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# Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

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Chair: Mr. Joël Lightbound





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• (1625)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone.

I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting no. 95 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the standing orders.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), this meeting was requested by members of the committee to discuss the possibility of undertaking a study of the recent fact-finding exercise report on Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

We'll begin by discussing the meeting request.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, committee members.

Maybe I could do a quick outline. This company, the SDTC, is actually set up at arm's length, as we know, from the government. It's not like a Crown corporation. It's a separate foundation that was set up in 2001.

About 10 or 12 years ago, it was a bit of a mess. The government of the day changed the board and brought in a board chair to clean it up, who hired a new president to try to clean it up, and it got a gold star from the Auditor General in 2017 for governance. In 2019, on a week's notice, the former minister of industry changed the board chair to the current chair, as well as a couple of members. The result of that was a restructuring of a number of the funds and the investment processes.

Now, in my view, the current chair should never have been appointed. She had a conflict of interest going into it in that SDTC had given her company a \$9.5-million grant, which had to have continued follow-up from the company. This set a different tone for the organization about conflicts of interest.

As a result of that, a number of whistle-blowers came to the minister and to the Privy Council Office in January to outline a whole series of questionable transactions and relationships between the board and a number of the companies. It wasn't only companies re-

ceiving grants from this organization, but also companies that were hired from the outside to do evaluations of each grant proposal and their questionable relationships with board members.

As we know, when you sit on a corporate board—I've sat on private and Crown corporation boards—it's not just about a real conflict of interest; it's about the perceived conflicts of interest. Those are just as important in our business as well. It appears, from what has been reported on by whistle-blowers, that there are many instances not only of conflicts but of restructuring the funds outside of the mandate letter or the mandate agreement they have with the government.

The Liberal government, 35 months ago, gave this organization \$750 million more of taxpayer money. The current minister became the minister one month after that, so he's been overseeing this organization for 34 months, yet was totally unaware of the governance changes and the investment process changes in this organization, to which his ministry had just given three-quarters of a billion dollars of taxpayer money.

The result of those whistle-blower comments... I'll outline that those whistle-blowers are doing something unusual, because they're not protected by government whistle-blower policy, which is an issue. They have come out and put themselves on the line. They are not protected by the Government of Canada's whistle-blower policies.

Because these conflicts are so egregious, as the committee that's responsible for the reporting of the operations of the industry department—otherwise known as ISED—the minister, all its Crown corporations, its agencies and its financial estimates, which includes the financial accounting and public accounts of the expenditures of ISED and all its organizations, including SDTC, we need to take a look at this now.

It is true that the current minister, upon receiving this, asked for what is called a fact-finding report from Grant Thornton, which has been presented. A very narrow mandate was given to it. It was much narrower than the accusations that were made.

However, we also know from the media last week that a number of senior ISED officials called this the greatest scandal of taxpayer money we have had in the government—it may be \$100 million or more of taxpayer money allocated in a conflict—since the sponsorship scandal of the Chrétien government.

• (1630)

I believe it's incumbent upon this committee to examine, as is our responsibility to Parliament, the expenditures, processes and impacts of all these management and governance changes at this organization for which the industry department is accountable.

I understand, Mr. Chair, that this requires a motion, which I would like to put forward now. I think the clerk has copies, if she would like to distribute them.

I can read this, and then we'll presumably have a bit of a discussion here in the committee about it.

I move that, in relation to the recent investigation and report on Sustainable Development Technology Canada, otherwise known as SDTC, showing a breach in conflict-of-interest rules and misuse of public funds, the committee undertake a study of up to six meetings to investigate these allegations; that the committee invite the following witnesses to appear before the committee: François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry; Doug McConnell, chief financial officer and assistant deputy minister of corporate services at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; Annette Verschuren, the current chair of SDTC; whistle-blowers who have come forward; and any other witnesses deemed relevant to the study put forward by parties—I would probably also put forward the president of SDTC as a witness we should hear from—and, subject to the approval of the recognized party whips and the availability of meeting time slots in the House of Commons, that the committee hold additional meetings and/or extend our current committee meetings by one hour on each allotted day for each meeting on this matter with the goal of not delaying the study of Bill C-27.

That's the motion. The idea is to give the committee two options. We could add additional meetings, which I know is more difficult, but I think from our whip's perspective, they would work to find the resources. The easier solution, since we meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, is to add an hour to the meetings after the Bill C-27 testimony for the next number of meetings to consider this.

With that, I will turn it back to you, Mr. Chair, for others to comment.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Masse and Mr. Lemire.

Just for precision, Mr. Perkins, one possibility that you've highlighted in the motion is for one more hour at the end of the meetings. Would that count as one meeting, by the terms of your motion?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Usually, meetings are two hours. Okay.

