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Friday, May 26, 2023

Chair: Mr. Peter Fonseca



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• (0930)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 93 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, May 2, 2023, and the motion adopted on May 16, 2023, the committee is meeting to discuss Bill C-47, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

With regard to interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French audio. Those in the room can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. Members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

Members, before we begin, for the benefit of our members and of Canadians who are joining us and watching us today in the committee's proceedings, I'd like to inform you that, as per the motion adopted on May 16, 2023, through unanimous consent from all parties, we scheduled a clause-by-clause meeting yesterday that went for five and half hours, completing a total of two clauses out of 681 clauses total. Now, that's very unusual.

At the finance committee, we've worked on many report considerations in the past. Last year, clause-by-clause took a total of five hours to complete. Again, yesterday we could complete only two clauses in five and half hours. We scheduled this meeting to begin clause-by-clause consideration, as per part (b) of the motion adopt-

ed, again, by unanimous consent from all parties. It reads, “(b) Moving to clause-by-clause review of Bill C-47 no later than Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 11:00 a.m.”, which is what we did.

As of yesterday, we've completed a total of 46 hours, equivalent to at least 23 meetings, for the subject matter of Bill C-47. A few members mentioned yesterday that they had assumed there would be more witness meetings scheduled for this week. I reminded those members and all others that, as per the motion adopted with their unanimous consent—meaning all members were in agreement—there were no objections to that and to what was being agreed to at that time. There were no objections. We met with the requirements of the motion before we moved to clause-by-clause, again, as per the motion's part (b) that I read out a little earlier.

After consulting with our clerks, I also reminded them that, during our last witness meeting, during the late evening of May 18, 2023, I stated the following during my remarks: “You will be the last set of witnesses the committee will hear on this piece of legislation”. All party members in this room wholeheartedly thanked our witnesses, as well as our clerks, who had diligently arranged the witness testimonies in such short order.

To reiterate what I mentioned yesterday, as chair, I must interpret the motion as written. Given that there's still some confusion over part (d) of the motion and how the phrase “goal of accomplishing at least 20 hours of study prior to the beginning of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill” interfaces with the rest of the motion, I want to specifically read out the start of the motion and part (a):

That the committee continue its pre-study of Bill C-47, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, by:

a) Inviting witnesses to appear on the contents of Bill C-47 during meetings scheduled the weeks of May 1, May 8 and May 15, 2023

• (0935)

Our meeting 87, which was scheduled with the clear intent of proceeding with witnesses as per the motion, ran for approximately 27 hours—at least equivalent to 13 meetings—starting on Tuesday, May 2 at 11:00 a.m. and ending on Tuesday, May 16 at 4:24 p.m.

The members who spoke at length during meeting 87 were already fully aware that we had to cancel all scheduled witnesses in order to allow them to keep speaking for hours.

Canadians would have preferred instead to listen to testimony from witnesses, including the many individuals and organizations that were eager to appear in front of our committee to answer many questions from our members. I know all our members work hard to prepare thoughtful and intelligent questions for our expert witnesses.

We adjourned that meeting with unanimous consent from all parties to add, “and that the whips of the recognized parties, and the clerks, be empowered to seek as many meetings as possible, with the goal of meeting for 10 hours before the end of this week”. That was for the week of May 15, which was last week.

Thanks to our extremely hard-working clerks—I thank them—we were able to achieve the 10 hours of witness testimony last week, as required, with a full house of witnesses for every hour of those meetings. Everything was done in good faith and collaboration, as evidenced by it being carried with unanimous consent from all parties.

All parties submitted amendments in the same good faith, within the required deadline of 12:00 noon last Friday. This was an indication that everyone interpreted the adopted motion the same way that the clerk and I understood it. Also, this timely submission helped our legislative clerk and his team work towards the next step, to ensure that they prepared the required documents and package for clause-by-clause.

I understand that members who brought this up in the late afternoon on Wednesday had plenty of time to bring it up ahead of submitting their amendments. In spite of having my personal contact information, none of these members called, texted or emailed me to discuss or to clarify. You had an opportunity to reach out to me last week or all of this week, but you decided not to.

Again, I am happy to make myself available to all members, and I am glad that a number of you sent me messages yesterday. I have sent MP Morantz.... I apologized yesterday that MP Morantz did not have my personal information. I believe he has it now.

Marty, feel free to contact me any time.

Again, I hope what I mentioned has brought better clarity to the motion that was adopted on unanimous consent, and we can move on.

I would again like to take this opportunity to thank our clerks, our legislative clerk and their team of analysts, interpreters and technicians, who have made these 46-plus hours possible and still keep on working really hard.

Thank you.

Members, if this is good, let's try this again. We will go ahead with what's in front of us. Please refer to the package received from our clerk.

With us today, again, are a multitude of senior officials from various departments per division discussed. If you have any questions for them, you'll have an opportunity to ask those.

At this time, we'll get to our annotated agenda here. I'll look to the legislative clerk, but we were at clause 4. Is that correct? Yes.

We have some hands up. I see MP Morantz—his hand is up—and then MP Blaikie and PS Beech.

• (0940)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate your preamble, but there are still significant issues that our party has.

I'd like to move that we resume debate on Mr. Lawrence's motion from where we left off yesterday.

The Chair: We are back to debating Mr. Lawrence's motion from yesterday.

MP Morantz.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You raised a number of very good points, but I have to say that the intent of the committee, as I understood it, was to make every effort to hear from—

The Chair: MP Morantz, I apologize for interrupting. We have to vote, actually, on being able to continue with that.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Chair, just on a point of clarification....

Will I still have the floor after the vote?

The Chair: It will be a new list after that.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Okay.

I'd like to ask the chair, then, to put me on the list immediately after the vote.

The Chair: First, we'll get to the vote.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): I just have a quick question, Mr. Chair.

Is the motion to resume debate on the motion that we were discussing the last day debatable?

The Chair: It is not debatable, MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Okay.

The Chair: We will go to the vote.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): I have a point of order. I apologize. Since I wasn't at yesterday's meeting, Mr. Chair, could you read out the motion that we're voting on, please?

The Chair: MP Perkins, this is a motion that came to the floor yesterday from MP Lawrence.

Mr. Clerk, if you have that motion in front of you, could you just read that?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Roger):

That given the committee has yet to achieve its objective of obtaining 20 hours of witness testimony on Bill C-47, notwithstanding the motion adopted by this committee on May 16, the committee allocate an additional 10 hours for witness testimony and that clause-by-clause begin immediately following the 20th hour of witness testimony.

The Chair: Okay, MP Perkins.

Now we will go to the vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: We will go back to clause 4.

Shall clause 4 carry?

• (0945)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Why are we going back to clause-by-clause? I have my hand up, and I have requested the floor. I'd like to introduce a new motion.

The Chair: I see PS Beech's hand up also.

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): No.

The Chair: Okay, you're just getting on the speaking list.

MP Morantz, you have a motion.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Yes. I'll just read it into the record, Mr. Chair.

That in relation to the motion adopted on May 16, 2023, the committee reaffirm its intention to receive a cumulative duration of 20 hours of testimony concerning Bill C-47, also known as the Budget Implementation Act, No. 1. However, irrespective of the aforementioned motion, it is ordered that the committee refrain from initiating the clause-by-clause examination of the bill until the committee has completed the full 20 hours of witness testimony and that once the committee has completed 20 hours of witness testimony, clause-by-clause consideration begin on the business day following the culmination of testimony.

That's my motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: That speaking list with regard to the motion, PS Beech.... Is that what you were raising your hand for?

Mr. Terry Beech: Yes. I'm sorry. I would like to be on the speaking list.

I would also like to know if the motion is actually in order.

The Chair: It is in order. Your motion is in order.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Marty Morantz: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Terry Beech: Oh, he has another point of order.

The Chair: Yes, he has another point of order.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Given that I introduced the motion, do I not have the floor to speak to it?

The Chair: Yes, you may speak to your motion.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm sorry, MP Morantz.

Mr. Chair, could I be added to the list, please?

