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Chair: Mr. George Chalal



Standing Committee on Natural Resources

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• (1200)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 115 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

I would like to remind participants of the following points. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair. Members, please raise your hand if you wish to speak, whether participating in person or via Zoom. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

When we adjourned the meeting on Wednesday, we were debating the motion by Monsieur Simard and the amendment by Mr. Jowhari. Mr. Jowhari had the floor at adjournment of the meeting on the last day. I will go back to Mr. Jowhari. If you would like to speak on the amendment, please raise your hand and I will put you on the speaking list.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. At the end of the last meeting, I asked whether we could have a definition of Standing Order 109, as to the consequences, the time frame and so on.

To make it easier, could we perhaps complete that discussion before we go on to any further debate?

The Chair: The clerk will proceed to read out the standing order as asked, Mr. Dreeshen.

Go ahead, Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Thomas Bigelow): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Standing Order 109 reads as follows:

Within 120 days of the presentation of a report from a standing or special committee, the government shall, upon the request of the committee, table a comprehensive response thereto, and when such a response has been requested, no motion for the concurrence in the report may be proposed until the comprehensive response has been tabled or the expiration of the said period of 120 days.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Monsieur Simard, go ahead on a point of order.

• (1205)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): I want to follow up on what Mr. Dreeshen just said. I may have misunderstood the clerk's answer. It's not the interpretation's fault, I may have misheard. So I ask the following question so I can understand better.

The purpose of this motion is to have the matter of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report and the Trans Mountain Pipeline debated in the House. If we apply Standing Order 109, I understand that it won't be debated in the House, because we'll have to wait for a written response from the government. So that would go against the spirit of the motion. Do I understand correctly, Mr. Clerk?

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Chair, maybe—for full transparency for the entire committee and because the member asked—the clerk could clarify that for all of us collectively.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Stubbs. I was going to ask the clerk to provide that clarification.

[Translation]

The Clerk: I'll answer in French, Mr. Simard.

There are two components here. If we request a government response, pursuant to Standing Order 109, it obliges the government to prepare a response, but it gives it 120 days to do so.

It is not possible to move or debate a concurrence motion in the House until a response has been submitted or the 120-day deadline has expired.

[English]

The Chair: Hopefully that clarifies any concerns members had.

Mr. Jowhari, the floor is yours.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

It's great that we started the conversation with some clarification, because it helped ground the intervention I'm about to make.

The way I understood it, we started this study of TMX back in September with a focus on accountability. A report had come out that a project that was initially estimated to cost around \$7.5 billion went to \$34 billion, and we wanted to understand why and how. There are a lot of witnesses. I'm hoping the report will shed some light.

Why did we all agree, unanimously, to the report? It was because we were focusing on accountability. Traditionally, we look at the study, we agree on it, we come up with a list of witnesses, we send those lists of witness names, the witnesses come in and provide testimony, we ask questions and a report is put together. I'm not going to go through an iteration of versions one, two and three. A set of recommendations is then made and we send it to the government. We table it in the House and we ask for a response from the government.

One method of looking at accountability is the work we do in the committee. Another method is what we do in the House with debates. Mainly, we debate bills and legislation, but in the House, topics like this could be debated as part of an opposition day motion, a late show or a concurrence motion.

Given the fact that the House is in a gridlock and we don't have a dance partner who cares about Canadians, the opportunity to debate it as an opposition motion for the Bloc at this point isn't presenting itself. I understand that.

What are the alternatives? One alternative is the late show, but the late show is only about five or 10 minutes. It's not really going to give Mr. Simard the opportunity that he wants.

Alternatively, right now, we could move a concurrence motion. The debate is about three hours. You debate; this is really the objective.

On accountability, those are the paths we could go down. Based on what Mr. Simard has suggested, we are saying we're going to bypass the committee report for now. I'll come back to that.

When we go to the House, the only option the Bloc sees right now is moving a concurrence motion.

I understand the process and I understand the reason we want to do this.