I have Mr. Masse, Mr. Lemire and Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for agreeing to start the discussion on this with a motion that we can work with.

I agreed to this meeting because of a couple of things—my interest in whistle-blowers and in protecting them. I've talked to some of the former employees there. We had the minister at the ethics committee yesterday. My primary concern in all of this is obviously due

process, but the position I've also taken is to provide the workers who are still there with equivalent public service jobs if they want to leave that agency and go on a lateral move somewhere else within the civil service. It's something that we can do to protect them. It probably would also ensure that the process the minister is going through right now is thorough.

For me, it's about protecting those families who are there. That's the bottom line. The agency gets away from an environment that actually has a union. The agency gets away from greater accountability to protect the public servants. Even though their salaries are virtually 100% paid by the public, they are not protected in the same way. I see this as an entire issue over social justice and the abuse of workers. Until we actually have those guarantees in place, I'm prepared to meet as much as possible to continue to bring that message forward on a constant basis. I'll be a broken record on that, because I think it is something we can control.

When I'm talking to the different people who were there and who have moved on, I can tell in their voices the sincerity and the concern. In terms of mental health, some of them have gone on stress leave. There are not enough employees there for them to hide if they're one of the ones coming forward. I know that a third party lawyer has been engaged, but I don't necessarily trust that process either.

I'll conclude by supporting this motion until the government provides some assurances to those workers beyond what the minister is saying right now. I repeatedly went after the same thing through three exchanges. I'm still not satisfied. Those people have to live through this process. The longer it goes on...it's problematic. If this parliamentary system right now will expedite that, then I think that's better for them than actually going through a long-drawn-out process if they do want to get out of this environment and they have no choice.

That's the preference that I have and that's the position that I have at this time. Thank you very much for your time and for bringing this forward.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Perkins for requesting this meeting. In the interest of transparency, I should add that I would have been happy to add my name to the request had the French version been made available to me earlier. That would have made three parties and six members requesting this meeting to address a worrisome situation involving the use of public funds.

I support what my colleague said about protecting whistle-blowers. That is a crucial aspect of our democracy.

I'd like to propose an amendment to the motion. First, I'd like to suggest that we have two meetings, not six. If they are short, one-hour meetings, we can compromise. However, in the interest of saving time given our very full agenda with our study of Bill C-27, I suggest changing the wording.

Instead of directing the committee to invite specific witnesses, we could propose that all information obtained in Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics meetings on this matter be shared with the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, including past and future testimony and, in particular, that of Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Mr. François-Philippe Champagne. I would leave the other four points unchanged.

We can give ourselves the option of inviting witnesses back as needed and inviting any other relevant witness so we don't have to invite them all. The meeting could take place after the whistleblowers testify at INDU so we can get the supplementary and complementary information that will make our study even more comprehensive because I think our committee is in the best position to study this kind of motion.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lemire has proposed an amendment.

Mr. Lemire, members may ask you to repeat it because it is rather long. If I understand correctly, essentially, you're suggesting that we set aside four hours for this study rather than six meetings; that the information gathered by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics be shared with the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology; and that we not be obliged to invite everyone on the list of proposed witnesses.

Do I have that right?

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I propose that we give ourselves the option to invite certain witnesses back if necessary. However, I think it's important to schedule this after the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics' study and the whistleblowers' testimony. I would like us to make a complementary contribution to the study, not do the same study twice.

**The Chair:** Perfect.

[English]

We're now debating the amendment proposed by Mr. Lemire.

If it's on the amendment, I have Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Vis and then Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** I'm not sure if I fully understand the amendment. I understand that it's to have two meetings instead of six, and then to perhaps have the sharing of witness testimony from other committees, so there's no redundancy in terms of who we hear from at this committee. Could I check, without yielding the floor, whether Mr. Lemire can confirm that's what he's suggesting?

**A voice:** Yes.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Okay.

I want to make some general remarks on this amendment and on the motion as a whole to let you know where I stand on it, or where we stand. I won't speak for all my colleagues here, but it's safe to

say we take this matter seriously. There were allegations of mismanagement. The minister has known about those and hasn't been sitting on his hands. He's acted, as you know, as Mr. Perkins said. You've probably heard the testimony the minister gave last night at the ethics committee. I know Mr. Perkins and Mr. Masse were both there.

Mr. Masse, I know you got to ask the minister questions, which is great.

We know the minister asked for an independent review of the agency based on the allegations of mismanagement. That review has been completed. That has resulted in an action plan and the freezing of the accounts of SDTC. All of this is public knowledge. On top of that, the Auditor General is doing an audit, so we know that process is under way. We also know our ministry has also hired a firm to do an HR management review as a parallel process to the Auditor General's audit. We also have two other committees looking at this. Public accounts and ethics are looking at the very same topic, and both are doing a study.

