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Chair: Ms. Rachael Harder



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• (1600)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC)): Welcome back, everyone.

As you know, we are here discussing a matter of business that was started at the last committee meeting. We have a motion on the table, and there is an amendment to that motion. The amendment was put forward by Mr. Angus. The amendment is currently being debated, and as is stated in the notice of business for today, we will pick up the debate where we left off.

Before moving on to the first speaker—whom I have recorded here based on the last day—I will take a moment to review the protocols within this room, based on health and safety.

As you will recall, when you're at your desk or your table, by all means you are able to have your mask off. However, if you get up from your seat and move about the room, we ask that you put your mask back on. We also would ask that you honour the arrows that are on the floor, and move in a counter-clockwise direction when moving about this room.

When you help yourself to a snack or a coffee, or other drink, please be mindful of the things you touch with your hands. Also, please use hand sanitizer before touching items.

With that, we will move on to the business of the day.

Mrs. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Could we have the speaking order?

The Chair: The speaking order for the amendment, which is the first point of discussion today, starts off with Mr. Kurek, then Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus and Mr. Green.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Could I be put on the list?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Fergus, do you want to speak?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Please.

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau...on the speaking list? Awesome.

Before moving on, I understand that Mr. Angus is not here, so this may be somewhat complicated. This is his amendment. However, Mr. Green is in his place. It may be appropriate at this time for you to summarize what the amendment is, if you'd like to take the floor. However, if you wish for me to proceed, I'm happy to do that, as well.

I can also ask the clerk to read what she has, just to remind the committee.

• (1605)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): It is that the motion be amended by adding after the words “one week of the adoption of this Order” the following:

and that these records be provided to the Ethics Commissioner for his study; and that this committee call upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to appear to give testimony relating to these matters.

The Chair: Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is good to be able to address the committee after the meeting this past Friday, and it's good to see all of you, some of whom I've seen over the past few days in the House.

We find ourselves in a unique position here. I don't think it would be out of line to say that over the last number of weeks the current Liberal government has been rocked by yet another scandal.

In the context of this scandal, we have faced as a nation an unprecedented pandemic requiring tremendous action by all levels of government, which have, rightfully so, provided aid to Canadians at a time when they have been in desperate need. I would state boldly that I don't think there's a person in this country, and maybe not even a person in the world, who hasn't been affected in some way by COVID-19, but when you look at what provides the strength of our nation—the democracy, the foundations of who we are—we look to institutions like Parliament, and we look to governments at all levels, in legislatures and city halls, and expect them to work in our best interests.

Unfortunately, we have seen over the last number of weeks that the best interests as defined by the current government and members within that government clearly have not been in the best interests of Canadians. There were personal ties to that, and those ties have—I mentioned this word earlier—rocked this government. More importantly, Madam Chair and members of this committee, it has rocked the trust that Canadians expect to be able to put in their leaders, especially at a time of such an unprecedented crisis.

I was proud to be one of the members who signed the letter that did in fact recall this committee with a motion to try to get to the bottom of exactly what has happened here. I know that other committees are also doing important work, but it is key that we have these debates and these discussions and, ultimately, that Canadians get the answers they deserve, because the trust that is required in a democracy has been shaken.

A saying that I've heard often is that trust is easily broken and hard to earn. I think it's important to acknowledge there has been a great deal of trust that's been broken. My colleague Mr. Barrett talked about this, and I think I'll mention at different points in time some of the other scandals that have eroded the trust that Canadians should have in their government. I don't exaggerate when I say that I hear from constituents each and every day about the fact their trust in government has been truly shaken. We need to do something about that. It is incumbent upon every member of this committee, and every MP, quite frankly, to ensure we do everything we can to restore the trust that has been shaken.

Madam Chair, what I'll do is outline briefly, from my perception and informed by the hundreds of conversations I've had with constituents over the last number of weeks, their feelings on some of the issues that we are moving through today. In fact, I had a conversation with one of the Liberal cabinet ministers. I was very appreciative that after a comment in question period—this was back a number of months ago—a minister would follow up with me. I hadn't heard back in a week or so, so I had my staff reach out to her office.

• (1610)

I had a number of conversations back and forth and then that minister did in fact reach out. I was very appreciative of that. I think that during this crisis all members would agree that quite a bit of work has been done together. We have shown that we can put politics aside when we are working for the best interests of Canadians.

I had a series of issues that I brought forward to this minister about various programs. People were falling through the cracks. One issue was the Canada summer jobs program. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but there were hundreds of last-minute applicants to that program. All of us as MPs have had experience with that program in a way that sees true benefit to our communities, especially during a time like we find ourselves in now.

When the government adjusted some of their rules I quite frankly was optimistic that that program would be able to benefit the organizations, small businesses, in my community, and the more than 60 self-governing municipalities across my beautiful constituency.

That minister mentioned something. Instead of making the Canada summer jobs grant larger, there was this new program that had at that point just recently been announced. It was going to take the place of it. At that time I shared my concerns that I wasn't sure it was going to work, especially in a rural constituency where quite a few of the organizations that were applying for the Canada summer jobs grant would have involved a student either moving or having to commute. It would have incurred costs. A volunteer incentive, although we encourage volunteerism.... Throughout this crisis we've seen an incredible level of volunteerism, whether it be helping out neighbours.... I've heard many stories come through my constituency office showcasing the best of what Canada is all about.

The Canada summer student grant was meant to be a kind of replacement for the Canada summer jobs grant. Although I shared my concerns, of course, the minister said that she would note those, and that was the end of the conversation. I do give credit for the fact

that the minister did reach out to a member of the opposition to deal with concerns with a number of the government programs.

Then we fast-forward to when this program was announced, and we ended up getting—like all the MPs I'm sure did—the information about how people should apply. We started sharing some of that information with folks who had asked us to keep them updated and whatnot, but then it started to smell.

It's unfortunate that this would be the case, because this program, well-intended or not, was meant to benefit students. It started to smell, and we saw over the course of a number of weeks some incredibly troubling revelations. The government had brought forward a program with an organization that was maybe not even capable of managing that program. There were close connections to the Prime Minister himself, and his family.

I would take a moment here to note that the allegation made by the members opposite—a number of them we heard at length, and there are a few different members here today—was that somehow it was the goal of the opposition to go on a “witch hunt”—one of the terms used—to drag the Prime Minister's mother or brother, or whatever the case was, before this committee.

• (1615)

I would hope that since the last meeting, the members opposite would have actually read the motion and the letter that called this committee back, because it had nothing to do with bringing the Prime Minister's mother or family members before this committee. It does have to do with the issue that I referenced in the beginning, which is trust of our institutions.

When you're the Prime Minister and are afforded all of the authority associated with that high office in our dominion, it comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Certainly, Conservative members don't want to see family members of politicians dragged before this. However, we do expect that for a high officeholder in this land, whether a minister—like the finance minister and the very troubling allegations that have just recently come out—or the Prime Minister himself, or quite frankly any of us, if there are connections that cause a shaking of the trust in our democratic institutions, Canadians deserve answers.

As was clearly articulated on the other side, we all run for office not to get our family members involved in the political battles that take place in the capital. However, when those who hold offices make decisions—whether they involve those family members or not—scrutiny needs to be applied.

I'll reference a senior who called my office who had not yet received the GIS. That senior had been watching the news that morning and noted to me how \$300,000 was worth more than their home and was more than they had ever made in any particular year throughout their entire life. They were frustrated that it seemed to them that the Liberal politicians were just in it for themselves and those closely connected to them. That's where it comes back again to the shaking of trust.

As I referenced before, trust is easy to break, but hard to earn. I would go as far as to suggest that we need to be very diligent that we move forward in a way that helps restore that trust to Canadians. I want to get to the amendment at hand because I think that Canadians.... We have to be willing to work diligently to ensure we have that clear understanding, because as we move forward with the scandal, we saw that there was a new revelation each and every day, it seemed. The Prime Minister's apology, after it was revealed the dollars involved and his family members involved.... We had questions about who authorized this, where the money was going and what seemed like almost a Ponzi scheme of referrals and references and various aspects of what happened to move forward.

We see very clearly that lack of transparency throughout the entire system. There's been a breaking of trust. When we have the opportunity—all of us, as members of Parliament and members of this committee—to bring clarity and to help restore that trust that Canadians expect in their institutions, I think we need to do everything we can to ensure that light is shone and that answers are found. We need to ensure that we have a clear objective to demonstrate to all Canadians that we are doing what's in their best interests and that it's not for our personal benefit that we have put our names on a ballot, but that we come to the capital to debate the pressing issues of our land for Canadians' best interests.

• (1620)

The amendment, Madam Chair, is important to differentiate the conversation that led up to it. I would move a subamendment, if the clerk would indulge me. I apologize that my French isn't good enough to assist in this.

I would just like to add two words to ensure, as I've outlined, the trust issue, that we have a clear ability to shine light on everything that's happened in this scandal, to ensure that light is shone.

The subamendment I would move is that, after the words “provide the records to the”, I would add “committee and the Ethics Commissioner”, so that we can move forward in ensuring that Canadians get answers on this ever-evolving and.... In fact, I find it quite staggering.

Madam Chair, I'm a fairly new member of Parliament. It's been, certainly, an interesting and educational number of months to have first been elected. It has impressed upon me the importance of our institutions and that we get to the bottom of all aspects of this.

