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Chair: Mr. Robert Kitchen



Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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• (1655)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): Good afternoon, everybody. I see we have quorum, so I will call the meeting to order.

I welcome you to the third meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

The committee is meeting for the next hour today to consider future business, and following that meeting the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure will meet for an hour and continue planning for the work of the committee.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, the committee may continue to sit in a hybrid format. This means that members can participate either in person in the committee room or by video conference via Zoom. Just so that you are aware, today's meeting is in public.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few rules.

Interpretation in this video conference will work very much like a regular committee meeting. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of floor, English or French. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize your name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. To raise a point of order during the meeting, committee members should ensure their microphone is unmuted and say “point of order” to get the chairman's attention.

In order to ensure social distancing in the committee room, if you need to speak privately with the clerk during the meeting, please email him at the committee mailbox. Also, if you wish to consult with the analysts—they are with us today—please communicate with them via that means as well.

On Friday, the clerk sent out the text of three motions that were debated during the OGGO meeting on Thursday, October 8, 2020. The debate on all three of these motions was adjourned.

Members were also asked to submit any suggestions they had for discussion during this meeting. We received suggestions from Ms. Vignola, which were transmitted to committee members on Friday.

I will now open the floor for members of the committee to discuss which subjects they wish to discuss.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have several motions on the table, but I would like to table one today. I believe it will only require one meeting. It reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of the federal contract for 10,000 pandemic ventilators awarded to FTI and manufactured by Baylis Medical, and that the committee report its findings to the House in November 2020.

Thank you Mr. Chair.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Green, you have a point of order.

Mr. Matthew Green: Am I not to understand that when we adjourn, we pick up the adjournment based on the motion that we adjourned on, or do we just start completely open?

I believe I still have a motion on the floor. I didn't know that adjournment was a reset.

The Chair: In the last meeting, we actually just continued on, but I believe in the last one we sort of [Inaudible—Editor].

When I opened the floor, I saw Mr. Paul-Hus first; however, there is an opportunity, Mr. Green, if you wish to put forward a motion to resume debate, or we can finish the debate quickly on the motion of Mr. Paul-Hus and then go straight to you to resume that debate.

Mr. Matthew Green: Just to be clear, in the last meeting, you're suggesting that we didn't adjourn while my motion was duly put on the floor.

The Chair: Yes, as we've come back to this committee, it's really up to where the committee would wish to go.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you for that point of information.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. MacKinnon.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think we should begin by debating the amendments to Mr. Green's motion that I had submitted to the committee.

• (1700)

[English]

The Chair: I would agree with Mr. MacKinnon that we would resume the debate on the amendment as proposed, assuming it's the amendment based on the motion originally presented by Mr. Green. The motion you were making the amendment on was one that was not being presented by Mr. Green.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I don't think that's the case, Mr. Chair. My amendment to Mr. Green's motion changes the date and deletes part of the motion.

[English]

The Chair: Sorry, could you repeat that? I apologize. I'm deaf in one ear, and they tell me I can't hear out of the other one. I could not hear the interpreter.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I proposed a two-pronged amendment to Mr. Green's motion, which we were debating just as we adjourned the last meeting. If it is true that we are going to open the meeting by debating Mr. Green's motion, then I think it would be proper that we open the meeting by debating the amendments that I put to his motion that were already on the floor.

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, do you have a point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, my motion has been tabled and we can proceed to a vote. Then we can deal with Mr. Green's motion or other motions.

[English]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: On a point of order, that's not how it works. We adjourned with a motion on the floor, a motion that had been amended. We were debating the amendments of that motion. If you accept Mr. Green's proposition that his motion was properly on the floor and we adjourned during its debate, then we should open this meeting by discussing Mr. Green's motion. There were proper amendments on the floor being debated as we adjourned that meeting. We should open the meeting, in that case, by debating the amendments that had been put to Mr. Green's motion.

The Chair: I'm going to get the clerk to speak to the amendment.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Paul Cardegna): If I may, just on the subject of the amendment that was raised by Mr. MacKinnon, just to clarify, my understanding is that Mr. MacKinnon's amendment was to remove the text "by the federal government of a \$900 million sole-sourced contract to WE Charity, as well as prior contracts to this organization". Furthermore, it was to replace the date October 31, 2020 with December 31, 2020.

Mr. MacKinnon, do I have that correct?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: On the date, wherever it appears....

The Clerk: Yes, it appears twice.

Procedurally, when a committee adjourns debate on a motion, the motion remains before the committee, and the committee can take up the debate again at any time; however, it rests with the committee to determine when it wants to do that.

In this case, the chair recognized that Mr. Paul-Hus moved his motion. There is nothing that prevents another member from moving that we resume consideration of Mr. Green's motion. That being said, we wouldn't be resuming consideration of Mr. Green's motion; we would be resuming debate on the totality of it, which is to say the motion and the amendment that Mr. MacKinnon has moved.

