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Chair: John Brassard



Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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• (1635)

[English]

The Chair (John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

I see Mr. Barrett wants to speak.

Welcome to meeting number three of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

[Translation]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

Pursuant to the Standing Orders, members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[English]

I have a rather long list here. I read it out the other day. I'm not going to read this every meeting, but just as a reminder to our colleagues in the room, we have to make sure our microphones and our earpieces are separated. There's a place that's designated for your earpiece on the table, and this is to prevent any injury to our interpreters.

The purpose of today's meeting is to conduct committee business. I'm going to go first and foremost to Mr. Barrett.

You have the floor, sir. Go ahead.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

I have a motion that I'll move, and then I'll speak to it once you've ruled that it's in order.

I move:

That the committee

(a) report the following recommendations to the House at the first opportunity:

(i) that the Conflict of Interest Act, including the conflict of interest rules, disclosure mechanisms and compliance measures set out in it, be reviewed;

(ii) that the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics be designated to undertake the review;

(iii) that it be an instruction to the committee to consider, as part of its review, whether the act should be amended or expanded with a view to enhancing transparency, preventing conflicts of interest, avoiding potential or apparent conflicts of interest, regulating public office holders' ownership of assets in tax havens, limiting the availability of blind trusts as a compliance measure, extending the act's provisions to political party leaders and leadership candidates, and increasing penalties for non-compliance; and

(iv) that, at the conclusion of the review, the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and

(b) in the time between when these recommendations are reported to the House and the House dispenses with them, begin hearing witness testimony on the subject matter referenced in recommendations (i) and (iii), and the parties be directed to provide the names of their proposed witnesses to the clerk of the committee within two weeks of the adoption of this motion.

Mr. Chair, I've provided it to the clerk in electronic format in both official languages.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

I understand this is a slight modification to the motion you had on notice, but we are in committee business, and I'm going to accept the motion as being in order.

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Chair, can we suspend and have a look at the motion?

The Chair: Why don't we let Mr. Barrett speak to it? That'll give you time to—

Linda Lapointe: Yes, because we want to read it and understand it very well.

[Translation]

We just want to make sure that we fully understand the motion that Mr. Barrett took the time to propose.

If he wants to continue, that's fine with me, but I just want you to keep in mind what I asked you.

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to suspend, but not for more than five minutes, because we have to get started, and we have to go to Mr. Barrett so that he can speak to his motion.

The meeting is therefore suspended for five minutes.

• (1635)

(Pause)

• (1640)

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to call the meeting back to order.

Mr. Barrett had moved a motion that has been distributed electronically in both languages to the members of the committee.

Mr. Barrett, when we left, you had the floor, sir.

Go ahead.

Michael Barrett: Thanks, Chair.

This motion offers us an important opportunity to review an act that is foundational to the public's ability to have confidence in elected officials, particularly those subject to the act—designated public office holders, ministers and the Prime Minister. This act, in relative terms, isn't very old. It's less than 20 years old. It was reviewed most recently in 2014. Though a review isn't required, things change, and we learn as we go.

It's been well observed over my time on this committee and as a parliamentarian—and pollsters, journalists and columnists will often remind us—that Canadians' confidence in public institutions is low. I think we should look for opportunities to give Canadians reason to have confidence in their institutions and those who are the stewards of those institutions. In our case, we're talking about the government. We have the opportunity to do that.

This motion will allow us concurrently to have the matter sent to the House to be reported and, while we're waiting for it to be dispensed with, to continue our work so that we can really seize the day.

I don't want to belabour it. I think it's quite self-explanatory. I think that this is very timely. You don't want to wait until the eve of an election to start a study. We're at the start of a new Parliament. Now is the time. We haven't been sent any legislation from the House. From what the government has signalled, it doesn't look like this fall we're going to see legislation referred to our committee. This act is quite squarely within the purview of our committee. It relates to the things that we've discussed.

We had interesting conversations with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I think this will build on the conversations we had the other day. Also, as I said, the real bottom line here is that we're presented with an opportunity to demonstrate our stewardship of Canadians' confidence in this institution by reviewing this act and making recommendations for changes where the evidence points us to do so.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, you raised your hand. We are listening.

Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Chair, I'd first like to point out a small typo or error in the French translation of the motion moved by Mr. Barrett.

The first sentence of paragraph (b) refers to the time between when these recommendations are reported to the House and when the House "*les rejette*". In fact, my understanding is not that the House rejects them but that it dispenses with them.

I think the expression "*disposer de*" would be appropriate in this case, because we're talking about a period of time that elapses between when the recommendations are presented to the House, which I imagine will follow up on them—so the way the House dispenses with them—and the time the House takes to dispense with them, unless I'm mistaken. If the House rejects the recommendations, there is no motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you for your comments, Mr. Thériault.

I think the clerk has made the correction and written, "*où la Chambre les dépose*".

A voice: It was suggested, "*où la Chambre en dispose*".

The Chair: It would say, "*où la Chambre en dispose*". Okay.

Luc Thériault: I would write, "*où la Chambre en dispose*", because that's what it says in English.

The Chair: Hold on one second.

I'll ask the clerk to send the corrected version of the motion to all members of the committee. The word has been changed, and the sentence in the motion has been changed.

Luc Thériault: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thériault. I'll give you back the floor.

Luc Thériault: I completely agree with the substance of this motion. After Monday's meeting, I think it's clear that the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is interpreting an act that can't address every possible scenario.

We have a rather unique situation right now, as I've actually presented. The idea isn't to target a single person but to ensure that Parliament, or the act, can properly regulate the various scenarios that may arise when people leave the *x*, *y* or *z* sector—most often the private sector—to occupy public offices or positions that would objectively place them in conflicts of interest. A review of the Conflict of Interest Act would make it possible to review the entire issue of how effective or ineffective conflict of interest screens are. I think that aspect is very well articulated. I think it's a necessity. The commissioner, in his testimony and his answers to the committee's questions, demonstrated that on Monday.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Thériault.