I have much more that I would love to say. I mentioned that I'll get to some of the testimony that we heard. I took fairly detailed notes, because it felt more like a university class last week. I must reference the Latin specifically. I admit I did not study Latin, but I did study Greek and Hebrew, two other dead languages—Greek, in terms of the ancient Greek. Now, I studied it. That doesn't mean I remember much of it.

Certainly there is much more I have that I could say, but my final comment....

Is the clerk making the additions I need to make in terms of the amendment to the amendment?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Miriam Burke): I'd like to clarify with you, if I could.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Sure. It's my understanding that the amendment is that the clerk provide the records to the Ethics Commissioner. That's how it stands now. Am I correct in that understanding?

The Clerk: Yes.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I would add a subamendment. I hope that I can find support, quite frankly, from every member of this committee on this issue, but certainly from members of the opposition, who I think are all united in this. I would add, simply, after “to the”, the words “committee and”—two words, before “the Ethics Commissioner”.

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, the motion that the clerk is working with is just slightly different from what you stated.

Let me hit pause here for a moment. I'll allow the clerk to come to confer with you, just to make sure we have the wording down before we continue.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I would be happy to confer and confirm.

The Chair: I will officially suspend for two minutes.

• (1620) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1625)

The Chair: Having resumed, I'll have you, Mr. Kurek, clarify your subamendment.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Sure.

Just to make sure that everything's in order with what the most accurate text is, it would be “to the members of the committee”—so, adding not two words but four words—“and the Ethics Commissioner”.

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, if it's okay, I'll just have the clerk read out the full amendment with the subamendment.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Absolutely.

The Chair: That's awesome.

The Clerk: The amendment would then read:

and that the clerk provide these records to the members of the committee and the Ethics Commissioner for study, and that this committee calls upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to appear to give testimony relating to these matters.

Mr. Damien Kurek: That sounds good to me. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think we have the unique ability, as members of the ethics committee, to demonstrate to all Canadians that we will do everything possible to shed light on this issue that has rocked the confidence of the government and has consumed headlines among radio talk shows—and I see Facebook posts minute by minute on this issue—and to ensure that we get the answers Canadians deserve.

In line, I think, with my friend from the NDP, in line with the intent of what the motion was meant to be—to shine light, to make sure Canadians get the answers that are required so that we can have—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: On a point of order, is there a speaking list?

The Chair: Because the subamendment has been moved...yes.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Okay, please put me on the list.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Seeing that there are members of the government getting on the speaking list, I would certainly like to hear what they have to say about this and look forward to—I would hope in an expeditious way—seeing that we can begin the process of shedding light on the many issues to come.

I'll just end my comments with one more paraphrase of a conversation that I had on Tuesday, yesterday, with a constituent specifically referencing the filibuster. They were reading the news and saw that the government members were participating in this filibuster, and this constituent didn't really understand what a filibuster was. At the end of the conversation, they asked, "Well, why would they want to hold up getting to the bottom of this?" I think that's a good question.

With that, I would move the subamendment, which I hope is in line with the original intent of what my friends in the NDP intended, which was to ensure that we can simply do that, get to the bottom of this. The outstanding question is, why not?

Thank you.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

Folks, we have now moved from a motion to considering an amendment to that motion, and now we are considering a subamendment. With that, we begin a new speakers list for the subamendment.

First up I have Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to Mr. Kurek for his remarks.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Do you want on the speakers list?

Yes, you are on there already.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Chair, we submitted names, and other names were added. That's why I want to know where my name is on the list.

[*English*]

The Chair: Sure, just one moment here.

For the subamendment, we are hearing from Mr. Barrett currently and then Madam Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Pardon me, Madam Chair, but I was asking a question.

My name is on the list, but I'd like to know where it is on the list. Is it fourth or fifth, for example?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm answering your question.

We have Mr. Barrett, Madam Shanahan, Mr. Green, Mr. Fergus, Madam Gaudreau, Madam Brière and Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Ms. Brière, every time I've spoken in this committee, you've interrupted me within 10 seconds on a point of order to add your name to the speakers list. I find that fascinating. Ms. Shanahan took the opportunity at the last meeting to interrupt on points immediately after I started speaking.

In the interest of collegiality, and that spirit of collegiality that we talked about early on, I won't be interrupting you ad nauseam, and with a predictable cycle, throughout your speaking at this meeting. I do find it interesting—I do find that very interesting—that other members are able to draw the chair's attention without interrupting another member when making their remarks.

In my letter to the clerk dated July 13, I raised the point that it is concerning to think that payments might be funnelled this way in order to secure government contracts with respect to the \$300,000 paid to members of the Trudeau family by the WE organization. Having visibility on speaking engagements that the family members have been paid for is germane to having an understanding of breaches that may have occurred. We have a situation where it is evolving minute by minute. It's important to understand if organizations are using members of the Prime Minister's family to gain access to government. That's important.

It's important to reiterate also that the issue is not with members of the Prime Minister's family being paid for their profile, be it for their work in a particular field or because, in the case of Ms. Margaret Trudeau, she is the wife of a former prime minister. That would garner some interest on the speaking circuit for sure, but when we have this organization that was not paying other speakers and only paid speakers who were related to someone who could financially benefit their organization, it's important to understand how widespread this is. That's necessary.

There's no intention or desire on my part or on the part of my Conservative colleagues to call any members of the Trudeau family other than the Prime Minister. I don't think that is necessary. The personal information with respect to addresses, contact information, is not germane, but with respect to speaking fees paid, and speaking fees paid by whom, that is germane to the work of this committee.

I will be supporting the subamendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1635)

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, thank you.

Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to point out to Mr. Barrett that he certainly has had ample opportunity during the course of this and earlier committee meetings to speak at length and without interruption. I think it is the business of all committee members here to participate to the fullest extent in the meeting. I think it's the right of every committee member just to make sure that they're on the speakers list and that—

Mr. Michael Barrett: On a point of order, Madam Chair, could I get myself on the speakers list, please?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks.

The Chair: Ms. Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Chair, I'd like to talk about a few points.

To the subamendment, I think we had a thorough discussion at the last meeting about what the mandate of this committee was and about the different roles this committee has. I made the point in my discussions that, for the committee here, our role is to review the work of the four officers of Parliament who are included in our mandate.

I am wondering if the subamendment is expressing some lack of confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, so I'd like to share with the committee some notes I made concerning the commissioner, the act and the role of the commissioner in executing that act.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner administers the Conflict of Interest Act by establishing compliance measures, investigating possible contraventions of the act and providing advice to public office holders on their obligations. The commissioner is an officer of Parliament. Officers of Parliament are independent from the government and report directly to Parliament.

The Conflict of Interest Act came into force on July 9, 2007, which created for the first time a legislative regime governing the ethical conduct of public officer holders. Prior to this date, public office holders were subject to non-statutory codes of conduct.

Some additional information on the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is that this person is appointed by the Governor in Council, by commission under the Great Seal, after consultation with the leader of every recognized party in the House of Commons, and after approval of the appointment by resolution of the House. He or she holds the office for a seven-year term.

Under the Conflict of Interest Act, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner must be a former judge of a superior court in Canada or of a provincial court; or a former member of a federal or provincial board, commission or tribunal who has demonstrated expertise in at least one of the following areas: conflict of interest, financial arrangements, professional regulation and discipline or ethics; or a former Senate ethics officer or former ethics commissioner. The position was created in 2007 and replaced the Office of the Ethics Commissioner under Parliament of Canada Act, section 81.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner also provides confidential advice to the Prime Minister and to public office holders on all matters pertaining to the implementation of the Conflict

of Interest Act, and in addition the commissioner may, at the request of a parliamentarian or on their own initiative, investigate any alleged breach of the act by a public officer holder. The commissioner may, in the course of investigation, consider information provided by the public that is conveyed to the commissioner by a parliamentarian.

I think this information that is publicly available is important for the Canadian public to understand. The role of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is to undertake any investigation of alleged violations of the Conflict of Interest Act.

I would like to return once again to our mandate here in the committee, because many members here did cite the text of Standing Order 108(3)(h), paragraphs (v), (vi) and (vii), during the course of their interventions. I just want to point out, especially in (vi), that the text must be read in its entirety. It's in a certain context:

(vi) in cooperation with other committees, the review and report on any federal legislation, regulation or standing order which impacts upon the access to information or privacy of Canadians or the ethical standards of public office holders;

It's not to investigate public office holders themselves.

● (1640)

This was very interesting to me as I was reviewing all our statutory requirements for this committee, because I took a look at the work of this committee historically. I think it's something that behooves us to see how the important work of committee members actually leads to the creation and the evolution of better standards of practice—

Mr. Damien Kurek: I have a point of order, Madam Chair. I would clarify with respect to the member opposite, a vice-chair of this committee, that much of the concern of the members, certainly from the Conservatives, and I've heard from at least one of the other parties regarding the reference to the mandate of this committee, conveniently, some of the sentences were—

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Is this a point of order or a debate?

Mr. Damien Kurek: —left out.

I would just note in reference to this that there were a number of times when members talked about the mandate of this committee.

She's right. It does need to be read in its entirety, but in its entirety and not just select aspects of it.

The Chair: Madam Shanahan.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you.

Returning to the work of this committee over the years, its early work before the creation of this committee was the creation of a Special Joint Committee on a Code of Conduct. Then, in the 38th Parliament, the mandate of this committee was studied at length, and I think it behooves us, as I say, at the beginning of starting any work in a committee, to know what the mandate is.

