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Chair

Mr. Leon Benoit

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

Before we get to the business of the day, I want to mention and remind members that the supplementary estimates (B) will be dealt with a week from today, next Tuesday, with the minister appearing for the first hour and officials for the second hour. There's a change of location: it's in room 253D, Centre Block.

Go ahead, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Chair, can I have the floor for a second?

I know we have witnesses here. Colleagues should have distributed in front of them a copy of a motion that I gave notice of last week. I'm hoping we can dispense with this quickly. I'll read the motion in English, Mr. Chair. I believe I've met the criteria for **48 hours' notice**:

That the Committee, in light of the comments by Senior Liberal MP David McGuinty and Liberal leadership candidate Justin Trudeau, conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector across Canada; that Members of Parliament David McGuinty and Justin Trudeau be invited as witnesses to explain their comments; and that the Committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all Members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

I'm hoping we can dispense with this quickly and get to our witnesses, who have travelled a long way. I believe we can get through the discussion of this motion relatively quickly and move on with our current study and discuss how we're going to proceed with this study if we happen to pass this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

I see two hands. First is Mr. Julian, then Mr. McKay. Mr. Julian, go ahead, please.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Chair, I certainly don't disagree with the idea of a study. I disagree with the wording here. I don't think it's appropriate wording. I think Mr. Calkins would be better placed to have this at the end of the meeting, which is traditionally what we do.

Mr. Chair, as you know, I've been here for eight years. When there are witnesses waiting, I've never seen motions brought forward at the beginning of a committee. We have four excellent witnesses, and so

I'd ask Mr. Calkins to pull back on the motion and bring it up at the end of the meeting, which is the appropriate time to do so.

The Chair: Mr. Calkins, do you want to deal with the motion now or at the end of the meeting?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I brought the motion forward now. I'd like to deal with it now and dispense with it and get on with the committee proceedings we have scheduled for today. I don't see why we need to belabour this. I believe there's enough support around the table to pass the motion and get on with the business of the day.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins. The motion is in order and did have proper notice.

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I'd be interested in the clerk's comments as to whether it is in fact in order, since the mandate of the committee is to study statute law relating to the department assigned to it; the program and policy objectives of the department and their effectiveness; the immediate, medium, and long-term expenditure plans of the department; analysis of the relative success of the department; and other matters relating to the mandate, management, organization, and operation of the department as it sees fit.

I'd be interested in the thoughts of the clerk as to how this motion—and we all of course will have our opinions as to its political motivation—might relate to the mandate of the committee as it's found in the standing orders.

• (1105)

The Chair: Mr. McKay, this motion clearly is in order. What could be more in order for this committee than talking about Alberta's energy sector and its importance to the rest of the country? We've been talking about this at previous studies, either directly or indirectly, so that's not an issue.

Mr. Julian, you had your hand up again, I think. I'd like to get to the vote as quickly as possible. We do have witnesses waiting.

Hon. John McKay: I'm sure you would, Chair. I'm sure you would.

Mr. Peter Julian: I would be interested in having Mr. McKay comment more generally on this.

Quite frankly, I'm a little perplexed, Mr. Chair. I don't understand why the Conservatives are bringing this forward at the beginning of the meeting, when we have four witnesses who are waiting and have a lot to offer to the committee as a whole. We have an important study. That being said, I'll have some amendments to offer a little later on.

I find the idea of the study that Mr. Calkins proposed is a good one. I think it's important. There's no doubt that the committee could be well informed by a study of this nature. The language, though, is completely inappropriate for a parliamentary committee. I think Mr. McKay spoke to that as well.

Here we have a situation where the government is thrusting this at us right at the beginning of a meeting, trying to push aside four esteemed witnesses who have come forward and have a lot to offer this committee, with language that is clearly inappropriate. I'm at a loss to understand why the government is proceeding in this way. It seems to me to be entirely inappropriate. This is a study that obviously has some benefits, and yet is proceeding in a very clearly partisan and inappropriate way.

Underneath all of the verbiage that is inappropriate for this motion, I think his intention is good. I'm disappointed that the intention is being masked by inappropriate language.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): I'm going to echo a bit of what Mr. Julian said. We'd be glad to entertain the notion of a study. I'm glad this study would follow the study we're working on currently, but I have to say I'm disappointed that we can't have a good discussion at the end of this meeting. I think it's disrespectful to the witnesses.

The study itself is a good idea but, as Mr. Julian said, there's a lot that doesn't need to be in there if we want to do a serious study. If we really want to look at the economic benefits of Alberta's energy sector, we don't have to put all of this witch hunt stuff in there. If it's going to be looked at by the public as a serious study into the economic benefits of Alberta's energy sector, I'm all for it. I think Alberta's energy sector is a big contributor to the Canadian economy. The oil and gas sector, in particular, is important to the entire nation's economy, and to Alberta's economy, and I think it gets cheapened by putting partisan attacks in there.

Personally, that's my take on it. I would hope you would reconsider and put this motion at the end, so that we can have a good discussion on it and let our witnesses be heard.

There's a big challenge to the Canadian economy right now, and that's innovation. With the fact that we're becoming an energy superpower, we have to look at how we can use that status to drive innovation. That's why our witnesses are here today.

I find it disappointing that we're getting distracted from our study by things that are perhaps politically expedient but don't help the committee's work.

• (1110)

The Chair: I guess one way of ensuring that we hear from the witnesses is to go to the vote as soon as possible.

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: In light of your having ruled that this motion is in order... I actually didn't hear you make the connection between the mandate of the committee and the motion itself as being in order, and given that the conduct of—

The Chair: I actually did, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I know you did. That's why I'm saying, given the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector, I would frankly think it is a good study for this committee, although I would take note that the committee has, apparently, at this point not seen fit to do so.

I'm not quite sure what urgency has precipitated this motion. I can speculate as to the urgency that's precipitated this motion, but apparently the committee hasn't seen fit to do so thus far. Therefore, in light of both Mr. McGuinty's and Mr. Trudeau's—how shall we say?—absence of acknowledged expertise on this particular study—that is, the economic benefit—I wonder whether the mover of the motion would entertain a friendly amendment, which I will read into the record:

That given that fair treatment of all provinces is vital for Canada's natural resources sector, the committee invite the Right Hon. Stephen Harper to explain the following quotes:

First is a quote that he made during a speech to the Council for National Policy in June 1997. It is:

“Obviously, the issue here is not slavery, but the appeasement of ethnic nationalism. For years, we've had this Quebec separatist movement. For years, we elected Quebec prime ministers to deal with that, Quebec prime ministers who were committed federalists who would lead us out of the wilderness. For years, we have given concessions of various kinds of the province of Quebec, political and economic, to make them happier. ... This has not worked.”

Next is a quote made to the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, again in 1997, in reference to the 1997 Reform Party:

Another Reformer, former MP Stephen Harper—

The Chair: Mr. McKay, no.

Hon. John McKay: This is the motion, and this is legitimate.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, excuse me. I'm questioning the relevance of the comments you're making. They're not relevant to this motion.

Hon. John McKay: I'm making a motion.

The Chair: Get right to it then, please, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I'm putting it forward as a friendly amendment. I'm reading into the record statements that Mr. Harper has made over time, which are as relevant as anything that Mr. Trudeau and Mr. McGuinty have said or may have said.

If I may continue,

Another Reformer, MP Stephen Harper—

The Chair: On a point of order, go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if Mr. McKay understands he's at the natural resources committee here. His comments have nothing to do with natural resources, energy policy, or anything like that. He's the one who questions the relevance of the motion and then goes far off topic here.

Hon. John McKay: With the greatest of respect, sir—

The Chair: Order, please, Mr. McKay.

An hon. member: Mr. McKay has the floor.

The Chair: There was a point of order brought forward. Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I think the point is that we're at the natural resources committee. We want to focus on natural resources. That's what Mr. Calkins' motion does. We can vote on it.

The Chair: Yes. I've already ruled on that. The sooner we get to the vote, the sooner we get to witnesses.

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I was in the middle of reading my motion. It is not open to you—

The Chair: Make your comments relevant.

Hon. John McKay: —or to anyone else to interrupt a mover of a motion in the middle of moving the motion. It's not open.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, it would be out of order for you to bring a motion at this time. There's a motion before the committee already.

Hon. John McKay: With the greatest respect, Chair, you improperly interrupted my reading of the motion to take a point of order. You can't actually do that.

The Chair: Order, Mr. McKay, please.

Hon. John McKay: May I continue to read my motion?

The Chair: No. Order. When the chair is speaking you should be listening, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Similarly.

The Chair: You're not allowed to bring a motion now, Mr. McKay. There's a motion before the committee.

Hon. John McKay: Since when?

Mr. Peter Julian: It's an amendment.

The Chair: You can bring an amendment.

Hon. John McKay: That's what I'm doing.