[English]

Monsieur Sari—just for some advice here, as I know we have some new members—if you want to speak on it, just let me know in advance, because sometimes things move quickly, and if I don't see any speakers, then we end up going to the vote.

Mr. Sari, go ahead on the motion, please.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank Mr. Barrett for moving this motion. The objective of this committee and of each and every one of us is to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest. We can obviously only agree on the objective of this motion. We can't be against doing the right thing. However, as members of Parliament, we can question how this motion is being proposed today.

I'll start with the first sentence of the motion. Mr. Barrett wrote it well. It proposes that the committee "report the following recommendations to the House at the first opportunity".

Right off the bat, I don't think we can put it that way. The clerk and the analysts can no doubt correct us on that.

I think we have to study the recommendations first. Above all, this committee's role is to study this motion. It's also up to the committee to table, in the House, a report that includes findings and recommendations. It isn't the committee's role to make recommendations directly to the House through a motion.

According to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, which concerns the government's response to committee reports, a committee has to ask the government to table a response within an appropriate time frame. Mr. Thériault made that last point very clear. That way, the committee would receive a much more comprehensive response, which would be a direct response to the report that was tabled.

Without disagreeing with the substance of this motion—after all, that's the purpose of the committee, and we can only support it—I think it needs to be reworded. I don't think the first sentence of the motion is in order, because it goes against Standing Order 109.

Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I'll be more attentive and ask to speak a little earlier next time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

[English]

I don't see any other hands....

Ms. Church, is your hand up?

Okay, go ahead, please.

Leslie Church (Toronto—St. Paul's, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree that this is a very important motion and an important review. I share some of my colleague's concerns or questions about the actual process of bringing this forward and whether or not we need to be recommending this to the House before we conduct the actual study, which I believe the committee is empowered to actually proceed on once, of course, we fully debate and adopt the motion.

I have a couple of suggestions. I'm wondering if my colleagues might be amenable to consider adding them.

Mr. Chair, maybe I'll start with the first one, if you prefer. I'm new to committees. I'm not sure how we do this.

The Chair: Here's what we do, Ms. Church. We don't generally take suggestions, because they have a tendency to not have any value to the motion itself. If you do have something that you would like to change, I suggest that you move an amendment to the motion. That would be the easiest way to deal with it.

Leslie Church: Okay. Perfect.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Leslie Church: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be more direct, in that case.

I would like to propose an amendment to the motion in the hope that my colleagues might be amenable to it.

Part (a)(iii) now reads as follows:

that it be an instruction to the committee to consider, as part of its review, whether the act should be amended or expanded with a view to enhancing transparency, preventing conflicts of interest, avoiding potential or apparent conflicts of interest, regulating public office holders' ownership of assets in tax havens, limiting the availability of blind trusts as a compliance measure, extending the act's provisions to political party leaders and leadership candidates,

I'm wondering whether here we could amend the motion by including "expanding consistency between the act and the Conflict of Interest Code for members of the House of Commons". This would come before "and increasing penalties for non-compliance; and". It would be just that one addition.

The rationale there, Mr. Chair, is that many of us wear multiple hats as parliamentarians. We are guided by both the Conflict of Interest Act and the code, yet there are some discrepancies between the two. We have two regimes, not one. Again, since many of us do wear multiple hats, I think it's worthy of review as to whether or not there's an opportunity to actually bring these two closer together. There are many instances when, for example, members are provided with briefings that can provide early insight into government programs and announcements, yet only the code applies, not the act. Wouldn't it make more sense for us to be under a more consistent regime of conflict of interest guidance?

If we're going to undertake a study of the act, I think it might be interesting to see whether there's some value in bringing the code into this discussion as well.

The Chair: There is a challenge with what you're proposing, Ms. Church, in that Mr. Barrett is talking about the act and you're talking about the code. The code is generally under the purview of the procedure and House affairs committee. It doesn't fall under the mandate of the ethics committee. The act itself could, so I have a bit of a challenge with the way you've done that, because the code actually deals with the code of conduct for members. The act actually speaks specifically to the Prime Minister and ministers.

Just give me a second here while I confirm this with the clerk. The fact is that what you're proposing as an amendment may not only be outside the mandate of what we can do as a committee but also be out of order.

Let me deal with this for a second.

• (1655)

(Pause)

• (1700)

The Chair: As I explained, the act and the code....

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, are you raising your hand to speak to the topic at hand?

Luc Thériault: Actually, Mr. Chair, I'm waiting for your ruling. If your decision is to keep the amendment, I will intervene to request that the written document be sent to me by email, because I'm not sure the interpretation is enough.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

[English]

As I said, there is a difference between the code and the act. The code is administered by the House.

Your amendment specifically deals with the code of conduct as it relates to members. I would suggest that a better vehicle for that would be through the procedure and House affairs committee, if you want to talk to your colleagues about that, because I know they had a comprehensive review of the code in the last Parliament.

Anything that deals with the act itself, as it relates to designated public office holders or ministers, is well within our purview as a committee to deal with and to make those recommendations.

Maybe, in the scope of any discussion or study that we have, we'd recommend that it change, but as it stands right now I'd have to rule the amendment out of order, given the explanation I just gave and the discussions I've had with the clerk and the analysts as well. I apologize for that.

Mr. Sari, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: First of all, I have a point of order on this amendment that you're ruling out of order, which is fine. However, if an amendment is in the interest of each and every one of us, I think we should at least receive it in writing, whether in French or in English. That would give us a clear understanding of the meaning.

When I talked about the first wording earlier, I made a mistake, and I apologize. It was actually an amendment I wanted to move. I was expecting the text of the amendment to be sent by email so that everyone could read it. As long as the amendment is in order, we have to study it. Where appropriate, there could also be a sub-amendment that we could accept.

Right now, we can't rely solely on our auditory memory to follow the debate on this motion. It's impossible. At one point, we received a motion in writing. We were able to read it and then discuss it.