The Chair: Yes. I have you on after PS Beech.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have a situation here that is very concerning. That's why we're bringing forward this motion. I want to speak to the motion itself.

The budget that was presented at the end of March calls for 490 billion dollars' worth of spending—essentially, almost 500 billion dollars' worth of spending—for which we have had only 10 hours of witness testimony.

We can go back and forth as to how we got to this point, but I want to point out to the committee that this budget is approaching, in spending, 25% of the GDP of this country. It is a massive expansion of government into the economy, and I think it is well deserving of more than only 10 hours of witness testimony.

The fact of the matter is that there are many things. The budget document itself is well over 400 pages. It speaks to not just financial matters, which I know Canadians would normally assume.... If you were to ask them what a budget was, they'd say, "Well, it's about spending. It's about revenue." However, this budget actually amends 51 different acts, many of which actually have nothing to do with budgets.

We saw the government get into trouble over this just a few years ago, when a very simple bill—an omnibus budget implementation bill—was implemented that had a clause buried in it that would give the Minister of Justice and Attorney General the power to provide a deferred prosecution agreement to a single company.

I'm not convinced at this point—because I asked the public service this question—whether any similar clause might exist within this bill that would give a single company the ability to benefit in some way. It is impossible, really, for this committee to review all of these provisions, and that's why I was disappointed to see that the committee did not proceed with at least referring some of these clauses to the relevant committees. I don't think this committee is equipped to review matters of sanctions under the Magnitsky act, for example. Now we're not even doing that.

We can wrangle over how we got here. The fact of the matter is that the finance minister would not agree in advance to tell us that she was coming here for two hours. In fact, the day she showed up at committee, we didn't know how long she was staying, which made it very difficult for us to prepare our questions on such a massive bill, Mr. Chair. She came, and she was not co-operative. I'll put this into context.

We have had the Governor of the Bank of Canada here several times. We've asked the governor a lot of tough questions, a lot of very difficult questions, for example, why the bank is losing money for the first time in its history, and why Canadian taxpayers are now subsidizing the Bank of Canada. We were pretty tough on him, but he, in every instance, professionally and respectfully responded to the inquiries of this committee, no matter how difficult those questions were.

I want to say the same about the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who also received very difficult questions from members of this committee on matters pertaining to the budget. In all aspects and all situations, Mr. Giroux responded respectfully and professionally.

We had, in fact, the Minister of National Revenue here. She too responded without insulting members of the committee and without calling members of the committee bullies. By the way, she also told us exactly, in advance, how long she would be appearing before the committee.

I guess we can go back and forth as to how we got here, but that doesn't mean that the citizens of this country don't deserve a full-some review of this budget and don't deserve to hear from a broad spectrum of witnesses.

I want to talk about why those witnesses are so important, Mr. Chair. As I said, the budget implementation bill is over 400 pages long and is \$500 billion in spending.

● (0950)

For example, I was able to question the executive director of the Ottawa Food Bank last week, who gave us some very stunning testimony. I asked her about what Mr. Hetherington said. He said, "Let me be very clear—we are in a crisis," and, "The Daily Bread Food Bank and food banks...across the city are at a breaking point". Ms. Wilson said she absolutely agreed with that statement.

I asked her if there was an increase in first-time users. They are at an all-time high, which is what Mr. Hetherington also said. Ms. Wilson said, "We continue to see people using food banks who haven't had to use them in many years, as well as newcomers to Canada and new people who are accessing food banks."

I asked her about what Mr. Hetherington said about the fact that before the pandemic, which was in 2019, there were 65,000 food bank users a month in Toronto. Now there are 270,000 users a month. This is absolutely stunning testimony.

Now, I want to put this part in context, Mr. Chair.

The government has spent more in deficit financing since 2015 than all other prime ministers before. From 1867 to 2015, the federal accumulated debt was \$625 billion. From 2015 to today, the federal debt has doubled, approaching \$1.2 trillion.

I have to say, never before has a government spent so much money to achieve so little in terms of results. The proof is in Mr. Hetherington's testimony. Why, when members of the Liberal Party have described as their government as being such an activist government, are 270,000 people a month using food banks in Toronto alone, let alone in the rest of the country? In my home of Winnipeg, in Vancouver and all across the country, millions of people are using food banks; food bank usage has quadrupled.

What the Liberal government has taught us in the last eight years is that you can't judge success by how much money you've spent. You have to look at the results, and the results are not good. In fact, they are dismal. Tax revenues have ballooned, yet the people of this country are in worse shape than ever before.

We haven't had, for example, people from the real estate industry come in and talk about why housing starts are so low. Where are those witnesses? We haven't had people from the health care profession come and talk about the dire circumstances in Canada's health care system across the country.

So much money has been spent, and there have been such dismal results. It demands special consideration, with more than just 10 hours of witnesses.

Ms. Wilson said that she saw an increase in users of about 30% over last year, but 86% over her 2019 numbers. This is not success when Canadians are going hungry.

By the way, the number of people who are employed and using food banks has spiked dramatically. That's a terrifying statistic. These are people who are working and doing their best to make ends meet, and they cannot afford to put food on their table. Those numbers in Ms. Wilson's food bank have gone up 86% over 2019.

We had the food bank director from Mississauga here. He said 5% of Mississaugans are going to food banks. One in 20 Mississaugans is going to a food bank. It's absolutely appalling, yet the government members will try to defend their record, because they like to say, "Well, we sent out a cheque for this and cheque for that."

● (0955)

By the way, with regard to the cheque that just went out for the grocery rebate, both the Mississauga Food Bank and Mr. Hetherington's food bank said that it will not help. They were very clear that it is not the solution. Conservatives have said that the solution is to let people keep more of their paycheques. Let them have more powerful paycheques, so that they can actually afford to pay for groceries. It's not rocket science. It's very clear that Canadians are struggling, and they're struggling because of the nickel-and-diming by this government, tax increase after tax increase, eroding the spending power of their paycheques.

Speaking of eroding the spending power of paycheques, we haven't had witnesses in, other than Mr. Cross, to talk about the cause of inflation in this country. For two years, government members have said that this is an international problem that has come to our shores, and that it's not their fault. Nothing is ever the government's fault, but we need witnesses to come and talk about this. We need witnesses to come and talk about how profligate government spending directly causes inflation.

Mr. Cross said that the issue of inflation is international, but this is two years later. We've had the Governor of the Bank of Canada confirm in testimony—in questioning I, myself, did with him—that if government spending had been less, inflation would have been less. We've had the bank governor say that the GST has caused about 10% of the current 4.5% inflation that we currently have. Now the government puts on a clean fuel standard, a second carbon tax, and it's going to increase the carbon tax again next year. Where does it end? How many more people in this country, Mr. Chair, have to go to food banks?

Ms. Wilson, as I said, said that usage of her food bank spiked 86% over 2019. If that trend were to continue.... Her numbers are 400,000 a year. In three years, if it goes up by another 80%, her food bank will be servicing close to 700,000 people a year. It is simply not sustainable. We need witnesses to come here to explain to the government why its profligate, massive spending habit is making it impossible to buy groceries. Sending people a cheque and standing up in the House to say that it has solved this problem now that it's sent everyone a cheque for groceries.... Do you know what? Canadians don't really want a cheque to buy groceries. Canadians want to feel like they are accomplishing something in their lives. They want to feel good about the work they're doing, and they want to support their families. The last thing they want is for the government to say, "Oh, here are some alms for you to go and buy some groceries. We've solved the problem." This problem is endemic to the fiscal policy approach of this government.

Another thing is that the Governor of the Bank of Canada, to his credit, is trying to get inflation under control. He's been selling off the bonds, what he calls quantitative tightening. He has increased interest rates to try to wrestle inflation to the ground, and inflation has come down somewhat.

However, experts say—and if members are interested, Mr. Cross has written extensively about this—that fiscal policy and monetary policy need to work together. We need witnesses to come—which is the point of this motion, Mr. Chair—to explain to the government that fiscal policy....

