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden.

[English]

What's the point of order?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I feel as though my words are being taken completely out of context. I was talking about how—

The Chair: We know that's not a point of order. That's a point of debate. We hear this all the time in the House.

Go ahead, Mr. Berthold.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Thank you very much.

I heard the comment. Of course, we can't go back, Mr. Chair. He said what he said, and unfortunately that's how I interpreted it.

I must say that all of this is being done in a context where, for over a year now, our leader Mr. Poilievre has been clearly denouncing the federal Liberal government's intention to impose a radical order that encroaches on Quebec's jurisdiction over Quebec woodlands. He first denounced it in April 2023. He has since done so several times.

One thing is for sure, we can't pass a motion like this without talking about jobs, let alone families and people who may lose their jobs because of the radical position taken by the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

I therefore support the amendment I have proposed, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, would you like to speak to the amendment?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I was wondering where I was in the speaking order.

The Chair: Once we have—

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'll speak to the amendment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. The floor is yours.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Simard, you have the floor.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to correct some statements made earlier and perhaps show that the motion you have before you is all the more important.

My party, the Bloc Québécois, has been holding meetings on the thorny issue of caribou for two years. Together with the leader of

the Bloc Québécois, we held meetings in Saguenay—Lac-St-Jean with forestry sector stakeholders, biologists, professors and all those who wanted to resolve the caribou issue. Never in my life have I seen the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord step in to ask questions about the future of the forestry sector. The Bloc Québécois has proposed a common roadmap that's been signed by some mayors of forestry municipalities, people from forestry companies and forestry unions. The roadmap provided us with a plan for the claims we had to make to the federal government to support the forestry sector. The Bloc Québécois held a symposium specifically on the forestry sector with various stakeholders in that sector. So when I hear my colleagues say that we don't care about the forestry sector, I find that so very rich.

I want to go back to how things went this summer. First, I find it unfortunate that Mr. Guilbeault's consultations are being held during the summer, when forestry workers are out in the forest. This is no time to ask them to meet to explain the ins and outs of the forestry sector. I think it would have been preferable to hold consultations a little later, especially since a Quebec Court decision called on Quebec to consult indigenous peoples.

So, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, I don't think it was the best solution to ask people from the forestry sector to appear before the committee to discuss the caribou issue, in addition to Minister Guilbeault's consultation, but I'm a good sport. I wondered why not propose a motion to my Conservative friends, a motion that would have substance. I don't think we can solve the caribou's problems or the forestry industry's problems with magic words. Yelling out “radical minister” and “common sense” four times won't solve these problems. Problems are solved in life when people are able to look at things and put concrete measures in place. That's what we intended when we moved the motion that we sent to our Conservative friends. It looked at the big picture in the forestry sector.

The caribou issue is one obstacle among others facing the Quebec forestry sector, which has been scraping by and struggling to survive for 10 years now, because the industry is in transition. We're moving from pulp and paper to other types of activities—you saw how intense the wildfires were last year. In addition, the forest industry is receiving very little support from the federal government. My region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, contributes more to the federal government in spinoffs than the forest industry receives in federal government subsidies. Since the government is afraid of breaching its international trade agreements, it never supports the forestry industry.

Added to that, of course, is the problem you've seen resurfacing in recent weeks, the one related to the U.S. tariffs, which are at nearly 15%. We put all this together to send the Conservatives a motion with a little substance, a motion that breaks away from the hackneyed ways and what I call the "Poilievre method", that is to say, use threats and insults and then try to draw public ire. I don't think that's what we should be doing to address this matter at the moment.

• (1235)

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mario Simard: So we put forward a motion to these people—

The Chair: There's a point of order.

Mr. Mario Simard: This is going to be exciting.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, defending Quebec's jurisdiction is not a threat.

The Chair: That's not a point of order.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Chair, I would say to my colleague that we've said many times that the federal government will never have a stranglehold on Quebec's natural resources. It's not up to the federal government to manage Quebec's natural resources; it's up to the Government of Quebec. We've said that many times. We'll have that debate after.

I was saying that we had proposed a motion to the Conservatives with some meat and bones to it; then we had radio silence. No one from the Conservative Party answered us. We can't negotiate parliamentary procedures on something. We can't do that. We can't put forward a motion on something and say that if someone votes against this, it's because they're lazy or on vacation. What a silly way to do things! Yet that's what we saw this summer.

When you think about it, the Endangered or Vulnerable Species Act is under the Department of the Environment. So the motion shouldn't go to the Department of Natural Resources. It should go to the Department of the Environment.

My colleague Monique Pauzé proposed a motion to Mr. Deltell in early August, but it fell on deaf ears. There was no response from him. I don't know if, as the Conservative leader said, Mr. Deltell was on vacation at the time. I also don't know if he was lazy for not answering us, to use the same epithet the Conservative leader employs for us. I don't mean to impugn his motives. The fact remains that, in this matter, until we were able to negotiate with the Liberal Party to have today's meeting, which seems very important to us, we never got an answer. So for all those reasons—

I totally understand my colleague's request for an amendment to refer to the 2,000 jobs; that's legitimate, but we will have the opportunity to debate that and make those demonstrations during the committee's study. If he wants to add the reference to the 2,000 jobs, we have absolutely no problem with that. However, I'm asking the Conservatives to stop playing partisan games, stop using points of order to get sound bites, so that we can focus on what we need to do, which is to learn about the problems and listen to the people in the forestry sector.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

Mr. Martel.

Mr. Richard Martel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like my colleague to keep his cool, and I'm going to correct what he said a little. He said that people in the forestry industry are not available in the summer to meet with us and speak on the subject. I can tell you one thing: Industry business owners unanimously commended us for wanting to request an emergency meeting. If the Bloc Québécois members think they were on the ground, I can tell them that I was there too. Business owners were coming to my office and telling me that something had to be done. They were terribly worried about the future of their industry.