What are we losing? By agreeing to the original motion that MP Simard brought, what we are doing, in my opinion, is moving away from accountability and into politics. Where we had an accountability agenda, now we are moving into a political agenda. This is where I have a fundamental issue, and that fundamental issue is that we are bypassing the process.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Chair—

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead on your point of order, Monsieur Simard.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: No, it's not a point of order, Mr. Chair. I was signalling you because I want to respond after Mr. Jowhari's intervention.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. I've put you on the speaking list.

Please continue, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: When I look at it, I'd say that the whole purpose of the TMX study was accountability. I talked about the process. What we are about to suggest would completely bypass the committee process, which is very structured, goes step by step and, traditionally, is what we've done.

Let me explain to you what we are bypassing. The way I look at it is that, first of all, we are ignoring all the testimonies and the witnesses who came in, to a large extent. Second, we are ignoring the idea giving the government an opportunity to respond. Then, what we are saying is, "Let's take a PBO report as a base." The PBO, Mr. Giroux, was here, and he was very clear about the scope of the report and about what he was trying to do during that report. He drew a conclusion that the TMX project is going to be sold at a loss and, therefore, we need an emergency debate using concurrence, given the environment we are in. Fundamentally, that's the issue.

The fundamental issue is that the government hasn't had the opportunity to look at our recommendation, which comes as a result of a report—which we could start working on very quickly—or to give us other information that it has. As a result of Standing Order 109, within 120 days we have to have that concurrence debate. This motion doesn't stop the Bloc from having the ability to move concurrence and have that three-hour debate. What it allows for is making sure that the information that all the witnesses provided is taken into account.

We had an opportunity to look at all of those and came up with recommendations. Actually, when we looked at the first amendment that MP Dabrusin brought, I thought we had a solution because it was about the recommendation, about going to the House and about the report, so that we'd look at and develop the recommendation. From there, we'd move on and have that debate in the House. If we come out of this gridlock soon, this debate could go on as early as the first week or two when we come back.

What is the advantage that we have? The advantage is that we have a set of requirements. By the way, it's 120 days on the calendar, so by the time we come back we'll have the government's response. We know the great work the analysts are going to do. We're going to have a report and be in a position to have a very fruitful conversation in the House, whether as part of the opposition day motion or of concurrence for three hours. Is that not correct?

This is trying to bypass all of that. Why are we trying to bypass a process that is very well laid out, has a very clear timeline and a clear ask for accountability? It's 120 days. Everybody knows, because of the clarification made by the clerk, that Standing Order 109 means that the government must, within 120 days, present a response to a report. We are ready to go to the report.

The government can already start working on it because we know one of the questions we are going to ask, which is whether this project could be sold at a profit and not at a loss to Canadians. We already heard the answer from the PBO that, if you look at the project...point of view, based on those risk factors and the value that they're putting into it right now, there might be a \$3-billion loss. However, if you look at other economic downstreams, the Government of Canada and Canadians are actually making money.

• (1215)

I'm just going to park that. Let's go back to why we are trying to bypass this process and why we are trying to force a concurrence debate based on only one element of a testimony in the House. That's where I think we are moving from an accountability agenda into a political agenda, and I really don't understand why—even if we want to do a political agenda—we are doing that.

What is there to be gained? Are we informing Canadians with more data or are we potentially presenting and looking at this from a lens that is only a PBO lens with a very limited scope, as the PBO has addressed? If it's not an accountability and it's political, I'm having a problem understanding, because I thought we were coming here to do good work—

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Oh, you did?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I want to be able to go back to my constituents and be able to present facts, as I'm sure everyone wants and, based on those facts, to be able to say, “Hey, look, this was the government's response.” This is where I have a problem.

Let me give you from a witness list an example of who we've had here to provide testimony. We have had the Department of Finance, the Department of Natural Resources and the Business Council of Alberta.

We also had the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. We had Canada's Building Trades Unions. We had the IUOE, International Union of Operating Engineers, IUOE, and the Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada. In their testimony around jobs and early involvement, I found that there were a lot of lessons learned.

We had the Trans Mountain Corporation here, which specifically talked about being a smart seller and making sure they shared a lot of lessons learned. We had CAPP. We had Synovus. We had Red Nation Natural Law Energy. We had a lot of individuals who came here from the Canadian Climate Institute, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Transition Accelerator.