Studies since that time related to disclosure of names of the access to information applicants. Again, looking at the appropriate execution of the legislation at the time, there was a calling of witnesses in the Mulroney-Schreiber affair, which was actually... There was a lot of testimony towards a full public enquiry, and to my mind, it points again to the fact that this is not the appropriate place for this kind of committee work, this kind of investigation.

Other work since then had to do with the estimates, the Access to Information Act and the naming of the different officers, including work on some of the more recent initiatives that had to do with privacy and social media in the age of big data. I think this points to the clause in our mandate that talks about initiatives. Indeed, some very good work was done on the growing problem of identity theft and its economic and social impacts, as well as on protecting Canadians' privacy at the U.S. border.

Also, more recently, in the 42nd Parliament, work was done on "Addressing Digital Privacy Vulnerabilities and Potential Threats to Canada's Democratic Electoral Process". Also, of course, there was report 20, the "International Grand Committee on Big Data, Privacy and Democracy". This is the kind of work that this committee undertakes.

Coming to the subamendment, it is not for this committee to be receiving personal documents. That is the prerogative, the job and, in fact, the very important work of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, because this is the person who has been named, with the agreement of all parties, to undertake this work. It is not the work of this committee. We are not an investigative body.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Shanahan.

Mr. Green, you are next.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

You'll recall, as a recap, that there was certainly a lot of discussion about the mandate of this committee and about what its extent was. There was one allegation that we were looking to drag Justin's mother to the meeting and perhaps her relatives and her family.

You'll recall that it was my colleague, Charlie Angus, who brought forward this compromise. That's what brought us here today with this amendment, which was to use the tools of the commissioner in this investigation and to have the appropriate documents above and beyond what's been reported. You'll recall we already know through public record that \$300,000 and more of pecuniary interest was transferred to family members. The compromise was to have this amendment essentially allow the private information of a private citizen to go directly to the commissioner.

In conversations with my friend, who is providing the subamendment, recognizing the announcement of the Prime Minister to agree to go to the finance committee, I think there would be a fair comment or feeling that the compromise that was put forward by my colleague might have been dead in the water at that point, that the Prime Minister might not have been willing to attend two committees, given the precedent.

What this amendment does—and I'm hearing this amendment for the first time—is that it essentially brings us back to the original spirit of the amendment the Conservatives proposed originally, which is, in fact, not the compromise that we tried to provide. I feel like, if I could just be so plain as to say, this is now a game of chicken, because we believed we were negotiating in good faith with our friends across the way in order to have accountability brought to this ethics committee.

Being here and representing my good friend and very learned colleague Charlie Angus, I'm here to represent that original compromise and that original interest to allow for the Ethics Commissioner to do his work in the investigation, provided there is support around this table to have the Prime Minister come to this committee.

This committee is not the finance committee. This committee has a different mandate, and the mandate is very clear. It's an ethical mandate. There have been financial breaches, as we've heard today from the finance minister's \$41,000 forgetting of monies that should have been paid to this organization and the many other ethical breaches that continue to unravel, but at the end of the day, our mandate here is to shine a light on this issue.

I would like to think, I would like to hope, that, if there was goodwill around the table to support the original amendment as it was, then I would be willing to stick with the intention of the original amendment over the subamendment. In fairness, I am just hearing the subamendment for the first time. It's a very smart subamendment, by the way, because it brings it right back to where we are, at square one.

Through my comments through you, Madam Chair, I want to hear from the other side. I want to hear from government if they are negotiating in good faith on a compromise before I make my decision on whether to vote for the subamendment or not. If they're operating in good faith, and we were to vote down this subamendment—and I'm going to speak very plainly—then the expectation is that we would get support from the government side to support the spirit of the original amendment, which was to have the documents go to the Ethics Commissioner and have the Prime Minister called to this committee.

Now I'm not naive enough to think that the invitation is going to automatically result in his appearance, but this is about accountability. This is about integrity. If there are games to be played, if there are future filibusters to be had, let's just be very clear that we could wrap this up very quickly. If in a few comments on government from the other side they say, "Yes, we'll support this amendment, as was the original spirit. We will negotiate in good faith with the New Democrats on the amendment", then I won't support the subamendment, but if I don't get that, Madam Chair, if I feel like we're going to be filibustering, if I feel like we're going to be into another procedural shenanigan....

• (1650)

The public is watching, and they'll see what's gone on in this committee. The public is not stupid. That's where we are at with the amendment that I'm bringing forward on behalf of my colleague.

I'm very curious to hear from the government side. If it is willing to operate in good faith, we could vote on this motion. We could put the question on this amendment and call this meeting to order to get on with things. Otherwise, we might be facing another filibuster, and we'll be right back to where we started.

That's where I'm at right now. Where I'm from, plain talk is not bad manners. I hope that in speaking plainly and clearly folks know what's on the table right now. I hope to hear from members of the government side that they are operating in good faith, and that we're not going to have another filibuster. We can have this committee operate within its mandate and call the Prime Minister to testify before this ethics committee.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Fergus, followed by Madam Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My thanks to all my colleagues around the table for giving us the opportunity to consider the proposal or the compromise put forward at our last meeting. I am very grateful to you.

Madam Chair, before I make my comments, could I ask the clerk to read Mr. Angus's amendment to the original motion again? Could you read it again so that everything is crystal clear?

If it's all right with you, Madam Chair, I would then like to continue with my comments.

[*English*]

The Chair: At this time, I will ask the clerk to read the amendment.

To be clear, you just want Mr. Angus's original amendment, without the subamendment. Is that correct?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Yes.

[*English*]

The Clerk: It is that the motion be amended by adding after the words "one week of the adoption of this Order" the following:

and that these records be provided to the Ethics Commissioner for his study; and that this committee call upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to appear to give testimony relating to these matters.

Mr. Greg Fergus: According to the amendment, would that information go directly to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner?

The Chair: The way the amendment reads, based on Mr. Angus's amendment, the information gathered, the speaking list gathered, would come to the clerk of the committee. It would not come to the members of the committee. Directly from the clerk, it would then be submitted to the Ethics Commissioner.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Is that what we all understand?

Mr. Matthew Green: And the Prime Minister would come before the committee.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I got that. I just wanted to make sure on that part. The reason why, Madam Chair, I sought that precision—to

make sure that it directly goes—is that.... It gets back to the principle that I raised at the last meeting.

If you'll allow me a little bit of time to talk about that, my concern always has been that.... Why we set up the commissioner, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, was that it takes it out of our hands. We have delegated this authority to act on behalf of all members of Parliament, regardless of political affiliation, to act in our better interests because sometimes it happens that.... I know all members are honourable, but even I am tempted every so often to play a political game. I know, shocking as it is, Madam Chair, it does happen to all of us from time to time. When we're talking about these important issues, about the finances or whatever background—I don't know; it could be a criminal issue; it could be whatever background that people might have—we want to make sure that this information is going to the person it should go to, and that is the person who is entrusted to act in a non-partisan way on behalf of all of us. That is the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

That's the reason I sought out an understanding on that. With that, Madam Chair, I have to admit that I feel very comfortable with the amendment. I still feel uncomfortable with the subamendment. My position hasn't changed on that. It's not said in the reason. I'm not trying to advance any political agenda on this. I'm really trying to think out.... It's fine for this issue, but there are going to be other issues that are going to come out, and we don't want to cross the Rubicon on this one. To use another good Latin reference, we don't want to cross that Rubicon; we don't want to cross that river. We want to stay on this side. It's in all of our interests to do so, and it will be in the interest of subsequent generations of politicians because we're only here temporarily.

Madam Chair, I'd like to compliment Mr. Kurek for part of his opening comments today when he talked about where we find ourselves. We do find ourselves in a health crisis. We do find ourselves in a global pandemic. I think Parliament has done a very good job of coming to the aid of Canadians in extraordinary ways, in ways that frankly make us the envy of the world.

I really appreciate the proposed steps taken by the government, which have been improved by members of the opposition, to come up with things such as the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which I think is going to be playing an increasingly important role in making sure that our economy grows back better. I appreciate the input that all members of Parliament have made, that I know my colleagues on this side have made, and I certainly know that you have heard from your constituents on what we did in terms of old age security, the guaranteed income supplement and business loans.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

All these measures, which were designed to get Canadians through this health crisis, have worked well. We have worked hard on that. To limit the spread of this disease, we told people not to go in to work. It comes with costs and consequences, however. We worked very hard to make sure that those efforts were worth it. However, Madam Chair, one thing that—

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Fergus. One moment, please. We are discussing the subamendment right now, so I would ask you to keep your comments to the subamendment, please.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I will do that. I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I'm just following up on what Mr. Kurek raised at the beginning.

The Chair: Yes, thank you. I don't mind your making a quick reference, but if it's the full compilation of your speech, then I think it's beyond the scope of the discussion right now. Thank you.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Excuse me. I will not make a political speech, and it was not my intent to do so.

[*Translation*]

There is an amendment to the original motion put forward by Mr. Angus, which I am prepared to support. I hope and believe that my colleagues are also prepared to take action to ensure that we have limits on this and that the information is sent directly to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We are also asking the Prime Minister to appear before the committee, which is a good compromise I'm proud to support.

I hope the committee rejects the subamendment. If it is defeated, I'm prepared to proceed with the vote so that we can move on and continue to do the good work that Canadians demand of us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1700)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus.

The next two speakers are Madame Gaudreau and Madame Brière.

Madame Gaudreau, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This will take about five minutes.

The first time I spoke on this committee, hopes were high. We sit on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, and we must be accountable, honest and transparent.

We took a break and it was good to see each other again, even though we are now very far away from each other.