We were therefore extremely surprised that the Bloc Québécois twice rejected inviting the minister to appear before the committee and the forestry industry. We were very surprised by that, especially since the Bloc Québécois supports respecting Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. We were proposing two meetings to discuss all of this.

So, Mr. Chair, I wanted to set the record straight a bit, because I felt that my colleague was getting carried away. He is very emotional about this issue. I think he knows he's lagging behind.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden.

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We could spend all afternoon talking about whose idea this was or who cares more about caribou, but we should also consider just getting on with the substantive matter.

There were discussions today, and for our part, we support the notion of adding jobs to the motion. We would provide a subamendment to that so that we could just vote once and move on, if that would be okay.

That subamendment, which I can distribute, basically just asks for a fourth meeting, which would be to accommodate one additional stakeholder and—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. van Koeverden, but that's not a subamendment. It's another amendment, so we have to dispose of this one first, and then you can propose your amendment.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I think we can do it as a subamendment. It doesn't negate any aspect of the current amendment on the table.

The Chair: You're proposing four meetings instead of three. That would involve amending the second part of the motion to change three to four, whereas right now we're discussing the first part of the motion, and the proposed amendment is to add some words at the end of the first sentence.

Can we dispose of the amendment? Was it Mr. Berthold's amendment?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: If you want it to be done in two steps, then that's fine. It could be one step if you use my method.

The Chair: Yes, [*Inaudible — Editor*]. Otherwise, I'll get very confused as chair, and that's not a good thing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. van Koeverden will have the floor after Ms. Pauzé when we return to the debate on the motion.

I see no other speakers. We'll vote on the amendment, then.

• (1245)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Can you read out the amendment, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Do you want to read it out again?

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'd be happy to read it out again, yes.

The Chair: Has Mr. Berthold's amendment been distributed?

We're ready to vote.

Mr. Luc Berthold:

That the motion be amended by adding after the words "forestry sector" the following: "given the Quebec government has assessed that at least 2,000 jobs will be impacted".

The Chair: Understood. It's fairly straightforward.

Clerk, let's vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé now has the floor. Mr. van Koeverden will follow.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Chair, I'd like to provide another amendment.

The Chair: Yes, but we have to go to Madame Pauzé, who was on the list.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, I was on the list to speak to the amendment. Since the amendment passe, I'll give the floor to Mr. van Koeverden.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The amendment that I'm proposing just changes it to "the Committee hold a minimum of four meetings", and, under paragraph b), includes an additional and specific stakeholder. It would read, "including AFNQL's Ghislain Picard, the Municipality of Sacré-Coeur and the Boisaco cooperative for one hour".

The Chair: I'll go to the English version of the motion.

The amendment basically is to say that "to this end, the Committee hold a minimum of four meetings", so three changes to four.

Where do you want the second amendment to be inserted?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: That will go under paragraph b). In the French, it's different. For some reason, there are numbers rather than letters, but in the English version—

The Chair: It would read, "representatives of the First Nations concerned," I guess, "including"—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: That would be followed by "and any other witnesses the Committee deems necessary", which is there already, and then a comma. The new part will read, "including AFNQL's Ghislain Picard, the Municipality of Sacré-Coeur and the Boisaco cooperative for one hour".

I can send it to the clerk.

The Chair: Can you send it to the clerk? Then we'll have the exact wording, which we can read out.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Luc Berthold: This amendment is actually two completely different amendments. I think we should—

The Chair: Do you want the committee to decide on the number of meetings first?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, I think we should stick to one subject per amendment.

The Chair: All right, then. We'll start by debating and voting on the first amendment, then we'll move on to the second.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Absolutely. We can amend it as we go along.

The Chair: Okay.

We're talking about the amendment to propose four meetings instead of three. Would you like to speak to it?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: I'm sorry. Did you have something else to say about your proposed amendment?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Berthold intervened, but I think I still have the floor. It's my amendment, and I think it's perfectly fine to have two sections where we amend.

The reason we're increasing the number of meetings by one, to four, is to include Monsieur Picard, so it's not appropriate to vote in two rounds. It's entirely standard to just vote once on this.

I'm currently sending it to you and the clerk.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

In everyone's interest and to ensure that the committee runs smoothly, it would be best not to go in that direction. Otherwise, given that there are several points and several guests, members will want to amend things and there will be subamendments for several minutes.

• (1250)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Is it a point of order, Ms. Pauzé?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I'd like to move a friendly amendment.

The Chair: I prefer to first establish whether we should treat this as two separate amendments.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: That's why I'd like to propose a friendly amendment to Mr. van Koeverden. I propose that we hold a fourth meeting and that Mr. Ghislain Picard and the Boisaco company representatives be invited for one hour each.

The Chair: I didn't see the wording, but I think Mr. van Koeverden wishes to invite other witnesses, not just Mr. Ghislain Picard.

Did I understand correctly, Mr. van Koeverden?

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: No, that's not what my amendment says.

The Chair: Could you read your amendment again, please? The change from three to four I get, but do you want to include the AFNQL?

Could you read your amendment again?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: There are only two aspects of the motion that I intend to amend.

The first is that we hold a minimum of four meetings.

The second is that, after the current line, which reads, "and any other witnesses that the committee deems necessary", we would add, "including AFNQL's Mr. Picard, the Municipality of Sacré-Coeur and the Boisaco cooperative for an hour."

The friendly amendment is to make it all one sentence. It does make it seem like it's just one amendment that way, but this is totally standard, and there's no reason why we should be voting on it twice.

The Chair: Okay, here's the way I see it. Just a second...

[Translation]

I understand Mr. Berthold's argument. He wants to treat this as two amendments, and he has the right to propose that.