• (1000)

I know the Prime Minister doesn't like to think about monetary policy and is very clear about that, but someone has to. If he won't, I would suggest that members of this committee need to think about it. It's well established that fiscal policy and monetary policy need to work hand in hand, Mr. Chair. They need to co-operate with one another. It doesn't work when the bank is trying to wrestle inflation to the ground and the government pours deficit-spending fuel on the fire, which is what has happened. The government has said that it is going to spend \$60 billion in debt through to 2027-28.

I have to say, Mr. Chair, that that's assuming no new measures. I think we can safely assume that there will be new measures. I have been here since 2019, and there are always new measures. In fact, sometimes they come just minutes after these budget documents are adopted.

Last fall, the finance minister introduced the fall economic statement, which said we'd have a \$4.5-billion surplus in 2028, but 142 days later she tabled the budget, which shows a \$14-billion deficit in that year. That is an \$18.5-billion swing in the forecast in just 142 days. I don't know how we can rely on anything this government tables in any budget document. It's very, very concerning, Mr. Chair.

We need witnesses to come to explain to the government why its fiscal policy needs to be in line with the bank's approach in terms of wrestling inflation to the ground. You know, we now have tangible evidence that fiscal policy is actually making things worse. Although inflation had been going down, just this month inflation went up.

It will be very interesting when the Governor of the Bank of Canada comes back, because I know members—Conservative members of this committee, at least—will want to ask him this: Has fiscal policy made his job more difficult? If the government had been more restrained in its spending, would the inflation rate be going down even further instead of going up? Is he concerned at all with the fact that the government plans to go at least another \$60 billion into deficit over the next five years? Most importantly, is this uptick in inflation going to cause him to reconsider the pause?

The pause was interesting. It's something I had never heard a bank governor say before, but fair enough, he wanted to be careful, so he raised the bank rate to 4.5% and then said that we were going to have a pause to see how things go. In fact, he said at committee that inflation was going to be 3% by the summer. It went up.

The government's own budget document says that the inflation rate for 2023 will be 3.5%. However, inflation would actually have to fall to 2% or 2.5% by midsummer for the inflation rate for 2023 to average 3.5%. Again, it's another example of.... No matter what the government puts in these budget documents, how could we possibly rely on them? How could Canadians rely on them?

Again, there are the food banks. This testimony is very, very disturbing to me. I wish we could hear from more food banks across the country. However, again, just like the government cut off debate in the House on the budget, just as it cut off witness testimony at this committee, just as the finance minister refused to tell us how long she would come to committee for and then, by the way, showed up and after an hour said she felt like she was being bullied but that Mr. Blaikie had convinced her that she should be kind and should deign to give the committee another 20 minutes.... It was very kind of her to do that, but the fact of the matter is that we are not bullies. We do not work for her. We do not work for the government. We work for our constituents who elected us, and we have very serious questions about the direction this government has taken.

For the finance minister to refuse invitations to this committee over and over again when the bank governor comes and the Parliamentary Budget Officer is happy to come.... The Minister of National Revenue seems happy to come and at least respectfully answer our questions.

• (1005)

To have the finance minister come here and say that we're bullies and to call members of our party political "hacks" in the House of Commons is just not productive.

I think what would be productive is for us to actually—

Mr. Adam Chambers: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Since I was on the other end of the political “hack” comment, I appreciated it because it gave me credibility with some of my colleagues who think I'm too moderate. I just want to make sure that Mr. Morantz knows that my feelings weren't hurt.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chambers. You had made that clear earlier too.

We will go back to MP Morantz.

Mr. Marty Morantz: I think Mr. Chambers could wear this as a badge of honour and that he has probably been called worse things by better people. In any event, that's not productive.

I really think that what would be productive is that we have witnesses come to talk about a half a trillion dollars in government spending. That's what we're arguing for here, Mr. Chair, and it's very important.

I want to get into some of the substance, though, of what we need these witnesses here for. For example, the department actually provided a document. There is one thing I want to mention, by the way. When we had Ms. Gwyer here a while ago, I asked her what the issue was with CRA not accepting cheques over \$10,000. I'm paraphrasing, but she essentially said that, if someone can't do it, and if they can't figure out how to transfer electronically, CRA will try to help them. I just saw a news report that she testified in front of the Senate committee about how CRA is going to be accepting these cheques. That's just one example of something we need to get clarification on.

The overview report the department provided is close to 90 pages long. It's massive. There is electronic filing and certification of tax information and electronic payments. We need more time to discuss those types of things.

We did get to speak about the doubling of the expense credit for tools of the trades, although it would actually have been nice to get testimony from my colleague Mr. Lewis about his bill on this matter.

We have not heard from the real estate industry, when housing—affordable housing and housing in general—is a major crisis in this country. This country is growing and it's going to be much bigger over the next 10 years. We have a massive shortage of housing and housing starts have gone down, yet at this committee we have not heard from experts on housing and what government can do to create the environment that home builders need to get houses built in this country. That's a major hole in witness testimony, and those voices are not being heard.

We have new rules on house flipping, on which we have not heard external witness testimony to find out how those might affect the market. I'm not saying that maybe this isn't a good thing. I just don't know, because we haven't had a chance to hear from people representing co-ops, people in the real estate industry or people in the banking industry what this type of change to the rules of our real estate markets might mean. It's a huge gap in our witness testimony.

Regarding taxation of veterans' and active members' benefits, again, we all have great respect for our veterans yet we haven't heard from any veterans. They haven't appeared before committee on this budget, yet their benefits are being directly affected by this budget. Why haven't we heard from veterans organizations?

All we've said is that we want another 10 hours of testimony—which could really have been done by now—before we get to clause-by-clause. It's not as though we're asking for the moon. It wasn't as though we were asking the finance minister to do a lot either, other than to come to the committee for two hours.

● (1010)

At every step of the way, this government seems to want to cut off debate on the budget in the House and to cut off witness testimony. Maybe it's because they didn't like the 10 hours of witness testimony we had. It was pretty bad for the government. There weren't a lot of good things—or any that I can recall—said about this budget.

Maybe they wanted to stop the bleeding. It's really hard to say. I can't get into their minds. I can really only speculate. Nevertheless, that's the point of having these meetings, of having an opposition to the government that can point out flaws. We know that having an effective opposition is fundamental to good governance. We know that because all we have to do is look around the world and look at countries that don't have an effective opposition.

Do you know what happens in those countries? Bad things happen. We can see that right now in Russia, in China, in Sudan and in many other places around the world.

Getting back to the issue of witness testimony, there's a provision here, in part 1, dealing with technical changes to the Gottfriedson class settlement agreement, a class action proceeding on behalf of 325 Indian Act bands. We haven't heard from those bands about what this settlement means. We've heard no indigenous testimony, in fact, about this budget. If I were a member of the indigenous communities across this country, I would be aghast at the short shrift this government is giving to indigenous communities, especially when their legal status has been affected by this budget, yet there's been no indigenous testimony.

We talked about the grocery rebate already, so I'll move on from that one.

There's also the automatic advance for the Canada workers benefit. It might be a good thing, but, again, we haven't heard from workers. We haven't had unions speak to what this means for their members.

Registered education savings plans is another area that we have not had witnesses on. There have been no witnesses on the RESPs. This is a very important program. I had those for my kids. I'm sure many members of this committee had them. Millions of Canadians have these RESPs, and there are changes being made to the RESPs. We haven't been able to hear from parent groups. We haven't been able to hear from schools. There's been just a complete absence of testimony on a policy that will affect millions and millions of Canadians. There's been zero testimony.

There's the registered disability savings plan. This one is actually near and dear to my heart. Probably many committee members don't know but my son Nathan was born in 1999. When he was two, he was diagnosed with autism. He was actually among the most severe. When Mr. Flaherty brought in this particular program, we were among the first to sign up for it. The registered disability savings plan is an extremely important program for families in this country who have a loved one with a disability. We have not heard from disability groups. I would love to hear from disability groups about what we could do to improve the effectiveness of the registered disability savings plan. For Mr. Flaherty, may he rest in peace, this was a signature accomplishment of his career. He was an excellent finance minister for this country. I can guarantee he would never do what this government is doing now in terms of their spending.