I'm not going to go through all of these lists, but what message are we sending to them? The message we are sending to them by doing this is, “You came here, you travelled, we incurred the costs, and you sat here and provided your insight.” As a result of that insight, we want to make sure that we get lessons learned. How we can digest that \$34 billion and where are the opportunities to learn? The message we are sending to them is: “From an accountability point of view, right now our focus is on a political agenda.”

I still don't understand. Hopefully, Mr. Simard or some of my other colleagues, when I yield the floor, will be able to explain to me and to Canadians what is wrong with the process that we have. If it's a concurrence motion, if it's a 30-minute debate, why not have all the facts? Why not have all of the facts in order to get up in the House, hold up the report and get the response from the government and say, “This response is good” or “This response is unacceptable”. We are not even giving the government a chance to respond.

When you look at that and at what else we are doing by actually bypassing the process we have, we are bypassing witnesses and their input. You can see that all of those bypasses are going to erode

our ability to have a very fruitful conversation in the House, whether it's in the 10-minute late show, whether it's three hours of concurrence, or whether it's a whole day of opposition.

Mr. Simard and the Bloc will get the opportunity, should they choose to accept this amendment, to have a fulsome conversation.

• (1220)

When I yield the floor, I'd love to hear why we are moving from an accountability agenda with a very clear structure to a political agenda.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield my time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jowhari.

Monsieur Simard, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Jowhari, I think you have a mistaken conception of the contradiction between accountability and the political program. There's a first principle in democracy, which is deliberation in the public eye. When I do my job as a parliamentarian to the best of my knowledge, I try to inform the people who elected me. We can have a debate in the House without ignoring the excellent work of the analysts who will produce a report. However, we have a deadline here and, in my opinion, it will be a long time before we finish studying the report. And yet, in recent weeks, we have seen some highly questionable elements in connection with the pipeline purchase. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report mentions them.

As far as my political intentions are concerned, I could give you a fairly simple example. My friend Ms. Dabrusin asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer if some of his analyses were not politically motivated, to which he replied that they were not, as that was not part of his mandate. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's mandate is highly regulated, and it's up to us to broaden our interpretation of his work. That said, many questions remain unanswered.

Will we be prisoners of the oil industry for the next 40 years, since we have to use the pipeline to the maximum to make it profitable? How are we to interpret the \$4 billion sunk cost figure put forward by the Parliamentary Budget Officer? I'd like to comment on that in the House. The government will also have an opportunity to comment on this in the House.

Then I'd like to understand your interpretation of politics a little better. Politics is not a negative thing. We have no ill intentions in doing politics. What we're trying to do, to the best of our knowledge, is to bring to light elements that we see as problematic, as shortcomings on the part of the government. Playing politics means highlighting the fact that it's a bit incongruous to buy a pipeline at a time when we say we're trying to reduce our GHGs. To me, it seems highly incongruous. Politics is about demonstrating to the public that it's incoherent to say we're going to use the profits from a pipeline to invest in clean energy, when those profits don't exist.

We have a duty to present these facts to the public, not to mention the pipeline's cost overruns, which we will never have studied. I'm confident that my Conservative colleagues and Mr. Angus will come prepared to a debate in the House, armed with the information they've gleaned from this committee's work, to let Quebeckers and Canadians know the ins and outs of this thorny issue.

Finally, I don't think there's any contradiction between accountability and, as you call it, the political agenda. Personally, I wouldn't call it a program, but political debate, which is healthy in a democracy. Political debate implies the presentation of different positions. My position on the pipeline is certainly different from that of the government. My role as an elected official is to bring out these different positions so that the average voter is able to know what represents them and what doesn't, and then be able to make an informed decision about what they feel is right for the future of the state.

So I don't see any contradiction in what you're saying. Rather, I see—and I'm not accusing you of anything—a headlong rush when you say that it would be preferable to wait 120 days for the government to respond and for the committee to complete its report. I would simply point out that we are not the most efficient when it comes to completing studies and studying reports. We haven't done very much if I compare us to other committees.

• (1225)

Let's give this thorny issue a chance to be aired in the House. Everyone will be able to debate it in full view of the public. The public needs to be better informed about a potential loss of \$4 billion for the government, and about a project that is never-ending, for which there is an explosion of costs, and which doesn't fit in with the government's rhetoric when it comes to reducing GHGs. Personally, I think that if we put all this together, our responsibility as elected representatives is to hold a debate in the House.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard.