I'll treat it as one amendment and, if Mr. Berthold wants to split it, he can always propose a subamendment. That said, I'd still like to see the wording of Mr. van Koeverden's amendment, which is in two parts. Can we send it around? That would be helpful for everyone.

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Chair, it has been sent out. It was first sent to you and the clerk.

The Chair: Okay. Do you have anything more to say about your amendment?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: We passed a CPC amendment, and when I suggested that this could just be a subamendment, it was deemed not possible. I would say the same about a subamendment for this one.

The amendment is not to split it. I say we vote on the amendment as such and move forward. I don't know why my subamendment was deemed ineligible—my recommendation—and then this subamendment is being considered to split it in half.

I was trying to expedite things to move along and have one vote for [Inaudible — Editor] version, and now we're just trying to slow it down.

The Chair: We're going to ask if anyone else wants to speak to your amendment.

Monsieur Berthold, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I would like to propose a subamendment to the effect that the committee should hold a minimum of six meetings.

The Chair: Okay. That is therefore a subamendment to Mr. van Koeverden's amendment; you want to increase the number of proposed meetings from four to six.

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's exactly right, Mr. Chair.

I'd now like to talk about my subamendment.

Many people want to be part of the consultations. As my colleague Mr. Martel said earlier, numerous people have contacted his office; numerous people have made public appearances in the media; numerous citizens and workers are worried about the federal government's decision to interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction, as though Quebec is not capable of protecting both caribou and jobs, as though Ottawa knows all and as though Ottawa can do a better job than Quebec.

We therefore need to hold more meetings to demonstrate that the federal government is on the wrong track and that it must trust—as we do—that the Quebec government can protect both the caribou and forestry workers, who have not yet had the opportunity to express their views. We need to give the Quebec government a voice. We need to allow a lot of people have their say. However, four meetings won't be enough. We agree that the Boisaco group should appear. We agree that First Nations groups should appear. We want as many people as possible to have their say. We can't do that in four meetings.

Moreover, allowing the Boisaco group to testify for an hour is certainly not enough. This group has written I don't know how many letters—six, seven or eight—to the federal government denouncing the draft decree and saying how harmful it could be for the industry. At the very least, we owe it to the workers and the industry to give them the opportunity to have their say, and to give them enough time to do so.

That is why I propose we hold a total of six meetings instead of four, and that these meetings be held soon, too.

• (1255)

The Chair: Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor to speak to Mr. Berthold's subamendment.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: We think four meetings will be enough. In fact, after four meetings, a report will have to be drawn up and then studied. If we add two meetings, we'll have to postpone the tabling of that report.

There is also the committee's other work, and there are jobs at stake there, too. People's health is at stake when it comes to oil, for example. In short, we have other issues to look at.

We believe that four meetings will be enough to do this study, because we'll also have to wait for the report and study it. We don't want to postpone all this indefinitely.

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

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, it's a shame that we can't come to an agreement about two meetings.

In our opinion, it's clear that we need to hold six meetings. Many people are affected by this, as Mr. Martel mentioned earlier. Mr. Berthold also pointed that out. Thousands of people are directly affected. In addition to forestry workers, we must also consider the socio-economic consequences in the regions directly affected. That's why we need to hear from as many people as possible.

I'd like to mention that the motion we proposed earlier, which was unfortunately rejected by everyone except us, called for testimony from industry representatives, from every possible background and, above all, from the ministers responsible. It's necessary, because this is a unique situation where the federal government is interfering in an entirely provincial jurisdiction, lecturing a provincial government and, on top of that, wanting to pass decree forcing measures to be put in place.

I think having four ministers appear is not too much. How can they justify it? There's the political lieutenant for Quebec, who dreams of being premier of Quebec. Let him testify here. I can't wait to hear him. Whose side is he on? What about the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, who's all proud to jet set around the world, giving Canadians' money to multinationals all over the world? What does he think about the impact this has on Quebec's regions, as a Member of Parliament from Quebec? The same goes, of course, for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

I don't think that four meetings will be enough. Six meetings would give us the time we need to hear from everyone.

In all honesty, I understand where Ms. Pauzé is coming from. She's been a parliamentarian for nine years and has worked hard on these issues. We understand that, in addition to the meetings, there needs to be an analysis, and that takes several meetings too. We're well aware of that. However, are we going to sacrifice testimonials from people in the industry, people who are directly affected and, also, environmental specialists who could give us their point of view, for two meetings?

Come on, folks, let's all work together for the good of the people.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, these additional six hours are extremely important. I'd like to answer Ms. Pauzé's question. We don't have to do this in September, according to normal parliamentary committee schedules. We can do it next week. We can hold all our meetings next week. I say that because we know it's urgent and there's a great deal of concern in the communities involved.

Consequently, this wouldn't affect the committee's other work. All we have to do is convene the committee next week and hold the six meetings in the same week. I think we'd be able to get through it so that everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

We're not tied to the committee's regular meeting schedule. We can do this now; it would allow everyone to be heard. I don't see why we should limit ourselves to four meetings when so many stakeholders are asking to be heard and there are so many people who have things to say about Mr. Guilbeault's radical decree.

● (1300)

The Chair: Before we move on to Ms. Pauzé, I'd like to point out that it takes a certain amount of time to invite witnesses and allow them to organize themselves to testify before the Committee. To do this in one, two or three days is ambitious.

A voice: Ambition is a beautiful thing.

The Chair: Yes, realistic ambition is a beautiful thing.

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Chair, my colleague may have the floor.

The Chair: Mr. Simard, over to you.

Mr. Mario Simard: For once, I agree with my Conservative colleagues. It's true that we mustn't fall into the "Ottawa knows everything" trap. That would be very dangerous. We're defending Quebec's interests. I hope that my Conservative colleagues will not fall into the "Ottawa knows everything" trap when the time comes for them to vote on Bill 21. However, let's leave that aside for a moment.