At this point, it depends on how the committee wishes to proceed. If the committee wishes to continue with Mr. Green's motion, it only needs somebody to move that, and the committee will take the majority decision on that. Alternatively, Mr. Paul-Hus was recognized and moved a motion that is on the floor.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Green. I recognize you.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, for the good and welfare of this committee, as we've been stymied now for the better part of six months, I'm happy to relinquish my motion on the floor to my friend Mr. Paul-Hus to hopefully get this committee rolling in the spirit of actually getting stuff done here. I'm happy to take up my motion after Mr. Paul-Hus, who has duly put his motion on the floor.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

Hearing that and seeing nothing else, we will carry on with Mr. Paul-Hus.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

Mr. Drouin, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I am trying to understand Mr. Paul-Hus' motion. A motion has just been tabled in the House requesting the production of documents related to this matter in the Standing Committee on Health. There is also a similar study in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Members of the official opposition have assured us that they are acting in good faith and that they do not intend to call Health Canada officials, who are busy responding to the second wave of the pandemic. However, if the motion is adopted, they will appear before our committee, and then possibly before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. We already know that they will certainly appear before the Standing Committee on Health. I am trying to understand the reasoning behind such a motion.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, do you want to answer that?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Yes, certainly, Mr. Chair.

First of all, it is a very clear and public record that specifically relates to the awarding of contracts by the department. There is overwhelming evidence...

Mr. MacKinnon, you seem to think this is funny.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Forgive me, I was speaking to my colleague.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I think it's good that we're meeting in person. It allows us to see each other and see the management problems we have.

We believe this event requires immediate investigation. We're talking about \$137 million in overpayments by the Government of Canada for ventilators that should have cost \$100 million at most instead of \$237 million. There is also the obvious link between former Liberal MP Frank Baylis, who works through an intermediary, and the government.

Everyone knows about this story, it's public, and it's the job of this committee to get to the bottom of it. It will not put the safety and lives of Canadians at risk, as the Liberals have been saying all day. We are talking about a \$237 million contract. That is a quarter of a billion dollars, for those who can count. We have a right to know what is going on with this contract and how Frank Baylis was able to get it through indirect means.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lloyd, go ahead.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): My quick point here, in response to Mr. Drouin's point, is that I don't think it's up to our committee to presume what the other committees may or may not be studying in the future.

I think it's completely fair game. I agree with my colleague Mr. Paul-Hus that this is a fair motion for this committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Mr. McCauley, and then Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): I'm fine, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacKinnon, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I want to make sure that we are discussing Mr. Paul-Hus' motion right now. I see that we are.

First, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics agreed to study the same thing. The reasonable Canadians who are listening to us and who see what has just been voted on in the House of Commons, which is a motion to study 28 topics and to review documents that could never be read in five human lives, can see that this is an opposition fishing expedition to look for documents. There are now several committees that want to study each and every instance of government procurement.

Here we are in the second wave of a pandemic, where officials from different sectors of government are responsible for the procurement of essential equipment and the delivery of emergency income support programs, which are vital to our people, our SMEs and our businesses. These people ensure that information technology is operating at full capacity. They have to take care of all this while maintaining relationships with partners, the provinces, territories, labour, employers, business, community organizations, and so on.

However we are debating whether we are going to require the filing of documents for a single procurement. This suggests that the opposition parties are not consulting each other before tabling all these motions. There is a proposal for a shipbuilding study, and certainly this is an issue worthy of study. Shipbuilding represents one of the largest procurements in Canadian history and is truly national in scope.

We have agreed to study information technology systems, another subject rich in possibilities, and some other procurements. I believe that my colleagues and I have demonstrated complete transparency and openness by agreeing to productive studies that would allow Canadians to see that, at the very least, members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates are able to work together, roll up their sleeves and agree to do proactive work that will ultimately benefit Canadians.

In the previous Parliament, I believe I did this with Mr. Drouin, Mr. Jowhari and Mr. McCauley. We did some studies that added to the government's thinking, philosophy and direction on very important issues, whether it was procurement, information technology or government operations. We've also looked at some fairly controversial topics, such as payroll systems. We were able to work together.

● (1710)

Welcome, Mr. Chair. I'm a little sorry that you're arriving while we're in such turmoil.

Now we are receiving proposals for review of each of the topics, procurements, issues and opportunities. We know that the Public Accounts of Canada will be made public. The government will be fully transparent and will be judged on all of its actions and initiatives in this pandemic environment.

I'm making a plea before my colleagues and the public today. Let's be constructive. If a committee of the House wants to look at a certain issue or several other issues that need to be examined from top to bottom as we see fit, the government party will be on board. We are offering to work together on some important issues, such as pandemic procurement.

Canada must be able to produce the essential equipment needed to deal with this pandemic. Now we are debating a single purchase as part of our initiative to build a national manufacturing force to deal with the pandemic. I'm talking about the supply of ventilators. A number of companies that did not manufacture ventilators have dropped their regular operations to respond to the Government of Canada's call. That is also what the auto parts manufacturers have done. The president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association told us that the companies that responded to the federal government's call to produce the ventilators, if they were needed, did so not out of partisanship but out of national pride. We thank them for that.

The Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has taken the initiative to go after what is needed to build strong national capacity. It has worked hard, day and night, in partnership with the Department of Public Services and Procurement. It responded to the government's request for help in building the national capacity that Canadians wanted so badly. We have received calls from citizens, governments, partners, unions and the medical community from all walks of life who have made it clear to us that Canada needs to regain its standing in the medical equipment supply chain. That is what the government has done, and it has done so very quickly.

We agree to study this initiative, just as we agree to study the issues that affect the departments that this committee usually deals with.

• (1715)

Once again, I invite my colleagues to be constructive and to agree to work together. Let's not show bad faith. Let's do the important studies that have been proposed by all members of the committee. Let's set a reasonable schedule. Let's call the necessary witnesses in an orderly fashion so that we don't overwhelm the people who are working to protect all the citizens of our country. Let's do studies that will be constructive. That is why we have been sent here by the voters.