Mr. Peter Julian: It's an amendment. He's bringing an amendment. He said that.

Hon. John McKay: I said that already.

The Chair: The amendment has to be relevant to the motion, so get to the relevant portion.

Hon. John McKay: That's what I'm doing.

The Chair: It hasn't been so far, Mr. McKay. Please get to it.

Hon. John McKay: I got through about half of it. I have a little bit more to go.

Another Reformer, former MP Stephen Harper, said other parties have played along for 30 years that it's better to have a leader from a certain region. He cited former prime ministers Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney, as well as Chretien and Charest, who were going to reconcile Quebec to the rest of Canada. "It's fairly obvious that—"

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: On a point of order, Mr. Chair—

Hon. John McKay: Actually, you can't take a point of order at this point.

● (1115)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chairman, this has nothing to do with natural resources. I understand Mr. McKay's intent may be to disrupt the committee. He's not a member of it regularly and we do welcome him here, but the reality is that this has nothing to do with natural resources.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, what you have said so far isn't relevant. If you continue in that mode, I'm going to rule you out of order and we will go on to discussion on the main motion. If you have an amendment to bring forth that is relevant to the motion, then we can get to that, and it's in order if you bring it forward.

Hon. John McKay: I've already read that part, Chair. I said I would like to move the following amendment, "That given that fair treatment for all provinces is vital to Canada's natural resources sector, the committee invite the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, MP, to explain the following quotes:"

I gave you one quote, you interrupted me on the second quote, and I have a third. If I can get through the final two quotes, then the motion will be complete. It is:

"It's fairly obvious this hasn't solved the problem, so it's not surprising that someone should make the opposite case that we need a leader from somewhere else."

Finally, there is a quote from May 2002, in reference to Atlantic Canada, in which he said:

There is a dependence in the region that breeds a culture of defeatism.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, you're out of order.

Hon. John McKay: How is that out of order?

The Chair: This amendment does not apply to the motion. I see no relevance, so let's go to the debate on the motion.

Hon. John McKay: May I have an opinion on the out of order ruling from the clerk, please?

The Chair: The way it works, Mr. McKay, and you should know this, is the chair makes these decisions. If I want to consult with the clerk, I do that. If you question the chair's decision, you're free to do that.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, just in the interest of getting to our witnesses as quickly as possible, what I'm going to suggest is the NDP said they want to entertain the study. They don't particularly like the language. We would invite them to bring forward their amendments. We'll vote on them in short order, and then we can get to our witnesses. I would invite them, if they have amendments to make that are relevant to the motion, to make those amendments. We will gladly vote on them.

Mr. Chair, we often do deal with motions at the beginning of the meeting, but it doesn't particularly matter, because if we're taking time from the beginning of the meeting or the end of the meeting, it's the same time lost to the witnesses. As we know just in terms of math, that's what we're doing. Let's invite any amendments. Let's have a little discussion, or whatever, that the NDP wants to have on them. We're willing to vote on them and the motion right now and move ahead.

The Chair: The next person to be recognized is Ms. Liu.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Good morning. I would like to thank our witnesses for coming in and I'd also like to hear their testimony as soon as possible, but I would like to first of all echo the thoughts that were expressed by my colleagues on this side that a committee should not become an organ of the parties.

I think that we've been working together fairly well for these past few months. We came out with a report on resource development in the north, and I think we can continue in this line of work, so I would oppose strongly a motion like this, the only purpose of which is to attack another party. I don't think that committee should be a place where we bring out partisan talking points and try to attack other party leaders or candidates.

On that, I would suggest to the committee that we invite the mover of this motion to move this motion to the end of committee so that we can hear our witnesses first and discuss this afterwards, out of respect for the time that they're taking to meet with us today.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Liu.

Next we have Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I would like to echo Ms. Liu's comments. I simply do not understand why the Conservatives have thrust this on us at the beginning of the meeting when we have witnesses who are waiting, and why they are refusing obstinately to have this at the normal period, which is at the end of consideration, after hearing our witnesses and after asking our questions.

There's no doubt this is controversial wording. I don't think any of us have difficulty with the idea of the study itself, but I think Mr. Calkins has really poisoned the well by what is clearly inappropriate language. I think Mr. McKay was, in my mind, offering equally inappropriate language, but it certainly was his right to move those amendments, Mr. Chair. I will have to disagree with you. I think the amendments were in order. I would have disagreed with them. I would have voted against them in the same way that I think the witch hunt against these two Liberal members is inappropriate. They both apologized.

I don't believe the natural resources committee is a place to go on a witch hunt. I think the natural resources committee should be properly studying what should be the energy policy of this country in the next couple of decades.

To attack the Prime Minister or to attack two Liberal members who have apologized for their statements is completely inappropriate. That's not the role of this committee, and I am disappointed, Mr. Chair, that the government seems to be using this committee now for a witch hunt and masking what is a perfectly legitimate means, which is having a study on energy policy. That's extremely appropriate. The wording here is inappropriate and unbalanced.

I would like to express my disappointment in how this government is treating the natural resources committee and how it is being misused for these partisan ends when we have four witnesses before us who can add a lot in terms of the content we need for our study and also in terms of recommendations we can make to the government in moving forward on energy policy and energy innovation in the years to come.

I'm going to have three amendments, Mr. Chair. I will offer them one after the other and hope that there will be some comments.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

I will begin with the first one.

On the second line, the following is stated: “[...] conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector”.

I would like to add the following: “and energy sectors across Canada”.

Of course, Mr. Chair, we shouldn't limit ourselves to Alberta, even though that will contribute a lot to our study. Focusing on Alberta and the rest of Canada provides us with a broader scope.

[*English*]

The Chair: The motion is relevant.

We will have discussion on the motion.

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I would actually support the motion.

I don't think you're in order to rule my amendment out of order. I don't believe that. Mr. Harper's comments are as relevant or as irrelevant as Mr. McGuinty's and Mr. Trudeau's comments. Nevertheless, in light of this new-found harmony that might actually break out, I would suggest that the amendment read, and I'd seek Mr. Julian's consent on this as a friendly amendment to his amendment:

That the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector and elsewhere across Canada to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

I'll put that forward as an amendment and I'll invite you to debate it or rule it out of order.

The Chair: Mr. Julian, do you accept that as a friendly amendment?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, I do.

Mr. Chair, that was my second proposal.

Could Mr. McKay read that a second time?

Hon. John McKay: Okay.

That the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector and elsewhere across Canada to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

The Chair: How would that fit in with the motion that has been proposed?

Hon. John McKay: It's an amendment on the amendment.

The Chair: And the amendment, for clarity, Mr. Julian, was to fit in where?

Mr. Peter Julian: What Mr. McKay is doing is expanding on my initial amendment—

The Chair: Which would fit in where to the main motion that we're debating? Where does it fit into the main motion?

Mr. Peter Julian: What he is doing is deleting the two witch hunt lines, I'd like to call them, that refer specifically to two Liberal MPs. The one thing—

The Chair: You'd have to clarify that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, just for a moment, if I may speak through you to Mr. McKay, the one thing that would be lost there that I would disagree with is that the committee report its findings to the House.

Hon. John McKay: That's fine.

Mr. Peter Julian: The motion would then read, and I still would have another amendment to bring forward:

That the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector and elsewhere across Canada and that the committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

The Chair: So you're talking about replacing the motion that's on the floor with your amendment?

Mr. Peter Julian: No, no; I'm amending.

• (1125)

The Chair: You'll have to explain to me exactly how you are amending this main motion—where you are inserting that, what you are deleting, and all of that kind of thing.

Mr. Peter Julian: I explained the first part in French, Mr. Chair.

We're adding "elsewhere". The study would go on Alberta's energy sector and also the energy sector right across the country, so we're adding the word "elsewhere". We're also deleting two of the clauses of the motion, the ones that mention the two Liberal MPs.

The Chair: You'll have to be clearer. We'll have to have this brought in writing so that it's clear. To me, it's not clear where you're inserting, what you're deleting, and that kind of thing.

Could we have that in writing?

Mr. Peter Julian: I believe the analysts already have it writing, Mr. Chair. They were following it.

The Chair: I was following, too, Mr. Julian, and it's not clear.

What are you deleting?

Mr. Peter Julian: The motion would read:

That the committee

—and we would strike the phrase "in light of the comments by Senior Liberal MP David McGuinty and Liberal leadership candidate Justin Trudeau"—

conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector and elsewhere across Canada.

Then we would strike the phrase "that Members of Parliament David McGuinty and Justin Trudeau be invited as witnesses to explain their comments". Then the rest of the motion would read as it is, though I do have another motion to bring forward, a final amendment.

The Chair: Okay, so that's a friendly amendment to your amendment. We have that amendment on the floor. Is there any discussion on this, or can we go to a vote?