Having said that, I was not able to speak at the last meeting, but I was very disappointed in a lot of things. Since the pandemic began, we have been told we need to act quickly and what we are going through is unprecedented. I agree, but what would happen if the committee, which is responsible for quickly shedding light on an issue, were unable to do so? We all have the ability to get to the bottom of this quickly, to help people who have needs and to make sure that the rules are followed.

I attended both meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance on this issue. Given everything we heard, it is important—to me, I am brand new—that, day by day, the perspective changes. For sev-

eral days, my constituents have been calling and asking me what is going on.

As I said earlier in the House, the—I do not want to use the word "ordinary" here—administrators volunteering at an association for their children "have to disclose any personal information that could lead to a potential conflict of interest." You and I are the first to disclose any potential conflict of interest. Folks have asked why it is that members of the government, who are not overseeing evening educational events for their children, but, rather, managing billions of taxpayer dollars, do not do it too. I told them that they were absolutely right, that they cannot simply stand by and watch what's going on, and that we must take action.

I believe I have now been speaking for five minutes.

We are discussing the subamendment and we need to get to the bottom of the issue. Anyway, what is there to hide? We must be accountable.

You will have gathered that I support Mr. Kurek's subamendment.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

The next two speakers are Madame Brière and Mr. Kurek.

Madame Brière, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to raise a couple of points before we get to the other issues. First, I hope Mr. Barrett does not feel he is being targeted. It's a combination of circumstances. I, for one, am also learning things from meeting to meeting. Although my comments on Friday raised a number of eyebrows, I see that other members like to flaunt the fact that they speak Latin, Greek or Hebrew.

As we pointed out on Friday, it is important that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner be provided with all relevant information to examine the matter in hand. We have full confidence in the commissioner, since it is part of his mandate to provide advice on any matter relating to enforcement of the Conflict of Interest Act. It is also part of his mandate to investigate. However, our committee is neither an inquiry committee nor a kangaroo court. That is why we accept the part of Mr. Angus and Mr. Green's amendment that says a copy of all documents should be provided directly to the commissioner.

I, too, welcome Mr. Kurek's remarks today. It's true that Canadians need to know the ins and outs of this situation. Indeed, we are working for all Canadians. That has always been our priority, especially since the beginning of this pandemic. Mr. Kurek also claims that we have not put Canadians' interests first. Yet we have implemented many programs, whether to help individual Canadians, personally, or to support businesses, such as the emergency wage subsidy, which we adapted to be even more responsive to the needs, concerns and issues faced by all our entrepreneurs during the crisis. Let's not forget the measures to provide commercial rent relief, or to help seniors, people with disabilities and students. In students' case, the program was designed to support them. Within the first week of the program's launch, 35,000 applications were made by people from all walks of life. We can see that the measure was necessary and expected.

We acted quickly and effectively. The numbers show that we have helped millions of Canadians and that billions of dollars have been distributed to support everyone. We even proposed a way for Parliament to work so that bills could be debated and put to a vote, a clear example of our respect for democracy. Rest assured, I am not going to repeat what I said on Friday.

With respect to the matter in hand, the Prime Minister has apologized. As mentioned earlier, he is now ready to answer questions from members of the Standing Committee on Finance. As for the subamendment, in my opinion, investigative work is the commissioner's responsibility. He is entitled to receive the documents and records he deems necessary, and he may do so confidentially.

For these reasons, I agree with my colleague Mr. Fergus.

● (1705)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

The next two speakers are Mr. Kurek and Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Kurek, the floor is yours.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll keep my remarks very brief.

Again, the question of the mandate of this committee has been brought up. I would actually use the comments that Mrs. Shanahan made, in part, in her speech on Friday. I apologize if this isn't quite 100% verbatim. It was as fast as my shorthand could go. She said that we have wide powers of how to conduct our business, when referring to the committee.

The inference that we want to turn this into a kangaroo court or go on a witch hunt, whatever the case may be, is absolutely not the case. However, with the number of calls that I'm getting in my constituency office—emails, text messages, Facebook comments and messages—Canadians demand answers. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure...and I'll use another quote from Mr. Fergus's testimony on Friday. It is that democracy is fragile. It is. We've seen shaking of the trust that Canadians expect to put in their government, regardless of its political stripe.

Seemingly, every time Twitter gets refreshed, there's a new revelation, a new element to the scandal that is being revealed. Certainly, from what I'm hearing from my constituents, we must do every-

thing we can to restore the trust that Canadians expect to have in our Parliament and in their government, regardless of whether they voted Liberal or not. We need to take every step necessary to help bring that trust back.

I would encourage all members to once again consider the question that was asked by that constituent I mentioned, with a phone call earlier this week: "What is the problem with shining light on this issue?"

I encourage members to support the subamendment. I would like to see it go to a vote, so we can move on.

● (1710)

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Barrett, followed by Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Michael Barrett: In the interest of moving to a vote, I'll cede my time. Thanks.

The Chair: Next is Mr. Vaughan, followed by Madame Gaudreau.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity to join this committee today to further explore the role of this committee in relation to what's in front of us, with the amendments and the motions that have been moved.

I'm going to start with a bit of background. When I was a city councillor in Toronto, one of the roles I fulfilled in David Miller's mandate was to appoint an ethics and integrity commissioner. As we were formulating that office, one piece of advice we got from several different bodies across the country—municipal, provincial and federal and people with experience—was to be very careful about setting up politicians to investigate politicians. There's a political theatre and a political process for that, but when you set up investigative bodies with competitors—with colleagues investigating each other—it very quickly becomes something that is unfair, both to those who are accused of wrongdoing and to those who are asked to participate in the investigation of colleagues. It's impossible to divorce the ethical standards from the political behaviour. This doesn't give us good, strong ethical governance structure. It doesn't give us good, strong investigative results. It doesn't give us clarity on what's been done wrong, what's been done right and what needs to change in terms of the rules and regulations to make sure that democracy and good governance are protected.

The motion that's in front of us is understandable in terms of its intent to get information from private citizens transferred to the Ethics Commissioner, so that the investigation of the situation we find ourselves in can be appropriately done and reported back to Parliament. The findings can be done through an independent system, which a previous Parliament wisely set up and put together. I think that's a really important principle.

I think there is a gap in the way in which it operates because of the issues that have been raised here, such as family members' roles in the conflict of interest guidelines, which family members, to what degree we understand family members' behaviours and how that impacts us as public office holders. I think we need clarity around that. It's critically important, even without this issue in front of us, to maintain the confidence and trust Canadians have in the governing process.

When we set up a parallel investigative process, it is not unlikely that this body could reach very different conclusions from the Ethics Commissioner. That calls the role of the Ethics Commissioner into question immediately. That's not a good situation. For those of us who rely on the Ethics Commissioner to clear our names or to deliver findings to us, it is not a good situation to undermine the integrity of that office while that office is doing critically important work on our behalf.

I'm very reluctant to set a precedent in this committee, which does not have a mandate to investigate any member of Parliament for any reason on a particular issue. To suddenly say that this committee would then have the power to compel any member of Parliament to attend and suffer the political consequences if they decline the invitation sets a really dangerous precedent. It sends this ethics standing committee off in a whole new direction it was never intended to deal with.

We set up the Ethics Commissioner not to depoliticize what was happening, but to give us clarity in a political setting. From there, how we choose to respond to the Ethics Commissioner is where this committee's work begins. At that point, I would assume, having read previous Ethics Commissioner reports on individuals, that the relevant information as to where the rules were broken, which rules were broken, why they were broken if they were broken, what rationale existed to frame the rules the way they were and what proposals may be required to change that is where the work of this committee starts.

It doesn't start by investigating the individuals simultaneously, regardless of who that individual is. It is very clear, if you read the full mandate of this committee, that our job is to evaluate those reports and to make recommendations to Parliament on what changes need to be made to guidelines and conflict of interest regulations so that Canadians can have confidence in Parliament.

I have complete support for Member Angus's motion to request that this information be forwarded to the Ethics Commissioner. That's fine. I think it's massively premature to call the Prime Minister, in this case, in front of this committee while that ethics investigation is under way. I think that is a flaw in the way the amendment is drafted.

• (1715)

I also think it assumes a conclusion to the Ethics Commissioner's investigation, that somehow we can start asking the Prime Minister questions in real time while that investigation is under way. Clearly, it's like doing the investigation and the trial all at the same time. I don't think that's an appropriate way to proceed.

I do support the motion, as I said, the amendment in the spirit of Mr. Angus's motion, but I am very concerned about calling politi-

cians from the House, any MP from the House, in front of the ethics committee every time there's a political point to be made. I think that sets a very dangerous precedent, and I can't support that at this time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaughan.

There are two other speakers on the list, Madame Gaudreau and Mr. Green. That completes the speakers list for now.

Madame Gaudreau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I must respond to what I just heard and to what I have heard in recent meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance. In fact, Mr. Morneau just appeared before the committee, and we learned that Mr. Trudeau will be paying the Standing Committee on Finance a visit. I don't understand what is going on here, because this is no small political matter or a minor offence. Consequently, it's important to me that I tell you I will be putting forward a motion.

May I read it now, Madam Chair? We can discuss it later.

[*English*]

The Chair: When speaking to a motion, an amendment or a sub-amendment, you are not able to move a motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I can't hear anything.

[*English*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Could you speak a little bit louder, please, Madam Chair?

The Chair: I will do my best.