If some want to undo all we've done and ask for a parliamentary committee study on each of the purchases, we're going to be here for five Parliaments, Mr. Chair. We published details of \$6 billion in purchases on the website in a transparent manner this summer.

So I reach out to my colleagues. Let's work together. Mr. Chair, I think what you are implicitly telling us is that we should decide together, in a subcommittee, on the order of business of the committee, and resume our work, which has been suspended, in the interest of the voters. We need to provide mature and orderly reflection to the government.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates is chaired by the official opposition, and I maintain that this gives you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Paul-Hus, some responsibility for the choices we make here together. We're in a minority, so you're in the driver's seat, if you put your heads together. However, it does give you a certain responsibility, in my opinion, to present us with a work plan, so that we consider it, the Bloc Québécois considers it, the New Democratic Party studies it, and we decide on our work plan together.

I'm reaching out to you. There's a great deal of material. We want to proceed in a completely transparent way and to treat this work with the seriousness that it requires. Mr. Chair, I hope that we can decide together on a working plan that will benefit Canadians.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

I agree with you on the fact that a working plan is what we need. That working plan is what our whole purpose is about. It's creating that working plan, getting to those motions so they can get to the subcommittee, which should be following this meeting, such that

the subcommittee can determine the studies we need to do. The faster we can get through this, the better it will be. I ask everybody to try to adhere to that.

I notice that everybody is wishing to speak.

Mr. Paul-Hus, I have you. I'm going to let you respond later. We'll hear from everybody else before we give you a chance to respond to people. Some of the questions that are coming from others are directed at you. I'll hold you for a little bit.

I have Mr. Kusmierczyk, then Mr. Weiler, and then Mr. Paul-Hus after that. They are followed by Mr. Drouin, Mr. McCauley, Madame Vignola, and Mr. Jowhari.

Mr. Kusmierczyk, go ahead.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I just want to ask if my honourable colleague Mr. Paul-Hus could reread the motion. I'm not entirely clear I understood the exact motion here. I just want to be clear before I add my comments to the discussion. If possible, I'd ask that my colleague be allowed to reread the motion. Thank you.

The Chair: I'll reread it for you, and I'll do it in English:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the federal contract of 10,000 pandemic ventilators awarded to FTI and fabricated by Baylis Medical, and that the committee report its findings to the House in November 2020.

Did you want to add to that?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Chair, may I speak to that? I'm not sure if I used up my time.

The Chair: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Chair.

I really do appreciate the question from my colleague, although I'm struggling to understand this, knowing that, again, other committees are taking up this work. Just going back to my original point in previous meetings, I'm struggling to understand the value of this particular committee taking up this study at this particular point in time.

When we look at where we are today and where we were many months ago when it comes to medical procurement, we've taken a whole-of-government approach focused on responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. We've worked with partners across all levels of government. We've worked with industry to secure PPE and life-saving medical supplies.

My wife is a nurse practitioner. I remember early on having a conversation with her after seeing what was happening in countries such as Italy with the challenges they had with PPE and medical equipment. I recall the conversations we had, not just about what was happening in Italy, but about what was happening right across the river in Detroit and southeast Michigan. We were seeing hospitals being inundated and overwhelmed and doctors and nurses struggling to get PPE, struggling to get medical equipment, as the first wave washed over Detroit and southeast Michigan. We saw it literally. We saw it on the news every single day.

Mr. Chair, I have to tell you that in Windsor we have 1,500 Canadian nurses who live in Windsor and who travel across the border each and every day to work in American hospitals. We didn't have to watch the news. Many of us know such Canadian cross-border nurses. We were getting information first-hand on what they were experiencing in Detroit with the lack of PPE and medical equipment and the challenges they were facing. Some of them were asked to carry their masks home with them in a paper bag and bring them to work the next day.

Those are some of the things we were thinking about back then, when the first wave hit. With this tremendous effort on the part of the government and on the part of local industry, Canadian industry, we mobilized. We've had the largest peacetime mobilization of industry to produce PPE and medical equipment. We've made this incredible leap from where we were to where we are now. It's absolutely incredible.

We have this momentum that we've established over the last number of months. I think it's important that we see that momentum carry through. We've heard over the last six months and in the summer that we're in a much better position now than we were back in March. That's thanks to the tremendous work of the government, the tremendous work of our officials, the tremendous work of industry and partners—our provincial partners as well—and others who really worked together to acquire the necessary PPE.

• (1725)

We've also been able to bring online production, in terms of long-term planning—the 3M facility in Brockville, and Medicom—to make N95 masks, face shields, gowns, as well as makers of non-medical masks. Again, we've mobilized all our forces and all our folks in order to address PPE and medical equipment, not just in the short term but also in the long term. At this point in time, well over 70% of our orders for face shields have been received. And I might add that the majority of those are from Canadian manufacturers. We received 85% of our orders for hand sanitizer, including from companies like Fluid Energy in Calgary.

Again, we're heading in the right direction. We're gaining momentum here, and that's important because we are preparing for a second wave. The last thing we need is to take the attention of our officials, and all the partnerships that we've built, away from developing and continuing to build up our stockpiles, continuing to build up our PPE, or continuing to build up our medical devices. We can't afford for folks to take their eyes off the ball at this critical juncture, especially knowing that there is a second wave upon us.

Again, you look at the fact that as the numbers are rising around the country, we are starting to get nervous. I can tell you that, again,

even having those conversations with my wife, who's a nurse practitioner, my number one priority is to make sure that we have the PPE and the medical devices necessary to protect not only Canadians and their health, but also the health and safety of Canadians who are front-line health care workers.