Where are the special needs groups? Why isn't the St. Amant centre in Winnipeg here testifying about the importance of the registered disability savings plan? There are so many. The Autism Society of Manitoba, my home province, could be here testifying about the registered disability savings plan. In fact, there's been no testimony from any family, group or individual on special needs issues even though there are major changes being made in this budget that will affect millions of Canadians who have children.

• (1015)

It's just appalling that the dearth of witness testimony being enforced by the costly coalition of the Liberals and the NDP on this committee is really doing a massive disservice to Canadians.

On fixing contribution errors in defined contribution plans, there's no witness testimony on that.

There are technical tax changes to the dental program and taxpayer information sharing for the Canada dental care program. These are very important things. We're talking about having CRA share confidential information. We've seen problems. There's a bill before the House right now to try to deal with privacy issues around leaking personal data. CRA has been hacked already. There are a lot of issues around protection of personal data. Again, it would be interesting to hear, for example, from the dental profession about this issue, but, no, we haven't had those witnesses either.

For hedging and short selling by financial institutions, we haven't had testimony on that one. That sounds like a very important subject that we should really be talking about at the finance committee, which is where we talk about the finances of this country, yet major changes to banking laws are being made without any testimony.

I'm not going to go through every single one of these, but there are a few more that I want to touch on. Just bear with me here.

There's treatment of mining of crypto assets. That's in terms of the GST/HST. We did have some testimony on that. I'm no expert on that, but that strikes me as an area that needs to be further examined. We did hear testimony from, I think, a couple of lawyers here from Toronto, who said that this is of serious concern, this particular change, and that it needs further examination. Other countries are going to eat our lunch on this type of technology in the future if we don't start treating entrepreneurs in this area with a little bit of respect.

The credit card services we heard.... I have to say in my testimony, Mr. Chair, that I've never seen a government actually make a promise and break that promise in the same budget. That was a new one. They've broken many promises. I won't go through the whole list here. I'm sure my colleagues would like to speak about those later, but we have a situation in which the government has said they want to bring down credit card fees and that they've made agreements with the banks now to bring down the charges that people pay when they go shopping and use their credit cards, but at the same time they change the GST rules to make it more expensive. They give and they take away, not a few months apart or years apart but actually in the same moment, in the same document. It's quite stunning.

We have the pension limitation period rebate fix. We've had no testimony on that.

For freight transportation of money, we've had no testimony on that one either.

On alcohol excise duties, we have had some testimony. I suppose it was good to see the government at least freeze the excise tax increase at 2% instead of inflation. I know I had asked the Minister of Finance to freeze this back when the fall economic statement was released, when she was actually in committee that one time. She said something about this advice being akin to crypto or something. It was a weird response. I didn't expect the government to actually move on this, but I guess the finance minister must have thought about it, thought about my question and my arguments, and agreed with me. I suppose that's one good thing, because when the budget came out, I would have liked instead to see zero.

• (1020)

Frankly, the undemocratic nature of the escalator tax is clear. Taxes should not be increased unless Parliament actually votes for them, not by order in council or any other way, but that's not what the excise tax does.

On a fair external complaints handling system for banking, again, we have not had the banks in to talk about what this means. It may be a good thing. I'm not arguing for or against it, but the point of this motion isn't to argue for or against these measures. The point of this motion is to argue for the fact that 10 hours of witness testimony for a half-trillion dollar budget is simply not sufficient. That's painfully obvious.

On strengthening the pension and federal pension framework and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985, again there was no testimony.

By the way, I just want to spend a few moments talking about the Canada growth fund. I think this is very important. This is a \$12-billion project the government wants to stand up really quickly. My experience in my prior life as a lawyer has been that, when clients rush to do things, often mistakes are made.

They want to stand it up really quickly, so instead of doing what they did with the Canada Infrastructure Bank—which is a whole other issue that I will get to later—and going out and hiring people to run the Canada Infrastructure Bank, what did they do? They decided to approach an independent pension fund management firm, the PSPIB, the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, and ask them to stand up the Canada growth fund as soon as possible. In fact, the departmental briefing notes say that a team has been seconded to stand up the growth fund.

We did have officials here on this in the prestudy of the budget, and one of the things I asked the officials was whether or not a request for proposals was made and how the PSPIB was selected. They are independent. They are not a branch of the government. They stand alone. How is it that all of a sudden the PSPIB is managing the Canada growth fund?

When I asked whether or not there was an RFP, the official said she would have to get back to me, which is fine, Mr. Chair, but the problem is that this is now approaching the end of May and I've not heard back. I don't know why the PSPIB was selected without having to go through a request for proposals. In fact, the Government of Canada's own website on procurement says that for the public service to retain services of any company for over \$100,000, it must go to an RFP. I would like an answer to that question. I asked the clerk to follow up on that for me last week. He did, and I still do not have an answer. That is fundamental, and we need to have an answer as to how the PSPIB was selected. Who made that decision? Was that a cabinet decision?

We've seen so many things happen with this government and how these decisions are made. People get appointed because of their connections. I'm not saying that the PSPIB isn't a worthy organization or a qualified organization. I just don't know, because no RFP was conducted. We haven't heard from witnesses. We could call other witnesses who might be able to testify and who might be able to do that as well, but somehow, out of the blue, the PSPIB gets to manage \$12 billion, with no request for proposals. This is terrible practice, Mr. Chair. We saw what happened with the WE Charity when this happened. It's like this government has never seen a conflict it didn't want to embrace.

• (1025)

I look at the intergovernmental affairs minister's sister-in-law being tapped to be the interim director of ethics and members of the Trudeau society being appointed to provide reports that are supposed to be independent and potentially critical of the government.

Of course we've seen what happens when this government appoints people—its friends—and says they're independent. It's just a farce. This government seems to have a blind spot frankly when it comes to these types of conflicts. It is a huge concern. Why don't we have witnesses? It's a \$12-billion project. Certainly you would think a request to hear from witnesses on the \$12-billion Canada growth fund would be reasonable, yet, no, we're stymied. This committee wants only 10 hours of witnesses. We're not going to hear about the RDSP. We're not going to hear about RRSPs. We're not going to hear about CRA sharing private information. We're not going to hear about the Canada growth fund. It's appalling, but again I do hope...and I want to relay to the clerk that perhaps he could follow up again to get me that answer. I would very much appreciate having answers as to why on a \$12-billion project—\$12 billion of taxpayers' money that is being rushed out the door—no request for proposals was done to find absolutely the best management for this project, this program, in the country.

Who decided it should be the PSPIB? Was it someone in the public service? Was it a minister? Was it the Prime Minister? It's a mystery, and I don't like mysteries, especially when it comes to taxpayers' dollars, especially from a government that said it would be open by default, from a government that pretended to be the most transparent government in Canadian history. That was another important promise that was broken.

We have not heard from any witnesses about the important issue of money laundering in this country. Canada has become a safe haven for money launderers. In fact we have our own nickname now for it in Canada. It's called snow washing. It's not a badge of honour, yet there's been not a single witness on money laundering, which is a major issue. I know my colleague Mr. Chambers cares very much about this issue. In fact he presented an important bill, a very simple bill that would have helped get this situation under control, and the government rejected it. They rejected a common-sense bill that would reduce money laundering in this country. Why? Is that responsible government? No, it's not responsible government. That's why we should be hearing witnesses on why Canada has the nickname "snow washing" of all things. Again, it's not a badge of honour.

There's supporting the economic growth of developing countries and preferential tariff programs for developing countries. This is division 4 of Bill C-47. This may also be a very laudable goal, but we have no explanation on this. We have no witness testimony. It would be interesting to hear from developing countries, in fact, as witnesses on this matter. I know that in my time on the foreign affairs committee, we spent a lot of time talking about how we could help civil society organizations around the world improve the standards of living of people living in poverty around the world. Canada is in many respects a leader in that type of thinking. Again that's another very important part of this budget, but there's been nothing, no witnesses and no testimony.