Mr. Peter Julian: I'll just speak to this.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said at the outset, I'm sorry that the government has chosen to delay the witnesses by bringing this motion forward at the beginning of the meeting rather than at the end, but the reality is that if the intent is to have a study—if that's the intent of Mr. Calkins—we support it. If the attempt is to smear members of Parliament, who have apologized for their comments, we do not support it. I guess Mr. Calkins needs to make that choice.

If he is proposing a study that looks at the issue of Alberta's energy sector and the energy sector across the country, we're on board. If it's going to be used as a witch hunt to attack members of Parliament, the reality is, as I think Mr. McKay's amendment shows, that all of us live in glass houses. Rather than impugning any members of Parliament for anything they have said—since all parties have comments that perhaps they would want to take back—I think that as the natural resources committee it is fundamentally important for us to show political maturity and leadership and bring forward a motion that actually tackles what we need to tackle, which is energy policy looking forward.

If that's the intent—to do a study—then I think, Mr. Chair, that these amendments should be met with unanimous support. If the intent is to attack members of Parliament, then obviously the government has other motivations, but I'm certainly hoping that they will support these amendments.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I think Mr. Julian has stated it well. Clearly, deleting the references to Mr. Trudeau and Mr. McGuinty is a step forward in terms of the potential intention of the government members; however, if the government members don't vote in support of the amendments, then clearly their intentions are nothing more than an attempt to do whatever is in the political agenda of the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Chair: Mr. Nicholls is next.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: I have to echo the comments of Mr. Julian. All of us around this table know that our economy is in a fragile, precarious position, and I hope we can show to Canadians that the economy is really what our priority should be.

I think we can all agree that Canadians are tired of these partisan squabbles and the wasting of time that take away our focus from the economy, which is really what needs to be looked at. The witnesses have come here today to speak upon the subject of innovation. Innovation is identified in the World Economic Forum's report as one of Canada's weaknesses in our economy, and I would hope that the government would see that as a priority.

I view this as a microcosm of the way the government is dealing with the economy right now: they're more concerned with destroying other parties than focusing on making a strong economy. I hope we can move forward with this. I certainly agree with the idea of a study. I hope the government will be friendly to our amendments.

• (1130)

The Chair: Is there anything further on this amendment? I'll go to the question on the amendment.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: The amendment is defeated.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm profoundly disappointed, Mr. Chair. This is not what the function of this committee should be. I find it entirely inappropriate.

Mr. Nicholls has just raised this very concern about the whole issue of the economy. I think this is a picture portrait of why things are declining for so many Canadian families: half a million manufacturing jobs lost; 350,000 more Canadians who are unemployed; and real-term, real family income declining. What we have is a government that—rather than attacking those issues and rather than putting in place economic and energy policies that can lead us through the next decade—is focusing on the lowest possible form of parliamentary attack and witch-hunting and is using committees for that purpose. It is, to my mind, absolutely inappropriate and irresponsible.

The reality is that Mr. McKay has mentioned some of the past comments of Prime Minister Harper that have been equally inappropriate. We have two Liberal MPs who apologized for their comments. One of them, Mr. McGuinty, I know well; I don't understand why he made the comments, but he apologized for them, yet we are taking up viable committee time with four witnesses waiting before us who could give us some guidance into the future of energy policy, and we have these four witnesses waiting because the government is insisting on ramming this through. They are not cooperating with the opposition on a study, but rather are engaging in the cheapest and lowest form of witch-hunt politics.

It's absolutely inappropriate, Mr. Chair. I am profoundly disappointed in the members of this committee, but I am going to attempt to address the issue of this report just the same, and I'll offer a final amendment.

[Translation]

I will read it.

After the words “Canadians are informed of these economic benefits”, we should add something on environmental impacts and the subsidies that are already being allocated to the industry. So I would like to add the following: “as well as of the environmental impacts and the cost of the subsidies”.

That's the amendment I am proposing.

[English]

The Chair: Do you want to speak to your amendment, Mr. Julian?

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: I think I have already spoken to it, Mr. Chair.

The environmental impacts of all energy policies should be considered. That's important. Subsidies are increasingly becoming a topic we should study. Last week, we received Blue Green Canada's report that talked about the subsidies in the energy sector. We're talking about \$1.3 billion.

According to the study, the oil industry has created 2,860 jobs. However, if the same amount of money was invested in sales and energy efficiency, about 20,000 jobs could be created. In other words, Mr. Chair, those subsidies could have helped create 10 times more jobs if they had been invested in another sector.

Of course, we agree with conducting a study on the sector's economic benefits, but we also need to strike a balance and approach this issue professionally. That's how Canadians want us to approach

these issues. I think that studying environmental impacts and the cost of subsidies is of the utmost importance.

That's why we are proposing this amendment. We want to turn the page on the witch hunt the Conservatives seem intent on leading, and we want the committee to undertake a study that will benefit taxpayers who, after all, pay our salaries.

• (1135)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Nicholls, is this to the proposed amendment?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Yes.

I think the impact of the energy sector upon the environment is relevant to the work of the committee. Going toward and transitioning to an energy sector that embraces sustainable development has been identified by many international bodies, such as the World Economic Forum in its report on competitiveness. For the past three years, they've been talking about sustainable development as a driver of advanced economies.

The fact that \$1.3 billion goes toward oil industry subsidies means we are missing the boat on where we can take the Canadian economy in being an energy superpower. We could use it to our advantage to drive innovation, to drive competition globally. The BlueGreen Alliance conference report has identified that if that money were invested, it would create 18,000 jobs. I believe that is the figure. That is not an insignificant number.

I would be interested in looking at the creation of those 18,000 jobs. Would jobs be lost elsewhere? What would the job creation numbers be in the natural resource sector if we made that shift?

The study we were going to ask the witnesses about today, touching on innovation, speaks to the weaknesses in our Canadian economy right now. If you trust the World Economic Forum's reports on competitiveness, we've gone from position 6 in the world to position 9, to position 12, to position 14. We would hope to see some improvement there.

If the government has identified that the energy sector is a signal to investors and to Canadians that the energy sector is of prime importance to our economy, then it should have spinoff benefits, which it presently does. There is value added to the energy sector and there are spinoff benefits, but we should be looking at them more in depth and looking at our international partners to see which way they are taking their economies and how we can compete with those advanced economies in the world.

I would just like to add that I believe I saw Mr. Smillie table a document for members of the committee.

Is that correct? Did he table a document with Mr. Leef for the committee? That is an open question for the chair. Was there a document? I just saw Mr. Smillie table a document with the government members. Is that available to all the members of the committee?

The Chair: I don't think I have a document from Mr. Smillie.

Mr. David Anderson: Can we go to the question on the amendment?

The Chair: Are we ready for the question on the amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: First of all, I want to express my support for Mr. Julian's amendment. I think it's a good amendment. If you're going to study something you should study everything, all of the benefits, and not only the benefits but also the liabilities that flow from the resource itself and from energy resources generally. In principle it's certainly a good motion.

I also wanted to apologize to the witnesses. I would like to think that this was an exception. Regrettably, it's not an exception to the use and abuse of a committee by the Conservative government. As you can see, the Conservatives wish to call Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau as witnesses on an economic study, neither of whom have any discernible expertise in the area.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John McKay: I think there's an acknowledgment and a demonstration by other members here that they are equally incompetent. They're not compellable and they would not particularly provide useful information. There's no MP here who actually has any expertise in that area.

First of all, I want to apologize. I would have like to have heard about the R and D innovation in the Canadian sector. I would have liked to have heard about other sectors of the Canadian economy and the R and D there, particularly of the energy sector, but I just wanted to express my support for Mr. Julian's motion, which I think is quite fair and balanced.

● (1140)

The Chair: Are we ready for the question on the amendment?

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Now can we go to the main motion?

Hon. John McKay: I would like to move an amendment.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: The amendment is as follows: That the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector and elsewhere across Canada and invite the Minister of Natural Resources to the committee to explain any comments that he might have and that the committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

The Chair: Do you have that written down, Mr. McKay?

Hon. John McKay: Yes.

The Chair: We'll need it in writing.

Hon. John McKay: You didn't ask Mr. Julian for it in writing.

The Chair: I actually did.

Hon. John McKay: I'm sure you'll be generous and give me a moment to write that out. Could I have a clean copy of the motion, please?

The Chair: The clerk will read the motion with the amendments, explaining where the proposed amendment is. I would like to remind the opposition that it's been three-quarters of an hour now on this, and witnesses are waiting. Let's get back to the business of the committee.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Rémi Bourgault): It would read:

That the committee

—and the part “in light of the comments by senior Liberal MP David McGuinty and Liberal leadership candidate Justin Trudeau” will be deleted—

conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector across Canada

The sentence saying “that Members of Parliament David McGuinty and Justin Trudeau be invited as witnesses to explain their comments” will be changed to “that the Minister of Natural Resources be invited”, and then the continuation will be the same:

and that the Committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all Members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

The Chair: You've heard the proposed amendment to the motion.