Was I wrong about that?

• (1640)

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I think it's only ethics.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** My understanding is that public accounts has had the deputy auditor general appear, and they are talking about this matter as well.

Do you want to clarify that?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** It's okay.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I can get you evidence of that if you dispute that, but that's my understanding.

There are two other committees at least that are looking into this, so I am wondering why it is that our committee.... I understand that as many committees as desire to do so can do this work, but, to me, we have important government legislation, Bill C-27, which we have all said is a priority for our country. It's legislation that hasn't been updated in 20 years, so I think we all agree that it's a high priority.

What are we trying to accomplish here by having another committee do the very same work that two other committees are already undertaking in Parliament?

What I would say is that this feels like there is a lot already being done. The government has been very transparent, open, diligent and willing to co-operate with the Auditor General, and it takes the matter seriously. We've said numerous times in the House of Commons.... I've answered many questions about this in the last few weeks and said that we really take the federal agencies and the standards of governance they uphold seriously and that they need to be held to the highest standard and held to account. We think, from our perspective, that we're doing that.

This feels like a bit of a delay tactic for Bill C-27. That's what I am going to say, because, for me, what is it that this committee is going to do over and above those other two committees that have already started to undertake this work? They've heard from key witnesses. Members from this committee have gone over and subbed in and participated in the ethics committee, just as of last night.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I was listening.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** You were there, and you heard the testimony. You were listening in and—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** That's why I need to do it.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** —auditing the committee—

**The Chair:** Mr. Perkins, this is not an exchange. Mr. Turnbull has the floor.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** It's okay. I appreciate that, Chair.

The point is this: If another committee or multiple other committees are doing this work, what is the need for this committee to have an emergency meeting to undertake this very same work, which is happening in other committees?

That's what I see, and I am not saying that this isn't an important issue, by the way. I agree that it's important, but why would we have three committees doing the same work in parallel? That seems like a waste of resources and time, and we have important government legislation that everybody has said is very important.

I would say that those are the key points I want to put on the record.

One other thing that I didn't mention is that the redacted report has been provided to committee members at the other committee, I believe at ethics, so they have a redacted copy of the report that has only confidential information taken out. That report has been made available to those committee members.

Key for me is how we ensure that we're not duplicating efforts, because I think we all agree that our time is valuable and that we want to do useful work. This study is being undertaken at ethics, which seems to me to be the most appropriate place for it to happen, to be honest. If members are talking about conflicts of interest, that relates to the ethics committee's work. It seems to me that we don't need three studies going on in parallel.

Maybe others want to comment on that, but I would say that I do appreciate Mr. Lemire's attempts at amending the motion, because I think it would hopefully enable us to alleviate delaying our work on Bill C-27, which I appreciate very much.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

For members who are questioning, those aren't bells for a vote. That was for a quorum call. That's why we don't need unanimous consent to continue.

Would it maybe be useful for members to have Mr. Lemire read into the record again the terms of the amendment, or is it well understood by everyone?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** The amendment has been sent to the clerk.

**The Chair:** Okay. The amendment has been sent to the clerk and will be shared so everyone can see the working—

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** As a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, was it two meetings of four hours, or was it that we would do four...?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** That was the basic idea. We can alter the format, but we want four hours of meetings.

**The Chair:** The best way to say it would be two meetings or a maximum of four hours.

[*English*]

It will be two meetings or up to four hours, if they are split into one hour segments. I think that was the essence of what Mr. Lemire....

I have Mr. Vis, Mr. Généreux and then Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Am I able to speak to the motion itself or the amendment?

**The Chair:** We are on the amendment.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** We are on the amendment only. Then can I respond to Mr. Turnbull's comments that were in relation to the amendment or the motion itself?

**The Chair:** You can go ahead, Mr. Vis, on the...but we're debating the amendment right now, so try to keep to that.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** In respect of time, I can discuss that. What we've put forward in this motion is six hours. I guess what we're arguing for, in the context of Mr. Lemire's amendment, is whether we're going to study this for four or six hours.

In respect to relevancy, it is this committee, whether we decide to or not, that determines ultimately, through the estimates process, whether SDTC and Industry Canada can actually fund this organization, although through, I would say, multiple governments of all political stripes the powers that committees hold to approve or disapprove of parliamentary spending have not been used to their full benefit and in the way that I believe taxpayers would want us to use them.

I remember fondly, in 2015, that the Prime Minister mentioned repeatedly that committees would be independent of the government, and he made a promise that parliamentary secretaries would not be sitting at committee tables, because he wanted to have them at arm's length from the government. Obviously, that is not the case at all.