Why stick to four meetings? The purpose of this report is to influence the minister when he's drafting his decree. That said, the minister intends to finish his consultations in September. It would be good for him to hear the witnesses who will testify before the committee; they will present a different picture of the situation, in particular the people from the Boisaco company.

To influence the minister's decision, we need move quite quickly. We need to make sure the minister understands the issue, depending on the witnesses we invite. What's more, I don't want this to become an opportunity to settle scores and advance a debatable ideology and one that, more often than not, resembles populism. I experienced that at the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. We won't be inviting the entire cabinet; that's not the objective. We want the companies and key stakeholders to be heard. We also want the committee to make recommendations as quickly as possible, so that the minister respects Quebec's jurisdictions and is aware of the socio-economic impact a decree will have on the various regions of Quebec.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Koeven.

[English]

Mr. van Koeverden, was your hand up? No? Okay. We'll go straight to Mr. Deltell.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It is rather strange to hear my Bloc Québécois colleague constantly repeating that this is interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction and that it makes no sense. The problem is that this is not mentioned in the Bloc Québécois motion. The motion does not specify that we must denounce the federal government's interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

Earlier, we moved a motion that read as follows: "Committee denounces federal government interference in provincial jurisdictions;". Who voted against that motion? It was the Bloc Québécois. In its motion, the Bloc makes no mention of this brutal reality for the provinces.

If the Bloc just wants to hear from a minister, I understand that. I think that the Quebec lieutenant, who dreams of being the Premier of Quebec, will have to explain here what side he is on. Is he on the side of the centralizing government, or is he on the side of the Premier of Quebec, who must defend Quebec's interests?

This case is not theoretical; it is real. We believe that the Minister of Transport and Quebec lieutenant should appear before the committee, as well as the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. The latter actually did not appear before the Standing Committee on Natural Resources because the members of the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party of Canada did not want him to. That's too bad, since we could have done it then. I would add that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry should also appear, as the study speaks directly to the impact this is having on the forest industry.

In my opinion, six meetings is very little for all these ongoing issues and for the 2,000 jobs that are directly threatened by this Liberal government.

The Chair: I don't see any more hands up.

Can we vote on the subamendment—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Chair, I would like to speak.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you.

I just want to point out that the Conservatives have arrived here suggesting that this meeting was their idea. It was not. They didn't propose six meetings until I proposed four. If it were really important for them to have six meetings, then they would have arrived with their initial motion, which they crafted seemingly overnight, because nobody on the committee had heard of it. It would have been their priority. It seems as though they want to take full credit for this meeting. That's fine, but they didn't propose six meetings until I proposed four. If they thought it required six, then they would have come prepared with that but they didn't. This meeting was not their idea. It was Madam Pausé's, so let's just get on with it and vote and have these important meetings so we can get to the real work.

• (1305)

The Chair: Are we good with voting on the subamendment, which is to change four meetings to six?

Okay, let's go.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Berthold, you have the floor.

Mr. Luc Berthold: As I mentioned, I have another subamendment to propose. My colleague's amendment touches on a number of topics.

My second subamendment seeks to clarify the part where it is proposed that we invite AFNQL's Ghislain Picard, as well as representatives of the municipality of Sacré-Cœur and the Boisaco Group for one hour. It's not clear whether it's one hour for all of them or one hour for each witness.

Therefore, I move that the amendment be amended so that all those stakeholders would be invited to appear for two hours each.

The Chair: I have the amendment in front of me. It does say for two hours each.

Would the members like to debate the amendment or proceed to a vote?

Mr. Luc Berthold: I want to debate it, Mr. Chair, but I won't take very long.

I have here letters that were sent by people in the forest industry and by the Government of Quebec denouncing this interference. I also have a letter that was signed by the Boisaco Group and is addressed specifically to the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. The letter says that:

It is important for the Prime Minister to know that, contrary to what Mr. Guilbeault and some of the other stakeholders are saying, it would be impossible to replace lost volumes with other volumes from neighbouring supply areas.

The letter also says that:

the big ideas whereby it would be essential to plan for a transition of their trades are also a form of magical thinking, especially since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, states that sustainable forest management can play a key role in climate change mitigation.

Technical and scientific explanations will have to be provided by the Boisaco Group on these two topics, and it will take more than one hour for its representatives to explain to us the effects of forest management on climate change and why it is impossible for the Boisaco Group to replace the timber volumes that would be lost and that—

Mr. Francis Drouin: I have a point of order.

We're talking about the subamendment to determine whether the testimony will last an hour or two, right?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: It has been suggested that it be two hours per witness rather than one hour in total.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I just want to know what Mr. Berthold is getting at, and what the connection is between what he is saying and the proposal to invite witnesses for two hours each rather than for one hour.

The Chair: I don't know, we'll see.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I did speak French, though. I'm trying to explain why we need to invite representatives of the Boisaco Group for two hours.

I have a lot of respect for the witnesses who are here, Mr. Drouin, unlike you.

• (1310)

Mr. Francis Drouin: There is none.

Mr. Luc Berthold: It is important that the witnesses we are going to hear from here have all the time they need to explain themselves, Mr. Drouin. I'm not like you. I do not have a disrespectful attitude toward the people who come to testify before the committees.

Mr. Chair, I will just bring up the last part of the letter from Steeve St-Gelais and André Gilbert, who say that:

the government has a choice. It will either slip into Mr. Guilbeault's ideological fantasies, or it will show its ability to govern in a logical, lucid and enlightened manner by putting an end to this threat of a decree.

In their letter, they also quote the poet Alphonse de Lamartine, who said, "We don't have two hearts, one for animals and one for humans; we have one heart or we don't have any." What the Boisaco Group people are telling us is that both jobs and woodland caribou can be protected, and they want to come and explain their view on that. It is impossible for them to do that in an hour.