Mr. McKay, do you want to speak to the proposed amendment?

Hon. John McKay: Thank you for the opportunity, Chair, to speak to this motion.

It's clear that the Minister of Natural Resources would actually be a beneficial witness for the conducting of these hearings into the economic benefits. I know from his speeches, etc., that he is very interested in this particular field. He is the senior minister in Canada with regard to this field, and I'm sure that we as members of Parliament, and all Canadians, would benefit from his discussion with respect to both the economic benefits and the liabilities.

Possibly I should have amended it to include Mr. Julian's language with respect to the liabilities, which also are involved in the exploitation of these particular resources.

● (1145)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson, on the proposed amendment.

Mr. David Anderson: We're ready to go to a vote on it, Mr. Chair, but I think I should just point out that when we move ahead with this study, if the Liberals want to put the minister on their witness list as one of their witnesses, they are more than welcome to do that, and it will be considered, absolutely. Therefore, I don't think the amendment needs to be supported. They obviously have the choice of putting him on their list as one of their witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Are we ready to go the vote?

An hon. member: No, I think we have another speaker on the list

The Chair: Okay. Who do we have on the list? I see Mr. Julian. I think Mr. McKay is indicating he would like to do a wrap-up at the end.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Ms. Liu, were you on the list?

Ms. Laurin Liu: I'm on it for the main motion.

The Chair: You're on the main motion? Okay. That's what I understood.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Gravelle would like to speak on the main motion too.

I'd like to start, Mr. Chair, by asking the clerk to read the motion, with the amendment, one more time.

The Clerk: Okay. It reads:

That the committee, in light of the comments by Senior Liberal—

Mr. Peter Julian: If you could, just read the motion.

The Clerk: Okay. It reads:

That the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector across Canada, that the Minister of Natural Resources be invited, and that the committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Clerk.

This is a second chance, I guess, for the Conservatives to pull back from witch-hunt politics, Mr. Chair. We've had a first vote, and perhaps Conservatives at this committee misunderstood the role of the committee, and that's why they voted down the NDP amendments. Now we have a Liberal amendment that does the same thing: it's to take out the partisan witch hunt from the motion that was put forward.

If the idea is to do a study, there's a consensus here. Mr. Chair, the reason we objected so strongly to Mr. Calkins' bringing this up at the beginning of the meeting and delaying, completely unnecessarily, these four esteemed witnesses, these witnesses who we should be hearing from instead of having this motion brought forward, is that we all had an agreement on the idea of moving forward with a study on energy. That's the consensus.

What this government has done yet again is it has ripped apart consensus in a very mean-spirited, inappropriate, irresponsible way. Rather than dealing with the energy future of this country, which is something that we are all concerned about and all want to provide guidance on, we have this partisan witch hunt taking place for two members who apologized for their statements.

In fact, one of them, Mr. Chair, resigned from this committee. I know how difficult it was for the individual to resign from the committee. He obviously understood that his comments were inappropriate and he took the necessary steps. He apologized and resigned, yet we're continuing this in a partisan, mean-spirited fashion. It resembles a witch hunt to me. I find it completely inappropriate.

This amendment that Mr. McKay is presenting gives the government a second chance to do the right thing and move forward with a study that we all agree with in principle, but disregarding the partisan language of the witch hunt that, unfortunately, Mr. Calkins has brought to the motion itself.

Let's adopt this amendment. In adopting the amendment, I think we can then move on and hear from the witnesses, which is something that, on the opposition side, we all wanted to do from the outset. That's why we proposed that Mr. Calkins bring this motion forward in the appropriate way—at the end.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

I agree again with Mr. Julian's comments, but I did want to speak to Mr. Anderson's comments about the witness. If Minister Oliver can be added as a witness on the list for this particular study, so also could Mr. Trudeau and Mr. McGuinty; what's good for the goose is good for the gander. Why a motion has to include non-compellable witnesses escapes me altogether, other than for the reasons as outlined by Mr. Julian, which do not, shall we say, elevate the quality of debate here.

I'm perfectly prepared to make an agreement with Mr. Anderson that if Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau are deleted as non-compellable witnesses and you wish to add them to the witness list, you're more than welcome, and similarly Mr. Oliver, the minister. If those aren't deleted, then certainly we have to include Mr. Oliver as a part of this motion.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McKay.

Mr. David Anderson: Call the question.

The Chair: To the vote, then, on the motion as amended—

Hon. John McKay: I request a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: We'll have a recorded vote.

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

Hon. John McKay: I have another amendment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: The amendment is, surprisingly, very similar to the previous one. It would now read that rather than we invite the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Finance would form part of the motion. Again, the Minister of Finance is a witness who would be very important to this study.

An hon. member: The question—

Hon. John McKay: I have to speak to it.

The Chair: Do you have that written down?

The Clerk: Can you repeat it, please?

Hon. John McKay: We'd just take the same motion and take out "Minister of Natural Resources" and put in "Minister of Finance".

The Chair: Okay. Is that clear to everyone?

Is there discussion on that? I remind the members again that there are now 50 minutes taken away from witness time.

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Well, I appreciate that reminder, Chair, because you and the government members have had plenty of opportunity to either move this to the end of the meeting or to withdraw the motion, and thus far have not seen fit to do so.

I feel bad that we are in fact wasting witnesses' time, but we are trying to establish a point here that a committee should not be used for partisan witch hunts. That's exactly what this motion would have done, hence the amendment to bring in the Minister of Finance and have him form part of the motion, because, in some respects, he's far more important than is the Minister of Natural Resources. He actually gets to set the schedules for depreciation, accelerated writeoffs, and subsidies for various companies, etc., both on the oil-producing side and on the energy-producing side.

Certainly, in order to be able to have a fair study, you need to be able to see what the accelerated writeoffs, the depreciation, and the programs are with respect to alternate forms of energy; hence, probably if the study does go forward, the Minister of Finance would be a critical witness.

The Chair: You've heard the amended motion.

Mr. Julian, do you want to speak to the amendment?

• (1155)

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, Mr. Chair.

This is the third chance now. We asked the government to hold off on this motion, and they refused. We said the witnesses were more important, and they refused to hear from the witnesses. Now we've had three attempts by the opposition to move forward.

Mr. David Anderson: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, clearly we are not opposed to hearing from the witnesses. In fact, we've been calling the question here regularly, so we can go to the vote any time. We are not opposed to hearing the witnesses and we would love to hear them as soon as possible. That's why our position has been to call the question as quickly as possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: That wasn't a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The reality is we have asked the government members to hold off on this motion until the end so that we can hear from the witnesses. The government has refused. We have offered now three types of compromise amendments so that we can get consensus on the study, which the government says is important. The government is refusing, and continues to use very partisan rhetoric that resembles witch hunt rhetoric, rather than dealing with the idea of the study.

We have another offering from Mr. McKay, something that should have the support of all members of this committee. If the members adopt this amendment, then we can proceed to hearing the witnesses. I don't understand why the government is refusing, when we have four witnesses who have a lot to offer us, and I don't understand why the government has turned this committee meeting into something very cheap and very partisan when it should not be that way. That's not how the natural resources committee has functioned, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Are we ready for the question?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, please go ahead on the amendment.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will speak to Mr. Anderson's enthusiasm for hearing from witnesses. Apparently, not all witnesses are created equal. Apparently Mr. Trudeau and Mr. McGuinty have to be part of the motion, but the Minister of Finance doesn't have to be part of the motion.

Mr. Chair, if you stood back and asked yourself who, on an energy study, would be of more interest to Canadians and to committee members than the person who writes the tax law, who submits the budget, and who does all of the things from a fiscal standpoint that make this sector particularly prosperous and important to our nation... Apparently the government members would prefer to hear from Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau, neither of whom has occupied such a position. It's more than passingly curious that the government members express great enthusiasm for developing a witness list that may or may not include the Minister of Natural Resources or may or may not include the Minister of Finance but absolutely insist the Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau form part of the motion.

To use Mr. Julian's language, it looks like a witch hunt; it smells like a witch hunt; it might even be a witch hunt.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, maybe you're not aware of how this committee has handled witnesses. We have a process. All parties are allowed to submit the names of witnesses, and the committee decides on the witnesses. We haven't had an issue with that in the past. You're not a regular at this committee, and I suppose you don't understand that, but that's the way we've handled these things.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, may I?

The Chair: Mr. McKay, go ahead.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, you and I have been around here a long time. I dare say you may even have been around here longer than I have. I have never actually ever seen witnesses put into a motion. Witnesses are invited by the clerk of the committee to testify on the motion or the study at hand. We agree that we don't put them in a motion, and we don't put them in motion when they are not experts in the field of any energy description whatsoever.