I agree with Mr. Turnbull that there is some work being done already in respect to this motion, but it is this committee that has the responsibility, under the Standing Orders, to review and approve of how money to SDTC is being spent. The fall economic statement is coming at a time that's very.... It could come any day. We don't know. The budget will be coming in the next few months. I think it is imperative that this committee, with its responsibilities under the rules of Parliament that dictate that we approve or disapprove where money from Industry Canada goes, give this its due attention and look at whether or not this organization should receive any additional funds.

Obviously, the government has taken it so seriously that they have said that they're putting a freeze on it. That's a pretty drastic action. That's not something the Minister of Industry or anyone in government ever does, especially with this government, which has spent more money than any government in the history of Canada. Their shutting off funding for a primary conduit to fund start-ups in the clean-tech industry is a massive indictment in and of itself that there is something extremely wrong with what is taking place at this organization, this not-for-profit funded by the Government of Canada.

My point is this. It is the responsibility of this committee, under the Standing Orders and the organization of Parliament, to undertake its due diligence to determine how money is spent in Parliament and which organizations are allocated money. It is imperative that this work take place prior to the estimates coming before this committee when the new fiscal year starts.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vis.

I understand that the amendment has been circulated by the clerk to all members.

[*Translation*]

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Généreux and then Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With respect to Mr. Lemire's amendment, I'd like to second Mr. Vis's reminder that committees are independent.

We regularly get gentle reminders in the House of Commons that committees are independent. As such, I hope that my Liberal colleagues will have the decency to follow this recommendation from their ministers, who constantly remind us about that independence in the House.

That said, Mr. Lemire, I just want to say that, during the Charbonneau commission in Quebec and the sponsorship scandal right here in Ottawa in the 1990s, elected representatives, public ser-

vants, and even whistle-blowers in some cases, had to put a huge amount of effort over a long period of time into bringing these scandals to light.

Can we use the word "scandal" in connection with the matter before us today? It sure looks as though we can.

As my colleague, Mr. Vis, just said, the fact that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry literally froze all funds administered by Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, suggests at the very least that something fishy is going on.

That's why I think we should be able to have six meetings. We're here to work. I understand Mr. Turnbull's point of view, and I respect it. We certainly do want to avoid having two different committees do the same work.

However, I agree with Mr. Vis that it's up to our committee to deal with all matters relating to industry and innovation, especially all the funding that goes to that.

That's why, quite honestly, I think six hours is not too much. As far as witnesses go, we can leave our options open. I'm not opposed to that, but I think we definitely need to hear from the whistle-blowers and the SDTC executive, who need to come and be accountable.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Généreux.

I believe Mr. Lemire's amendment has been sent. Both versions were sent, but I don't think the English version matches the French.

I'm reading both, and I see that the English one doesn't say—

[*English*]

It's been sent again by the clerk with the English version. However, the English version does not refer to two meetings. It still has six meetings in it, so there might be a bit of an issue. I understand that Monsieur Lemire is working to send it around again in both official languages.

I have Mr. Perkins and then Mr. Masse.

Are you okay, Mr. Perkins, even if you don't have the English text, to comment on the...?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I didn't realize it's not in the attachment. It's in the email.

**The Chair:** It's in the email.

Do we want to suspend for a few minutes to make sure that everyone has the proper amendment?

We'll do that for a maximum of five minutes. The meeting is suspended.

• (1650) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Okay, we're back.

You all have the amendment in both official languages.

Mr. Perkins had the floor. Then we'll go to Mr. Masse and Mr. Williams.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My sympathies to the translator who has a bad cold, it sounds like. I have been grappling with it for a couple of weeks. Hopefully you will deal with yours more quickly.

On the amendment, on the number of hours, I was trying to provide the committee with a couple of different options. Either we do separate meetings, or we just tag them on. The six meetings I was proposing were six meetings of an additional hour added to each of the existing Bill C-27 meetings. It's about six hours, which is not far off of what I think Mr. Lemire is proposing.

MP Turnbull, in response to the issue of delay, it's not a delay if it's an hour on the end of the existing meetings that we're already having on Bill C-27. I haven't proposed that we stop anything at all on Bill C-27. I agree with you, and I think we're all in agreement, that there's a need to do a thorough examination of what's been, so far, very fascinating testimony from witnesses on that important bill.

In terms of what's not clear to me, first of all, I don't think it's the same work as the ethics committee is doing. I attended just out of general interest. I wasn't invited to go. I just showed up to listen and see what the minister had to say. The line of questioning that I want to ask the minister about is very different from what the members of our side did on the ethics committee. Our work and our responsibility with regard to the estimates and the public accounting of the industry department and all of the billions of dollars it expends each year are different from the ethics committee's, so I think our look at it is a little different.