Again, my concern—and this is something my colleague had brought forward—is that we're asking officials to basically attend meeting after meeting and take time away from their important, critical work just as we're entering the peak of the second wave. We're asking them to take time away from their important work to come here and testify, and to produce documentation, duplicate meetings rather than having one meeting focused on those discussions.

It represents for me a real clear and present—

• (1730)

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

I'm just trying to seek clarity. We will be meeting in subcommittee, and I was hoping that you could provide the committee with an update on how we are to proceed. My understanding is that we've already adopted four motions at this committee, which have been agreed to by all parties, and now I would hope that we would have a subcommittee meeting so we can get working on those four motions that we've already adopted at committee.

I'm just trying to get a sense of how we are going to proceed, or if we're going to keep scheduling committee business meetings without proceeding with those four motions that have already been adopted at this committee. I'm just seeking clarification on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin. I appreciate that.

Yes, we are at 5:30, and we would like to be able to get to subcommittee. I would ask that people, when they do their presentations, recognize that time frame so we can get to subcommittee to get some motions moved forward. It is up to the discretion of the committee as to how you want to proceed. At this point in time, I ask everyone to understand that and respond to that accordingly.

On a point of order, go ahead, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm just going to be blunt here. It's the intention of the governing party just to filibuster this out. We have a meeting at 5:30 for the subcommittee. I'm happy to sit here for hours and hours, but if that's your intent, let's just say so and move on to the subcommittee then. It's absolutely a waste of our time to continue this.

The Chair: At this point in time, we are in discussion. If it's the intent of the committee to adjourn so that we move to the subcommittee, that has to be done from the floor. It cannot be done from a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: First, my colleague interrupted one of his colleagues. I don't mind. However, I should point out that we just lost 30 minutes, and we want to be efficient. The parliamentary secretary says that he wants efficiency, but everyone here seems to be intentionally wasting everyone else's time.

Of course, the Liberals don't want to hear about the motion involving Frank Baylis. That's their issue. However, we're talking about the effective management of public funds, and \$237 million is no small amount. Even though another committee will study all the spending that has been done, we're fully aware that we'll never know the whole story. That said, once we find out about a situation, Canadians expect us to shed light on it. That's quite clear.

We now have evidence that the Liberals have no intention of helping the opposition members do their job. This is obvious. They're simply filibustering to waste everyone's time, when we're dealing with critical situations.

If we hadn't found out about the story involving WE, two brothers would have received \$43 million to manage a \$1-billion program. Now we're talking about a \$237-million contract awarded to a former Liberal colleague, and the people on the other side don't want to hear about it. I can understand them, but it's not my job to support them in this matter.

• (1735)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Green, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Matthew Green: I can pretend I do, like everybody else.

However, I do have something for the good and welfare.... Given that I've been pretty strict on what is and what is not a point of order, I will not claim this is a point of order. I just want to be on the speakers list, because I find it a bit rich that the side that's filibustering is now calling for us to move on. At the appropriate time, I'd like to speak to their use of obstruction of democracy as it relates to [Inaudible—Editor].

The Chair: Mr. MacKinnon, you are next.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I want to follow up on my colleague Mr. Paul-Hus' comments.

We think that it's important to understand that we want to move on to a discussion on the development of the committee's work. If we must continually receive and debate motions and conduct new studies, we'll never be able to study everything. We have a very

long list of proposals, which have been adopted or which still need to be debated, to guide the committee's work.

I think that the chair, the government party and the opposition want us to have a reasonable discussion on what could constitute the committee's schedule and workload. However, if we must start each meeting with a new study proposal, which we'll be asked to debate, adopt and put on the schedule, obviously we'll never be able to begin the work that we were sent here to do.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

[English]

I appreciate that.

Points of order are not for debate, and that's where we're going with this. It has become that way. I'm going to ask the committee where it would like to go. Are we going to continue with this? Are we going to prolong it, or would you like to adjourn and move to the subcommittee?

I would ask for direction from the committee on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I want to make a comment.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I think that the government party has taken up enough of the committee's time. Now it's time for us to vote on this motion. We can then proceed as you wish.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Kusmierczyk, though, has the floor. The motion can't be put forward until someone has the floor. Mr. Paul-Hus is.... We still have [Inaudible—Editor].

If Mr. Kusmierczyk wants to put that forward, then he can do so. He has the floor. We have to proceed along those lines.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Put forward what, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We can't go to the question until everyone has finished speaking on the question. It would have to be to adjourn to go to subcommittee.

• (1740)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: What would that do to Mr. Kusmierczyk's place in the debate on the motion before us?

The Chair: The debate would be over, should that happen.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: The debate on the motion?

The Chair: On Mr. Paul-Hus's motion. It's a question of whether you....

There are two things: You could adjourn the debate or you could adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: If I understand you correctly, Mr. Chair, your wish, which I don't find unreasonable, is that the committee adjourn itself to a subcommittee, where the schedule of work might be considered.

The Chair: I'm listening to the wishes of the committee. I'm not making decisions. You need to make that decision as to what you would like to do as a committee.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Well, I would be prepared to make such a motion, without prejudice to my colleague Mr. Kusmierczyk's spot in the debate on the motion that's before us.

The Chair: You can't do that, unfortunately. You don't have the floor.

Mr. Matthew Green: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Green, I saw Ms. Vignola's hand first. Then we'll go to you.