When speaking to a motion, an amendment or a subamendment, you are not able to move a motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Perfect.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau, if you would like to give notice that you plan to move a motion, you are able to give notice of that at this time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Does that mean I can read it?

[*English*]

The Chair: You are welcome to read your motion and give notice of it at this point in time, yes, but it cannot be officially moved.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Excellent.

I will read it out, because it's still an oral motion: "In view of the admissions of the Minister of Finance to having obtained remuneration from 'WE Charity' and to having placed himself in a conflict of interest, the committee requests his immediate resignation."

• (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

The next speakers are Mr. Green and then Mr. Fergus. The last speaker on the list is Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Green, the floor is yours.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

I do appreciate—I deeply appreciate, actually—the candour of this discussion. I think it's very important for us to be open and honest with Canadians in terms of what our intention is when we enter into these good faith discussions, because it is a critical point.

I have to say, coming from city council myself, that the size and scope of this type of scandal would have required probably an immediate censure and there wouldn't have been a long and drawn-out process, given the information that's already been made public, quite frankly.

The spirit of the motion was to have the Prime Minister here today. What I've heard in the previous speakers' comments is that there's really no intention to have the Prime Minister join us here today, and that in fact it's not part of what they think is the appropriate use and mandate of this committee.

What I'm not interested in, Madam Chair, is the theatre of the invitation. What I want to be assured of is that when people are voting to support this invitation to the Prime Minister to testify here, they're doing it in good faith, where they actually believe—and they state on the record here today that they believe—that the Prime Minister should testify at this committee, given our mandate.

If that's not present, if this is going to be the theatre of voting for the amendment simply to get the documents subverted from this committee to the ethics and conflict of interest investigator, then that's not actually supporting the spirit and intent of the compromise, because this isn't actually a compromise at all, in fact.

That being said, I would love to hear from members opposite that they do believe that the mandate of this committee is much like that of any other committee. I'm on OGGO as well. Ministers are not backbenchers. This is not about dragging any old politician before a committee. This is about government. This is about cabinet. This is about responsibility. Quite frankly, I've said this before. Apologies are not the same as taking responsibility, and taking responsibility demands holding accountability. This committee is structured to hold government accountable.

Through you, Madam Chair, I need to be very clear again and plain in my language. If the members opposite do not actually believe in the intent and don't support having the Prime Minister come before us today, then I will be supporting the subamendment, and we will bring the documents here, because that's the spirit and intention of the motion that my colleague brought to this table, and I'm not here to play games, quite frankly.

Unless I hear from the opposite side that they believe the Prime Minister, much like he's doing in finance, much like ministers do—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Green. Just pause for one moment here.

Mrs. Shanahan has a point of order.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I'd just like to know if there's a speakers list and if I can put myself on it.

Mr. Matthew Green: That's not a point of order.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Let me just clarify something for the committee.

I don't mind giving the speakers list. You'll note that I'm actually giving it to you as we move along. I'm announcing two or three speakers at a time. I would encourage you folks to take up your pens and write that down. It is not an appropriate point of order to ask for the speakers list. I will not be answering that question any longer.

An appropriate time to ask for the speakers list, if you wish to have it, would be when one speaker is finished and I'm moving on to the next. There's a small pause there, and that would be an appropriate time to just raise your hand, take to the mike and ask for that speakers list.

Mr. Green, you may continue.

Mr. Matthew Green: Yes, and I'll continue by picking up where Mr. Barrett left off. It's clear that's a tactic to disrupt, quite frankly, and if you've been in this House long enough—I've only been here six months—that is clearly not a point of order. I just want us to recognize that people are watching on live stream and they see the games that are being played at this committee.

Again, I'll put it to this committee. There is a subamendment on the table. The subamendment is tied to whether or not the Prime Minister is going to come here and testify. Unless I hear from multiple members of the governing party that they, too, believe that it's within the mandate to have the Prime Minister testify, I'm going to be supporting the subamendment. The math around the table is very simple.

I do appreciate the candour. I would like to continue and state that if we end up in a filibuster here, I'm happy to dig in and we can continue this, because with every single day that passes, more of this scandal comes to light in the media. If that's your intention—to draw this out and to play these games—then fine. If you don't believe that the Prime Minister should be here, then you ought not to vote for the amendment, because that's not negotiating in good faith, quite frankly.

That's what we're here to do. We've tried to bring a compromise to this table. We've heard quite clearly that there's no intention for the Prime Minister to come before us because they don't believe that's the mandate of this committee. I happen to believe that it is, Madam Chair.

Hopefully, folks have their speakers lists written down. I look forward to the continued debate.

• (1725)

The Chair: Mr. Green, thank you.

Next on my speakers list are Mr. Fergus, Mr. Barrett and Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Fergus, the floor is yours.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Very briefly, Madam Chair, I support the amendment to the original motion. I will be voting in favour of the amendment to the original motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Barrett and Mr. Vaughan are next on the speakers list.

Mr. Barrett, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'll yield my time in the interest of moving this to a vote. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Vaughan, the floor is yours.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I would like to start by apologizing, because I think the way I phrased my argument gave rise to the concerns that—

Mr. Matthew Green: No, it was clear.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: No. I appreciate the point you're making. The way I phrased it gave rise to your concern. I don't want that concern to be sustained.

Let me be clear: I, too, will be supporting the amendment. I have my concerns about how it times out and plays out, based on the parallel investigation going on, but I also appreciate that members of the opposition wish to use the committee this way. That's the prerogative of the committee, and the motion that's in front of us is the one I have to vote on. I can't split it, parse it and divide it.

The point I was raising, and I think it's an important point, is that how we do it matters. I'm not evading. I'm not suggesting that this shouldn't be, that this line of questioning doesn't have standing at the committee. It's how it plays out that raises concerns for me. It raises concerns because of the points I made earlier.

It's clear that the amendment as proposed is the right way to go, based on the consensus of the committee. I'm not trying to turn that upside down. I apologize for raising that alarm. That wasn't the intent.

I hope the point that was raised and was made was that we have to make sure that the Ethics Commissioner does his work, and does his work with the confidence of this committee and is not undermined by it looking as though there's a parallel investigation going on. That was the point I was making. If I didn't make it clearly enough, I apologize to my colleagues and I apologize to the committee.

In particular, I want to assure Mr. Green that I will be supporting the Angus motion. I hope that clears it up.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Green, you are last on the speakers list.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

For the purpose of clarity, I'm going to be very clear: What I need to hear from the members opposite is that they believe the Prime Minister should testify in front of this committee, not that they support the motion. I've been around doing this long enough. You know, if you make it in Hamilton, you can make it anywhere.

What I want to hear is that they believe it's the mandate of this committee to have the Prime Minister testify before us, not just invite him. I'm not interested in invitations. I can invite the man to my wedding; it doesn't mean he's going to show up. I want him here.

Unless I hear from the members opposite—members, plural—that they believe the Prime Minister should be here to testify under the mandate of this committee, I'll be supporting the subamendment. That won't get any clearer.

It doesn't mean you support the motion. That's not enough. I want to hear you say that you believe the Prime Minister should be sitting in that chair, being held accountable by this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

Madam Shanahan, you're last on the speakers list.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I, too, need to apologize. In my enthusiasm earlier, I thought I had heard a question being put by the member opposite and I wanted to answer that question—that I will be supporting the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: At this time, we will move to a vote on the subamendment.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Chair, can I have a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: Yes, you may.

I will first have the clerk read out the subamendment, and then we will proceed to a vote.

● (1730)

The Clerk: The subamendment of Mr. Kurek reads, “that the clerk provide these records to the members of the committee and the ethics committee for study”.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Sorry, on a point of order, it should be “and the Ethics Commissioner”. It was “members of the committee and the Ethics Commissioner”.

The Clerk: Yes, my apologies. It should read, “and the Ethics Commissioner for study”.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Clerk, can you read it in French as well?

[*English*]

The Chair: Sorry?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: The interpreters are doing a great job, but can you read it in French as well, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: I don't have it in French.

[*English*]

The Chair: Because the clerk doesn't have it in front of her in French, it would be rather difficult to do. It's why we trust our interpreters to do that work for us. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Can you read it again, very slowly?

[*English*]

The Chair: Sure. I'll ask the clerk to read it one more time.

The Clerk: It reads, "that the clerk provide these records to the members of the committee and the Ethics Commissioner for study".

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to the vote.

We have a tie.

I'm going to suspend the meeting just for a moment. Thank you.

• (1730) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1755)

The Chair: I will call the committee back to order.

I find myself in an interesting situation where I'm expected to break the tie. As the chair of this committee, I have reviewed the documents in front of me, including our procedure book and the expectations that are outlined there. I've also conferred with the clerk, and I have come to a decision.

As the chair of the committee, it is expected of me to break the tie one way or the other; of course, it cannot be sustained as a tie. I am not expected by the green book to give a reason for my decision; however, I will provide you with a reason here today.

In the mandate set out for this committee, towards the end of the mandate, it says this:

In cooperation with other standing committees, the Committee also reviews any bill, federal regulation or Standing Order which impacts upon its main areas of responsibility: access to information, privacy and the ethical standards of public office holders. It may also propose initiatives in these areas and promote, monitor and assess such initiatives.

There's an important distinction here in terms of the mandate of this committee. Yes, it will review bills and reports that are brought forward by the four officers of Parliament; however, it may also "propose", which is to say create a new study or initiative in these areas, and "promote, monitor and assess such initiatives", which would tell me that this committee does, in fact, serve as a body to promote, monitor and assess the activities that take place by office-holders within this place called Parliament.