There's the indefinite withdrawal of most-favoured-nation status from Russia and Belarus. By the way, this is in the budget bill. The indefinite withdrawal of most-favoured-nation status from Russia and Belarus—I ask all the people who are watching this committee meeting now what that has to do with a budget. Send me your emails. It has nothing to do with the budget. It again gets back to this issue of the dangers of omnibus bills.

• (1030)

I may get back to some of these provisions in a few minutes, Mr. Chair, but I want to say that I think we also need to have witnesses on omnibus bills. This practice has gotten out of control.

I have an academic article written by Louis Massicotte. I won't read the whole thing, but there is one passage here that I think needs to be read into the record. It's not a recent document. It refers to an older bill, Bill C-38.

Bill C-38 has been widely condemned, and criticisms came from unexpected sources. Why are so many people concerned about omnibus bills? The reasons are in many ways the exact reverse of the previous ones. From the point of view of the opposition, omnibus bills are as attractive as the closure, time allocation, supply guillotines and so on. They create quandaries for opposition parties and oblige them to object to some popular measures delicately hidden in a less attractive package.

The real question, however, beyond the convenience of the government or of the opposition parties, may well be: is the public interest well served by omnibus bills? Take for example the clause-by-clause study in committee. When a bill deals with topics as varied as fisheries, unemployment insurance and environment, it is unlikely to be examined properly if the whole bill goes to the Standing Committee on Finance. The opposition parties complain legitimately that their critics on many topics covered by an omnibus bill have already been assigned to other committees. The public has every interest in a legislation being examined by the appropriate bodies.

We know that Speakers have consistently refused to act as referees on such issues, while at times hinting that the House might provide for some special procedures. One of them, Lucien Lamoureux, came up with what is probably the best question: is there any end?

This is the point of this article: Where does this go?

Could a government wrap up half of its legislative programme into a single measure dealing with the improvement of the life of Canadians or ensuring prosperity for all?

We often hear that omnibus bills are like closure and time allocation: "all governments do it", which.... This is why some of the most eloquent pleas against the practice of omnibus bills have been made in the past by the present Prime Minister, and were no less eloquently refuted by then Cabinet ministers now sitting in opposition. But in recent years, the logic behind omnibus bills has been pushed to extremes never seen before. It has been computed that between 1994 and 2005, budget implementation bills averaged 73.6 pages, while since 2006 they averaged 308.9—four times longer. But the increase is even more huge than it looks. While during the first period a single budget implementation bill was presented each year (there were none in 2002 and two in 2004), bills of that na-

ture have since then been presented twice a year except in 2008, when there was a single one. The yearly average of budget implementation legislation in recent years is therefore closer to 550 pages—this is seven times longer! Another contrast is that during the first period, budget implementation bills tended to be slimmed down markedly between first reading and Royal Assent, while in recent years they kept their initial size throughout.

The debate on Bill C-38 reminds us that omnibus bills have become a slippery slope now generating high controversy. In my view, they do little to improve the already low esteem in which legislators are held by the Canadian public. My colleague Ned Franks wrote three years ago that omnibus budget implementation bills "subvert and evade the normal principles of parliamentary review of legislation". I fully concur with his assessment.

I couldn't have put it better, Mr. Chair.

With that, I think I am going to give up the floor for the moment. I would ask the clerk to put me back on the list, though.

I do hope that some of the things I've said have some influence on the other members of this committee.

• (1035)

It is vitally important. The Liberals need to put their partisanship aside and look out for the best interests of all Canadians. With a half-trillion dollar budget, reaching almost 25% of this country's GDP, Canadians deserve no less.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Morantz.

On my list, I have MP Blaikie and then PS Beech, MP Perkins and MP Morantz.

MP Blaikie, you are next, please.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am glad for the opportunity to weigh in on what has been going on at committee. It's hard to know exactly where to start, so forgive me if I seem a little ponderous at the outset.

I think the story of how we got here matters, because I've heard a lot about how desperately Conservative members want to hear from witnesses. I would point out that when we first embarked upon the study of the bill, there was lots of time to hear from witnesses—lots of time.

I share the frustration of Conservative members with the minister, who I think should have committed to come to committee far earlier and should have committed for the two hours. I've been very clear about that. Nothing has changed in that regard. I still think that's true.

I don't think it was helpful that the minister first of all refused to say that she would come for two hours and then decided to stay longer but didn't give anybody any notice. Frankly, I don't think it's what you do in a professional workplace.

I also know, and this is part of my frustration as somebody who is neither a Liberal nor a Conservative, that I came prepared to do the work of clause-by-clause. Members around this table will know that there's a fair amount of work that goes into preparing for amendments. There are lots of folks to talk to about different kinds of decisions. There's usually short notice on when amendments come, so it's a rush to talk to folks about what the amendments represent, what they mean, to talk to other members about their own amendments, and then talk to folks in our respective parties and many Canadians outside of the political system who are experts in those fields.

We do our homework and then we come prepared to work, as I did yesterday. I was and still am frustrated, to put it mildly, that having come prepared to work, I haven't been able to do that work and instead have been subjected to the same filibuster, largely, that we had before the minister came.

The Liberals say from time to time, "What's the point of giving the Conservatives anything they want because, at the end of the day, they're just going to keep filibustering anyway; they're first and foremost committed to obstruction, for no other reason than obstruction itself." I would say to my Conservative colleagues, this spectacle that we're witnessing sure doesn't help any of us who would like to argue back to the Liberals, as I often have in defence of Conservatives, "Look, despite my own frustration with what they're doing, there's a legitimate point there. It's not just endless dysfunction."

What we're doing here is endless dysfunction, except that's not exactly true, because there is an end date to this. The end date to this is Monday at four o'clock, as agreed to by the Conservatives. This is a filibuster that accomplishes nothing. They are building no leverage for anything. Monday, at four o'clock, we're going to start voting on clause-by-clause. We will go through every clause of this bill, with no debate, offering members of Parliament no opportunity to put on the record why they're voting for or against certain amendments. No useful purpose is served by that. That means Canadians won't get the reasons for why MPs are voting in any particular way. It means that we won't have any debate around this table.

All that the Conservatives are doing right now is pissing away the time we have to do that democratic work, both for now and for posterity. Later, if anybody can get through all of the many hours of ridiculous filibuster that we've been subjected to, they might care to find some of the reasons for why certain provisions that are in this act passed or didn't pass. However, the idea that somehow this filibuster is accomplishing anything, when the Conservatives have already agreed, apparently at the time in good faith, to an end to clause-by-clause is just ridiculous. It's complete fabrication.

Now I get that they want to hear more witnesses. I wanted to hear more witnesses. In fact, I said so while they ate up 23 hours of the committee's time. What the heck is going on here? Why should anyone watching this be impressed. I'm beyond the blame game. This is pathetic. It's just pathetic. Shame on all of us for not finding a way out.

• (1040)

What's going on doesn't help anybody, and it's certainly not in the spirit of freedom or democracy or accountability or any of it. What we're watching are the Conservatives talking the clock out to the deadline that they themselves set.

Now, why am I not prepared to extend the deadline? I think all that means is that I'm going to be subjected to more hours of Conservative filibuster and we're going to keep doing this until a majority of the committee has the ability to finally have a vote.

What is the point of Parliament? The point of Parliament and members of Parliament, first and foremost, is to vote on things. That's the one thing we can do that nobody else gets to do. That's it. That's what we're here to do. That fundamental purpose and right of parliamentarians is being hijacked by people who won't let votes happen.

The Conservatives know full well that the committee is prepared to move on and consider this legislation, and we should do it while we still have time to debate. But no, we're not going to, are we, guys?

What is up with that? I'm getting really tired of listening to people talk about how much they want to hear from witnesses after burning up all that time.

We have a problem. There isn't enough trust and good faith around this table. The Conservatives will say it's the Liberals' fault and the Liberals will say it's the Conservatives' fault. I don't care whose fault it is. We've got to do better, guys. We really do. This is not acceptable.

There are members of the committee who aren't permanent members of this committee and, of course, many Conservatives have changed. I think they're on their second leader or third leader of Parliament. They're on their eighth finance critic. I don't know. Those aren't real numbers—don't quote me. It's been a lot, though, so some of the folks around the table may not know that we did this on the fall economic statement or that we did that on the last budget bill.