Ms. Vignola, do you have a point of order?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): I gather that this is about not allowing Mr. Kusmierczyk to discuss the situation of nurses who are repeatedly crossing the border; not voting on the Baylis Medical issue; preventing discussion on Mr. Green's motion; and preventing any other member from moving a motion, even if the tabling of the motion was approved at the previous meeting.

Is that right?

[*English*]

The Chair: At this point in time, we have a motion on the floor from Mr. Paul-Hus. That is what is being debated right now.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Clearly.

[*English*]

The Chair: The options are to adjourn debate on that motion, in which case you could go to Mr. Green's motion and follow forward on that, or to adjourn and end the meeting today. We would then go to subcommittee. The subcommittee could discuss the motions that have been passed.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: If we go to subcommittee, no one will be able to move a motion, even if it would take only one meeting to address the motion. We stop all this and go to subcommittee. Everyone remains silent and we go to subcommittee. Is that right?

[*English*]

The Chair: The subcommittee could discuss motions that are there and come up with a motion to bring back to the committee, as they see fit.

Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: I need to share a few things, Mr. Chair.

I'm at a distinct disadvantage here in this hybrid system in trying to ascertain what the speaking order is and to get on the speaking order. We're having people call in on points of order and jump into debate. Your interpretation, when I go to the English channel, is muted. I cannot hear it. I'm becoming increasingly agitated.

So I wish to call a point of order. I'm feeling like I'm being obstructed. I want to make sure I'm on the speakers list. I haven't spoken on any of this stuff since my motion. I want to be on the record today, from my perspective, to exactly what is happening here by the government [*Inaudible—Editor*].

The Chair: At this point, Mr. Green, you are the last person I have on the list of speakers, so you are on the list.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay. Just before we adjourn, I want to make sure that with these shenanigans coming out of the government side I'm not going to somehow get squeezed out of being able to contribute to this committee. Just for the record, they're probably going to lose this vote anyway.

• (1745)

The Chair: Thank you.

Seeing no other hands, Mr. Kusmierczyk, you still have the floor.

Go ahead.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate all the comments here.

For the record, I'm ready for us to discuss the other motions that we had already deliberated upon in previous committee meetings, but here we have a motion that was dropped from the sky on us. I feel it is imperative on all of us—we've only been here for an hour, to be fair—to at least be able to put on the table our concerns about this particular motion. These concerns that we're trying to raise here may be discounted, may be minimized by other folks on this committee, but these are legitimate concerns that we have with a motion that we're hearing for the first time today.

Numerous motions were brought forward and debated in previous meetings that I'm happy to discuss and move forward on. The motions that my colleague Mr. Green has put forward are things we debated in the last meeting, and I think we should advance and do our best to proceed on those motions, as opposed to being distracted by new motions that just happen to fall from the sky and what-not.

This is an opportunity for us to put all our concerns on the table, and these aren't illegitimate concerns. These concerns are shared by many Canadians. I look at, for example, an article that was published in Maclean's magazine that calls the motion that was just before us in the House “a farce”. It says:

It calls for the Health Committee to study every imaginable aspect of the COVID response, “including, but not limited to,” rapid testing; vaccine development and distribution; federal public health guidelines “and the data being used to inform them;” long-term care; the GPHIN early-warning system; protocols for travellers...emergency stockpiles, the COVID Alert smartphone app, contact tracing, and more and more. It’s a breathtaking list but it’s not even exhaustive: the “including, but not limited to” wording means that anything else that pops into any member’s mind or inbox could be added at any time.

How shall this committee undertake its work? By calling on six government offices to provide “all memoranda, emails, documents, notes and other records” on “plans, preparations, approvals and purchasing of COVID-19 testing products including tests, reagents, swabs, laboratory equipment and other material.”

That’s just one of seven wide-scale fishing expeditions listed in the motion.

And here's the important point that I'm trying to make here:

All requiring massive deployment of government resources. All with potentially zero utility even to the motion’s stated purpose, because if this committee sat until Doomsday it would not be able to examine or discuss the thousandth part of the haystack this motion would order up.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lloyd, go ahead.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Chair, I hope the member realizes he's not on the health committee; he's on the OGGO committee. He seems to be talking exclusively about the motion that was passed in the House recently related to the health committee, and he is on the government estimates committee. What's the relevance of his comments today?

The Chair: I'd ask all members that their points pertain to discussions that we have. I will allow some latitude, but please keep them reflective of the discussion.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Thank you, Chair.

The point I'm trying to make picks up on a point that my colleague made earlier in this meeting, which is that there are other committees studying these very issues and calling on these same government officials, these same companies, these same people and these same witnesses to testify across various committees.

The point I'm trying to make here is that we are in the middle of the greatest pandemic and health challenge that we've ever faced as a country. We have officials who are working day and night—seven days a week, 24-7—to address this issue. It seems to me that the only thing my colleagues across the aisle are focused on.... Rather than helping these folks in their work to prepare us for the second wave of the pandemic, all they care about is producing papers, establishing committee after committee, duplicating witnesses, duplicating—

• (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus has a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My colleague, who is participating in this meeting virtually, and my Liberal friends don't need to waste their breath. We could adjourn the debate on my motion. I believe that they clearly demonstrated their refusal to co-operate and their intention to ignore the

story involving Frank Baylis. It couldn't be more obvious. If they had shown the least bit of willingness, there would have been some debate and then a vote. We would have continued our work effectively for the good of Canadians.

I'm prepared to adjourn the debate on my motion. They demonstrated that we have more serious issues to resolve.