I don't personally have the ability to analyze the amendment based solely on my auditory memory. That would be really impossible.

I'm simply asking that whenever an item is added, we at least receive it in writing and suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that we can discuss it. That's really in the interest of each and every one of us.

I'll go back to the first point I made earlier. I have to say that I'm not very comfortable with the first wording. I think it would be very important to say the following:

...that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government provide a comprehensive response to the report.

That's much more how I really see the role of our committee. I think that's what we need to discuss.

As for the other items, I do indeed have other amendments to propose, and I'd like for us to be able to discuss them. If you want us to bundle the amendments, we need a little time to send them

and analyze them, one amendment at a time. I still have four amendments to propose for the three paragraphs.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

On this particular amendment that was moved, I've already ruled it out of order. You are well within your rights to move other amendments, if you would like.

The next speaker on the list is Mr. Saini.

Mr. Saini, I had you on list. Go ahead, sir. We're on the motion now. We're not speaking on the amendment. We're on the motion.

Gurbux Saini (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): I would like to ask the clerk for clarification. Does the House have the authority to do what Mr. Barrett is asking?

The Chair: I'm sorry, sir. Could you just repeat that?

Gurbux Saini: On the motion that is in front of us, does the House have the authority to deal with it? I'm asking the clerk.

• (1705)

The Chair: I'm going to suggest that if it's the desire of the committee to support the motion as presented, which I've ruled is in order, then it would be up to the committee to decide that. The text of the motion and the ask of the motion would, in that case, go back to the House, but there are other parts of the motion that we would start dealing with right away.

We have the authority to deal with the motion that's on the floor right now.

Gurbux Saini: The House has given this committee the authority to deal with it under Standing Order 109. Why are we going back to the House?

The Chair: We want to make sure—and I don't disagree with you that we do have the authority—that when it does go back to the House and the House gives us this, then we can actually deal with this study in its entirety and not worry, and we can get the House's blessing on this.

I assume this is why it was written this way, Mr. Barrett. I'm going to go to you for an explanation, and I'm going to talk to the clerk here.

In talking to the clerk, just for clarification, under Standing Order 109, the committees may make a request to the House for global orders and answers, and the committees can report back to the House, so it's well within our right to do that, sir.

I have another hand. Go ahead, Ms. Church.

Leslie Church: Thank you again.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to try this again. I have another amendment I'd like to propose to the motion at hand. I'd like to propose this as subparagraph 4(a)(iv):

that it be an instruction to the committee to consider, as part of its review, whether the act should be amended or expanded to ensure it meets the objectives set out in the Conflict of Interest Act to encourage experienced and competent persons to seek and accept public office and to facilitate interchange between the private and public sector;

Those are words taken directly from the act itself. This would be important for us to consider as well, because if we're looking at the expansion and enhancement of the act in different ways, it's important that we also return to the overall objectives of the act and whether or not the act itself is meeting those objectives that were originally set out. I think a lot of those objectives are behind many of the considerations in the motion.

The Chair: Before we get into debate, just let me check with the clerk here for a second.

Leslie Church: Sure.

The Chair: What the clerk and I were talking about is this. For you to move your motion, I need you to speak slowly and clearly, so that the clerk can take the motion and understand what the words are, because she will write it down and then we will distribute an amended motion, if accepted, to the committee members as well.

Ms. Church has the floor.

Mr. Sari, I'll come to you after Ms. Church, unless you have a point of order.

Okay, go ahead with your point of order.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you very much.

Since we're on the same team, I would prefer that we suspend the meeting so that we can draft the amendments and send them to you. That would be much better than proposing them orally and then having them transcribed, because that could leave the question of which version is the right one, and it isn't ideal to have to amend amendments. It's better to suspend the meeting and come back with well-written amendments, which the clerk can send to everyone. That would be ideal, and it would save us time.

[English]

The Chair: This is why I asked Ms. Church to speak slowly. If we start suspending every time we have a written amendment... This is not a long amendment. I've asked Ms. Church to speak slowly and clearly on this, so that the clerk can translate. She will send it to everyone. I can't suspend the meeting every time somebody wants to move an amendment, unless it's a substantive, long-winded amendment. I want to make sure that we're getting through this. Is that okay?

We're still on the point of order. Go ahead.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Chair, Mr. Thériault had his hand up before the others.

The Chair: Okay.

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

Luc Thériault: It's on the issue—

The Chair: Okay. If you want to raise a point of order, please say so.

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

The Liberals are putting forward amendments. I imagine they had already read the motion, which had been put on notice before the meeting. It's up to them to send us the written amendments they want to propose.

I would agree with suspending the meeting so that all their amendments can be written and sent by email. That way, there will be no more discussion. If you rule them out of order, we'll have the exact wording. At present, it's very difficult to follow with simultaneous interpretation, especially since the way in which the amendments are presented isn't very clear.

I agree that we should suspend the meeting, but this is probably the last time for this motion, because I don't have an amendment to propose. It seems as if it's only the Liberals who want to do that. However, I wouldn't want us to take a break every time an unexpected amendment is proposed. That's their business.

In short, I would take a five-minute break because I can't keep up, but I'd like us to continue the meeting afterward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

The difficulty is that, if an amendment proposes several changes, I have to make a decision on the admissibility of each proposed change.

Ms. Church is now proposing an amendment. The clerk and I will decide whether it's in order. If the amendment is in order, we will then suspend the meeting for three minutes to give the clerk time to write it down and send it to all committee members. After that, we will continue our work on the amendment.

[English]

I am going to suspend for three minutes.

Ms. Church, I need you to read that amendment slowly one more time, please.

Leslie Church: That section (a)(iv) be added to the motion:

that it be an instruction to the committee to consider, as part of its review, whether the act should be amended or expanded to ensure it meets the objectives set out in the Conflict of Interest Act to encourage experienced and competent persons to seek and accept public office and to facilitate interchange between the private and public sector;

The Chair: Okay, I'm going to accept that amendment.