Mr. Chair, I'm irresistibly driven to the conclusion that there might be some other purpose to this motion. I don't know what it could possibly be, but it doesn't seem to have too much to do with the study on energy.

• (1200)

The Chair: I'm pretty sure, Mr. McKay, you're right. We've been around for a while, and I'm pretty sure you know of situations in which witnesses have been named in a motion. We've had members of parliament and even their staff named in motions as specific witnesses by the Liberals and the NDP in past parliaments, so it has happened before.

Whether we like it or not isn't the issue here. The issue is we're dealing with this motion.

Let's go to the question on the motion as amended.

Hon. John McKay: I request a recorded vote again.

The Chair: It's a recorded vote. We'll go to a recorded vote on the amendment.

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

The Chair: Now we go to the motion.

Hon. John McKay: I wish to move another amendment, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity. I know you're being very generous with me today.

It's an amendment very similar to the previous two, only instead of the Minister of Natural Resources, who the committee apparently doesn't want to hear from, or the Minister of Finance, who the committee apparently doesn't want to hear from, the Minister of International Trade would be substituted in.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, would it be all right if we just read in the names of all the different ministers who could appear and have one vote so we can get to the witnesses?

Hon. John McKay: No, it wouldn't. I appreciate the offer, but, no, that wouldn't be all right.

The Chair: I'm trying to be very generous so we can get to the witnesses here.

Hon. John McKay: You're a generous and fair chair. I've noticed that.

The Chair: Is there any debate on the new amendment that Mr. McKay has brought forward? Do you want to speak to it?

Hon. John McKay: As you know, Chair, the Minister of International Trade, who I have nothing but the highest regard for, has been a very busy lad lately going around signing up Canada to a whole bunch of trade treaties. A lot of these trade treaties have a great deal to do with access to energy resources, the most obvious of which is the current deal with respect to CNOOC and Nexen, on which the government has yet to be forthcoming as to what the net benefit to Canada is.

In a study of one of the critical energy sectors in Canada, such as the oil sector and indeed the energy sector generally, I would think that the committee would benefit greatly from the views of the Minister of International Trade. Certainly as the globe becomes smaller and the demands for energy become greater, the access to other forms of energy becomes quite critical, so I would think that the presence of the Minister of International Trade is a *sine qua non* of a study such as this. I would see his inclusion in a motion such as Mr. Calkins has proposed as far more significant than the other witnesses, who, as I say, are brilliant individuals in and of themselves, but have no recognized expertise in the energy field.

Certainly the Minister of International Trade has thought about this. He's generally from the area where all of this occurs, and I think the committee would benefit highly by his presence, but I guess if you turned down the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Natural Resources, there is some likelihood that you might actually not want to hear from the Minister of International Trade and certainly not want to make him a compellable witness.

• (1205)

The Chair: We'll move to the vote on the amendment.

An hon. member: I would like a recorded vote.

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

The Chair: Can we get to the vote on the main motion now?

Hon. John McKay: Not quite. Not quite, Mr. Chair.

I changed the motion again to read this time, "the Minister of the Environment".

We only have 20 cabinet members to go.

The Chair: We'll move to the vote on the amendment.

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I just heard Mr. McKay say we've only got 20 cabinet ministers. Obviously he thinks he's going to continue doing this, so I'm just wondering, if he is planning on filibustering until the end of the hour and he wants to make that clear, would he let us know so that we can treat the witnesses with respect and actually let them go?

We'd like to go ahead with the witness hearing, have a vote on the motion now, and make the decision. If he's going to filibuster for the next hour, out of respect to the witnesses he should let us know. Then we can let the witnesses go so that they don't have to continue to sit through this.

The Chair: That's a reasonable request. Mr. McKay, do you have an indication on that, if you wouldn't mind?

Hon. John McKay: I'll just point out that I've already apologized on behalf of the committee for the abuse of witnesses' time. The abuse of their time started with Mr. Calkins' motion. I don't quite know why the opposition, having objected to Mr. Calkins' motion in the most vociferous way possible and having absolutely no compromise or even a hint of moving the motion down to a later part of the day, should now be asked to let the witnesses go when the government has had ample opportunity to treat the witnesses with respect.

This is an abuse of witness time, I agree. It's an abuse of Canadians' time. It's an abuse of all of the opposition members' time. If the government wishes to carry on this way, they're welcome to do so, but my amendment stands, and I move that the previous motion be amended by deleting "Minister of International Trade" and replacing it with "Minister of the Environment".

The Chair: Is there any debate on the amendment?

Do you have a point of order?

Mr. David Anderson: I just wanted to reiterate my point.

Mr. McKay can make his political statement, which he's just done, and that's fine. We're just asking, if he's intending to filibuster for the next hour, to give us that indication so that we can let the witnesses go so they don't have to continue to be part of this. It's just out of politeness to them. It would be up to him to make that decision, and if he could let us know, then, Mr. Chair, you could allow the witnesses to leave the table.

Otherwise, if we're going to vote on his thing, which we would like to do immediately, then we can hear from the witnesses. We still have time to hear their presentations. If this goes on much longer, then we're not going to and we should just let them go.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, did you hear the proposal from Mr. Anderson?

Hon. John McKay: I've heard the honourable parliamentary secretary, and maybe he should look in the mirror as to who is abusing what witnesses. This was a purely partisan witch hunt motion designed to try to embarrass two Liberal members. It had no purpose whatsoever other than that. They started it; now they don't want to finish it.

My motion stands, and I apologize to the witnesses.

You have seen what happens in this majority government. It is an abuse of the opposition and it is partisan witch hunts 24/7/365. If Mr. Anderson, the parliamentary secretary, wishes to withdraw Mr. Calkins' motion or instruct Mr. Calkins to withdraw his motion, he's more than welcome to do so, but don't blame the opposition when it comes to starting partisan witch hunts, because this one was started entirely and completely by the Conservative members.

The Chair: I've been trying to let things go back and forth or try to find a way to get to the witnesses. It's clear that's not going to happen, so is there any discussion on Mr. McKay's proposed amendment?

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, sir.

Thank you for the opportunity to once again discuss this invitation to the Minister of the Environment.

The Minister of the Environment has, how shall we say, been more of an apologist than a minister. Nevertheless, he does have jurisdictional responsibility in the area of energy. He certainly has not been, how should we say, as enthusiastic as I would wish with respect to the cost to the environment on the energy sector. It is a not insignificant cost. When the motion talks about the benefits and isolates the conversation to the benefits, you don't actually find out what the liabilities are.

Mr. Chair, I don't know whether you were a small businessman in your previous life, but I ran a law practice. In a law practice you have assets and you have liabilities. You have income and you have expenses. This motion is actually on the left side of the agenda. It's not on the right side of the agenda or the right side of the page. On this motion we don't actually get to what the liabilities and costs are of Canada being an "energy superpower". If there is any minister who should be charged with the responsibility of explaining to Canadians and to parliamentarians that there are costs to these endeavours, then it actually should be the Minister of the Environment.

Again, I made the same point with respect to the international trade minister, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Natural Resources—that they should be included, each one of them—and now the Minister of the Environment should be included in the motion as a person of great interest to this committee. This is a committee that is to discuss all sides of the energy equation. He is an appropriate witness to have here. I would put him in the motion above all others.

• (1210)

The Chair: Yes.

Go ahead, Mr. Leef.

Is it a point of order or a discussion on the motion?

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): It's on a point of order.

Mr. Chair, we may be able to expedite this and subsequent motions by Mr. McKay.

You made the offer a little bit earlier to add all the names of these ministers to the motions. He declined that. Offering them up now one after another after he's clearly declined your offer would, in my opinion, make the motion out of order.

You also made the point quite clearly that witnesses can be listed by the opposition and the government when a motion is accepted for study. I would suggest that this and every other motion that names independent cabinet ministers, given the opportunity he's had, should be immediately ruled out of order, and then we can move on with other business.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Leef, I can't rule those proposed amendments out of order. I wish I could find a way to deal with it to get to the witnesses, but we'll have to go through the process. I'd just like to say to the witnesses here that if you would like to get a coffee or something, feel free to do that, but I ask you to remain in the room or at least not leave for a long period of time.

Is there any discussion on the proposed amendment by Mr. McKay?

Hon. John McKay: I appreciate your taking note—

The Chair: Mr. McKay, I haven't recognized you.

Hon. John McKay: Sorry. I apologize.

• (1215)

The Chair: Are there any other people who have asked for the floor on this amendment?

Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the belated recognition. I appreciate your noting that the motion is in order.

These people have significant portfolios, and they are of significant relevance to the committee. I take note, as I did at the beginning of the committee when questioning whether the motion was in order, that this is quite clearly within the mandate of the committee. The committee is entitled to study the department that's assigned to them and its effectiveness. It's certainly well within all four corners of relevance to this committee.