With regard to the amendment that's here, the only thing that I'm really concerned about is that I'm not clear on when we would start. I believe that we need to have the minister. I believe we need to have the chair. I believe we need to have the president of the SDTC, and I'm not sure that we can hold off to figure out what ethics is doing with the whistle-blowers. I don't even know if the whistle-blowers will agree to attend any committee, because the nature of whistle-blowing is that it's quiet and behind the scenes.

I think we can start our own work, which probably, given this timing since we're coming up to a constituency week next week, would probably not start until we return from the constituency break. I'm not suggesting that it would start this Thursday, and then we're on a riding break. It would probably be two weeks today, I guess, before we would start—at the end of that meeting.

Initially, my thought is that I would probably vote against this amendment if it means that we have to wait until the ethics committee has gone through a number of its witnesses before we do anything. I don't think we can wait. I think we need to get at it, start making the decisions and invite the minister and officials to come to the first meeting when we return from the constituency break, obviously pending his availability. He has a busy travel schedule.

I would think that we could do that, and we would do it over, let's say, six hours in six meetings for now. I think we can get what we need to get done. If there's a way to mash Mr. Lemire's motion together with ours to make sure that's clear, I just provided two options. We can do separate meetings, or we could do it at the end. I understand why it might have been a little confusing about which way to go. My personal preference is not to schedule more meetings. It's to add an hour on to each of the existing meetings we have and certainly not to substitute it for the work that we're already doing on Bill C-27.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Just to clarify, my understanding is that, based on the amendment of Mr. Lemire, it doesn't require us to wait until ETHI has completed its undertakings with regard to this matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemire, I'm not sure if that's the intention of your amendment, but that's what Mr. Perkins just said. I didn't interpret it that way.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** My intention is to avoid duplicating the work, for one, and, for another, to use our time wisely to study Bill C-27 and to hear from witnesses.

Just as an aside, Mr. Chair, I'd like to share part of the actual definition of our committee: "The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology studies and reports on legislation, the activities and spending of Industry Canada and its portfolio members," among other things.

Today's topic of discussion is squarely within our committee's purview. It is the very essence of our committee. The minister should be speaking to us. I think we need to demonstrate that diligence. However, if someone else does it, I think we can pick up where they leave off, take things a little further, and deal with issues relating to Industry Canada spending.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lemire.

Mr. Masse and Mr. William, for comments on Mr. Lemire's amendment.

Mr. Masse, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse:** There are a couple of things that come to mind.

First of all, it's not unusual for a same subject to be going concurrently through different committees, including this committee, because it is so overlapping. There are plenty of examples of that.

I was there, because Matthew was actually out of the country, so I happened to be the person who could fill in for him, and it worked out that way.

I'm not willing to cede this responsibility and the workers' lives, basically, to the ethics committee, when we're actually directly responsible for that agency in this chamber right here. I'm not willing to pass that up.

Ethics had its own thing going on. In fact, the meeting had to be suspended. Because of the conduct of certain members, the chair actually had to suspend the meeting. We don't have that problem here—thank goodness, Mr. Chair—but that's what actually took place at ethics. We had to actually cease operations because of the conduct of members there.

To me it's about my doing my job. Also, there's going to be a legislative change. The minister said we can't change the legislation, when the reality is that we can actually change it. If we change the legislation under this framework, it would come from this committee. It would come as a recommendation. It wouldn't come from ethics to change the legislation there, because it's a different set of responsibilities.

I'm not going to let those families down. I'm going to do what I have to do here to make sure that they are actually going to get the proper supports necessary, because they have to go in, again, every single day as this continues to go on, whether it's in public or behind the curtain. If it's not going to be behind the curtain, then I want to make sure that it's going to be done by members of this committee.

This issue was also brought up at science where it was turned down. This issue might go to environment. It might go to other committees. I know it's been shopped around quite a bit.

The bottom line is that I also don't want to have the professional public embarrassment of being part of a committee that turns its back on the responsibility we're mandated to do by virtue of being on this committee. That's what's being asked here—for us to actually turn our backs on our responsibilities and, just because it's convenient to let ethics do their own thing, we don't do our job here. That's critically important to understand.

I understand the importance of Bill C-27, but very few times has a committee basically stopped the sun and the earth from moving and put itself in a position where it can't do anything else, because of a bill.

By the way, the government never brought that bill into the chamber for the longest time, despite being urged to do so. On top of that, we had the minister here and a whole drama that continues to go on with amendments. It's actually led to a public campaign—if you check your emails right now—of people calling on us to stop Bill C-27. That's actually coming not just from ordinary citizens but from NGOs, the academic community and a whole host of different things. It's turned into a giant mess.