Just to be clear, are there any other amendments that you want to propose here?

Go ahead, Madame Lapointe.

[Translation]

Linda Lapointe: Since this is a very technical text dealing with subjects such as the act, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and those kinds of things, it's very important for me to have the French version too. Of course, I speak English, and I could speak to you in English like you speak to me in French, but I want to be sure I understand everything properly.

The Chair: You're right about that, Ms. Lapointe.

If there are other amendments, I ask you to send them to the clerk right away, because I won't suspend the meeting every time. Our time is limited. Maybe we'll be able to vote on the motion, but maybe not. It would be easier for me and all committee members to work that way.

• (1715)

Linda Lapointe: In fact, my goal was to ensure that the text was available in both languages.

The Chair: Yes, I know that.

Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, I'm going to suspend for probably three minutes.

Do you have a point of order, Mike? Let me suspend, and we'll get this out.

Okay, thanks.

• (1715)

(Pause)

• (1730)

The Chair: That took 20 minutes to write up what is effectively a one-line amendment. I'm going to suggest that if anybody has any other amendments, they do it right away. Send it to the clerk and she'll work on it. Then, if the amendment is moved, she will share it with members of the committee.

I don't want these suspensions. I dealt with too many of them in the last Parliament, and we just wasted time.

We are aware that there may be some typos. I appreciate that, Ms. Church. That's what happens when you work on the fly. The clerk is going to correct the typos.

We are on the amendment that was moved by Ms. Church, which I've accepted. Everybody has it.

Does anybody want to speak to it?

Gurbux Saini: I'm going to propose another amendment.

The Chair: You can't do that, sir, until we dispose of this amendment.

Is there any other discussion on this amendment?

Ms. Lapointe.

[Translation]

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, none of this would have happened if we had received the amendment beforehand so that we could read it. That would have been a lot easier. Hearing it today in committee puts us in a situation where we have to make sure we understand all the implications. As I also explained, it has to be done in both official languages.

Thank you for your understanding.

The Chair: Yes, thank you.

[English]

I have Mr. Barrett and then Mr. Sari.

Michael Barrett: The motion was transmitted in both official languages, so that was never an issue. You got it in English, and you got it in French. It was read very slowly, and we had the highest standard of professional simultaneous translation for the benefit of all members of the committee, so there's no need for that.

My challenge to members opposite, Chair, would be to furnish the committee with amendments that they have prepared for the motion that was on notice, which is not that different from the one we have today. I suspect we will find that many of the amendments we're going to see today have been written since we have been in the room, as would have been the case if I had moved the motion that was on notice. This isn't a question of making sure that things are given in both official languages.

After that 20-minute pause, I would be amenable to being able to see all of the amendments that are going to be proposed.

If this is just an exercise in running down the clock, we're not going to support any of the amendments. If we have a couple of good-faith amendments, we want to have a discussion about it where necessary, but if we're just going to pull on every lever to slow things down as much as we can, then we're not going to support the amendments. They can move them. We'll vote against them. We won't speak to them. If we're truly looking to improve on this, let's do that. I don't think it's helpful to say that this is happening because they didn't get it in advance.

First of all, when committee business is before the committee, it's a member's absolute right to not provide the motion in writing. The committee is not entitled to that, but it was provided in writing in both official languages. This is what happens. Amendments can be made on the matter at hand. You can move an amendment without furnishing the committee with it in writing.

I very much understood the intent of Ms. Church's amendment, with the exception of whether it was replacing or supplementing point four. That wasn't said. Once that was simply said, it was crystal clear and I did not have it in front of me.

My colleague, who speaks French as a first language, heard the motion read in English and was able, he tells me, to understand Ms. Church's intent as well. That's how we're able to do this with the services being provided to us.

On what looks like delay for the sake of delay, please prove me wrong.

Through you, Chair, I would ask the members opposite how many amendments they're going to ask us to consider. The request from Mr. Thériault was to see all of the amendments. They had 20 minutes to furnish you with all of them.

Let's just understand what we're dealing with. Do we need to make a request for additional resources? I don't think there are a lot of committees sitting tonight, so let's figure that out.

• (1735)

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, I think I made my point very clear as well: that if there are any amendments they be sent to the clerk so that she can dispose of them very, very quickly and send them back to members of the committee. If need be, members of the committee can talk while that work is being done.

I appreciate the point that Mr. Thériault and others made—that, you know, you might want to have it in writing—but we do have the services that provide simultaneous interpretation, especially on.... I wouldn't consider Ms. Church's amendment to be that complicated. It was easy to understand, so we're going to proceed on that basis.

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, I see your hand up, but Mr. Sari is next. Your turn will come after his.

[English]

Go ahead, Mr. Sari.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Are you speaking to the amendment?

Abdelhaq Sari: Yes, exactly.

We're actually saying the same thing.

Mr. Saini really wanted to add an amendment, but we're not exactly sure how to send you our other amendments. The goal isn't to delay the process, but to get a clear understanding of things. I don't agree that we should just say that we sort of understand the meaning of the amendment. Wording and language are very important. Every word carries weight, and the French translation can sometimes be harmful. In fact, in the motion itself, which Mr. Thériault drafted well, some elements were very poorly translated. That's why I'm bringing this up.

My question to you, Mr. Chair, is this: Do we need to send all of our amendments to you right away, because we have other amendments, or, as you said to Mr. Saini, do we have to deal with this amendment first before moving on to the others?

The Chair: I'll answer your question.

[English]

Mr. Saini indicated that he wanted to move an amendment.

Abdelhaq Sari: Yes.

The Chair: We deal with one amendment at a time. If he wanted to move a subamendment to the amendment, that's possible—

• (1740)

Abdelhaq Sari: Oh, okay.

The Chair: —but that's not what he indicated to me. That is why I intervened and gave him the procedural, correct answer, okay? That's why.

We're on the amendment right now. Is there any other discussion?

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, you have the floor.

Luc Thériault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For a few minutes, we discussed an amendment that seemed clear, but anyway....