We'll now go to Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Thank you.

I wasn't going to intervene, but I thought I might help Mr. Jowhari, for whom I have enormous respect, to understand the role of a committee.

We are not here to do policy. Our accountability is democratic accountability. If decisions were made by the bureaucrats that were all well and good, bureaucrats could make those decisions. They

don't sit me at this table to be a bureaucrat, to all sit in the same boat and sing Kumbaya.

TMX was a political decision. It was a wrong political decision. It has to be analyzed through the frame of a political decision that has had an enormous impact on Canada. It will continue to have an enormous impact long after this government is a footnote in history.

This is why we are here to bring the hard questions to government. Each of us, I agree, have to follow within a process, and have respect for the rules. That's the only way democracy can work. My colleague has a right for democratic accountability to bring forward a motion and a debate to the House of Commons. That's an extraordinary gift that we have in our system.

It's not a thing that I would have supported, outside of finishing a study at other times, but the TMX pipeline was an enormous political decision that will define this government beyond all other things that it has done. That deserves to be debated.

Personally, I think there were serious problems in the over-optimistic scenarios provided by officials from the PBO, but I respect them, because they provided their information to our committee, and we bring that information to Parliament.

When our Deputy Prime Minister came here, she came here with a complete political frame. She did not come here on an accountability and transparency policy. She made statements that, I think, were absolutely false. Now, I'm a gentleman. I'm not going to accuse her of lying and gaslighting us. She denied the fact—as the Deputy Prime Minister, and the person in charge of how this is going to get paid out—that the toll rates being given to the big shippers are less than half the cost. Well, I'm sorry, either she didn't know, or it was a lie.

The public needs to know that, right now, we are subsidizing more than 50% of the tolls going to TMX. That's worth bringing to the House, in its own right. She claimed she would get, not just the money back for the present value but all the money, plus more. I thought that was an extraordinary statement to make. That was a completely political statement, because it contradicts every single thing we've heard from all the witnesses. That does need to be debated.

I'm looking forward to getting through this debate, and, hopefully, we're not going to be filibustered for days. When we have this report, I think we forward it to Parliament. It can't be debated until we get a response. I don't think my colleagues have anything to worry about, that this is going to gum up the already super gummed up Parliament.

We're sending a message that there are concerns. It'll be dealt with down the road. Parliament will continue to be as dysfunctional as it is on any given day, regardless of whether Mr. Simard adds to the dysfunction or not. He's not adding to the dysfunction. He's doing his job as a parliamentarian. We will finish our report, which will allow each of the parties to provide differing bits of viewpoints, and take from the evidence our points of view.

The government will have its point of view, and it will defend that this was the greatest decision ever made. New Democrats, obviously, think it's highly problematic for Canada's international climate commitments. It's creating a massive carbon bomb, and making a ridicule of our promise of an emissions cap if we're doing massive increases. However, that's a New Democratic Party point of view.

We accept that I'm the only New Democrat at the table. I don't have to have all my colleagues agree with me. I'll have the right, when the report's done, to do a minority report, which I fully intend to do.

I think this motion's straightforward. It's not going to gum up the works of Parliament. It does respect our parliamentarians. If we didn't like Mr. Simard's motion, I'd vote against it. That's my right as a parliamentarian. That's accountability.

When we talk about accountability and process, this is what we're doing here. We get to vote on a motion. There are motions I like, motions I don't like, motions that should be amended, and motions that should be completely thrown out.

Mr. Simard has come up with a reasonable motion, reflecting a reasonable concern, and it is in no way disrespectful to the work of our committee.

I'm ready to vote.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

I'll now go to Mr. Schiefke.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the discussion that we've jumped into about this study. I appreciate it from multiple angles. There is value that comes with the studies that we do and the reports that we produce that we're able to then share with our constituents if they reach out and have questions. Like you, Mr. Chair, I chair a committee, so I also understand the value from that perspective.