[English]

The Chair: I thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus, for your statement. However, you can't move that motion on a point of order. It would be up to the committee if they want to reflect on what you stated and respond to that accordingly.

Ms. Vignola, go ahead.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: My colleague is moving to adjourn the debate. However, I fully understand that he isn't in a position to do this, so I'll take over.

Can we adjourn the debate on Mr. Paul-Hus' motion and continue discussing other less cumbersome matters?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Vignola.

I'm going to ask if there's consensus among committee members to adjourn the debate on this motion.

Mr. Matthew Green: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Green, go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: What is the speakers list? I would still like to know whether or not.... How close was I to actually being able to have an intervention at this committee? I have a parliamentary privilege to participate in this committee. I feel like that's getting pushed out here because of the shenanigans that are happening, Mr. Chair.

After Mr. Kusmierczyk, how many speakers would there have been before I reached my opportunity to have an intervention on this?

The Chair: I had about six other speakers before you.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay, you can go ahead and adjourn.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Can I see a show of hands to adjourn?

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Green, go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, now that it's been adjourned, I'd like to go ahead and revisit the motion that I had presented. We gave pause to it to allow for Mr. Paul-Hus. It's the one that I had duly put forward.

I'd like to ask if I could speak to that motion, or to the amended portion of that motion, as the first person on the speakers list, given that we're now in a bit of a free-for-all.

The Chair: We have now adjourned discussion on the motion by Mr. Paul-Hus.

The next step was to come to you, Mr. Green, on your motion and reopen the discussion we ended on as of last meeting. It would have to be....

Can you confirm this for me? You're removing a motion to reconsider your motion. Is that correct?

Mr. Matthew Green: No, I'm not removing any motion.

My motion was put forward. I allowed Mr. Paul-Hus to take the floor to put forward his motion, as he did in this free-for-all, and in that chaos we're now at a place where that's been adjourned. The motion that I have is still in adjournment from the last committee, as I understand.

• (1755)

The Chair: The committee needs to decide whether they want to resume discussion of your motion.

Mr. Matthew Green: I still have the floor, so I would like to put to this committee that we resume debate on that motion. I do believe, Mr. Chair, that we can get somewhere substantive if we remove the WE from that and change some of the dates, but damn it, let's get to work here.

The Chair: I will put forward the motion that we reconsider Mr. Green's motion that's on the floor.

Mr. Francis Drouin: On a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, I thought we adjourned debate so we could move to subcommittee. That's the understanding I got.

Mr. Matthew Green: No.

The Chair: No, that was the motion...not to go to subcommittee.

So, do I see consensus to resume debate? No.

Then we need a recorded division on that vote.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, I have a quick question.

Is this a debatable motion?

The Chair: No. The vote is whether to resume debate and we're calling a recorded vote.

Mr. Matthew Green: Is that a debatable motion?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay.

The Chair: I'll have the clerk speak to that.

The Clerk: If I may, the motion to resume consideration, or essentially to move to another order of business, is considered a dilatory motion. Therefore, it is non-amendable and non-debatable. When it's proposed, the question has to be put to allow the committee to decide immediately which issue it wishes to proceed to discuss.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, go ahead.

The Clerk: On the motion to resume consideration of the motion in the name of Mr. Green and the amendment in the name of Mr. MacKinnon, I will now call the roll.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

The Chair: I heard Mr. Green first, and then Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, I do appreciate the opportunity to revisit this. You can probably pick up in my voice some of the frustration that I've had—

The Chair: I'm sorry, just a second, Mr. Green. Is this a point of order, or are you resuming?

Mr. Matthew Green: I believe I picked up the floor to be able to speak to this motion.

The Chair: Certainly.

Mr. MacKinnon has a point of order first.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: On a point of clarification, I believe that when we left this motion the last time, as I indicated earlier, there were appropriately put amendments on the floor and we were in the process of taking up the debate on those amendments. Is that correct?

Mr. Matthew Green: That is correct.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: And I had the floor at that time.

Mr. Matthew Green: No, I restarted during this meeting. You can't have it both ways.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Matt for chair.

The Chair: I would agree. I've recognized Mr. Green on that debate on the amendment. We're debating the amendment.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: So we're debating the amendments as read out by the clerk earlier.

The Chair: Mr. Green will be able to speak to that first.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: It's over to you, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you for that gracious recognition.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Green.

• (1800)

Mr. Matthew Green: I'm trying to find that happy place, Mr. Chair, because what I've experienced here since the resumption of Parliament has been straight out of the Harper government playbook. You'll recall that back in 2007 there was an actual book, a 200-page handbook, on proof of the toxic atmosphere that paralyzed Parliament. You'll recall that, at that point in time, there were actually reported instructions on how to filibuster and otherwise disrupt committee proceedings and, if all else failed, to shut down the committee entirely. That has been my feeling, both as it relates to my particular motion—which would have been a routine motion at any other committee, to simply resume the work that we were supposed to do, all the points of the work that we were supposed to do—and all of this talk, Mr. Chair, about trying to adjourn this debate, to then go back to schedule what?

I am unclear, Mr. Chair. Through you to members of this committee, when you look back at all the playbooks and all the tactics that the Harper government used, the only thing the New Democrats and the Liberals agreed on at that time was that the dysfunction was part of a long-term strategy to persuade voters that minority parliaments don't work and that they need to elect a majority. I'm starting to feel as though that's the case now. I'm starting to feel as though much of the disruption with these frivolous points of order and these shenanigans that are coming is really set to frustrate the processes of committee work.