Ripco and Litière Royal also sent letters, and we didn't have a chance to talk about that. We will certainly add them to our list of witnesses. They also want to explain their view to us. Let me quote from the open letter that Benjamin Dufour of Granulco and Éric Fortin of Litière Royal wrote to the Prime Minister of Canada. They say that,

on the contrary, the environment minister's militant approach is always leading us to an impasse. It creates a highly conflicting polarization that must be quickly eased in order to find fair and equitable solutions.

These people have a lot to say. We can't limit them to one hour of testimony on such an important topic when 2,000 jobs and the future of the woodland caribou are at stake. These people have to tell us how they see the future of the workers and the caribou and how we can work to protect both at the same time. So it is important that we have two hours to hear from the Boisaco Group representatives.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

[English]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I applaud the Conservatives' recent interest in having more meetings. I would just say that if it were their priority and their strong opinion that we needed to have more than whatever was arrived at during this meeting, they could have made those changes in the motion they ran off at the top of this meeting, but they didn't.

We arrived at this meeting with these proposed changes to accommodate three additional stakeholders. It's very standard to have

an hour for three stakeholders. That's 15 minutes for opening statements and an hour and 45 minutes for questions. That's more than adequate, and I would like to move on to voting on this amendment.

Again, I thank the Conservatives for their recent interest in engaging with stakeholders on this subject.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mrs. Chatel, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I find it fascinating that, in 2024, the Conservatives think that we can have an economy that is not based on a healthy environment. It makes no sense. Where are they from?

Mr. Luc Berthold: That's the opposite of what I just said—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: No. Put some heart into your words. It's amazing to see that they think you can have an economy without ecology. Of course we want to protect biodiversity. Caribou are also linked to an economic sector; it's not just an environmental issue. The two go together—

Mr. Luc Berthold: We'll talk about this again.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: We need a healthy environment to have a healthy economy, so I don't see what the problem is. We must have a—

Mr. Francis Drouin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: With all due respect to my colleague Mr. Berthold, who talked about respect for witnesses, I would remind him that we also must respect our colleagues on the committee. For some time now, he has been commenting while someone else is speaking. I would remind him that he does not have the floor.

The Chair: Ideally, one person would speak at a time.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Unfortunately, I'm—

The Chair: Is this a point of order?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, it's a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order, as well.

The Chair: Too many points of order are being raised at the same time. I'm losing track.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, my point of order will be brief.

The Chair: Do be brief, Mr. Berthold.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I could have raised a point of order on the relevance of Mrs. Chatel's comments, but I didn't. I should have done that by asking you for the floor. That's what I'll do next time.

The Chair: Where were we?

Mrs. Chatel, you had the floor, so continue.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, I was interrupted. I know it is becoming a habit for the Conservatives to interrupt me and yell louder when I have the floor. This is the new style of politics the Conservatives are playing, especially with their female colleagues. We are going to try to arm ourselves with a good armour and deal with this new unfortunate reality for democracy.

I'll go back to what I said. Economic health and ecological health go hand in hand. We need to protect the caribou. This is not just a Quebec issue. The Species at Risk Act does exist. It's a federal statute that is part of the committee's mandate, and that is what we are discussing. We have to respect our jurisdictions while fully respecting provincial jurisdictions, of course. I don't think there's any debate on that. The Conservatives would like to make this a political issue, but everything is political for them, even the environment.

That said, I would like to remind you that this is important for the forestry sector and for jobs. Our forestry companies and forestry workers want certainty. We have to agree, we have to make our voice heard and we have to be the voice of our communities.

I think four meetings is more than enough. We want our voice to be heard before the end of the consultations, which go until September 15. The number of meetings we can have is limited.

Therefore, I support the proposed amendment to hold four meetings.

• (1315)

The Chair: Okay.

First, we have to vote on Mr. Berthold's subamendment, which proposes that we devote two hours to each of the witnesses.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: We will now vote on the amendment proposed by Mr. van Koeverden. Enough has been said about all aspects of the issue.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Is there any discussion on the main motion?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I would like to move an amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I propose to add, under items i to iv in Roman numerals, the following item iii.

The Chair: Sorry, you've lost me.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We're on the main motion.

The Chair: Okay. I'm looking for the French version.

We see items i to iv. Then there are items a to c.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That's right.

The Chair: Are you talking about items a to c or items i to iv?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'm talking about items i to iv.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: After item ii, I propose adding the following, before item iii: "the socio-economic impact of an emergency decree on communities across Quebec;"

The Chair: So it would be a matter of adding this element between items ii and iii.

Could you read it again?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We would add to the nomenclature, "the socio-economic impact of an emergency decree on communities across Quebec;"

The Chair: It would be at the end of the sentence. Is that correct?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Since item ii talks about impacts, it would be better to add the sentence right after. This is all a bit of an embellishment. We're proposing to add another line.

The Chair: I'm trying to understand the amendment.

There is the item "iii the socio-economic effects of forest fires on communities;" Would something be added to that?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: No.

The first item of the motion is fine. Our amendment was accepted and we are very happy about it. After that, there are items i, ii, iii, and iv.

After item ii, we suggest adding the following sentence: "the socio-economic impact of an emergency decree on communities across Quebec;" Why do we want to put it in there—

• (1320)

The Chair: Okay. Item iii becomes iv and item iv becomes v. I understand. That's perfect. That's clear. We have the text in front of us.

Do you want to speak to it?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It goes back to what we said earlier, that an emergency decree is an unprecedented step that should be used only as a last resort. But this government, which is always happy to encroach on provincial jurisdictions, wants to do it.

We want to focus on the socio-economic impact of an emergency decree on communities in Quebec. Beyond the legal battles, the emergency decree in question has a direct impact on thousands of people, especially the 2,000 people who work in the forest industry.