If you look at my own background, you'll see that I was in the environmental field for 10 years before coming into politics, and I had many careers before that, which we won't get to. I did my graduate studies in renewable resource sciences at McGill University. For me, building an economy that provides economic opportunities while also ensuring that we're leaving a positive, lasting legacy for future generations is extremely important. This is highlighted by the fact that I have two children now, and I think about their futures.

This study, for me, was incredibly important. I wanted to learn more about every aspect of this project, and I think we were able to

do that over the last couple of weeks with the wide breadth of witnesses who appeared before us. I appreciated my colleague Mr. Jowhari's remarks. They focused a lot on the economic components of this project, what we learned about the costs incurred by the government, what the projections are and how Canadians are going to get that money back.

Above and beyond that are secondary effects, positive effects for Alberta, British Columbia and the workers who were involved in this. We had witnesses come in and talk about every single aspect of this project. I don't know if this has been done before in this committee; I'm relatively new to this committee. I sat on the public safety committee prior to this. As far as I know, this is the most in-depth analysis of this project done by any committee in the House. I appreciated it. I had questions once I found out that we were doing this. I reached out to my constituents and asked them if they had questions that they wanted me to ask the witnesses who appeared. I was able to ask those questions of the ministers themselves. I was able to ask those questions of the multitude of environmental organizations that came in. I was able to ask questions about things that mattered most to them. I very much appreciated that. I got the responses that I was looking for. It's fair to say that I think each and every one of us learned something new about this project as a whole. I learned a great deal. I appreciated sharing that with my constituents, Mr. Chair.

One of the things that I have taken great pride in and that has facilitated my work as a member of Parliament is being able to use the work that is done in committee, particularly those reports, when responding to questions put forward by my constituents.

We're doing great work in the transport committee. We just finished a study on high-speed rail in Canada, which a lot of people in my community have asked me questions about. I'm able to now respond by saying, "We did a study on this. Here's a synopsis of the study. You don't have to look through 100 hours of debate in the House of Commons on this. We just did a study and brought in ministers and experts from across the field. Here's everything you need to know compiled in a document that you can read over lunch."

We did the same thing for a study on accessibility, which was an incredible study about whether or not our transport sector in Canada is accessible for those with physical disabilities in Canada. When people reach out to me and ask what is going on and whether there is any work being done to make their life easier, I'm able to take that report and say that we did a study on this. It gives them a great idea of where we are, what's been done, and what we're recommending to the government that we do moving forward.

In this case, we spent dozens of hours studying this very important project. Mr. Clerk, I don't know if you had the opportunity to give a ballpark figure, but most studies cost in the tens of thousands of dollars when you take into consideration inviting the witnesses in, the time that we spend here, and the salaries of the incredible staff and interpreters who are working for us here. We put a lot of effort into this from a time perspective and a monetary perspective. We have a vast array of information now that we can compile into a report that doesn't just talk about the finances of it but talks about what's been done to help protect the environment, as well as what was done during the production and construction of this project to help workers across the country.

• (1235)

We had unions come in and talk about the benefits of the work that was done, and how proud they were to have built a project that, for all intents and purposes, was one of the most difficult projects to construct.

What I would like to see is this: Take the fruits of our labour and all of the information we've compiled on a wide array of issues surrounding this project, and turn it into a report that every single one of us can share with anybody who's interested in learning more about this project. Some say, "Well, we'll be discussing this in the House." With all due respect, I don't know how many of my constituents, if they have a question for me, want me to respond by saying, "Do you know what you should do? Here are the 120 hours of debate in the House of Commons. Please read that. It'll give you a good idea of where we are on this project."

We have an opportunity here to do both. We can do this study and have this great report that will give everybody a pretty good synopsis of—

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

To clarify the record, a concurrence debate is only three hours, not 120.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Chair, I would like to raise a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll now go to Mr. Simard on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: I'd like to make a small clarification so that everyone is on the same page.

Perhaps the clerk could tell us that if we hold the debate in the House, that doesn't prevent the committee from producing a report. This report can be presented to my colleague's constituents, if he so wishes. One does not preclude the other. You can wear a belt and suspenders. It's possible to do both at the same time.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simard. There is nothing impeding us from taking multiple avenues. However, as a point of clarification, the member is still going through his argument on why he be-

lieves this path is the way we should go forward. I'd like to hear more from the member, who can continue his debate.