I have a bit of experience in committees, and I feel that delay tactics are being used.

I find the amendment superfluous. It's superfluous because section 67 clearly states that the act must be reviewed every five years. However, what the committee is doing today is asking the House to give it the mandate that some would like it to have. I don't think that encouraging or not encouraging someone from the private sector to apply, to get elected, is part of the act or should be part of it. That position can be defended and will be discussed during our work, but I don't think it is relevant. I mentioned this to the Ethics Commissioner on Monday. In my opinion, there are stations, jobs and structural positions of people in the private sector that, unfortunately, are incompatible with public office. We will be able to assess that aspect. We'll need to hold that discussion.

Now, to say that we as a committee need to make sure that these people are going to be solicited.... I don't want to solicit anyone. Someone who wants to get involved in politics has to meet the criteria established to ensure there is no conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest. Full stop. We are not a recruitment agency. Competence has nothing to do with wealth, and it has nothing to do with the interests someone defends. Competence has to do with a person's experience, and that's it. They have to prove it. We, as elected officials, have to prove it to the public and will be judged by the public in an election. Those are my thoughts. Therefore, I will be voting against this amendment.

However, I want to say that the motion is written by the book. What needs to be understood is that, earlier, during the first interventions, I understood that the Liberals wanted us to conduct a study calling for a review of the act. In our opinion, we are already at the stage of reviewing the act.

We are asking the House to give the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics the mandate. Full stop. If we agree on that, we can add things to the recommendations and amendments during our study. However, right now, what's important is to know whether we want to have this mandate and ask the House to review the act and to do so as soon as possible.

What the Liberals are proposing, or what seemed to be coming out of their remarks, is to conduct a study so that one of our recommendations to the House would be to review the act. We'll move past that. In any case, it is consistent with section 67 of the act.

Let's speed up the process. I know I have been speaking for a while, but we need to speed up the process.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

[English]

I have Ms. Church and then Mr. Sari.

Leslie Church: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In respect to Mr. Theriault and his comments, part of the rationale for bringing forward the amendment actually had to do with the points that were raised by Mr. Theriault at our last session.

Just as a point of clarification, the language that I have proposed here for the amendment is directly from the Conflict of Interest Act.

The purpose of the act is set out in 3(d) and 3(e) of the act, as follows:

(d) encourage experienced and competent persons to seek and accept public office; and

(e) facilitate interchange between the private and public sector.

Part of why I believe that this actually is in scope and is an important part of the review is that these are delineated objectives of the act that we are seeking to review here. If we look at Mr. Barrett's motion, we see that he set out in his third sub—(a)(iii)—that all of the pieces of the review that in his view we should actually be reviewing as a committee, which are within the scope of the act currently as well—blind trusts and such, how we deal with ownerships and how we deal with conflicts of interest—are elements in the act currently.

Mr. Theriault, I appreciate how you've set out your intention to vote against the amendment, but I just wanted to be extremely clear that my intention here was to pull language from the act itself, just as in the preceding subparagraph of Mr. Barrett's motion, to emphasize the areas that we should be looking at as parliamentarians when we are reviewing the act.

• (1745)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Church.

[Translation]

Mr. Sari, you have the floor on the amendment.

Abdelhaq Sari: Yes, I will speak to the amendment, and I would also like to respond to Mr. Thériault.

I agree that, when someone wants to become a member of Parliament, they have to apply—in other words, run for office, and earn people's trust. However, the door must be open to everyone, especially people who have the required skills. Fundamentally, I believe that we shouldn't create barriers that prevent people from entering politics, and that's where Mr. Thériault and I disagree. We have to encourage people to enter politics, and that means not creating barriers, as was done for visible minorities and feminist movements. It's very important. Maintaining these barriers will prevent us from accessing the skills of people who have proven themselves in the private sector. The reason I don't agree with Mr. Thériault is that, by leaving this element in, we are creating constraints and barriers and depriving ourselves of skills that could serve the public interest.

Concerning the actual amendment, the reason our party is so keen on it is not because we want to favour the private sector; it's just to make room for people who have experience and expertise. Right now, these people are aware that coming here could harm

their future or they could be singled out, as we see in this kind of a motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

[English]

I don't have anybody else on the list, so we are going to the amendment proposed by Ms. Church.

There is a tie. I vote against.

(Amendment negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: We are now back on the main motion.

Is there any discussion on the main motion? As there's no discussion on the main motion, we're going to call the vote on the main motion.

Gurbux Saini: I would like to amend the main motion.

The Chair: I have already called the vote, Mr. Saini.

Gurbux Saini: I had my hand up before you called the question.

• (1750)

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

Gurbux Saini: Mr. Chair, long before you asked for the vote, I had my hand up.

The Chair: Mr. Saini, I called for the vote. I didn't see any hands when I asked if there was any other discussion, so I am going to the vote. If you would like to challenge my decision on that, please, go ahead. We're going to the vote, sir.

Gurbux Saini: Yes—

The Chair: You mentioned it earlier, but you didn't mention it just now when I asked if there was any other discussion. That was the time for you to raise your hand.

Gurbux Saini: As a new member, maybe I misunderstood you. When I say I want to speak and propose an amendment, that should be considered.

The Chair: My ruling is that when I called for further discussion on the main motion, there was no other discussion. We are going to the vote. There will be no other discussion on this.

Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

[Translation]

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, before the vote on Ms. Church's amendment, my colleague had already stated his intention to move another amendment afterwards. So, if he can no longer move his amendment, I don't think that's fair.

[English]

The Chair: I've made my decision. If you'd like to challenge me on my decision, I invite you to do that. Otherwise, we're going to the vote.

Gurbux Saini: I would like to challenge going to the vote.

The Chair: We have a challenge to the chair on the decision to go to the vote.

Madam Clerk, would you pose the question, please, and explain what a yea or nay vote means?