The Chair: Would anyone like to comment?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, I would just like to raise a point of clarification. Is this an addition or a replacement?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It's an addition.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Okay.

The Chair: We would add after item ii—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Would item iii become item iv?

The Chair: That's right, and item iv would become item v.

Are there any comments on that, either for or against?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Yes.

I am a member from Quebec. Right now, it is really the caribou communities and the Quebec communities that are affected. Isn't that limiting? When the meeting takes place, there may be others.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You're right. It is not limiting, but, since we are talking about the woodland caribou and this problem is happening in Quebec, it goes without saying that the witnesses will testify about their reality on their territory, the provincial territory.

That's why this is a provincial matter, not a federal matter. Why? It's because the realities are different from other....

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Thank you very much. You've clarified the point I raised.

I understand very well that this issue is unfolding in Quebec at the moment. However, we have a federal piece of legislation. A member of the Quebec Parliament already knows that there is a Species at Risk Act and that it falls under federal jurisdiction.

Am I mistaken, Mr. Deltell?

The Chair: We're talking about the amendment—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I don't know. We may be getting lost in jurisdictional issues. The species at risk act does exist.

The Chair: There is indeed an emergency decree under that act.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: That is a federal statute. Mr. Deltell is saying that it's not a federal statute.

The Chair: His amendment only talks about the impact of the decree—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: He says it's not within our purview.

Mr. Luc Berthold: We are talking about the impact on communities in Quebec.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: That falls under our jurisdiction because it is a federal act.

Mr. Luc Berthold: What does that have to do with it?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: It has something to do with it.

The Chair: Even if the measure is taken within federal jurisdiction, it can have an impact on the ground—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, that's not what I'm saying.

We fully agree that the impact of this decree, under federal law, is being felt in Quebec. As a member from Quebec, I was wondering whether such a decree had an impact on caribou outside Quebec. Right now, that is not the case.

I was just raising a point of clarification. My colleague has clarified everything, and I sincerely thank him for that.

The Chair: Yes, we are talking about Quebec communities.

Can we vote on Mr. Deltell's amendment?

Other members want to comment.

Mr. Boulerice, you have the floor.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

There are three main topics in this important discussion we're having today.

First is the protection and defence of workers.

Second is adequate consultation with the affected indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation. Moreover, on June 21, the Superior Court of Quebec ruled that the CAQ's Quebec government had not adequately consulted indigenous communities. We have to keep that in mind as well.

Third is our responsibilities for the protection of endangered species and other species at risk, and biodiversity.

I see that my colleague's amendment focuses on only one of those three topics, whereas we have responsibilities, as parliamentarians, to protect endangered species and biodiversity. There was a lot of rhetoric at COP15 in Montreal, but at some point, that must also apply in real life. Furthermore, not only does the amendment refer to only one of the three topics, but more importantly, it is somewhat redundant to what is already in the initial motion moved by the Bloc Québécois, which obviously talks about the impact on jobs and economic activities in a number of regions of Quebec.

So I could vote for or against the amendment, but I get the impression that it is not really relevant and that it adds nothing essential to the motion, which already takes into consideration the interests of the industry, the regions and the workers.

● (1325)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, did you want to say something?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Just very briefly, any species at risk or endangered species is entirely the jurisdiction of the federal government, and when caribou cross territorial and provincial borders, they don't have to surrender any papers or anything like that at the border. It's the same as with water pollution and air pollution: Caribou do not respect provincial and territorial borders.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I would just like to clarify something for my colleague Mr. Boulerice.

First of all, the reason it doesn't say caribou is that it already specifically mentions the animals under item i, where it says "the issues that threaten the caribou". However, what is not addressed in the current motion is the issue of the emergency decree, and that is what we want to add to the arguments. So it's not redundant. It adds a reference to it being an emergency decree. Had the minister not been so aggressive and imperialistic in interfering in provincial jurisdictions with this decree, we may not have been here today. However, since we're talking about a decree, that's at the heart of the debate, so we want to add that reference.

The Chair: As I don't see any other raised hands, we can go to a vote on Mr. Deltell's amendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Can we vote on the motion?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I have an amendment to propose.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Luc Berthold: The amendment is to add, after “a. Invite the Minister of the Environment and officials”, “to appear for two hours independently within seven days of the motion being adopted”.

I will submit it to the clerk in both official languages so that it can be distributed.

The Chair: Then we would continue with “to respond”. Is that correct?

Mr. Luc Berthold: After that, it would be, “on the subject of the emergency decree and the elements...”.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I would like to say one more thing, Mr. Chair.

The minister knowingly and willingly encroached on the Quebec government's jurisdiction to protect the caribou and jobs. So it is important that he come and explain how he can act in such a unilateral and radical way, particularly toward the communities affected by this decree. The chief forester and the Government of Quebec have been very clear about the consequences this will have.

Therefore, the minister must come and report to the committee on the motivations behind the application of this decree, and as we have wanted this meeting to take place since the beginning of July, we can't wait for the minister to decide on his own to come and testify.

We would like that appearance to take place within seven days of this meeting.

The Chair: Ms. Pausé, you have the floor.

Ms. Monique Pausé: I would like to ask for a clarification.

Where it says, “appear for two hours independently”, what does “independently” mean?

Does that mean two hours for the minister and two hours for the officials?

Mr. Luc Berthold: It means two hours for the minister, without the officials. The minister can be accompanied, but we don't want officials to be invited as witnesses. We want the minister to be called to appear for two hours. Usually, we spend an hour with the minister and an hour with officials. We want the minister to have two hours to answer questions on his own. We want him to stay at the table for two hours and not leave after an hour.