I appreciate, Mr. Chair, your recognizing that the motion is in order, and that this witness is a critical witness to any kind of study such as you might propose as set in this motion.

The Chair: Okay, we'll go to the vote on the amendment.

Hon. John McKay: I would like a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: We will have a recorded division.

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

The Chair: The proposed amendment is defeated. Are we ready for the vote on the motion?

Hon. John McKay: I have an amendment, Chair. I know you'll appreciate this one. This is a really good one.

The Chair: Monsieur Gravelle, you asked to be recognized. Do you have a proposed amendment?

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to apologize to the witnesses for having to be here for this—I don't know what to call it—meeting. I can assure you this doesn't occur often, but it does occur too often.

I'm appalled at the behaviour of the Conservative members for not dealing with this at the end of the meeting, as we've done in the past. When it came to committee business in the past, we've always dealt with it at the end of the meeting. I can refer back to the motion that I introduced calling for a study on the benefits of the ecoENERGY program. That was dealt with at the end of the meeting, as has been done in the past.

Has it been done since—

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Gravelle makes a fair point when he says some motions are dealt with at the end of a meeting, but he's inaccurate when he says they are all dealt with at the end of a meeting. He knows that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Go ahead, Mr. Gravelle.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Let me rephrase that. Since I've been on this committee, all of the motions have been dealt with at the end of a meeting.

The Chair: That's actually not accurate, Mr. Gravelle. I can remember...

Go ahead, Mr. Gravelle.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: That is very, very accurate, Mr. Chair.

I'm appalled at the behaviour. Because of this behaviour and because we have some excellent witnesses today, I'm going to be presenting a motion right after this meeting that the witnesses return to this committee next Thursday. I would like the clerk to extend the invitation to these witnesses.

The Chair: Monsieur Gravelle, if you're not proposing an amendment or speaking to the main motion, we can't deal with that. We have to deal with the motion first.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: I'm just informing you that I will be introducing a motion at the end of this meeting to bring the witnesses back next Thursday.

The Chair: If we get to it, that's fine. The way things are going, we'll see.

Are we ready to go the vote on the motion?

Hon. John McKay: No, we can't do that, Mr. Chair. You know I have an amendment.

The Chair: Are there other amendments to the motion?

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Yes. There is an amendment to the motion, and this one is to replace the Minister of Environment.... Apparently, the government doesn't wish to hear from either the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of International Trade, the Minister of Finance, or the Minister of Natural Resources. They prefer Mr. Trudeau and Mr. McGuinty, above all others, to the western economic diversification minister.

I would like to amend the motion to delete the Minister of the Environment and replace that with the western economic diversification minister, and then I'd like a great opportunity to speak to it.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on the proposed amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

As the senior minister for western Canada and the minister charged primarily with the issue of energy, this would be a critical minister to the study, as proposed, so that there can be some coordination.

Clearly one of the discussions that's taking place is the reverse flow in the pipeline, which has a certain attractiveness and is gaining a certain political attractiveness because it appears that by 2017 or 2019 the United States will actually achieve energy self-sufficiency, in which case we may well have a bizarre situation on our hands in that we have a great deal of energy, particularly oil and gas energy, locked in the ground but with no accessible market, or an accessible market at a price point that makes it uneconomic. Therefore, I can't imagine why a western economic diversification minister wouldn't be thinking about these issues now and actually ramping up a study on reverse flow in the pipelines.

We will literally have pipelines to nowhere if, in fact, the United States achieves what is predicted, which is energy self-sufficiency. For those of us whose homes are in eastern Canada, this is an attractive issue. Whether it is gas or whether it is oil, it is quite attractive, so I and I'm sure all of our colleagues would be very interested in the views of the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification on whether she has actually thought this through and what studies she may be initiating with respect to the reverse oil flow.

I'm sure all colleagues would agree that her views on this particular issue might actually be at least as interesting as those of Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau. I would actually prefer to have heard from the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of International Trade, and the Minister of the Environment, but if we're not going to hear from any one of them, then certainly the western economic diversification minister would be a worthy witness here and should be included in the motion.

• (1220)

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on the amendment proposed by Mr. McKay?

We'll go the question.

Hon. John McKay: I request a recorded vote.

The Chair: It will be a recorded division.

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

The Chair: The proposed amendment is defeated.

Mr. McKay, just before we go to any other possible amendments, I just want to read something, and I may want to consider it for a while.

On page 533 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, by O'Brien and Bosc, it says that an amendment is out of order procedurally if it is irrelevant to the main motion—which is why I ruled your initial proposed motion out of order—but then it also says it's out of order if it raises a question substantially the same as one that's been dealt with before in the same sitting.

I suppose I'm questioning whether just changing the names of ministers is really providing motions that are substantially the same as motions made before, and if you are going to bring forth another similar proposed amendment, I'd like you to explain why this wouldn't apply and why your proposed amendment shouldn't be ruled out of order.

Hon. John McKay: I don't have the benefit of reading the section that you're reading, Chair, but my view on the matter is that once you've ruled an amendment in order, which you did with respect to the Minister of Natural Resources, then it's in order for all time, and the fact that the names and ministries may change is entirely irrelevant. Once it's in order, they're all in order, and I don't know that you can actually back off from that position.

The first part of the section you read—and I can't recall it word for word—is not related to the second part of the paragraph.

•(1225)

The Chair: As I said, Mr. McKay, the issue is whether it raises a question substantially the same, which has been dealt with in this session already.

Anyway, can we go to the vote on the main motion?

Hon. John McKay: But you will agree, Chair, surely, that the minister's—

The Chair: Mr. McKay, what are you speaking to exactly here?

Hon. John McKay: I was just finishing off—

The Chair: Are you going to propose another amendment?

Hon. John McKay: Yes, of course. I wouldn't want to—

The Chair: Well, then get on with proposing another amendment.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. Thank you—

The Chair: If you're questioning the chair, you can move a motion to that effect.

Hon. John McKay: No. I thank you. I thank you, Chair, for your consideration and patience with me.

Mr. David Anderson: On a point of order, given the time—and I made a similar point here a little bit earlier—I think now that we're getting into that amount of time left when the witnesses are not going to be able to make their full presentations because of Mr. McKay's filibuster, what I propose is that we allow the witnesses to leave the table.

Obviously Mr. McKay is not interested in hearing from them today. He wants to continue this, I think, because he just told you he has another amendment, and we know each amendment has a certain time to it. I'm going to suggest that you allow the witnesses to leave the table. Unfortunately they are not going to be able to be heard fully today, but we certainly would be interested in having them come back again. I don't think Mr. Gravelle's motion needs to be put in place for us to invite them back.

We apologize, from this side, that they were not able to make their presentations today. Had we been able to vote on this motion immediately, we certainly would have had a good two hours of visiting with them. Hopefully they can come back another day.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Is there any objection to allowing the witnesses to leave the meeting? The time is running out. We don't have enough time to hear all presentations, or barely enough, I guess, if we went to it right now.

Mr. Julian, do you object to allowing the witnesses to leave?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I think the committee has to apologize to the witnesses.

We raised right at the outset, Mr. Chair, that for the government to bring forward this motion at the beginning and in such a controversial way was something that's—

Mr. David Anderson: On a point of order, if Mr. Julian wants to continue the debate on this point, that's fine, but I don't hear any objection to allowing the witnesses to go. Why don't we let them go, and then Mr. Julian can continue his debate as well?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: That's clarifying. That's not a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson. That's not a point of order, but we want to—

Mr. Julian, are you objecting to allowing the witnesses to leave at this point?

Mr. Peter Julian: Absolutely not, Mr. Chair, but what I am saying—

The Chair: Then I just want to say that—

Mr. Peter Julian: Hold on. Mr. Chair. If I may, I'll complete my comments that Mr. Gravelle put forward a notice of motion. We intend to call the four witnesses back—

The Chair: You can't do that when a motion is being debated, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, that's a notice of motion to inform committee members.

From what I understand from Mr. Anderson, he has no objection, so we should be able to get that through unanimously.

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

I would just like to say to all the witnesses that I do apologize and I just—

Are you objecting, Mr. McKay?

Hon. John McKay: The issue has been raised. I had my hand up, and Mr. Anderson spoke and Mr. Julian spoke. I had my hand up. I wish to speak to this proposal. May I?

The Chair: Unfortunately, I guess I can't have the witnesses dismissed. They'll have to stay around a little longer.

Mr. McKay, go ahead, please.

Hon. John McKay: Possibly you shouldn't presume, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate Mr. Anderson's belated recognition of this witness abuse. It is a pity that an hour and a half ago he didn't recognize that when Mr. Julian first brought up the issue.