That said, it is for sure within the purview of this committee to monitor and assess the actions of those on Parliament Hill. The Prime Minister of this country, Mr. Justin Trudeau, is one such of-fice-holder. It is definitely within the purview of this committee to have him come here and testify.

The amendment that has been put forward requests that. The amendment that has been put forward requests that a list of speakers be made available to the clerk, then to this committee and to the Ethics Commissioner.

My question, as the chair of this committee, is whether it is in the public's best interest that this take place. Ultimately, this committee is responsible to assess the actions and take on other studies having to do with public office holders and their conduct. We do that not for our own sake, but for the sake of the Canadian public.

In this case, we are looking at over \$900 million that was committed to by the Prime Minister of this country and his cabinet, and that money was to be given to an organization to run a youth volunteer program. That \$900 million is public funds; that is taxpayer money from the Canadian people. Therefore, I would surmise that the Canadian public does, in fact, have an interest in how that money was utilized.

It has been suggested by some members of this committee that some of that money—not money that was incorporated in that \$900 million, but in previous interactions with WE Charity—was also public money that may have been used to fund the members who are on the speakers list that has been requested. Again, because that is public money, it is, in fact, in the interest of the Canadian public to understand how that money was used.

That said, I will make my decision in the interest of Canadians from coast to coast, and I believe that what is in their best interest is full transparency. I vote yea.

• (1800)

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6, nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: At this point, we move to a discussion on the amendment to the original motion.

I will have the clerk read out the amendment, which has now been amended. Then I will continue with the discussion in just a moment.

Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Madam Chair, I regret to do this.

The Chair: Are you raising a point of order?

Mr. Greg Fergus: I am going to raise a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Fergus, go ahead.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for outlining your reasons for making the decision that you have made.

I will be challenging the decision of the chair. The reason I will be challenging the decision of the chair, Madam Chair... First of all, let me thank you for laying out your reasons. You didn't have to, and you did. I would respectfully submit that the chair should have taken a look at the green book, as you called it, where it says:

The Chair is not bound to give reasons for his or her vote and is free to vote either way. However, when bills are being studied, the Chairs of legislative or standing committees normally vote in such a way as to maintain the status quo or to keep the matter open for further discussion, just as the Speaker would do in similar circumstances in the House.

That is the only reference to what we're doing. I would argue, as I do challenge the chair, that this does not permit the status quo, but indeed is breaking new ground for the ethics committee and—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Fergus. Thank you.

It's not a ruling. It's actually a vote. In the same way that you wouldn't be able to challenge the vote of anyone else around this table, you are not able to actually challenge my vote as the chair.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Can I have a ruling by the clerk on that? I'm just looking at the part of the procedure that deals with what happens when there is a tie vote and the conditions in which the committee chair would actually cast a vote.

The Chair: If you just give me a moment, I'll ask the clerk.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Please do that. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Fergus, the clerk has declined to speak to this; however, it is confirmed that it is in fact a vote and not a ruling, so unfortunately I'm not able to sustain your comments.

Thank you.

Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: I hesitate to bring up the speakers list, in light of your comments earlier. However, I am curious and, partly, I admit my relative youth in terms of my time in Parliament. I was on the speakers list when I moved the subamendment. Does that mean my time has expired, or do I have the opportunity to once again address? I'll simply ask that question for clarification.

• (1805)

The Chair: Mr. Kurek, thank you.

In just a moment, we will proceed to discuss the amendment. According to the speakers list, Mr. Kurek, because you did last have the floor under the amendment, and the only reason it went from you to others is that we entered into a discussion of the subamendment, you are still technically at the top of my list with regard to the amendment. It would come back to you.

That said, maybe just before we get going in our discussion on the amendment—Mr. Green, I see your hand—I will ask the clerk to read out the amendment as it now stands, with the subamendment as a part of it.

The Clerk: Thank you.

The amendment as amended reads as follows: That the motion be amended by adding after the words “one week of the adoption of this Order” the following: “and that the clerk provide these records to the members of the committee and the Ethics Commissioner for study; and that this committee call upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to appear to give testimony relating to these matters.”

The Chair: Mr. Green, do you want to be added to the speakers list? Okay, no problem. You are already on there.

I will just review the speakers list before we continue. We have Mr. Kurek, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Angus, Mr. Green, Madame Shanahan, Mr. Fergus and Madame Gaudreau. With that, we will continue.

The floor is yours, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I will truly keep my remarks brief and simply say that I believe it would be to the benefit of all for the issue we have at hand to be moved expeditiously through these proceedings so that we can not only get on with the further debate of this motion but ensure that Canadians are getting the answers that I believe and that my constituents believe—and as I've mentioned before, they remind me on a regular basis—they should be getting.

I would reference again some of the comments that were made in the last committee meeting. You cannot do indirectly what you would not do directly. It was Mr. Fergus who made those comments, and I believe that is absolutely true. Certainly, in the most transparent way possible, I would submit to all members of this committee and the many who are watching these proceedings on Facebook, ParLVU and whatever else the case might be, that I clearly believe Canadians need, deserve and demand answers on this, and that any action otherwise is doing indirectly what I would simply ask the members opposite to state clearly. What is their intent in a delay?

With that, I would close my comments and simply say, let's get on with it and let's get Canadians the answers they deserve, so that we can move on to ensure that the trust I referred to in my opening comments can be once again worked on, that hard work of restoring trust in our institutions that need to be treated with such care, and so that we can work hard to restore that trust and get the answers that Canadians deserve.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

The next two speakers are Mr. Barrett and Mr. Green.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I won't go on long, as we're into hour six on this motion. We're on an amendment to the motion.

I very much echo Mr. Kurek's comments. The situation changes almost by the hour with respect to new information that comes forward. The will of the committee on the subamendment was expressed. As I said at our last meeting, having heard from colleagues, there is certainly enough said that we can get to taking a vote.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. However, to pick up on where Mr. Green was before, if it looks like the speakers list will just be populated until we exhaust our room booking here today, I may make further interventions. I hope that we do bring this amendment to a vote and then the main motion to a vote, certainly before the end of the hour.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1810)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Green, you are next on the speakers list. Following Mr. Green, we'll have Madame Shanahan.

Mr. Matthew Green: You'll recall that in my conversations around the subamendment I was fairly clear about wanting to get to the heart of the matter. We have an opportunity, certainly, to discuss this at length, and I think it will be interesting to see how this conversation develops from here in terms of whether we're going to be in another filibuster situation or whether we're just going to call the question.

I'd like to test the will of the committee and call the question on this motion and just get to the vote.

The Chair: Mr. Green, thank you. I understand your enthusiasm and your desire to do that in the interest of time, and of course in the interest of the Canadian public; however, at this time I am not able to accept that.

Mr. Matthew Green: That's fair. I have a comfortable chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Shanahan, you're up next, and following you is Mr. Fergus.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have to say that I am disappointed with how this situation is evolving, given the very important discussions we had at our first meeting around how this committee would conduct itself, and last Friday, in that personal documents of individuals should be handled with the utmost care, in all confidentiality, and in privacy. That's part of the work we are actually here to uphold.

I would move a subamendment: that any examination of personal documents by this committee be done in camera.

The Chair: Are you specifically speaking about the documents that would be part of the speakers list requested by this motion?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Just to clarify, it's documents we're asking for, not a speakers list.

The Chair: That is the document that is being referred to; it's the speakers list.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes, so I move that any examination of those documents by this committee be done in camera.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Shanahan.

At this time, we will move to debating the subamendment by Madame Shanahan.

Mr. Kurek, the floor is yours.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I believe the sentiment being expressed by the member opposite has been discussed at length, so I would simply suggest that we move forward to a vote as quickly as possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Fergus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Again, Madam Chair, I would like to stress that I do not agree with the committee's decision on the subamend-

ment for reasons that I have been arguing for quite some time. I'm not going to raise them again.

I feel we are making a big mistake here. If we start asking for documents about a member's legal or business past to find out who did what and whether it has anything to do with the machinery of government, where will it end? I believe we are setting a really bad precedent here.

I was prepared to support this approach, and I said loud and clear that this information should be forwarded directly to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, as he is the designated person to conduct this type of review. I still support that approach. If we leave the door wide open to the potential smearing of the reputations of honourable members of Parliament, their family members and their friends, where will it end? It's an important question to ask.

We should turn this over to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. No one can say that the commissioner is reluctant to stand up to power. He has been in the position for two and a half years, and in that time, he has demonstrated that he has no hesitation whatsoever in making decisions or making his opinion and findings known after an investigation. It's better that he, rather than we, be in charge of that. If politicians are asked to monitor other politicians, how far are they going to go? Can their impartiality always be guaranteed when they do this kind of study?

It's a bad idea. It is, however, a decision the committee has made. I will certainly continue to ask questions about it. This really does not sit well with me, but if we want to limit the damage, the least we can do—as we agreed when we set up this committee, in this Parliament, in February—is to discuss the documents we obtain in camera, so that we do not—although we have already done so—overstep our responsibilities or allow abuses to take place.

So I am making a plea to you in moving that this information be considered in camera. That way, we could at least limit the damage we are about to cause.

I therefore support my colleague's subamendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1815)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fergus was last on the speakers list. Seeing no other speakers, we'll move to a vote.

The vote, then, is that any examination would be done in camera.

Perhaps the clerk wouldn't mind just reading it officially.

The Clerk: The subamendment reads that any examination of personal documents by this committee be done in camera.