• (1330)

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Chatel, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I love our Minister of Environment. He is doing an excellent job; he is listening and holding consultations. However, I also want to hear from the departmental experts. I don't know whether that is the case for my Conservative colleagues, but I

absolutely want to hear from the people who are dealing with the technical side of the issue. I really like the minister, who sees the big picture, but I also want to hear from the officials. For me, it's also important to hear from the minister and the officials before September 15, which marks the end of the consultations.

The Chair: I suggest that we ask him to appear for two hours with his officials. That way, it would be clear that we want to have the minister for two hours and we want to hear from his officials, as well.

Ms. Monique Pausé: Mr. Chair, I support your proposal. Legal experts are also working on this issue. Of course, the minister needs those people to appear.

The Chair: Mr. Berthold, what do you think?

Mr. Luc Berthold: I missed the question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I suggested a small amendment to make it clearer. It would be to say “appear for two hours, accompanied by his officials”. That would reflect our wish that he spend two hours here along with the officials.

Mr. Luc Berthold: The person I want to hear from is the minister. The minister will decide who will accompany him, but I don't want the officials to be called to appear as witnesses.

The Chair: Okay. We can just say, “appear for two hours”.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I would like to hear from the minister for an hour, but I also want to hear from lawyers, experts and scientists. The minister can stay, but I want us to have an hour with the minister and an hour with the officials to hear from them and put questions to them.

The Chair: I think you all agree that the officials should be able to accompany him.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I've never seen the opposite happen. What I want is for the minister to stay for two hours.

The Chair: Yes. I suggested that he spend two hours here and that he be accompanied by his officials.

Mr. Luc Berthold: We don't need to add that he must be accompanied by his officials. We just want the minister to appear.

The Chair: Okay. So we can write, “appear for two hours”. I find that writing “independently” muddles things a bit.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I'm prepared to remove “independently” if the minister appears for two hours.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I've never been an advocate of independence.

The Chair: It is understood that he can be accompanied by his officials, and the meeting minutes will specify that we agree on that.

Can we go to a vote?

Mr. Francis Drouin: No. I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

I support the proposal made by Mr. Berthold and by you, but I would remind you that the committee will be holding four meetings, so I don't want to impose a time limit on the minister. I would remove "within seven days of the motion being adopted". We can simply say that we want him to appear when he is available.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Drouin is proposing a subamendment to remove "within seven days of the motion being adopted".

Can we vote on that?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, if I understand correctly, we would delete "independently within seven days"—

The Chair: We've already agreed to delete "independently". Mr. Berthold agreed to remove that because it did not clarify matters. So we have to vote on deleting "within seven days".

Can we start the vote?

• (1335)

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Okay.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I would like to raise a point.

I say this with all due respect for the entire team, but, unfortunately, this committee has had some issues in the past with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change appearing or not appearing. I say this with great respect for the entire team, which works hard, but sincerely, if we don't put "within seven days", he will come in six months, if he still remembers. It has happened all too often. We find that unfortunate.

The Chair: Okay.

Can we vote on deleting "within seven days"?

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: Can we now vote on the amendment as amended, that is, without the words "independently" and "within seven days"?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I think we can reach a compromise.

I've had the opportunity to speak with members on the other side of the table. It seems to me that, if we invited the minister to appear within 14 days of the motion being adopted, that would satisfy everyone. We would be happy, we would be able to come to an agreement, and that would ensure the minister's presence.

The Chair: Can he move a subamendment to his own amendment?

Mr. Luc Berthold: No, but Mr. Deltell will do it.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I'd be happy to.

The Chair: Okay. Time is running out, and I'm trying to rush this.

Mr. Deltell has a subamendment to Mr. Berthold's amendment. We have already removed "within seven days" and he would like to add "within 14 days". Is that correct?

Mr. Francis Drouin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm wondering how many times we can go over the same subject. We have just dealt with the time frame of the minister's appearance. But we are coming back to that again. If we keep doing it, the meeting will not move forward at all. We—

The Chair: We're not going back to the words "within seven days". This time, it's about inviting the minister to appear "within 14 days".

Mr. Francis Drouin: That's right, but I just deleted the words "seven days".

The Chair: Yes, but we're no longer talking about a seven-day time frame. We're not going back to the words "within seven days".

Mr. Deltell is proposing to add "within 14 days". Apparently, an agreement was reached somewhere in the hallways.

Go ahead, Mrs. Chatel.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: A consultation will end on September 15. Obviously, the issue is important, and if we invite the minister, he will come within the time frame.

I don't know what you're afraid of. I am not at all worried.

The Chair: Mr. Deltell is withdrawing his subamendment.

Can we vote on the amendment to remove the words "independently" and "within seven days"?

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: Can we now vote on the motion as amended?

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I would like to move an amendment.

I would like to add the following words: "Invite the Minister of the Environment, the Fight Against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks, from the Quebec government, Mr. Benoit Charette".

The Chair: Where do you want to add that?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It could be inserted after item a.

The Chair: So it would be after the item where we invite the Minister of the Environment and his officials.

Could you repeat the text you are proposing?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We would insert the following: "Invite the Minister of the Environment, the Fight Against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks, from the Quebec government, Mr. Benoit Charette".

The Chair: Okay. So it would read, "Invite the Minister of the Environment and officials, and the Minister"—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: No, it would read, "the Minister of the Environment, the Fight Against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks, from the Quebec government, Mr. Benoit Charette".

• (1340)

The Chair: Okay.

So we also want to invite the Quebec Minister of the Environment, Benoit Charette. That is what we want to add to item a. of the second part of the motion.

Does everyone understand what Mr. Deltell wants to do?

Ms. Pauzé, you have the floor.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: I would like to ask a question, as there have been times when I've asked the minister to come—

The Chair: He wouldn't come.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: He didn't want to come, that's right.

The Chair: He has the option not to come.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Okay.