You will, I hope, understand the opposition's views on this matter: that this has been an abuse of your time, and an abuse of your time for purely partisan reasons, for no other reason than pure partisanship. This is what goes on with regrettable regularity, and it has rendered Parliament almost dysfunctional.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, you're not speaking to the motion—

Hon. John McKay: Notwithstanding that, I would thank you for your time. I look forward to the opportunity to actually ask you substantive questions. Hopefully you will be able to inform this committee of your material.

I apologize that we have wasted your time and your preparation time as well.

•(1230)

The Chair: I'd like to ask again if there is anyone opposed to my allowing the witnesses to leave, as it appears we're not going to get back to them at this meeting.

Does anyone object to that? I hear no objection.

I'd like to thank the witnesses, both the witnesses who are here in person and the witness from Edmonton. It is a shame; we had business to do, and unfortunately we haven't been able to get to it.

I'd like to allow you to leave the table, and leave the room in Edmonton, if you would like, and again thank you for appearing. I do hope we are allowed to hear from you sometime in the future.

Are there any more amendments being proposed?

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the generosity.

Again, thank you, witnesses, for your participation.

I was very concerned about the similarity of these motions. I thought for all of our sakes, just to change up the similarity, we could amend the motion to this time invite the Premier of Alberta.

The motion would now read that the Premier of Alberta be invited. It would be that the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector and across Canada and that the committee invite the Premier of Alberta to the committee hearings.

I'm sure the clerk has had some practice in getting used to the change in this motion. Just substitute the Premier of Alberta's name in there.

The Chair: You've heard the amendment proposed by Mr. McKay.

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I'd suggest that if we leave in that members of Parliament David McGuinty and Justin Trudeau be invited as witnesses to explain their comments and that we invite the Premier of Alberta as well, we would go along with that.

As a friendly amendment, I would suggest that perhaps we could do that, and we could support Mr. McKay's amendment.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, you've heard Mr. Anderson's attempt at trying to solve this issue. Do you agree with that friendly amendment proposal?

Hon. John McKay: I'm remarkably charmed by the apparent friendliness of Mr. Anderson. It doesn't happen that often.

The Chair: He's demonstrated it at this committee very often, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Of course Mr. Anderson is not being entirely forthcoming, because he knows that the Premier of Alberta would have a lot of important information that would be of relevance to this kind of study, so I don't regard it as a friendly amendment, in spite of my personal regard for Mr. Anderson.

The Chair: We have the proposed amendment. Does everybody understand the proposed amendment?

Is there any discussion on the proposed amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

I have the greatest and highest regard for the Premier of Alberta. I do not know her. I only have observed her in a political setting, and regard her as, really, one of the leaders of our country.

I think not only is Alberta fortunate to have a premier of her calibre, but the nation is fortunate to have a premier of her calibre. She's shown immense leadership on a variety of national issues, which, regrettably, others haven't shown on issues such as energy issues. She's a remarkable woman. She has significant qualifications for the position. She articulates the position of her province brilliantly, but she does have that big tent, the larger vision of...

Should I stop, Chair, given that you're preoccupied with your clerk and you're wanting to find out what the book actually says?

The Chair: I'm listening intently, Mr. McKay. There's nothing of importance that I'm missing, Mr. McKay, because I'm listening intently to everything you say.

•(1235)

Hon. John McKay: I'm shocked that you would say so, Mr. Chair. I didn't realize you had such multi-tasking talent. I thought you were a straight-ahead kind of guy.

As you appreciate, the Premier of Alberta is a very capable individual, very well qualified for her position. What I like about her is not only that she represents her province well but that she also takes into view the interests of the nation. I think that's to be commended in a provincial politician.

I particularly appreciated her efforts in Halifax, where she tried to bring a number of the premiers together. My goodness, she was so skilled as to even bring Premier Marois into the discussion about energy and other matters that affect our nation.

It's rather a pity that other politicians, particularly senior politicians and particularly senior federal politicians, aren't able to see the national interest at these premiers' meetings, but I remain eternally optimistic, Mr. Chair, that the Premier of Alberta will set a fine example for other politicians.

The Chair: Are we ready for the vote on the proposed amendment?

Mr. David Anderson: Can you read the amendment as he has proposed it?

The Chair: The clerk will read the amendment.

The Clerk: It is: That the committee conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector across Canada; that the Premier of Alberta be invited; and that the committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

Is that right, Mr. McKay?

Hon. John McKay: That's right.

Mr. David Anderson: I have another friendly amendment. It would be that we word it, "That the committee, in light of the comments by Liberal MP David McGuinty and Liberal leadership candidate Justin Trudeau, conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector across Canada", and we then conclude with the rest of Mr. McGuinty's motion—or rather, Mr. McKay's.

I'm sorry; they all look alike to me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Order.

Could you go through that again, Mr. Anderson?

Mr. David Anderson: We would leave the first.... It's "That the committee, in light of the comments by senior Liberal MP David McGuinty and Liberal leadership candidate Justin Trudeau, conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector across Canada".

I think we would support inviting the Alberta premier, knowing that she's not compelled to come or whatever, and I expect that you would still see Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau being expected to explain their comments as well, although that wouldn't be in the motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Just to be clear, you would be—

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I'm going to withdraw this. I didn't take the time to write it up properly here, so on his next motion—

The Chair: Okay. I wanted clarity. Are you backing off, then, from the friendly amendment?

We have Monsieur Gravelle on Mr. McKay's proposed amendment.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Not really, sir; I just want some clarification after what Mr. Anderson said.

The Chair: No, we're going to deal with the proposed amendment.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: May I get the clarification afterward?

The Chair: If we ever get away from the motion, yes, you may.

Let's go to the vote on the amendment, then.

Hon. John McKay: I ask for a recorded vote.

The Chair: It's a recorded division.

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

The Chair: Can we go to the vote on the main motion now?

Hon. John McKay: Chair, you would be disappointed if I didn't have another amendment, wouldn't you?

The Chair: No, I would not be at all, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I'm shocked. I'm perfectly happy to adjourn the meeting. If you have other business to do, I'm perfectly happy that you adjourn the meeting, but if not, then I do have another amendment, Chair.

If the committee is apparently not interested in Alison Redford, the Premier of Alberta, who probably has more influence—

The Chair: Is there a point of order, Mr. Julian?

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to move that the meeting be adjourned, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: There's been a motion to adjourn the meeting. I'll go straight to the question.

Those in favour of the meeting being adjourned early—

● (1240)

Mr. David Anderson: Just a minute. You can't move a motion on a point of order.

The Chair: Oh, that's right, of course not. Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Of course it's out of order, Mr. Julian. Besides, we're dealing with a motion, and the motion is on the floor right now. The chair let that slip.

Are there any other proposed amendments?

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to propose, Mr. Chair, that the meeting be adjourned.

The Chair: We're dealing with a motion. There's a motion before the committee. I can't accept that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, you can, actually, Mr. Chair.

I think that if you consult the clerk, you'll find that it is in order, not on a point of order, but in the place of an amendment.

The Chair: I will have a discussion on that. I'm not certain about it.

That motion is in order, Mr. Julian. Let's go to the vote on the motion to adjourn.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Now, we go back to the vote on the main motion.

Hon. John McKay: I had no idea, Mr. Chair, that my Conservative colleagues were so enthusiastic to hear what I had to say. It's a remarkable turn of events.

Having turned down now the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of International Trade, the Minister of the Environment, the minister of western diversification, and the Premier of Alberta, why don't we try Christy Clark, out in British Columbia?

Let's do Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia.

The Chair: I want to know exactly what you're proposing here.

Hon. John McKay: I just replaced the Premier of Alberta with the Premier of British Columbia.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson: I think we're going to ask you to rule this out of order.

Mr. McKay is simply doing this to try to delay. These are frivolous suggested amendments to the motion. I'm going to ask you to rule that amendments in this fashion are out of order, since he's not taking this seriously any longer.

The Chair: We have an expert helping us here today, an expert besides our normal clerk.

I asked her to look at the issue that I had brought up, which was that an amendment is out of order procedurally if it raises a question substantially the same as one that has been ruled on in the same session. I don't know how this has been handled in the past. I'd like to see what the committee clerk, Isabelle, has to say. Let's have a little discussion on this.

Mr. McKay, this is your second proposal in terms of amendments. You've requested in your amendment that the Premier of Alberta come before the committee and now you're requesting the Premier of British Columbia. If there is a third request, I'll have to make a ruling on that, because you're raising a question substantially the same as the one that we've already dealt with. I don't want to presume what you're going to do, but let's go to the discussion on this proposed amendment first.

•(1245)

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

There is a substantive difference between the Premier of Alberta and the Premier of British Columbia, and how either of them could be confused as being similar in any way, shape, or form, escapes me altogether. If you were to ask Christy Clark and Alison Redford about the similarities between them, I dare say you might get a bit of an earful.