The Clerk of the Committee (Nancy Vohl): On the challenge on the ruling of the chair, the question is, shall the ruling of the chair be sustained? If you think that the decision of the chair should be sustained, that it's the decision that you think is correct, you vote for. If you think that the ruling of the chair is incorrect, that it should not be sustained, you vote against.

The Chair: We have a challenge.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: I think there will be minutes of proceedings. Before we go to a vote—

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Sari, but a challenge is not debatable. Those are the rules. The challenge has been made to the decision of the chair. We're going to go to a vote.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: I said that before we even get to a vote on the chair's ruling—

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, but there's no debating this. The challenge has been made. It's a non-debatable challenge, so we're going to go to the vote.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Chair: Look, it's the first week back. I'm still getting used to things. The vote is to sustain the decision of the chair, which means we go to the vote on the main motion.

Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

Leslie Church: I would raise a question of privilege, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: I also want to raise a question of privilege.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead on a question of privilege.

Leslie Church: Mr. Chair, I think it's very clear that my colleague had an amendment that he intended to make at some point after my amendment was considered by the room. Now, I don't think that any of us here want to get into a debate about who put up a hand before you looked in the general direction and called this vote. We have another at least 35 minutes allocated to the business of this committee, and I think it is more than appropriate that my colleague be given a chance to move the amendment that he so clearly indicated to the room that he intended to make.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Church.

The ruling of the chair was sustained by the committee. I am going to, again, proceed on the vote. I appreciate your intervention on the question of privilege, but the committee did speak on the chair's decision, so we're going to go to the vote.

Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: The vote is on the motion moved by Mr. Barrett.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Chair, I raised a question of privilege, but you have not yet given me the floor.

I just want it noted in the minutes that I am raising a question of privilege about what happened. I asked to move an amendment, and you answered that I would have the opportunity to do so. We then voted on another amendment, but now you want to vote on the motion without hearing our amendments. I want it noted in the minutes that you promised me, very clearly, that two other amendments could be proposed, but that you then changed your mind, perhaps because you're in a hurry.

Right now, we don't have freedom of expression in this committee. We can't speak clearly and propose the amendments we want to propose. We could have moved them once and for all to debate them, but you told us we had to wait and proceed one amendment at a time. That's what you said, Mr. Chair. You said it in English, and that was interpreted into French in my ear. So I expect us to be able to propose our amendments. You promised it, and then you changed your mind.

Please at least explain to us why you changed your mind. That would be very relevant. Right now, we have two amendments that are very relevant to the motion, to help you and to ensure that we can work together. However, now, we can't speak our minds.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

Again, I go back to the fact that the decision of the committee has been made. I accept the decision of the committee, so we are going to go to the vote on the main motion.

Gurbux Saini: Mr. Chair, I find it very difficult that the committee is not prepared to listen to the member on such an important issue as changing the ethics rules. I don't know.... I think it's just.... You're trying to force your will onto other members when Mr. Sari had an amendment and I had an amendment, and you're saying no. I want it to be recorded that this is not how democracy should work.

The Chair: Mr. Saini, the way the minutes of the meeting work is that those decisions that are made either by the committee or the chair are what are going to be recorded in the minutes of this meeting. Again, the decision of the committee is clear. It sustained the decision of the chair, so we are going to go to the vote on the motion.

Leslie Church: I have a question of personal privilege.

Mr. Chair, I think the Standing Orders say:

Unless a time limit has been adopted by the committee or by the House, the Chair of a standing, special or legislative committee may not bring a debate to an end while there are members present who still wish to participate.

I believe that this is exactly the situation we find ourselves in right now. The chair has brought an end to the debate arbitrarily while there are members who clearly still wish to debate.

The Chair: I will respectfully disagree with you on that. The decision of the chair was that there were no hands to continue any further debate. I went to call the vote. My decision was challenged, and the decision was sustained by members of the committee, so I am going to go to the vote.

[Translation]

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I did indicate that my two colleagues wanted to move an amendment. You asked that we conclude debate on Ms. Church's amendment. You really said we were going to wait.

Now you're saying that we won't be hearing from our two colleagues. We've sat on other committees together before. I didn't expect that from you, as someone with so much experience. I'm disappointed.

[English]

The Chair: You can have the opinion you want. I didn't see any hands. I made the decision, and it was sustained. You can raise all the questions of privilege you want. The committee sustained the chair's decision, which means that we're going to go to the vote on the main motion.

Call the vote, Madam Clerk.

● (1800)

Gurbux Saini: Mr. Chair, I find it very difficult. When we were debating Ms. Church's amendment, my hand was up, and you said we'd deal with that one and then you'd come to me. I find it very difficult that now you're saying that you didn't see my hand when it was clear that you were indicating that you'd come back to me after we dealt with Ms. Church's amendment.

The Chair: I think I made it very clear that we can't debate any further amendments. You weren't proposing a subamendment.

When I made my decision.... When I thought the debate was over and I didn't see any hands up, that's when I called the vote, Mr. Saini. I'm not going to make something up, that your hand was up, because it wasn't when I called the vote. You rightly challenged, and I appreciate the fact that you can do that. I gave you that opportunity. The chair's decision was sustained, so there's no further discussion on this. The committee has made its decision, and we're going to go to the vote.

I'm going to call the vote on the main motion.

Madam Clerk.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

When you ruled that debate was over, it was on the amendment. There was only one amendment on the table at that time. You made that decision before moving on to other amendments. You asked the

committee to wait for the other amendments. I then told you that I would send you amendments by email. You told me that we could wait.

When debate is on the table, it always concerns a single amendment and not the others. In fact, you yourself postponed the other amendments to debate them at a later time.

That said, will you behave like this at every committee meeting? If so, it will be difficult to work with you in the future. To take for granted what the chair is saying is information we can understand. Is that how we will operate and work in the future?

Today, I'm learning that what we can gather from your comments isn't necessarily the right thing. That is disappointing, especially in the case of a committee that is supposed to set an example when it comes to ethics. We all understood the same thing, that we had to wait to move on to other amendments. I think we're smart enough to understand what you're saying, whether it's in English or in French.