Did Mr. Deltell get the minister's commitment? Have those steps already been taken?

The Chair: I doubt it, but I may be wrong.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Have you ever seen me say things without checking them?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Yes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: It didn't come from the chair, but do you think he's going to accept the invitation?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I think the chances are good.

The Chair: Okay. In any case, he may not come.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Saying that the chances are good is a joke.

The Chair: Listen, he can decline the invitation anyway. That's beyond our control. We do not want to interfere in Quebec's affairs. He will come if he wants. We can't force them to accept.

Is there agreement on this amendment?

[English]

Mr. van Koeverden, are you in agreement with bringing in—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The motion already says that we can list anybody we would like as a witness. The Conservatives are well within their rights to invite anybody they'd like on that list.

I appreciate that perhaps the Conservatives have run out of proposed amendments and subamendments, but this one doesn't apply, because it's already captured in the original motion.

The Chair: I think—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I would ask that it be deemed redundant and unnecessary. We can invite—

The Chair: I won't rule it redundant. We're naming people all over the motion.

It stands as far as I'm concerned, but can we just vote on it?

We'll vote on it and then we'll vote on the entire motion, hopefully.

An hon. member: No, no, no.

The Chair: No? Okay, we have more amendments after, but let's get rid of this one.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

[Translation]

The Chair: So we will not be inviting him.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order.

If we don't adopt this motion, there will be no meeting. My understanding is that the Conservatives' strategy is to propose amendments so that there is no meeting, as they keep proposing amendments.

Are they for or against the idea of discussing this in committee?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You say that amendments are constantly being proposed, but do you know that four amendments have been adopted?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Yes, but—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: That's pretty good, isn't it? That improves the work, madam.

The Chair: Order.

Listen, we have about 15 minutes left. If I understood correctly, Mr. Deltell wants to move another amendment. That's his right, but I would like us to proceed fairly quickly.

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Yes, I have other amendments to propose, of course, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: How many do you have?

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Deltell has the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I am moving an amendment that the committee invite the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry for two hours respectively.

• (1345)

The Chair: Can we vote on that?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, do you want to speak?

[English]

Mr. van Koeverden, your hand is up.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: On a point of order, I think it's up to you, as chair, whether we entertain endless amendments to this or we vote on the original motion.

The Chair: I can't stop people from proposing amendments. I can't do that.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: No, but I think you can move directly to vote on the original motion. I truly think it's up to you, given the amount of time that we have today, to vote on the main motion or to entertain this—

The Chair: I can't do that, but what I will do is exhort members of the committee to get through this quickly. If a member has an amendment to propose, then that's fine, but let's vote on it and get this motion passed so that we can organize the meetings.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Yes, but respectfully, Monsieur Deltell just indicated that he has lots more amendments.

It's clear what they're doing. If we want to just—

The Chair: Yes, but then we'll run out of time.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: This is a standard—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. van Koeverden. I understand what you're saying. If we keep going on endlessly, what's going to happen is that we're going to run out of time; there won't be a motion, and we're not going to have a study. I think everybody here wants to look at this.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I disagree.

The Chair: Okay, well, whatever—maybe not everybody wants to look at this. The point is we want to get.... Maybe we don't want to. I don't know what the committee wants.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Okay, let's vote on this one.

The Chair: Let's vote on this one.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Deltell, do you have another amendment to propose?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, here is my next amendment—

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask a question for clarification.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Drouin?

Mr. Francis Drouin: I see that it is 1:50 p.m., and the meeting is supposed to end at 2 p.m. I just want to make sure that the request pursuant to Standing Order 106(4) has been dealt with. So we would have to vote on the main motion. However, I would ask the clerk to tell us until what time we can keep going, based on the resources we have. I am prepared to stay here until 5 p.m. if necessary.

The Chair: We can't stay until 5 p.m.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I imagine they also want to vote on the main motion.

Mr. Luc Berthold: If you stop talking, we'll vote.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We want to vote on our amendments.

The Chair: We're wasting time.

Mr. Deltell, you have the floor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Chair, I couldn't have said it better than you. Thank you very much.

My amendment seeks to add to the list the following: "Order that the government produce all socio-economic analyses completed on the impact of the federal decree, including all projected job loss analyses, within 14 days of the motion being adopted;".

The Chair: Can we vote on that?

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I have another amendment, Mr. Chair.

In the same list, I propose adding the following paragraph: "The committee write a letter to the natural resources committee asking the chair to immediately recall the committee in order to plan a study on the federal decree;".

The Chair: We can go to a vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

• (1350)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Chair, I have another amendment. It's very short. I move that the following words be added to the motion: "The committee denounce any interference by the federal government in provincial jurisdictions."

The Chair: Okay. It's true that it's simple.

Can we go to a vote?

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: This proposal is not relevant. We are not going to debate interference or non-interference. Our committee has to discuss the federal act and its implications. We are not going to hold a debate session on constitutional law. It's not relevant.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I would like you to rule on the relevance of this amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: If the amendment is not relevant, it should not be moved and voted on.

The Chair: Just a moment, I'll give you my opinion on that.

Everything is being added, anything goes. This seems to be beyond the scope of the motion. We would be starting a constitutional debate. It is true that there is a federal act. If there is interference in this matter, it is the courts that must rule, as in the case of the decree in Candiac. I think people are crossing the line to engage in politics.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: You can challenge the chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I don't think it's relevant.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Are the amendments finished?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Do you think it is out of order?

The Chair: I find that we are going—

Ms. Monique Pauzé: My patience is running out.

The Chair: We will never finish. It's broad. This debate has been going on for decades.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Give us your ruling, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I don't accept the amendment. That's my ruling.

Is the committee in agreement to vote on the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1355)

The Chair: We've done a good job.

The meeting is adjourned.

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