Nevertheless, this is a big country, and the Premier of British Columbia is responsible for a whole variety of energy sources. The one that is of most relevance to this study would be the pipeline that goes from the energy sources in Alberta out to the coastline. Were the committee to have Christy Clark, the Premier of British Columbia, in to the committee, she would have a very strong view on the substance of the motion as opposed to its froth, particularly the economic benefits that flow from Alberta's energy sector.

I recollect her saying in the newspaper, on television, and elsewhere, "How is it that Alberta gets all of the benefits and British Columbia takes on all of the liabilities?" I don't know whether that is or is not true. I don't know whether British Columbia would actually not derive any benefits. They certainly have a heightened risk in transporting this oil across what is otherwise pristine wilderness. There is certainly a heightened risk in loading from a pipeline into the ships, and there is a heightened risk in getting the ships into the ocean to go to their ultimate destination.

There has been a great deal of conversation on this matter, and I can't imagine that you wouldn't want to invite her or that you wouldn't want to see her in place of Mr. Trudeau or Mr. McGuinty if the committee were serious about Alberta's energy sector.

Were it up to me, I would think that all of the previous persons I have proposed would be of great significance to any serious study about energy in this country.

Oops, I didn't wake anybody up, did I?

The Chair: No, I heard what you said.

Is there any further discussion on this proposed amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: I'm really disappointed because, with the amendments on the floor and those to come, it looks as though this will spill over to the next committee meeting and we'll be debating it on Thursday.

This is the kind of attitude that poisons the public trust in the political class. In the words of James Carville, "It's the economy, stupid", and that's what we should be focusing on. We should be focusing on the economy and not playing these partisan games.

We had four excellent witnesses here today. We asked at the beginning of this meeting that this motion, owing to its controversial nature, be placed at the end of the meeting. All members around the committee table have been here longer than I have, perhaps with the exception of Ms. Liu, and they knew this motion was controversial. We could have dealt with this at the end of committee. We could have heard witnesses. We could have spoken about the Canadian economy and the energy sector, and we chose not to.

The opposition side was making very reasonable requests by the NDP. We were requesting this to be placed at the end of the meeting, but unfortunately, this is going to spill over to the next meeting and waste more time. It's going to waste more of the witnesses' time. There have been thousands of taxpayers' dollars wasted in this meeting today, basically for a battle between the old dinosaur political parties, and I think Canadians are tired of that. They want us to focus on the things that are important, and they want our priority to be placed on the economy.

•(1250)

The Chair: I'm not sure what you were saying there related to Mr. McKay's proposed amendment.

Hon. John McKay: I may be old, but I'm not a dinosaur.

The Chair: We'll go to the vote on the proposed amendment by Mr. McKay.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 0)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Did they actually have an amendment that nobody supported?

The Chair: Including the mover.

Hon. John McKay: I thought it was a great amendment.

The Chair: Can we go to the vote on the main motion now?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, you'd be disappointed in me if I didn't have something for you, so I have another one for you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you.

You might actually really appreciate this one. This is quite good. It is that we take the motion and strike all references to Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Trudeau, and that we add after the section “energy sector across Canada” the following: “and that the committee include as part of their study an examination of the economic impact of the energy sector on related businesses including supply chain providers, and that the committee report its findings to the House.”

The Chair: You've heard Mr. McKay's proposed amendment.

Mr. David Anderson: He'll have to read it again, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Could you read it again, Mr. McKay, please?

Hon. John McKay: It is:

That the Committee

—and we strike any reference to senior Liberals—

conduct hearings on the economic benefits that flow from the energy sector across Canada

—we can leave Alberta in or out; it doesn't much matter—
and that

—again striking reference to members of Parliament McGuinty and Trudeau, and that we add

the Committee include as part of the study an examination of the economic impact of the energy sector on related business including supply chain providers, and that the Committee report its findings to the House in order to ensure that all members of Parliament and Canadians are informed of these economic benefits.

The Chair: You've heard Mr. McKay's proposed amendment. Is it understood?

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Could we repeat it one more time, Mr. Chair, please?

The Chair: Do you want the clerk to read it or do you want Mr. McKay to read it?

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

•(1255)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, it entirely changes the motion. I think it should probably be ruled out of order for being too significant a change to the motion to be ruled in order.

The Chair: You're proposing, Mr. Anderson, that—

Mr. David Anderson: I'm just asking you to rule on it.

This is not an amendment. This is a rewriting of the motion, and that's not appropriate.

The Chair: I'll have a look at it.

Mr. Anderson, unless you have something to add to that, it seems that it would be in order. It's not entirely changing the intent of the motion. It is certainly a point of debate, but it seems that it would be in order, unless you have something you want to add to that.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, my opinion was that it did change the intent. You've ruled that it does not, so we'll allow you to make that ruling without challenging.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Does anyone else want to speak to this proposed amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: I'm shocked that no one else would want to speak to this amendment. It's brilliant in its summary of what this committee should actually be studying, as opposed to what apparently the Conservatives want to study.

Rather than trying to score partisan points and go on the witch hunt or do the 24/7/365, shoot-anybody-who-says-anything mentality that pervades in this government, we are proposing that the committee do substantive work that might actually have an impact on energy in this country.

That would be a novelty, Mr. Chair: that a committee of Parliament actually has impact on the public policy direction of the nation.

It says that it includes, as part of the study, the economic impact of the energy sector and related businesses.

You know, Mr. Chair, there's been quite a conversation lately about the so-called “Dutch disease” and the economic impact. When I was at Department of Finance, I found this to be an interesting kind of conversation, because, being from Ontario, it appeared to me to have raised the value of the Canadian dollar, and that has economic impact everywhere. It's a far more complicated conversation than simply saying that the value of the energy raises the value of the dollar and therefore makes other industrial sectors uncompetitive. It's a far more complicated discussion than that; there are enormous flows back to, if you will, the manufacturing heartland of the nation, and there is a reorientation of industrial products and benefits, which then flow to the energy sector.

It's a catchy phrase, to talk in terms of the Dutch disease; it's not particularly useful, though, when trying to study the economic impact of energy on the entire nation's economy. That's one part of the motion.

The other part of the motion includes the supply chain providers. It's trite to say, Chair, but the resource itself drives a whole bunch of supply chain providers. I've been to Fort McMurray; I've seen the massive hole in the ground; I've actually seen some of the rehabilitation efforts on the part of the industry to restore some sense of naturalness to the environment, but you can't go into Fort McMurray—in particular, you can't even go into Tim Hortons—without first a big lineup, and second seeing a sign in the window that says “Help Wanted” or “We Need Employees”.

•(1300)

The Chair: Mr. McKay, do you want to go to a vote on your proposed amendment or not?

Hon. John McKay: Do you not like this amendment?

The Chair: The point is that the time is almost up.

Hon. John McKay: I'm happy to go to a vote at this point, if need be.

I just want to end by saying that when somebody at Tim Hortons is being paid \$15 to \$20 an hour, you know that the supply chain providers are doing very well, thank you very much.

The Chair: We have one other speaker on the proposed amendment. It is Mr. Calkins. Then we'll go to a vote.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Chair.

It's been one hour and 58 minutes since I last had the floor and moved my motion. I just want to comment on my genuine disappointment in the opposition filibuster for what should have been a relatively straightforward motion that we had plenty of time to think about and digest before we came here today.

It's clear to me that the Liberals are absolutely terrified of having the agenda that we know, or I suspect, has been there all along. If the members we've invited... All experienced parliamentarians at this table understand that an invitation to appear before a committee is simply that: just an invitation to appear. I was somewhat shocked to see the way the former Liberal spokesman on the natural resources file seems to have been thrown under the bus today.

It seems to me that back in the spring, when I chaired the subcommittee on finance, the Liberal Party of Canada had a number of witnesses they could call. One they called to appear to testify before that subcommittee was the member for Ottawa South, David McGuinty himself. It seems to me that in a matter of context, if he had so much expertise at that time, he has fallen so far from grace

within his own party that he's not even going to be welcomed back here, to be invited to appear before the committee to speak to his comments and address the concerns I have.

Notwithstanding your excellent chairmanship, I'm the only Albertan sitting around this table as a member of the committee who could bring these kinds of issues forward. I'm happy to do so. I don't think anybody should underestimate my resolve to make sure we get a study from this committee, and afford every opportunity for those who have made comments to come and clarify those. It's an opportunity for them to do so.

I also want to comment on the disingenuous offers presented at the beginning of this committee to deal with this at the end. The fact is that we wouldn't have been able to deal with this any sooner at the end of the committee than at its start. In fact, it's taken the entire two hours, so far, and likely will consume more committee time. Offers made disingenuously shouldn't be taken as a way to discourage me from continuing to have this motion brought forward before this committee until it is dealt with.

In the interest of time, however, Mr. Chair, I think we have to move on. Members have responsibilities they have to attend to.

I move that the committee adjourn.

• (1305)

The Chair: We have a motion that the committee adjourn.

I will go directly to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

• (1310)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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