Go ahead, Mr. Schiefke.

• (1240)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you very much, Chair.

Getting back to what I was saying, I have used, multiple times over the last nine years as a member of Parliament, the reports we have produced within committee. I share them with my constituents when they ask questions. All of those resources are paid for by the taxpayers. That's always an item brought up by my Conservative friends. We need to be diligent about how we spend taxpayer money.

We just spent literally dozens of hours studying this. We brought people in from a wide array of fields, as I said, including ministers and department officials. Now we're basically saying, "No, we don't want to report on what we just learned." I think Canadians need to ask why we don't want to do that. Were there perhaps things they didn't like that were said, because they went against certain arguments put forward, or against misconceptions that were held by certain members?

In this particular case, my honourable colleague Mr. Simard is right. We can debate this at a later date. However, what we have in front of us now is a plethora of witness testimony we can use to put together a very comprehensive report of a very important study—one that, as a member of Parliament, I would very much like to share with constituents who have questions about this project. As chair of another committee, I would very much like us to see this come to fruition and provide something to the government with recommendations, ideas, comments, etc., then get a response from the government back. If we want to have a debate in the House after the fact, we can use the data and information we have all sifted through and adopted as a report.

I feel we should move forward that way. I see disagreement across the way. Mr. Angus is right. Part of our job is to agree when we are in agreement, and to disagree when we're not in agreement. However, my position is this: Let's move forward. Let's put together this incredible plethora of information in a report we can share with constituents, regardless of which riding we represent. Then, if we see fit and so choose, we can move forward to debate it in the House of Commons.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schiefke.

Mr. Jowhari, the floor is yours.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start by thanking my colleague, MP Angus. He has a much longer runway in the government. He will be missed in the next round. He has institutional knowledge around the committee that I commit to brushing up on, but I thank him for sharing his point of view. We also had comments from the peanut gallery, but I'll let that one go.

Monsieur Simard, my choice of using "political" versus "accountability" in my attempt to make a point was probably misunderstood. I'm not suggesting that you are playing a political game. I could not find a better word to say that we transitioning from accountability into—what? If you want to say that there's a "spectrum of accountability", that's very much the same—accountability in the House, accountability in the committee etc. If that word is causing stress and is derailing us from the conversation, I'll withdraw that word and say that we are within the spectrum of accountability, and we are looking at the debate in the House.

Really, the point that I was hoping to make was that during that accountability and spectrum of accountability, it's best to have all the facts, and it's best to have a response from the government in the recommendations that we are going to make. We have a lot more substantive conversation.... Where I am lost is when PBO comes in as a last witness, and, all of a sudden, we have a motion, whereas we have other witnesses who come in and align with the PBO from a general direction.

We also had witnesses come in, for example, the TMX CEO, who said that they were going to be smart sellers, and sell this thing and profit. We didn't move a motion and say, "Okay, let's go debate it in the House." That's the end of the case. We are making money, so we are done.

Really, the point of proposing that amendment was for us to ensure that as we engage the population, as we engage with our stakeholders, we have a set of references that are testimonies. I agree; right now, I can go and get the notes from the committee, have my staff pull each one of those witnesses, get the key points to be able to come in and do a 20-minute debate as part of a three-hour concurrence debate and say, "This is what we heard." One of the areas that I cannot respond to or debate in the House is the question of the government position.

We are not suggesting that we should prolong this process. It's that one of the pieces that I cannot go back and debunk or support is the government response. The only way that the government response comes is as a result of us making a report and sending it, and using Standing Order 109 to actually mandate the government within 120 days. This is the tool, at least for the last nine years—that's the way I understand it—that mandates the government, forces them to respond, and gives me the tool that I need, so that when I get up in the House, as part of any of those accountability measures within that spectrum that we were talking about, I am able to say, "Well, I heard this from this witness, and this is the government response." Do I support it or not?

I come from multimillion-dollar projects that were run. I understand gating. I understand risk management. I understand who makes the decisions. I understand the difference between a political decision and a transformational decision. I'm looking to the government response to be able to figure out whether it truly was a politi-

cal decision or a transformational decision. If it was political, okay, you're going to pay the price.