• (1820)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: It's that any examination of those documents, the documents we're referring to in the motion, be done in camera.

The Chair: Does that work, if we say “the documents referred to”?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Yes...that the documents referred to be done in camera.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Can we get a recorded vote, Madam Chair?

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

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

Mrs. Shanahan the floor is yours.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Can you read it again for me please?

The Chair: I will have the clerk read the amendment, now with two subamendments added to it.

The Clerk: The amendment reads that the motion be amended by adding, after the words “one week of the adoption of this Order”, the following: “and that the clerk provide these records to the members of the committee and the Ethics Commissioner for study; and that any examination by this committee of the documents referred to be done in camera; and that this committee calls upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to appear to give testimony relating to these matters.”

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I have nothing further to add.

The Chair: My speakers list then is Mr. Fergus, followed by Madame Gaudreau.

Go ahead, Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Madam Chair, even with this amendment, I still think it is a wrong move for us to make. I will be voting against the amendment, and the main motion, if the amendment were to pass.

The Chair: Moving down the list, we have Madame Gaudreau, followed by Mr. Vaughan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Based on all our discussions, thoughts and conversations, I believe we are ready to vote. I will leave it at that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Vaughan.

• (1825)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: I'll be voting against it. I think the notion of a parallel investigation concerns me deeply. The integrity of the Ethics Commissioner and the work that independent officer of Parliament does is profoundly important. The idea of competing opinions on interpretation of evidence simultaneously as that independent officer goes forward, I just think is wrong. I think it undermines, as I said, a very strong ethical framework that Parliament has put in place to hold us accountable, because we know that's, unfortunately, a necessary part of any parliamentary process. I wish it weren't true.

The issue that is in front of us is how to, I would hope, make the ethical framework, the rules of conflict of interest and rules of integrity clear and stronger so that future parliamentarians are framed with an independent, principled way of finding information, assess-

ing facts and, if necessary, taking action to hold members accountable. It was a deliberate decision of past Parliaments not to have parliamentarians do this for good reasons, and I am deeply concerned about this.

I don't think it's inappropriate to have the Prime Minister here, as I said in my comments, to answer questions as to what's happened. That's not the point I was making. The point I was making and the concern I had, and the concern I still have with what's being decided here today, is this notion of a simultaneous parallel process to the Ethics Commissioner's. What happens if this committee reaches a separate set of conclusions than the Ethics Commissioner? What does the Ethics Commissioner do? Have we not undermined the independence of that office?

I think we need to think about that, not in the context of the current timetable or framework in which we sit, but I think we need to think about that in the context of the next situation that comes along. Do we want independent oversight of parliamentary processes as they relate to both cabinet members and backbenchers, any member elected to the House of Commons, or are we going to constantly have a committee that will be able to call a member, accuse a member, demand evidence of the member, display that evidence to the public and then reach a conclusion that has no consequence whatsoever because the Ethics Commissioner hasn't been involved?

There's a reason why opposition parties went to the Ethics Commissioner first. That's the process. That's the appropriate process, and that's the process we've agreed to as parliamentarians. We're changing that today. We're not changing it based on strengthening an overall ethical framework or accountability mechanisms. We're changing it because there's information in the public realm, and there is a political opportunity to exploit that in the committee setting. Let's be frank about it.

Of course you're going to get push-back from a political perspective, but I'm not speaking here from a political perspective or from a partisan perspective. I'm speaking here as a parliamentarian who takes the issue of ethics and accountability extraordinarily seriously, and I support wholeheartedly the notion of an independent office of Parliament doing this work.

History has shown us that there were pitfalls to politicizing accountability, instead of strengthening it, and this committee's job is not to go after members of Parliament. It's to set the rules by which parliamentarians are held accountable, and the decision in past Parliaments was to very clearly put that in the hands of an independent Ethics Commissioner. I have confidence in that commissioner, and certainly my experience as a parliamentarian over the last six years has seen that they have the capacity and the fortitude to speak truth to the power that parliamentarians hold and to hold us accountable through that process.

I have confidence in that, and I have a great deal of concern about the way in which this committee is reinterpreting its mandate and, in particular, the notion that there should be a parallel accountability process that could look very different from the one that gets delivered to us by the Ethics Commissioner, whose job it is to do a non-political, non-partisan interpretation of fact, present findings to Parliament and then move forward with accountability measures.

I support, as I said, getting all the information to the Ethics Commissioner. I think that's fundamental to a good decision, but I don't support simultaneously delivering it to other groups of parliamentarians so they can go off and do their work in different committees.

• (1830)

I have a great deal of reservation with regard to some of the things we made today, irrespective of which party we're talking about, irrespective of what issue we're talking about, from an ethical process, from a legal process of how we're handling this issue. I will just end with this: God help you if you find yourself in a situation where parliamentarians are suddenly swirling around your behaviour and you no longer have access to an independent Ethics Commissioner and instead it's just a partisan committee. That is not a good practice to be establishing.

I have made my point.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vaughan.

Mr. Fergus, you are last on the speaking list.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I spoke a little precipitously. I will be voting for the amendment, but I will be voting against the main motion in the end.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fergus.

Excellent. Seeing no other speakers, I will move to a vote.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'd like a recorded vote, Madam Chair.

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

The Chair: At this point in time, we will proceed to our discussion of the motion as it stands amended. I will now have the clerk—who has been so gracious to us, I might add—read the motion with the approved amendment.

Once the clerk does that, the speaking list that has been preserved from our last day is as follows: Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Kurek, Mr. Fergus, Madame Brière and Madam Shanahan.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I have a point of clarification. Can you share with me what the procedure would be following this vote?

The Chair: Following the vote on the motion...?

Mr. Greg Fergus: I'm assuming that there will be a debate on the motion with the speaking list that you have just outlined.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Then I'm assuming it will come to the question. What will happen subsequent to its coming to the question?

The Chair: Mr. Fergus, I'm not able to tell you where that vote will end, but once the vote is completed, which is what I'm assuming you're asking, if the motion passes, then this committee would have the responsibility to determine a witness list and so forth. We'd move forward. The clerk, of course, would call for those documents as outlined in the motion. However, if this motion does not pass, then you are all free to go on your way and that's that.

• (1835)

Mr. Greg Fergus: The reason why I ask, Madam Chair, is that, given that we have passed the time that was scheduled for our regular business meeting—and, of course, there is a motion on the table, so it needs to be considered—following that motion, would there be

an automatic adjournment and move to the subcommittee for the subcommittee business that was planned to be taking place starting at 6 p.m.?

The Chair: It is to the will of the committee.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Thank you.

The Chair: You're welcome.

The Clerk: The motion as amended reads, “That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), the Committee review the safeguards which are in place to avoid and prevent conflicts of interest in federal government procurement, contracting, granting, contribution and other expenditure policies; and that, to provide a case study for this review, an Order of the Committee do issue to Speakers’ Spotlight for a copy of all records pertaining to speaking appearances arranged, since October 14, 2008, for Justin Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, Margaret Trudeau and Alexandre Trudeau—including, in respect of each speaking appearance, an indication of the fee provided, any expenses that were reimbursed and the name of the company, organization, person or entity booking it—provided that these records shall be provided to the Clerk of Committee within one week of the adoption of this Order; and that the clerk provide these records to the members of the Committee and the Ethics Commissioner for study; and that any examination by this Committee of the documents referred to be done in camera; and that this Committee calls upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to appear to give testimony relating to these matters.”

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Gaudreau, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: It's wonderful that we are able to talk this much, but these opportunities do not last long.

If I understand correctly, we took the time to consider the issue from all angles for our constituents. Considering that we have managed to unanimously move forward, I hope that we will remain open-minded during the discussion leading up to the vote, but I feel we could raise new points, rather than repeat what has already been said at our last two meetings. I know that we are capable of doing it.

The next speaker can have the floor, because I'm ready to vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Moving down the speakers list, we have Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I, too, would acknowledge the breadth of the discussion that has already taken place and would cede my time in order to proceed to a vote.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

My next speakers are Mr. Fergus, Madame Brière and Madam Shanahan.

Mr. Fergus.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Madam Chair, thank you very much. I will once again raise my opposition to what we're doing and I think I have parliamentary reasons to support this. When you take a look at the "Selected Decisions of Speaker Milliken", you will find several examples that indicate committee reports that exceed the scope of their committee's mandate. You can find those rulings, Madam Chair, as was brought to my attention over the weekend, on pages 774 to pages 799. There are a number of rulings that Speaker Milliken had issued stating when committees had exceeded their mandates.

I won't review them here. I won't waste your time, but I think it is really important. When you look at those rulings, you'll see the talk about the mandate of this committee. It is really important. I would like to point out, near the end of that selection of readings on page 798, Speaker Milliken says, "Like all other powers of standing committees, the power to report is limited to issues that fall within their mandate or that have been specifically assigned to them by the House."

In other words, the mandate of the committee limits not only the scope of the committee's report and its study, but also the scope of its power to send for persons and/or papers. We are exceeding our mandate here today.

Madam Chair, I know you did not issue a ruling. I would request that perhaps you take a minute to confer with the clerk, but based on that citation I would love to have a ruling from the chair as to whether or not you think this main motion—if it should pass—should be considered.

Does it fall within or without, inside or outside, of the mandate of this committee?

• (1840)

The Chair: Mr. Fergus, thank you.

It has been brought to my attention, actually, through due diligence on my own part as chair. I have conferred with the clerk and have done my own research. I appreciate you referencing those pages. I trust they are from the 2017 edition.