Mr. Chair, my motion was very clear. In fact, I thought I was pretty graceful in entertaining some potential to revisit, in some of my conversations with my Liberal friends, what the scope of work was, whether it was before COVID—which I was fine with—or whether it was up to the date in question. However, if one thing has been made clear by the motion by my friend Mr. Paul-Hus, it's that there is absolutely no interest on the part of the government to revisit the work we've done prior to this committee in substantive ways that would present some kind of accountability.

We have significant issues with procurement. We've heard today, Mr. Chair, people talk about how much PPE has been produced. Nobody's talking about the national emergency stockpile and all the PPE that was thrown out, or the blunder in procurement of the first four months of this pandemic, or the 11 million items of PPE that were purchased, nine million of which were garbage. We couldn't even use them. We still, to this day, don't know what the national standards for the national emergency strategic stockpile are. We still have no clear picture about where we're spending money, whom we're spending money with and what we're investing in as it relates to procurement. Yet, we have these scenarios, these self-owned.... The only reason we're caught in the quagmire is that it seems this government can't help itself from helping itself.

Frank Baylis is a significant issue. Two hundred-plus million dollars is not immaterial when it comes to contracts. Morneau losing his job as the finance minister is not immaterial when it comes to ethics and overview.

If the question being put by government is “Why are we dealing with this stuff?”, the question back is simply “Why did you have to go down these paths of very grey-area politics, which at first blush of the public wouldn't pass the sniff test?”

Mr. Chair, the only saving grace I have from today's meeting is the fact that we're not in camera, because, as my old football coach used to say, the eye in the sky doesn't lie. In all the chaos that was the first hour of this meeting, with trying to get to a point where we could get some business done, people know who was speaking. People know who took up the vast periods of time and people will also recognize, Mr. Chair, who tried to move immediately into another adjournment.

I'm not sure what the prerogative of the government is. As a New Democrat, I'm going to share with you that we fought to continue to allow this government to work, despite the best or worst efforts—depending on whom you're talking to—of Liberals and Conservatives to trigger an election. I'm going to say this, that my gut feeling right now—

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

The Chair: Mr. Green, hold on just a second.

Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I understand the member's passion, but we are debating the subamendment. Is he in favour of the date, and is he in favour of the amendment that was proposed by Mr. MacKinnon? That's the amendment we're debating, not the entire motion.

• (1805)

Mr. Matthew Green: Right, and the reason we're in this scenario with the amendment is that you prorogued Parliament, and then came back and filibustered committee. That's why we have to extend the date. If this government ran as it should have in the middle of a pandemic, absent of corruption, then these documents would have been provided to me back in August. But no, a week before I was supposed to receive these documents, the government was prorogued, and everything was put on pause, so we're back in this place.

I am open to retracting the dates, to have the demand on the documents placed just before we come back. That would suffice for me. My concern, and the reason I'm talking about the future prospect of a snap election called by this incompetent government, is that my gut tells me they're asking for December because they know we're going to be back at the polls before then. That's what my gut is telling me right now. I'm going to call it early. I think this government is just begging for a snap election, so it would be very convenient for the production of papers to have a due date that goes beyond their election call because they know that after prorogation, when they go and make that walk of shame to the Governor General and call a snap election on Canadians, all the studies disappear.

I am unwilling, Mr. Chair—and I don't want to hear anything about a filibuster; I'm going to have my moment right now—to move from...any amendment that would result in the imminent delay of production of documents that should have come back in August. If they are in good faith, then they will see fit that we come up with a scenario that allows an immediate production of the documents as requested by myself back in June, May or whatever god-forsaken day it was before the prorogation.

This kicking of the can on accountability leads me to think that we're hankering for another snap election, and I'm agitated because we just want basic, simple answers. I don't want to go back to the polls. If I have to go back to the polls, Mr. Chair, and express to my constituents that I sat on this committee for an entire year and we didn't get to one study because of this government, I will be furious. If you think this is passionate now, just wait until I'm unleashed on the doors. I will pull the clip from this particular meeting, and I will put it on repeat on social media. I will advertise it as to the kind of obstruction we've had here.

With that being said, I will share that I am open to withdrawing subsection 13, to allow it to be kicked to whatever committee is going to deal with that circus, but as it relates to the production of papers and as it relates to the priorities that we set prior to prorogation, I'm unwilling to budge on any amendment from the Liberal side that would have us kick the can beyond the date of the next snap Liberal election.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

We have Mr. MacKinnon next, then Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Drouin and Mr. Kusmierczyk.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Well, I'm looking at my colleagues. I want to acknowledge Mr. Green and his passion. I come to this job with the same amount of passion that he brings to this job. I am here to get things accomplished for the people of Gatineau, just as he, I assume, is here to get things accomplished for the people of Hamilton Centre. Both of us want the best for all Canadians, as I hope all of us do.

The question is how we transparently and openly proceed to a schedule of work in this committee that is realistic and does not unduly burden the first responders in the federal government who are out doing procurement, supplying the provinces and doing the work of this pandemic.

[*Translation*]

The House of Commons has just adopted a motion that contains 28 items, calling on our counterparts on the Standing Committee on Health to conduct an in-depth study of virtually all the government's actions during the pandemic and to obtain documents that will take trailers to deliver and years to review. That's what Parliament did.

What are we debating here? Let's be realistic. Mr. Green can accuse the government of all kinds of things, the opposition can accuse us, and we can accuse the opposition. However, at the end of the meeting, what will we have done to further the interests of our constituents?