• (1245)

If it was transformational and if it puts our country on one of the lists of countries that can get large national projects done, that's good. Were we efficient in doing that? No. Where could we find efficiency? I don't know. I haven't seen the report and I haven't seen the government response about why things happened the way they happened.

I'd like to know, when we went from \$7.5 billion to \$12.5 billion, what risks were identified? What was the risk mitigation? Once we approved that, who was approving it?

I'm hoping to get those from the government in the response to the report. When we went from \$12.5 billion to \$22.5 billion, I have exactly the same question. We have a gating process. We have a risk mitigation process. This is the Canadian people's money, so I'd like to get those answers.

I don't feel comfortable going into a three-hour debate having the pieces of information we have without a response. I can say that the PBO said we're going to lose \$3 million or potentially \$4 million. I can say that the PBO did a sensitivity analysis and within 2.5% up and down on each one of those, such as the interest rate, such as the rate, as well as the utilization, we could potentially be making \$4.5 billion, even excluding all the other benefits. I can make that argument, but how is that going to help us?

What's going to help us is a response from the government to say how we went from \$7.5 billion to \$34.4 billion. That's number one, based on all we've heard. The other thing in the response from the government is what factors it is using to ensure Canadians are not going to lose that money. I don't have those answers.

We want to go to Canadians during a three-hour concurrence debate, whenever it happens and however it happens. Pieces of data are missing. The only way I can get that piece of data, the way I understand current procedures, is through—

• (1250)

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

Is this meeting in public?

The Chair: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm concerned we're going to be forcing the Canadian people to listen to a three-hour filibuster on TMX, as opposed to just getting this moved so we can get to other very important matters. We now have 10 minutes left.

Will we continue with the filibuster and then move on to Wednesday?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: This isn't a filibuster. I will go—

Mr. Charlie Angus: A three-hour debate on something that should just be moved is a waste of our time.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, it's not a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It's not?

The Chair: No, it's not. It's more of a commentary.

Just to clarify where we're at, we had a motion on the floor. We are on the amendment of Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Charlie Angus: It's a fair point. I got lost.

Thank you.

The Chair: Colleagues, a number of people are still on the speaking list after Mr. Jowhari. Once we exhaust the speaking order, maybe we can get to vote on the amendment, but we'll see. If not, I'll have some comments prior to ending today's meeting.

Go ahead, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I'm going start with the point of order.

With all due respect for MP Angus, it is very interesting that when he was responding—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Is this a point of order?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I was quietly listening—

The Chair: Mr. Jowhari, we have a point of order.

Please go ahead, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: He has the floor, Chair. I think it's perfectly fair for him to use his time attacking me. He can do that; he has the floor. I don't think he gets a point of order on top of it to attack me. He should just take the floor and continue whatever he's going to do.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: I'd like to take the floor, then.

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

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Angus, when you were providing your feedback, you talked about every member of this committee having the opportunity to be able to bring their point of view. That's what accountability is and that's what the process is. Yet, you accuse me of filibustering, which I'm not. I'm trying to make a point. I haven't repeated one comment. Then you're also telling me it's a waste of your time.

I don't think it's a waste of time. I can use the same concept and say that us debating is a waste of time.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Chair, I rise on a point of order. I have two concerns.

One is I think he has to address his remarks through you as the chair. I don't think you think it's a waste of time, because you're the chair. Whether or not I think he's wasting my time is my opinion and my perfect right as a democratically elected member of Parliament. I do believe he's not supposed to be attacking me personally. I think he's supposed to go through you, and then you can convey that he thinks I'm wasting his time.

The Chair: Thank you for your point of order.

Colleagues, let's focus our conversation on the amendment, on the importance of what members would like to state or on com-

ments of debate that members have, which you may agree or disagree with, but not on anything personal in nature, I will say.

I would like to continue on in our proceedings, because Mr. Jowhari has brought this amendment forward and I think he still has more to add.