What I do know is that the individuals here in this issue are in our wheelhouse. I'm not willing to cede that. I'm not willing to cede that to the ethics committee, to the environment committee or to science committee. To me, it's very important that we do something on this, and for me it's about protecting the whistle-blowers and the workers. If we don't do anything and ethics muddles on this, those workers then have to wait for us to come back and revisit this to try to find another way back to the issue.

I really worry about that for their mental health and the way that they have to deal with this going to work every single day. In ethics they actually debated.... I had an amendment to give the chair some grace to scheduling when the whistle-blowers would come forward, because there were only two dates presented originally at that time. I amended that to give the chair more flexibility, because given my experience here, when you have that flexibility.... They only have one week. If something happens with the whistle-blowers...and it could be things that we don't imagine, where things at work turn because of all these public things that are going on right now and it becomes a different environment than is currently there.

For me, I don't want to let this be dragged out any further, but I also want to make sure that we don't end up basically passively supporting the lengthening of the duration of this, just because we don't do our jobs here, because we're willing to brush it off to ethics. It's a totally different environment.

I'm okay with the four or six hours, as long as we don't.... I'll be quite frank. If we have to do more for the workers, I'll be the one out there putting motions forward to actually increase the hearings. I'd rather not delay Bill C-27. I'd like to do whatever we can to keep going on that, despite all the failings of it, but don't use it as a shield to basically say we won't do our job here.

I'll support the time changes in the amendment to start, but I'll be the first to ask for more time, if necessary, to actually get to the bottom of this if we don't get protection for the workers.

● (1710)

That's what I want from the government. They have done some good things. The minister has done some positive things, but we still don't protect them, because we chose as Parliament to make them vulnerable to the situation. By the way, these boards and the CEO and the ones who have been.... These are political appointee positions.

That's kind of where I see things going. I appreciate that, and I'll end it there.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

I have Mr. Williams next on the amendment presented by Mr. Lemire.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Mr. Chair, I think we can all agree that we want to stand up for the whistle-blowers. I think we can all agree that ethics is doing its job with conflict of interest breaches. Our job is to look at the program and the misuse of \$150 million so far.

I think the way we're looking at it is that it has to be six hours because of the workers, because of the people who step forward, because of the whistle-blowers. We have to put that time in for them. Hopefully, we get the six meetings. I think that's important. If you look at the calendar, that will only take us to the break. It kind of fits within the schedule. It just means that the committee has to do three hours instead of two for six meetings. I don't think that's out of line. I think that still allows us to do Bill C-27. At the same time, it does the important work that this seems to be. I think six hours is even pretty low. That would only be three normal meetings.

I think we'll probably go against that amendment, just to make sure it is six. It needs to be six hours for the workers. I think that's just fair to them. They put a lot of work into these documents. I can tell you from past experience that any staff who puts their livelihood, quite frankly, on the line to be a whistle-blower has to be commended and protected. We also need to be doing work on their behalf.

Lastly, this is the committee. This minister is responsible to this committee and this committee only, so we should be studying that here—and thoroughly. That's what I think we intended with the first motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I see no more comments on the amendment presented by Mr. Lemire. Hence, I will ask the clerk to put it to a vote.

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

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to Mr. Perkins's motion as amended by Mr. Lemire's amendment.

Are there other comments on the amended motion before us?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I'd like to make a friendly amendment to the motion. I would amend it by including Leah Lawrence, the president of SDTC, in the list of people to appear before the committee.

**The Chair:** Just so we're clear, there is no such thing as a friendly amendment, Mr. Vis, even though you can be very friendly yourself.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I thought it was very friendly.

**The Chair:** It's just an amendment. You're proposing an amendment, which then needs to be debated and voted on.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Yes. Thank you for the semantics.

**The Chair:** There is an amendment by Mr. Vis.

Can you repeat it?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I want to include Leah Lawrence. Point (e) would become point (f), and point (e) under the amended motion would include the name Leah Lawrence.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I'm a little bit confused. The motion has been amended, and Mr. Vis is making an amendment now to the motion, which has already been amended, but he referred to sections (e) and (f), which I'm not sure exist anymore. There's only (a) and (b) and the list of witnesses who appeared before other committees whose testimony would be used for our work, so I'm not sure how to understand what Mr. Vis has proposed.

**The Chair:** If I understand correctly, what Mr. Vis is trying to do would be to add a fifth point, so after “Whistleblowers who have come forward,” would be “Leah Lawrence”.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** It could be anywhere on that list. I just want to add Leah Lawrence.

**The Chair:** Okay. That's the amendment proposed by Mr. Vis. I guess it could be argued that it could fall under “any other relevant witnesses”, which is in the motion, but I understand you want more clarity, so that's the purpose of your amendment.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** You are correct.