My question is simple: Will you always behave like this? If so, we'll have to be careful in the future. Although I don't have any experience at the federal level, I have sat on commissions for quite some time. However, I've never experienced such restricted opportunities for expression as what I'm experiencing today at the federal level.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

My decision was based on the fact that there was no more debate on the motion, and that's why we moved to that. The decision was made by the committee to sustain the decision of the chair.

We are now going to the vote on the motion.

Madam Clerk.

Gurbux Saini: On a question of privilege, Chair....

The Chair: We've started the vote, sir.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 1)

● (1805)

[Translation]

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

Linda Lapointe: Mr. Chair, we also want to move a motion, which I will give you after I read it.

The Chair: Okay. Read it slowly, please.

Linda Lapointe: Our motion reads as follows:

That the committee undertake a comprehensive study of the Lobbying Act to assess its effectiveness in ensuring transparency and ethical conduct in lobbying activities; that witnesses include the Commissioner of Lobbying, representatives from civil society, former public office holders, and ethics experts; that the committee report its findings and propose legislative or regulatory reforms to the House; and that pursuant to Standing Order 109 the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

Mr. Thériault, do you have something to say on the motion? No.

[English]

Is there more discussion? I don't see any.

Do we have consensus on the motion proposed by Madame Lapointe?

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Thériault, you may begin.

Luc Thériault: My motion concerns a study on artificial intelligence, or AI. I'll outline the issue before formally presenting the motion. The clerk has copies in English and French for distribution.

To provide some context, I would say that artificial intelligence is a process designed to give machines the ability to imitate certain skills specific to human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, creating content and making decisions.

We often hear that this technology is incredible and that it provides many advantages, and rightly so. However, what do we really know about this technology of technologies, this race to establish artificial superintelligence? Ultimately, we know very little.

However, in May 2023, a group of pioneering artificial intelligence experts and business leaders in this field warned the general public of the potential dangers of the innovation. They stated as follows: "Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war."

Since this concern was raised by the very people creating the superintelligence, it seems worthy of study. The goal isn't to unnecessarily slow down technological development, but to take proactive measures.

What are the positive and negative aspects of AI? What do we know about this technology of technologies, this race to establish artificial superintelligence? How can we regulate the various applications of AI? Financial considerations aside, how could this type of artificial superintelligence become a threat to the security of institutions and governments? When will governments reach a point of no return in terms of regulating artificial intelligence? How does artificial intelligence affect energy and environmental issues? Above all, how does artificial intelligence affect privacy and the control of access to information?

This drive to create artificial superintelligence raises an ethical question. Apart from the financial interests of these companies, what is the ultimate goal and what vision of humanity lies behind it?

A failure to address this issue now would amount to giving carte blanche to all-powerful corporations and turning a blind eye. We must proceed with an informed approach. That's why my motion recommends the following:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), the committee undertake a study to assess artificial intelligence (AI), the challenges it poses, and how it should be regulated; to this end, that the committee hold a minimum of four (4) meetings; that at the first meeting, the committee invite the Canadian Minister of AI to appear before it; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government provide a comprehensive response to the report.

• (1810)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

The motion is in order. You have already spoken a bit about it, but do you have anything else to add for the committee?

Luc Thériault: I just want to say that the committee should indeed open this discussion and invite experts to participate. We need to begin an in-depth ethical discussion on this topic. Above all, this issue will affect the control of access to information and privacy. That's all.

If our work can clear the way for other committees to propose avenues for research or study, so much the better. I believe that artificial intelligence is too big an issue for us to pass up the opportunity to conduct this type of study and bring in experts, even practitioners, to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new technology. This issue requires ethical consideration. I believe that this falls within our mandate.

The Chair: Thank you.

During the discussion, perhaps we could talk a bit more about privacy and that sort of thing.

Ms. Lapointe, you can talk about the motion.

Linda Lapointe: Thank you.

Mr. Thériault, I find your motion very intriguing. Artificial intelligence is a recent development. We need to understand how it will affect our lives. I would like us to take the time to review this motion to see whether we might want to propose any amendments.

I personally find your proposed study quite appealing. In my opinion, the impact of artificial intelligence will rival the rise of the Internet. The advent of the Internet brought positive developments, but also negative effects that required countermeasures.

However, with artificial intelligence, what lies ahead is even more significant. I would like us to really examine the motion to ensure that we're all moving in the same direction.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

I also believe that, if the motion is adopted, the committee must look at other issues that fall within its mandate, such as privacy, for example.

Mr. Thériault, I believe that you want us to study these issues. As it stands, artificial intelligence is a broad topic that involves many challenges. Our committee's priority mandate is to look into privacy issues, for example.

Do you agree?

Luc Thériault: Yes, Mr. Chair, I agree.

I gave an overview of the situation. We now need to see what challenges lie ahead and how we can define them.

Obviously, some challenges will fall squarely within our purview. However, the witnesses who appear before us and our inquisitive questions will also help answer your question.

Artificial intelligence is indeed a special field. You know, back home, we talk about “the Internets” when referring to GAFA. When the government wanted to start regulating GAFA, they sent us packing.

Other committees will want to work on artificial intelligence, since it's a cross-cutting issue. However, I believe that our committee should contribute to this topic.

• (1815)

The Chair: I agree. Like Ms. Lapointe, I believe that we must give this issue some consideration.

I also understand that there may be one or two other committees studying artificial intelligence. However, we must stay within our mandate.

Mr. Sari, you have the floor next.

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Thériault, first, thank you for this motion. I'm currently drafting a bill along the same lines. Of course, the ethical aspect of artificial intelligence, which you mentioned, is one of my areas of focus. I would be delighted to have a hallway discussion with you about artificial intelligence, since I've been teaching it for a number of years.

One thing that worries me most—and I don't think that you touched on this—is the potential for bias in the algorithms behind generative artificial intelligence in particular. You talked about this in your introduction. I would appreciate it if you could send us the document that you quoted, since it's quite relevant.