This is like some kind of parliamentary *Groundhog Day* film. I watched this movie, and the ending is dumb and Canadians don't win.

What we should be doing is spending this time actually doing clause-by-clause. That's where we're at.

We had 10 hours of witness testimony. I agree that's not enough, but I'm not prepared to extend this circus. Do I actually believe we're going to hear more from witnesses? At this point, no I don't. I think the Conservatives are going to find something else that they want to complain about and then they're going to filibuster on that. I could be wrong, but I'm not interested in finding out that I'm right.

I thought we were done with this. I thought we were going to do some real work. This is the second day now that I've come prepared to do some real work on clause-by-clause and I'm not getting the opportunity. I'm glad that I at least got the floor to talk a bit about that.

Mr. Morantz earlier quoted somebody who said that omnibus bills are terrible. One reason for that is that the finance committee members are expected to be subject matter experts on everything.

I would remind Mr. Morantz and other members of the committee of the original study motion that we had. Had we got to a vote when we should have got to a vote, after some debate, within the context of a two-hour meeting....

A two-hour debate is still a fair amount of debate for 12 people sitting around a table discussing how to study a bill. It was not the content of the bill that we were discussing at that time—if we were actually on topic. You may recall that was the debate where we heard a lot about eels and the fishery on the east coast. Again, it's a fascinating topic, but we should have been able to get to a vote on that. Had we got to a vote, the very thing that Mr. Morantz was just quoting, which he said he wanted to have happen, would have happened. We would have sent the sections of the bill that properly belonged with our critics who are experts in other areas to those committees. We would have benefited from their wisdom. We would have multiplied the ability to hear witness testimony, because there would have been other committees providing time slots to hear witnesses on the content of the bill.

That was the whole point of breaking up the bill. I think that's a better process, given that omnibus bills, not just by this government—in spite of a promise not to do omnibus bills—but by the previous government, which made an art form of them, the Harper government....

If they're going to become a fact of parliamentary life, then we need to find a better way, as parliamentarians, to study them and push back against the government's effort to effectively impose closure by putting a whole bunch of things in one bill. We don't appear to be able to stop them from doing that. What we can do is change the way we study the bill so that there is more time and there is the ability to hear witnesses.

● (1045)

I thought that was a good thing that our committee was on to, but we have failed to set a precedent for that yet again. Instead, we've had to listen to a filibuster. If we take Parliament seriously and we take our role and our job.... If we don't think our job is a joke, then we could actually take the time to do the work, and we could set interesting precedents for how you go about studying a budget bill given the fact that government seemed pretty committed to doing omnibus legislation. We could set a new standard. We could raise the bar for accountability in terms of Parliament hearing witnesses and having subject matter experts examine legislation.

I actually thought we were on the cusp of that. What a fool I was. I'm sitting around feeling like I've been had, because I thought we were having some good conversations through the winter, trying to figure out how we weren't going to repeat last year's gong show, yet here we are right back where we started, except even more futile. At least last year, once the Conservatives were done their filibuster and agreed to a timeline to do clause-by-clause, we actually did clause-by-clause. Now we're not.

I'll say to you, it is a real problem if we get to Monday at four o'clock and we start voting on this stuff without any of us having

put our reasons on the record. I think that will be a bloody shame. I think anyone who is really committed to accountability and democracy in Parliament would not allow that to happen.

I am not prepared to extend the deadline. From what I've seen, extending the deadline just means more of this. This is the problem. You can't negotiate a process to get to the outcomes that everyone, through the filibusters, says they want to achieve, because you think you have, and then they eat up all the time to accomplish that other purpose with more filibuster. Eventually, you need a deadline.

I participated in a filibuster in the 42nd Parliament, when the government was contemplating making unilateral changes to the Standing Orders. I thought they needed at least one other party to agree. I thought that was a filibuster with some principle. I thought it was worth getting animated about and worth showing up for, so I did it.

I also respect that there will be filibusters. I've seen those, too, believe me. It's not just here. At the procedure and House affairs committee in the last Parliament, it was Liberals tying up the committee because they didn't want the committee to invite the Prime Minister. There are going to be filibusters that I don't agree with, and I'm okay with that. I have to say, for what's being held up, and for the amount of work we haven't been able to do, the goal of this filibuster is pretty light. It wasn't worth losing all the good work we could have done.

The minister is intransigent, and I'm mad about that. Parliament doesn't have the ability to compel the minister to appear. We have the ability to do our own work, but we don't seem to be able to get that done. Let's not throw stones in glass houses. I think the minister should be held to account for not having been clear that she was willing to show up for an hour or two hours. I think, in the end, it was an hour and 40 minutes, or whatever. Sure, but are you really going to let the attitude of that minister derail the entire work of the finance committee for months? We deserve better than that. Canadians deserve better than that.

This work deserves to get done, and we're not going to agree on all the outcomes, guys. I'm not looking for a Kumbaya moment. All I'm looking for is for everyone on this committee to say their piece and then allow us to vote on things so that we can make decisions and move things along. If Parliament can't do that, we have a big problem. That's where the feeling that some people are just committed to endless dysfunction gets harder and harder to shake.

I'm not going to go on and on. There are a number of claims I think are worth responding to, except it's hard to feel that they really are, because this whole thing feels, in an important way, fundamentally unserious. I have to say, we're talking around a lot of serious things, but I don't feel like we're doing it in a serious way anymore, and I'm disappointed by that. I think we could do a lot better. As somebody who believes in making decisions based on evidence and experience—my experience on this committee and the evidence that any Canadian is welcome to look at not just from this budget bill process but also from the many we've done before—I am finding it harder and harder to believe that I'm sitting around a table with serious people who are honestly committed to getting a job done.

• (1050)

That's my point of view. I get that we're all going to have different points of view about this. I just feel that if Canadians are sitting at home wondering what the heck is going on, somebody should have the decency to call out what I think is really happening and the only way you can make sense of what's going on here.

The clock is running. The time will not be extended, because I am tired of these shenanigans. Let's think about what we do with the time we have and how we do the best job, instead of asking for permission to continue this charade.

Thank you very much.

• (1055)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie. Just on those remarks, I do my job at the will of the committee, and in good faith I hear from members and we move forward, especially when there is a vote and when it is with unanimous consent, and it was with unanimous consent in terms of what we would do with PS Beech's motion and that we would get to clause-by-clause yesterday and look to complete that by Monday. I crossed my fingers that we could have done it even earlier. And this has come up a number of times. It came up with the FES. It came up with our pre-budget consultations. Members from all parties have spoken to me about the pre-budget consultations, even when we get into those, and being able to do them in a more methodical way and being able to have a report that will go to the minister to have more impact. I've heard from all of you, and as I said, I take you at your word and in good faith.

On that, I'm going to pass the floor over now to PS Beech, and then I have MP Perkins and then MP Morantz.

PS Beech, go ahead.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our colleague from the NDP, Daniel Blaikie, for those comments.

The sentiment is shared, I'm sure, by a lot of people sitting around this table. We all work very hard throughout our ridings to gain the respect of our constituents. We knock on doors, have conversations, attend events and do a lot of hard work. Everybody does—the Conservatives, NDP, Bloc and Liberal members—in order to have the privilege of sitting at this table. What struck me from Daniel's comments, which I think is apt for what is currently going on and what has been going on for a long time, is the lack of seriousness. You can trace that lack of seriousness all the way back to the first critic I worked with here at the finance committee, who

was Pierre Poilievre. That was the first time I ever, in all the time I've been at Parliament—and I've served seven ministers before serving at Finance.... I've been subject to arbitrary filibuster, which is what we're facing today and which is what has my colleague Daniel so upset.

There's a track record on this. You can draw a straight line from Pierre Poilievre as finance critic and acting in that way directly to his becoming leader and then forcing his members to act in that way, which is exactly what we're witnessing today.

We could go back to May 9, 2022, and the aforementioned Budget Implementation Act. Was it filibustered by the Conservatives? Absolutely.