**The Chair:** There is an amendment on the floor, colleagues.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I would just say that I think that witness appears in ethics tomorrow, so if that witness is already appearing, then that's another witness's testimony that we would get before this committee.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** I can't be at the ethics committee tomorrow. I have to be here doing other work, and I want to have the opportunity, as a member of this committee, to have her before this committee.

**The Chair:** We're debating Mr. Vis's amendment, and I'm looking around the table to see if there are more speakers.

Seeing that there are none, I will call the question. Is it clear to everyone? We're adding a fifth section after “Whistleblowers who have come forward,” with the name and title of the—

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Chair, to be crystal clear, Mr. Vis has asked to add a fifth point underneath section (a) of the motion. Section (a) of the motion says, “all information obtained in the context”, and it lists the other two committees, so it's adding, to that list, (v) in roman numerals, and then adding a witness, Leah Lawrence.

Is that correct, Mr. Vis? I want to make sure I'm crystal clear on what we're voting on.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Mr. Vis, you're—

**Mr. Brad Vis:** What I'm seeking to do in this amendment is to add Leah Lawrence to the list of names clearly outlined. I'll state them all. We want to have François-Philippe Champagne, Doug McCannachie, Annette Verschuren, Leah Lawrence, whistle-blowers who have come forward and any other witnesses deemed relevant.

That's what I'm seeking to do.

**The Chair:** I think that answers the question Mr. Turnbull was asking. That's in section (a), roman numeral (v), adding the name Leah Lawrence.

You were looking at the motion before it was amended, Mr. Vis, so you have to look in your email to see the amended version, which would give you a more solid footing to—

**Mr. Brad Vis:** That's fair.

**The Chair:** We've reached an understanding as to what is sought by this. If there are no more speakers, I would.... Wait just one second.

Yes, Mr. Turnbull, before we bring it—

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I agree with adding the witness. I think we should just pass this amendment on unanimous consent and have the witness added to the list, if the committee is willing to do that.

**The Chair:** Is there unanimous consent to the amendment proposed by Mr. Vis?

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Okay. That brings us to the main motion as amended by Mr. Lemire and subamended by Mr. Vis.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Can we pass it with unanimous consent?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** I have Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** The clerk is just getting a proposed amendment to the main motion, which, essentially, changes the beginning part where it says two meetings. I don't think we want to hold separate meetings outside of this. It changes it to six hours over six meetings concurrent with Bill C-27, beginning on November 14.

The amendment is coming. You can always make amendments to the main motion.

**The Chair:** Just one second. I have a point of order, but I believe that's amending the part that was already amended, Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Yes, that's what I was going to say. It's substantially similar to what we already voted on, which is an amendment to that section. It's going back—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** No it doesn't, because it has a starting date, and it's six hours over six meetings.

**The Chair:** The number of meetings and hours was just quite clearly voted on in the amendment presented by Mr. Lemire, so I would rule the proposed amendment you're suggesting now to not be receivable, given that it's already been voted on. However, you have mentioned a starting date.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** It's November 14.

**The Chair:** That is not in the.... I'll just consult with the clerk to make sure, but....

Are there any other terms to the amendment you're proposing to the main motion, Mr. Perkins?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Mr. Perkins is asking to start this on November 14. Isn't that a constituency week?

**An hon. member:** It is.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Maybe you want to do the week after, unless.... Maybe we should just have six hours on Monday morning next week. Want to do that?

**An hon. member:** Not next week.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Yes, it's the constituency week. Why not?

**An hon. member:** Next Monday is a holiday.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Okay. Just to bring some order, I've ruled the part about the number of meetings in your amendment not receivable, but the starting date hasn't been discussed, nor voted on.

Mr. Perkins, just to be sure—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** How about starting the week of Monday, November 20, and then we can figure out what days we want to do that, given the limits of the resources.

**The Chair:** Yes. It will have to be skilfully negotiated by our clerk with the House administration so that we get these meeting hours.

Everyone has heard the terms of the amendment, which would be just.... What would be the wording exactly?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** At the end of "allegations," in the English, it would say, "beginning the week of November 20".

**The Chair:** Would it be "beginning the week of November 20, the committee undertake a study of up to...?"

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Right. That would probably be better.

**The Chair:** Okay. Everyone has heard the amendment. Should I call the vote, or is there unanimous consent on this?

We'll go to a vote on the amendment by Mr. Perkins.

Therefore, the amendment—

**Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Chair.

I have a favour to ask right now. I'm just seeking UC to change my vote to a no.

**The Chair:** Do we have unanimous consent to allow Mr. Gaheer to change his vote to a nay?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Amendment negatived: yeas 5; nays 6 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Please be quiet. I'm hearing a lot of side conversations. I think it's important for everyone to pay attention to the committee's discussion.