A second issue is of great concern to the committee. I asked a witness about this matter on Monday. It involves the possibility of using artificial intelligence to process access to information requests. I believe that this may even become necessary, given the amount of information to process. This raises questions about the ethics of using this type of technology for that purpose.

There are a number of aspects to address. However, before inviting witnesses, Mr. Thériault, we should first have a discussion to determine the topic of this study and its scope, in keeping with the role of this committee. We can then choose the aspects, angles or areas to address and the witnesses to invite for each of them. That's my proposal.

[English]

The Chair: I do have you down, Ms. Church.

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, I believe that you're right to move this motion. However, the clerk sent only the text of the motion, without the preamble. If you agree, I suggest that everything that you wrote be sent to all committee members so that they can better understand your proposed study.

Luc Thériault: Mr. Chair, the clerk has a copy of the motion, including the preamble.

The Chair: The clerk sent only the text of the motion, without the preamble.

Luc Thériault: Okay.

The Chair: If you want, we can send everything that you wrote to the other committee members so that they can better understand your proposal.

Luc Thériault: Yes, absolutely. I thought that the preamble had also been sent out.

I think that, by inviting witnesses to address our various concerns, we'll be able to answer our colleagues' questions. I think that we need to move forward first and that things will become clearer as we go along. Mr. Sari seems to have expertise in certain aspects of the application of artificial intelligence. However, there are also people racing to develop artificial superintelligence. Not many companies in the world carry out this type of research. We could invite some of their representatives. I'm thinking in particular of people from the Université de Montréal, such as Yoshua Bengio. In short, there will be a list of witnesses. I think that this will shed light on the issues and guide our questions and recommendations at the end.

• (1820)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

[English]

I think that, once you see the preamble, you'll perhaps understand, Mr. Sari, and it will answer a lot of your questions. The problem is it's considered debate and we can't send it, but, with Mr. Thériault's permission, I think you'll have a better understanding of where he wants to go, and it makes perfect sense to me.

Ms. Church, go ahead, please.

Leslie Church: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Thériault, as well, thank you for proposing a very interesting and timely subject for us to look at in terms of our committee's mandate around both information and privacy. This is actually of great urgency and concern for many Canadians.

One of the things I would like to see scoped into the study, if at all possible and if you are amenable, is around a phenomenon that touches many Canadians in their pocketbooks when they're purchasing online. It's the increasing phenomenon around surveillance pricing. This really depends on private information like a person's location, a person's identity and a person's purchase history.

One of the main areas where we don't have much transparency right now is around how AI is being used to help create a system where consumers are at the mercy of highly fluctuating changes in pricing that are dependent on these personal data points being collected online and used by artificial intelligence to change prices instantaneously based on this information. It's a very emergent area of concern.

If you would be at all amenable to it, Mr. Thériault, I certainly would be interested in looking at that, because I think that also has a direct impact on many Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you for that intervention, Ms. Church.

I sent the preamble as a courtesy to put in context where Mr. Thériault was going with the motion. I would suggest that, as you submit your witness list, if you have anybody who's an expert in that regard, submit them to the clerk and the analyst. We will do everything we can to get them, too, because I agree with you that this is important.

[Translation]

Mr. Thériault, you have the floor.

Luc Thériault: I was just about to say that.

I like that aspect. In some committees, particularly the Standing Committee on Health, we've already done this. We set topics when members raise questions regarding a number of issues. I would be open to spending an hour at some point strictly on the topic raised by Ms. Church. Over the coming days, we'll be determining how to organize our work around this. I wanted to take a comprehensive approach that addresses the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and how we might regulate it. Then we'll get started! We're open to asking questions about specific sectors.

Some people have a broad perspective. They're familiar with artificial intelligence and its various applications. They can answer our questions. I'm open to this. Let's get started. We must decide how to organize our work.

We're currently voting on a motion to set up a study. However, subcommittees always then organize the work involved in a study. I think that, at that point, we can agree on the witnesses and topics to focus on, and so on. If necessary, we could even add a meeting if we want to. This will depend solely on our interest and the development of our reflection process, our understanding and our ability to make relevant recommendations to the House.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

I thought of something today. We could meet as a subcommittee on Monday for an hour or so to discuss and plan our work for the fall, taking into account the studies approved today and the desired witnesses.

Do you agree?

Mr. Thériault, we're listening.

Luc Thériault: I don't know whether on Monday, given the deadlines.... We can meet with witnesses on.... We definitely need to draw up a list of witnesses and discuss how to organize our work. I think that this is our next step together.

I think that it's a good idea to meet on Monday to organize the studies. We also need to set a schedule for the work. I think that this is the right step to take.

• (1825)

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Thériault.

[English]

Mr. Sari, go ahead.

[Translation]

Abdelhaq Sari: I want to make sure that I got this right. On Monday, we can propose a list of witnesses to address the topic of artificial intelligence. However, we'll also be discussing other motions tabled, not just Mr. Thériault's motion. We'll also be organizing the work. I gather that this is the plan for Monday.

The Chair: Yes. We'll draw up a list of witnesses.

[English]

I was thinking about having a subcommittee meeting on planning anyway, on Monday, for at least one hour or so. Then there might be something else we need to do in the second hour, but I agree with Mr. Thériault: We had three motions that were passed today, and developing a plan for the fall is the next normal course of action. I will certainly talk to the clerk and the analysts about doing that.

I don't have any other discussion. We're on Mr. Thériault's motion. I'm going to first ask for consensus on the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: It is 6:26 p.m. I don't think we have any other business.

I want to thank you all for a very robust discussion on what I think are some very important issues we're going to get to deal with. That was really the purpose of today, to make sure we start the process of working this fall. I appreciate all the interventions, even the ones that didn't agree with me. That's what healthy debate is all about.

Thank you, everyone—our analysts, clerk and technicians.

The meeting is adjourned.

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