We could go back to the fall economic statement, which was filibustered by the Conservatives between November 2 and 16.

We go to this budget implementation act, which has been filibustered thus far, I believe, for something like 25 hours over witness time and now—

The Chair: It's 27.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you. I wouldn't want to be incorrect.

It's been 27 hours over witness time, and now, including the first hour and a half today, another six or so hours during clause-by-clause time. I have in front of me the original motion that I drafted. I want to talk a bit about how this motion was drafted.

I got a call from the Conservative Party. They were saying, hey, can we figure out how to work on the BIA...? I was very excited because I thought that if we could avoid a filibuster like we had at the last budget implementation act, and if we could avoid a filibuster like we had at the last fall economic statement, it would actually allow us to do the work that my colleague Daniel Blaikie just described.

I had phone calls. We had meetings. We did some of that in person. We did some of that online. Then, a very familiar play began to play out: It had happened before, so I wasn't surprised by it. Basically, we had come to what I thought was a general agreement on the way we could handle this and, then, all of a sudden, the negotiator changed and the terms changed. As we looked for ways to come to terms on those terms, those terms changed again.

When my colleague MP Lawrence talks about negotiating in good faith, I would dispute that. Now, fool me once, shame on you, and fool me twice.... It's as the saying goes. Adam Chambers tried to get it before, and I'm using it now, but really, I felt that it was going to be shame on me again, because I don't want anybody to be in a filibuster. I've been very clear about that with my members. I've been very clear about that with the Conservatives and with all opposition members: that I negotiate in good faith every single day so that we can do the good work at this table and avoid at all costs filibusters or needlessly wasting people's time.

An example of that is very clear here today. Mr. Morantz, in his speech, talked about the great testimony from Ms. Lindsay Gwyer. Well, he's not in the room and so he probably doesn't know, but that person, as well as a number of very articulate and hard-working professionals from the Department of Finance, are here to work on clause-by-clause and to answer some of those specific questions that were included in Mr. Morantz's filibuster. His very act is preventing those officials from doing their jobs and making sure we're passing the best budget implementation act possible.

Mr. Lawrence complained yesterday.... I think he logged a good four or four and a half hours yesterday. It was quite the show. When we talk about a lack of seriousness, that comes from a couple of different places. Sometimes it's the content that we're actually discussing versus what we should be discussing. Sometimes it's members serving wine in the committee room instead of having the good discussion that we should be having on the budget that's supposed to be helping Canadians. In this particular case, he spent a lot of time talking about the good faith of getting at least 20 hours of study prior to being able to begin clause-by-clause.

I agree that we should get at least 20 hours. That's certainly what we said in the previous BIA. That's what we did in the fall economic statement. We want witnesses to come in. Heck, if we weren't subject to filibuster, we could do well beyond 20 hours. We've proven that, right? It's not as if the members here aren't willing to work. We've shown up.... I think it has to be 40-some hours now of doing nothing except listening to the Conservatives talk about fish and elvers and doing whatever they can to fill the time—reading handbooks, etc. That's what we've been listening to.

Today, we have officials here. Previously we had food banks. We had chambers of commerce. All the people Mr. Morantz talked about—veterans, people who could have talked about money laundering, chambers of commerce, indigenous individuals, people who could talk about the RESPs, people who represented disability groups—could have been slated to appear. They were all denied their ability to contribute to the budget process because of Mr. Morantz and his act to filibuster. I wish I could take Mr. Morantz's testimony of today and travel it back in time to the start of this month. He could talk to himself about the impact of his actions and those of his party: about what happens when you filibuster needlessly and not for any real point.

• (1100)

The point was quite clear. The point was to obstruct the bill and to prevent it from passing, or to at least delay it for as long as possible. Mr. Lawrence talked about that yesterday. Certainly I think our

colleagues in the Bloc and the NDP realize that through various negotiation processes.

The outcome the Conservatives are looking for is very clear. Witness testimony is not part of their objectives. You can tell that based on their actions. I've already talked about three specific filibusters around the three most significant fiscal documents that the government has put forward, the last two BIAs and the fall economic statement. It goes well beyond that.

For two years in a row, the Conservative Party has prevented us from having pre-budget consultations in any meaningful way. In fact, last year they arbitrarily moved those, as part of their negotiations, for no real reason, from August back until October, simply so Canadians couldn't have their say at the start of the pre-budget process.

How did those pre-budget processes used to happen, Mr. Chair?

They used to happen with this committee going across Canada to be at the doorsteps of Canadians to hear what they had to say, so they could substantially contribute to this process. For the last two years, that has been banned. That ban continues under the current leader, Mr. Pierre Poilievre. His entire goal as a leader is to try to convince Canadians that the country is broken on one hand, while he is actively trying to break it on the other hand.

Mr. Chambers said today, as a point of order, that he was scared that his colleagues might think he's too moderate. He supports a leader who is actively trying to fire an independent officer, the Governor of the Bank of Canada. That is an independent institution that has been in place for more than a generation, that has served Canadians so well and put us in the position that we're in to be able to outperform our peers in other economies. The current Leader of the Opposition, if he ever gets into the prime minister's chair, wants to fire that individual, not for good reason but because doing so is part of his strategy. That is the strategy that Mr. Adam Chambers is supporting.

Fear not, good sir—nobody is ever going to suggest that you're a moderate as long as you support a leader who uses these types of undemocratic tactics, not as a measure of last resort but as the first thing he goes to when acting. It's what he's learned since he's been here.

Going back to my interaction with Mr. Lawrence and this original motion, I have the original copy. It's dated May 1, 2023. This was a consensus document that was written after having conversations with members of the Conservative Party, members of the Bloc and members of the NDP and as well as members of our Liberal caucus. Unlike the case with the previous BIA and the previous FES, when I thought I could take the Conservatives at their word, every time they made an offer this time, I made sure that offer was shared with the Bloc and the NDP. That way, if the goalposts moved, they would understand that somebody was trying to pull the wool over our eyes and that they were in fact not negotiating in good faith.

Later on, when we finally resolved this, this is how it got resolved. We had this exact motion, as well as the unanimous consent wording that we had read into the record. Mr. Lawrence sat next to me and went line by line to make sure he agreed with every single point that was in here, asking questions along the way. In fact, he asked me specifically about the 20 hours of study and whether we could change the language to guarantee that 20 hours of study before we moved to clause-by-clause, to which I definitively said, “No, I can’t do that, because how many hours of study we get depends on how much time the whips can get together for committee resources.” However, it was our essential “like” that we could get over 20 hours, because that’s what we originally said back in April, over a month ago. He read this passage—he might have read it a couple of times—and agreed that this actually substantially does what we want. Then we added Gabriel’s clause, which made sure that we did 10 hours before the end of the week.

• (1105)

That particular passage is item (d), and it reads:

(d) Subject to the approval of the recognized parties’ whips, and the availability of meeting slots from the House of Commons, the committee hold as many additional meetings as possible with the goal of accomplishing at least 20 hours of study prior to the beginning of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

I am not in charge of getting committee time or of understanding the resources and how they are, but my understanding is that we cancelled a large number of other committees. The Conservatives not only obstructed here by filibustering and continuing to filibuster, but also obstructed the PROC committee. I don’t know the full list, but many committee meetings have been cancelled while we’ve listened to the Conservatives talk about nothing.

I would agree, finally, with Daniel’s last point, which was that all the Conservatives are doing by continuing this filibuster is proving the fact that they intend to do nothing except obstruct for obstruction’s sake. There is no interest to hear from Canadians. They were here. The Conservatives kicked them out. There is no interest to hear from officials. They are here. They have been here for six or seven hours. They’ve gone through two clauses. Otherwise, we’ve been listening to whatever the Conservatives could think of to fill the time.

You don’t have to take my word for it. That’s the great thing about parliamentary democracy and the systems we have set up in Canada. You can go to review the tapes. Everything I talk about has been on video.