Mr. Lemire's amendment was rejected, which brings us to Mr. Perkins's main motion.

Are there more comments on the motion?

[*English*]

If there are none, then I would ask the clerk for a vote.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** Can it be passed with unanimous consent?

**The Chair:** Can the motion as amended be passed with unanimous consent?

Mr. Lemire.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I support the motion if we can wait until November 27 to begin the study. I won't propose a formal amendment, but the chair and the clerk can discuss among themselves.

**The Chair:** Well, no date was specified in the motion—

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Right. My proposal is that we begin the study after the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics has heard from witnesses. They're supposed to appear during the week of November 20. We could have them come here the week of November 27.

**The Chair:** Okay, if I understand correctly, you're not proposing an amendment.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I think that's up to you.

**The Chair:** You want to help the Chair choose a date.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Exactly.

**The Chair:** Okay, I understand.

Does the committee wish to adopt Mr. Perkins's motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to. [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull, you have the floor.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** I think we've had a very productive meeting today.

I want to move that we adjourn today's meeting.

**The Chair:** There's a motion to adjourn on the floor, which calls for an immediate vote.

**An hon. member:** I have point of order.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure that I can accept a point of order once I've called the vote.

(Motion negatived: 6 nays; 5 yeas)

**The Chair:** The motion is defeated, which brings me to give the floor to Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move a study motion. I think the clerk may have a copy of it.

I move:

That, the committee begin a study, of at least five meetings, examining the impact Canada's carbon tax is having in the nation's continued decline in productivity as noted by the OECD's ranking of Canada as last when compared to western economies. That the study include an examination of the United States approach to investing in green technology through the Inflation Reduction Act and not carbon taxes as a major factor in Canada's declining economic output compared to Canada's most important trading partner the United States since 2015.

**The Chair:** Mr. Perkins, I understand that you're bringing this motion forward today, but notice has not been given and we're under Standing Order 106(4) now.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** No, we voted on the 106(4), so we're no longer on the 106(4).

**The Chair:** We're still on the 106(4). The 106(4) calls for a meeting to discuss a potential study. It's not.... Once we've adopted the motion, we're still in that 106(4) meeting that you asked for.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** We also asked to include, which we agreed to, discussion of the committee agenda. We're still not—

**The Chair:** That is why notice was sent by the clerk for the subcommittee to meet and discuss the agenda and the committee business, which we're supposed to do right now.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull:** That's why I was adjourning.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** You lost the adjournment vote, because I know you don't want to discuss things in public.

**The Chair:** Right now, we're under Standing Order 106(4), so I can't accept motions of committee business that do not pertain to 106(4).

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** The committee's refusing to accept the motion to do a study, as I outlined, on the carbon tax and its impact on our economy.

**The Chair:** It's not that, Mr. Perkins. Notice needs to be sent for a motion like this. It can be brought forth, as you know, in a regular committee meeting. This is a 106(4) meeting, and notice has not been given of the motion. That's all.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I understand that, but we're still in open—

**The Chair:** You're an experienced parliamentarian who knows very well—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** We have finished the 106(4), so we are still in open committee.

**The Chair:** The meeting is the 106(4), Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** No, the meeting is our general Tuesday meeting. I agreed to allow the five days to deal with it to extend to six days last week, out of courtesy to the chair and to the committee members, since the witnesses for the day on C-27 declined to appear. I could have forced this meeting to happen yesterday, as per the rules of the House of Commons.

In an effort of collegiality, I said, “No, I’ll move it to today in order to work with the fellow Liberals.” Apparently the Liberals want to shut down any discussion about the harm that their carbon tax is having on the Canadian economy. They will go to any end to shut committees down.

**The Chair:** Mr. Perkins, as chair, I just think this is a very procedural point.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** This is a normally scheduled meeting.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I’m seeking clarification through you.

Is MP Perkins challenging the chair?

• (1735)

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Sure. I will challenge the chair’s decision on this.

**The Chair:** At this point, Mr. Perkins, we’re not in committee business. We’re on the 106(4) that you asked for.

After consulting with the clerk, I was informed that this is not a receivable motion. There has been no notice given.

Now, I’ll recognize—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I’m challenging the chair’s ruling on that decision.

**The Chair:** Then I will call for a vote.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** We’re still under Standing Order 106(4), even though the motion has been adopted to conduct this study.

As per the notice that I’ve sent and for which I’ve received absolutely no objection to by any member here, we were supposed to have one hour. Mr. Perkins told me that the 106(4) would take one hour. Then the rest would be committee business. I sent notice for the subcommittee to meet to discuss the rest of C-27 and how we would go forward with C-27.

Are we in agreement to adjourn the meeting and go to the subcommittee?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Perfect. The meeting is adjourned.

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