Mr. Jowhari, go ahead.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, to all my esteemed colleagues, the point I'm trying to make is around the fact that there is a big piece of information missing. That piece of information is the insight that the government and various departments had in the project, which would be a very fundamental part of a debate that we need to hold in the House. I'm not arguing. I'm not saying that we should not move concurrence. I made a commitment to Mr. Simard that I will be getting up and having that debate as part of that three-hour debate.

I have also already, during my intervention, through you, to my colleagues, talked about what points I am going to get up and have a conversation about. I want to have a conversation around accountability. I want a conversation around risk, around gating and around how these processes were approved. Why did we switch from a government sponsor to financially sponsored for the rest of the project? How do we cover all of that? We won't have those answers until we do the report.

For us to have a debate on a topic based on the PBO's report without having all the elements of this equation so we can have a very substantive and complete debate is the wrong thing to do, I think.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Patzer, go ahead, please.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Thank you.

I would appreciate the opportunity to hear from Mr. Jowhari in the House during the three-hour debate. That would be refreshing. That would be a nice little change from the usual comedy show we get from that side in the chamber.

I just wanted to inform Mr. Jowhari, and maybe even Mr. Schiefke, that maybe it would be good for you guys to go and join the public accounts committee for a little while and hear what the Auditor General has to say.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Sorry, this is just a quick clarification. My last name is pronounced Schiefke. It's just a small thing, but I want to make sure we're all respecting each other, and I want to respect my last name as I will respect Mr. Patzer's last name.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schiefke.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Chair, I have a point or order.

I'm glad you made that clarification since the chair was also mispronouncing it.

The Chair: Colleagues, once again, I think Mr. Schiefke has just brought something to the attention of all committee members. Let's not make fun of that. It's important to him and other committee members as well—

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Nobody is making fun of it.

The Chair: —that we have pronunciations that are correct.

Thank you, Mr. Schiefke, for—

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Thank you, Chair. I don't want to say that Mr. Patzer was willfully trying to make fun of my last name. I just wanted to put out there that's the correct pronunciation of my last name.

That's all. Thank you.

The Chair: It's good to let us know, because folks may not know across the committee. Thank you for doing that.

Mr. Patzer, back to you.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: There, I learned something today.

I would like to propose that members spend some time on the public accounts committee and listen to what the Auditor General has to say about government responses to committee reports and recommendations from committees. Her language is saying that she is becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of action by the government when there are recommendations to departments and they take these recommendations seriously, and then nothing ever happens.

Multiple reports came through public accounts when I was on that committee and those were her exact feelings on all of them, that the government was doing nothing. Lots of times there was a report on a report on a report. There was a report that was done say in 2017. There was a follow-up report done in 2019. Then there was another follow-up report done in 2021. All along, nothing was done.

That is the record of this government when it comes to reports from committee. I think that is why members, at least on this side of the table.... I won't speak for the other two parties, but I would think they would agree with me to a certain extent that it's part of the reason why they don't want to simply have another report stashed on the shelf for the government to completely ignore and why we would like to have a concurrence debate in the House of

Commons so we can further bring awareness of the issues at hand for Canadians.

We have different perspectives on how and why the purchase of Trans Mountain was a bad idea by this government, but, nevertheless, there is a debate that should be had in the House of Commons on this. That is something we will endeavour to do.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order.

Through you to Mr. Patzer, I think all the 338 members of this House are on public accounts because we are trying to make sure that we are holding the government accountable.

This is exactly the point that I was trying to make, that without a response—

• (1300)

The Chair: Mr. Jowhari, I know you raised your hand to get on the speaking list. I put you on, and I think you may have misinterpreted that.

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

It is 1 p.m.

The Chair: Thank you.

Colleagues, we have the minister for supplementary estimates scheduled for Wednesday. I would propose to do what we did last time: we have the minister come in on Wednesday, we adjourn today's meeting, and we will continue on if members decide on a future meeting with the topic at hand.

Monsieur Simard, please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: If the minister is present for two hours, I understand that we will hold another meeting. If he's not present for two hours, on the other hand, we could resume the discussion after his appearance. So it would be good to know that today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Colleagues, the minister most likely will be attending with officials. I will leave it up to colleagues to decide at the meeting once we exhaust the time with the minister, or with officials, to proceed in the manner you wish.

If everybody's in agreement, we will adjourn.

The meeting is adjourned.

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