Mr. Greg Fergus: This time it is just from the "Selected Decisions of Speaker Milliken". It's not necessarily the House rules of procedure from 2017 actually. It's from his—

The Chair: That's good clarification; thank you. Having reviewed that, I would say that this motion is in fact within the scope of this committee.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Would that be your vote?

The Chair: I haven't been asked to rule on this.

Mr. Greg Fergus: I will be asking that you rule on this, in light of the "Selected Decisions of Speaker Milliken", pages 774 to 799.

The Chair: Just give me one moment.

We're just going to suspend for one moment please.

Thank you.

• (1840)

(Pause)

• (1850)

The Chair: Mr. Fergus asked me to make a ruling with regard to whether or not the motion is admissible. I have conferred with the clerk on this matter once again, and have concluded that it is. I conclude that it is within the mandate of this committee based on Standing Order 108(3)(h)(vii). Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), the committee is able to review the safeguards that are in place to avoid and prevent conflicts of interest in federal government procurement, contracting, granting, contribution and other expenditure policies, as outlined in the motion.

Standing Order 108(3)(h)(vii) states that the mandate of this committee includes the following: "the proposing, promoting, monitoring and assessing of initiatives which relate to access to information and privacy across all sectors of Canadian society and to ethical standards relating to public office holders". Given that this is part of the mandate of this committee, I see no reason why the motion does not stand. Therefore, I am ruling it as within the purview.

We go to Madame Brière.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: I have nothing to add, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Shanahan is the last person on my speaking list.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I have nothing to add.

The Chair: Having gone through all the speakers, I will now move to a vote.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Can we have a recorded vote, Madam Chair?

The Chair: We can.

We will vote on the main motion as amended.

Following the vote on the motion as amended, we have five in favour and five not in favour.

I will now suspend for a moment. Thank you.

• (1855)

(Pause)

• (1855)

The Chair: I call the committee back.

Having determined that the motion is within the purview of this committee and that it is in the best interests of the Canadian public for there to be transparency around this matter, I vote yea.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

Mr. Damien Kurek: I would like to move an additional motion, or do I need to wait until the vote is read?

• (1900)

The Chair: We are done with the one motion. I've acknowledged you, so you can go ahead.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would move an additional motion, of which I have copies. I would be happy to—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Can Mr. Kurek move his motion? I did say I had a motion to put forward as well.

[*English*]

The Chair: That is correct. According to procedure, you would need to raise your hand in order to officially move your motion.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Thank you. That's acknowledged.

Mr. Kurek.

Actually—I'm so sorry—you cannot move a motion on a point of order, Madame Gaudreau. Once Mr. Kurek is done, you are welcome to put your name on the speaking list. At that point, when you're called upon, you will be able to move your motion.

I will put you on the speakers list, Madame—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Chair, I understood that we agreed that, once we had dealt with this motion, the amendment and all that, I would be next.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Gaudreau, according to procedure it's not the way things work. You may have been led to believe that; however, as the chair my role and responsibility is to keep this committee functioning according to procedure.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I'm new. Is that the standard procedure?

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: The motion has already been put forward. You can't speak to another one until the one in hand has been discussed.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. You have not been subbed into this committee, so you are not able to raise a point of order. However, if you wish to be put on the speaking list you are welcome to raise your hand, and I will acknowledge you on your turn.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Chair, on a point of order, can you confirm if Mr. Kurek gave notice of motion prior to the meeting?

The Chair: I can. As all of you are aware, Mr. Kurek does have a motion that prior notice was given for. Mr. Kurek has not been afforded the opportunity or the luxury of being able to read his motion. I'm not yet sure whether it's the one on notice. However, if it is then I'm able to let it stand.

Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity, and certainly there are elements to the procedural realities of Parliament that I am also getting used to. For the benefit of the clerk, it is the same motion that would have been circulated last Wednesday afternoon, if my memory is correct. I'd be happy to hold on for a brief moment.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the clerk and all those who work diligently during these challenging times to make sure that Parliament can function. They are to be applauded for their efforts, from the security to the staff who run the buildings to those who deal with the legislative matters. Thank you very much for that.

Madam Chair, I'm happy to read the motion into the record. However, as it was distributed and has now been distributed once again, I would have a number of comments if it is allowed to stand as presented.

• (1905)

The Chair: Are there committee members who wish Mr. Kurek to read the motion into the record? Excellent, then it stands as written before you.

Mr. Kurek, go ahead.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Each day, each hour and it seems like, today, each minute, more is revealed about the growing WE scandal. We had stunning revelations from the Minister of Finance today. We've had, of course, much conversation about the Prime Minister's actions. We have had inferences and references to other members of cabinet who have connections to this organization or have been lobbied by this organization and, in some cases, maybe even lobbied without that having been in the manner that is prescribed by the relevant acts. I believe, as I have mentioned before, that Canadians deserve answers on this.

This motion is very simple. I would encourage all members to consider it our duty to see that those members of Parliament who have been appointed to cabinet, who hold the highest and most powerful offices in our nation, would be asked to simply spell out what they know so that we, as a committee, can review and Canadians can understand what there is to see here. We have a strong tradition in this country to ensure that executive government is held to account, and that's done through Parliament and its structured committees.

Madame Brière mentioned at some length last week the stereotype that is given politicians. Certainly, when I started the journey of getting into public office midway through last year, I got into politics understanding that there is a certain stereotype that exists. According to one Reader's Digest article I read, this is one of the least respected professions, only above that of lawyers. Maybe there's a correlation, with lawyers often being politicians, but I am not a lawyer.

It is a stereotype that I work diligently to break. I work to be transparent, to be open, to be honest and to ensure that Canadians are well served, and specifically that the 110,000 or so people who live in Battle River—Crowfoot are well represented, that they can trust me and that they are served by me, as I have the honour to briefly hold the title of the member of Parliament for Battle River—Crowfoot. I don't take that for granted one day. That's why I fought so hard to see Parliament resume, albeit modified. I've been very disappointed with much of how the parliamentary procedure has taken place over these last number of months.

In the interest of time, I would just make a couple of small comments. One is that I find it very interesting that a number of members of this committee have referred to the job of the Ethics Commissioner, which I have the utmost respect for. However, in previous comments, Mr. Vaughan specifically didn't refer to this, but the other members did. I find it tragic, actually, that a number of members said that it is the committee's job to review the reports of the Ethics Commissioner, yet a number of months ago, right prior to the COVID pandemic breaking out and seeing Parliament greatly change, we saw that members of the government voted against having the Ethics Commissioner come to this committee to explore one of his reports.

• (1910)

I believe it is in the interest of Canadians to do everything possible to shed light on this issue. Certainly I can imagine there are many members within government who are trying to figure out a strategy to deal with the ever-evolving WE scandal, but as a member of the opposition, I would encourage all members of this committee to truly look at this as an opportunity to have all members of Her Majesty's government in this country shed light on the connections that they have. This is not meant to be anything other than that proactive disclosure, which we have seen unfortunately not done by certain members who hold cabinet positions.

There is the ability for Canadians to understand what their government is dealing with, and to trust that the dollars are being spent in the right way, that we have that relationship between members and their constituents. All of those things depend on that subject that I talked about before, and that is trust.

I would simply say this: Let's make every effort possible to help restore trust in our institutions, and let's shed light on the scandal so that we can get the answers that Canadians deserve.

With that, I will conclude my comments and move the motion as distributed.

The Chair: Madame Shanahan, are you raising a point of order, or do you wish to be added to the speakers list?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I wish to be added to the speakers list. Could you tell us what it is?

The Chair: Sure. For Mr. Kurek's motion, we have Madame Gaudreau, Mr. Green, Mr. Barrett, and Madame Shanahan.

Having heard Mr. Kurek's opening remarks with regard to the motion and having briefly conferred with the clerk, I would like some further time to determine whether or not this motion is in fact admissible.

If I may, at the will of the committee, I would suggest that we adjourn the meeting and suspend the debate. We would then pick it back up tomorrow, at which point we would be entering into committee business once again. Madame Gaudreau, you would have the opportunity to move your motion.

Do I hear any objection?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: I'd just like some clarification on the timing. We had scheduled a subcommittee meeting, so that would fall.

The Chair: Correct.

Because it's now 7:15 p.m., we've missed the opportunity that we had for a subcommittee, so what I would look to do, then, is bring the committee back tomorrow. Hopefully we can move through committee business fairly efficiently, and then we would be able to do our subcommittee meeting tomorrow.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Can we have a time out?

The Chair: I'm happy to suspend just for one minute.

• (1910)

(Pause)

• (1915)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: We had substitutes with us today. We have no idea what anyone's availability is. With all due respect, I think this motion deserves all of the attention that it merits. I can see the reason for the adjournment.

I propose that we let our whips work together to propose an appropriate date, and we adjourn now and come up with a date to reconvene.

The Chair: As the chair, I am not able to commit to a specific time. I am not able to make any promises to the committee members here today.

What is on the floor right now is whether or not we wish to adjourn this meeting, suspend the debate and reconvene, or whether we wish to continue going forward.

Seeing no objection to adjourning...

I'm sorry. Are we going to put it to a vote as to whether or not we're going to adjourn?

Mr. Matthew Green: If it requires a motion, I'm happy to move it; if it does not, I'm happy to withdraw.

The Chair: Mr. Green, I will acknowledge you and you can move a motion.

Mr. Matthew Green: It's nice to get my name on the record books here at the committee.

I move that we adjourn. I will be the most popular motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. That concludes our meeting. We will see you again soon.

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