The key issue is that the committee must figure out how to organize its work. It's that simple.

Mr. Chair, we've already adopted several motions. We can move on to scheduling meetings to study these motions. You can ask the committee members to move on to the consideration of these topics, which are important.

Mrs. Vignola, Mr. Green, Mr. Paul-Hus and Mr. McCauley have all proposed study topics, which we're prepared to consider. We look forward to doing this. We want to ensure that Canadians have a better understanding of these topics. This is critical.

I'm a little offended by Mr. Green's outrage. We're also here to get things done for our constituents and to ensure that they can access the information that they need and that they have a right to obtain.

I moved two amendments. Perhaps other committee members have some to move as well. Mr. Green is basically proposing to take everything that we agreed to debate and put it into one motion. On top of that, he's making two fairly cumbersome requests regard-

ing the submission of documents and requiring that the documents be delivered within a week, in five days, which I think is quite unrealistic.

Instead, I'm moving an amendment before the committee that would significantly lighten the workload proposed by Mr. Green.

• (1810)

Mr. Chair, I want to ask you in particular and our colleagues on the subcommittee to organize the committee's work so that we have an orderly and workable schedule. We'll then be able to tell our constituents that we have a feasible workload, that we'll provide the information requested, and that we'll consider and gain a deeper understanding of various key topical issues and then report our findings to the House of Commons.

That's our job. That's all we want, on the government side. We want to look at important topics and report our findings to the House of Commons. This isn't about introducing, at each meeting, surprise motions or sensational motions drawn from the headlines to rearrange this committee's entire work schedule by adding an urgent matter, a new unrealistic date.

Mr. Chair, on the contrary, we should be organizing our work. Let's make sure that the four parties represented here can meet collectively as a subcommittee to plan our work, as set out in the Standing Orders. That's why I moved my amendments to the motion. If necessary, I'll make the same point when we continue the debate on the main motion. Canadians must see our passion here, on the government side. We want to get things done for Canadians and make progress on issues for our constituents. We have a great—

• (1815)

[*English*]

The Chair: One minute, please. We appear to have lost translation.

Do you want to continue? I believe we should have it now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I'm about to conclude my comments anyway, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKinnon.

Mr. Lloyd—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I haven't finished, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I misunderstood; you said you had concluded, so—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: I said that I was about to conclude my comments.

With this in mind, we're reaching out, once again, to our colleagues and friends in the opposition to allow this committee to do the work that it has been called upon to do. I hope that this work can be done in a subcommittee. I move that we adjourn the debate on this motion.

[English]

The Chair: On a point of clarification, Mr. MacKinnon, you're proposing to adjourn the debate on your amendment. Is that correct?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: That's correct.

The Chair: Just for clarification, adjourning the debate on the amendment adjourns the debate on the whole motion.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Correct.

The Chair: Okay. Do we have a consensus?

As you have the floor, I guess I'm asking the committee if there's consensus to adjourn the debate.

Mr. Green, go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: I don't think we have consensus to adjourn this. I'm wondering how many people were remaining to speak to this motion.

The Chair: We had four more people speaking on the amendment.

Mr. Matthew Green: You're suggesting that by adjourning the amendment, we adjourn the whole motion.

The Chair: That's correct. We adjourn the debate on it.

Mr. Matthew Green: Then do we call the question? If you're saying that we're adjourning the debate, it would just be—

The Chair: I'll defer to the clerk for a second.

The Clerk: When a committee is dealing with an amendment to a motion and it adjourns debate on the amendment, what it essentially means is that you cannot take up the main motion again. The reason is that the amendment supersedes it. You must deal with the amendment first. Now you can deal with the amendment either by adopting it, defeating it or adjourning the debate on it.

In this case, Mr. MacKinnon has moved that we adjourn the debate on the amendment. What that essentially means is that we cannot continue with the discussion in general of either your motion or the amendment, until such time as the committee wishes to bring it up at a future time, provided the motion is agreed to.

Mr. Matthew Green: With that, Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask your indulgence so that I'm clear in my mind procedurally.

If the debate is adjourned, is the motion still active, or would I have the ability to resubmit a motion that might be broken up into

two parts for the purpose of having that addressed at some future time?

• (1820)

The Chair: The motion is still active and can be picked up at any time.

Mr. Matthew Green: But I can't change it. Is that correct?

The Chair: If you want to, you can.

Mr. Matthew Green: All right. I can't speak to this. I respect that.

I don't support the adjournment, because there's something I want to say about it.

The Chair: I'm going to call for a recorded vote by the clerk.

The Clerk: The motion is to adjourn the debate.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

We will adjourn the debate on this motion.

Mr. Drouin, go ahead.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, can I make a suggestion and move a motion to adjourn, or seek my colleagues' preference to move to subcommittee so we can deal with the four motions we have already adopted and start scheduling meetings?

The Chair: Do we have consensus for Mr. Drouin's motion?

Mr. Matthew Green: No.

The Chair: We'll have a vote.

The Clerk: The motion is that the meeting be now adjourned.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 1)

The Chair: Before we adjourn and leave the room, I just want to say that, as this meeting is complete, the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure will now meet.

When I adjourn this meeting, the technical staff will end the meeting in Zoom. This means that members of the subcommittee cannot remain logged into this meeting. In order to participate in the subcommittee meeting, they must reconvene. Members of the subcommittee will have to sign into the meeting after this meeting is adjourned, using the password and the link sent to them by the clerk earlier today.

With that said, we are now adjourned.

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