Then they came on Wednesday. They didn’t talk to our chair about how they wanted more witness testimony on Friday, when we dismissed our last witnesses. They didn’t talk to the parliamentary secretary of finance on Saturday or on Sunday about how they want more witnesses. They didn’t send a text message or say anything on Monday or Tuesday. No. They sent a tweet on Wednesday—the day before we were supposed to start clause-by-clause and the day they knew we couldn’t have more witnesses, because it would be impossible for the clerk to schedule them—to complain specifically about not getting witnesses.

It doesn’t take a Ph.D. student doing a four-year study to figure out what’s going on here. It takes a rudimentary analysis to understand that every permanent Conservative member of the finance

committee supports the philosophy of their leader, Pierre Poilievre, which is to obstruct for obstruction’s sake. That’s not to the benefit of the true role of the opposition, which is to take a look at government legislation and help us make it better. Show up here with actual problems; we work through it, through debate, and we actually get it changed to make it better.

This budget implementation act will not be as good as it should be, simply because we could not incorporate the good ideas of the Conservative Party, because they decided that they did not want to contribute their ideas.

All that being said, Mr. Chair, I expect that after we dismiss this motion, which is very similar to the previous motion we adjourned on yesterday, which was very similar to the motion that we voted against at the start of yesterday, there will be another one, and another one after that. Maybe Mr. Blaikie was convincing enough, because I think he is more convincing than I am. Maybe the members of Parliament from the Conservative Party will look inside themselves and will decide that parliamentary democracy is worth more than getting a gold star from their obstructionist leader, who has no interest in contributing positively to this committee.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would suggest that we get to work. The officials are here and ready to work. The Liberal members are here and ready to work. The NDP is here and ready to work. The Bloc is here and ready to work. With that, I would move that we adjourn debate on this motion.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, PS Beech.

Clerk, we will have a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now members, we will move back to clause-by-clause consideration.

Shall clause 4 carry?

(Clauses 4 and 5 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

• (1115)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Chair, can we get a recorded vote?

The Chair: We will have a recorded vote for clause 6.

(Clause 6 agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We will move on to clause 7.

Shall clause 7 carry, members?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Chair, could I have the floor?

The Chair: We are in a vote. We just called the vote.

Are you looking to speak to clause 7?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, but I had my hand raised.

The Chair: I didn't see your hand raised. I'm sorry. It didn't come up on our screen.

MP Perkins is speaking to clause 7.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

On the budget implementation bill, I'd like to move the following motion:

That the committee reiterate its desire to hear a total of 20 hours of testimony in relation to Bill C-47, Budget Implementation Act No.1, as agreed to on May 16, 2023, and notwithstanding that motion, the committee maintain its goal of receiving 20 hours of witness testimony but not proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill until the committee hears a minimum of 19 hours of witness testimony.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Perkins.

I see your hand up, MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Chair, isn't this more or less the same motion we have been debating and voting down?

What I'd like to do is move to adjourn debate.

The Chair: MP Dzerowicz, it is in order. It's 19 hours, not 20, so it is in order.

Go ahead, MP Perkins.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I moved to adjourn debate, so—

The Chair: I'm sorry.

MP Dzerowicz moved to adjourn debate, so if the—

Mr. Rick Perkins: She can't move adjournment. She doesn't have the floor.

The Chair: She did have the floor, MP Perkins.

Mr. Clerk, could you poll the members, please?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We're going to poll the members. MP Dzerowicz asked for adjournment of debate. She did have the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'd like to challenge the chair on the ruling that I didn't have the floor. I moved the motion, and immediately after that I had the floor to speak to the motion.

The Chair: We'll have the vote on the adjournment of debate.

Mr. Clerk, go ahead, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'd like to challenge the chair on his ability to do that. That motion is out of order.

The Chair: We will suspend for a minute.

• (1115) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1120)

The Chair: We're back.

After conferring with the clerk... MP Dzerowicz did get the floor, but she got it on a point of order, so she would not be able to look to adjourn debate.

We'll go back to MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's been a lot of discussion in the last hour or so by MP Blaikie and MP Beech, which I found interesting. As they say, there are usually at least two sides to every story. In this case, it is probably three.

Those watching need to understand how we got to this place and why we're asking for 19 hours of witnesses, as opposed to the 10 that have happened today. It goes back to the original motion MP Beech spoke quite extensively about a few moments ago. It was negotiated in good faith. We certainly believe it was negotiated in good faith that we would get 20 hours of witnesses. This is an issue about how we got here, which both MP Blaikie and MP Beech may have a different view on.

Our view is that we negotiated that in good faith. The government decided not to have 19 or 20 hours of debate or witness testimony. They decided to have only 10 hours on a spending bill of half a trillion dollars for the budget implementation act. We negotiated that in good faith and believe that good faith is not being upheld by the government and its supply arrangement partner, the NDP, in saying that it's okay to have only 10 hours of witnesses on a piece of legislation that has record spending and will have impacts on generations to come.

MP Beech talked about arbitrary filibusters. Well, I'm sorry he thinks democratic tools are arbitrary. They're not arbitrary. As the chair points out, the 27 hours of discussion held on the minister's appearing for two hours at this committee to defend her bill, Bill C-47—which amends 51 acts of Parliament and spends half a trillion dollars—was not arbitrary. It was a specific democratic, institutional accountability issue.

The minister has built up a level of distrust in this committee and in the House because she has refused to accept three invitations by this committee in the last six months, the first being to appear on the issue of inflation with the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the second being on estimates. While these are invitations and it's up to the minister to come, generally, even the Treasury Board guidelines I referred to in my earlier discussion about her appearance say that an estimates appearance is a must for a minister. It's not really optional. You have to come, as a minister. It's part of the accountability element of Parliament to do it, yet she was unwilling and we were unable to secure a guaranteed commitment from the minister that she would appear for two hours. That's all we were asking for. I don't think it's a lot to ask.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, I guess. The fact is that the minister ignored three invitations, the third being on the actual pre-budget consultation for this budget delivered in Parliament. It was one of the five days between May and January when the minister appeared in Parliament. That was about—

[Translation]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins:—trying to make sure the minister appeared.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mrs. Chatel, you have the floor.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Chair, I'd like my Conservative colleague to focus on his motion. He seems to be discussing another motion that we were debating before, which had to do with the presence of the minister. The motion before us right now deals with the presence of witnesses.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Chatel.

[English]

To MP Perkins, I think I mentioned this before, but please keep it relevant.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You gave the latitude to MP Blaikie and MP Beech to speak to this issue for almost an hour, so we have a right to respond to that issue in the same context and with the latitude they were given.

The Liberal members may not like to hear the fact that there is actually an alternative view to the long, half-hour presentation by MP Beech on his view of whether what's been going on here is arbitrary or obstructionist. That was allowed to go on without interruption. We didn't interrupt that, even though it was not pertinent to the motion he was discussing, so I would expect the same courtesy from government members.

Therefore, I will continue on that.

Doing something of an arbitrary nature, as Mr. Beech accuses the opposition of doing, reflects a basic fundamental principle, which is the issue of whether or not this committee has been ignored by government members and whether this committee is now imposing a version of closure—

Mr. Terry Beech: On a point of order, I'll apologize if my half-hour presentation was off topic, but I can't take it back.

What we can do is follow the procedures according to the rules. I know Mr. Perkins doesn't actually think that a presentation of half an hour is very long. For him that is extremely... You can barely say his name in 30 minutes. I think he's put something like 15 to 20 hours down in his time, but he just admitted on the record, just now, that what he's talking about is not relevant to the motion. I think we agree; therefore, he should be ruled out of order and we should get to a vote.

The Chair: PS Beech, whenever any of our members is speaking and a point of order on relevance comes up, I try to refocus members and bring them back to the topic at hand, be it the motion or the clause or whatever we are discussing.

I'll allow MP Perkins to continue.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, MP Beech. I understand you don't like hearing another side of the story that you presented, but the reality is that it's a pattern with this government to try to avoid accountability. That's part of the motion I put forward here. It's the issue of having witnesses on this legislation.

The one that was agreed to in good conscience and with the best of efforts with the government, the government is now shutting down.

There's been lots of time this week and since that motion was passed for the government to work with the clerk. During the constituency week, there were a lot of parliamentary resources available for this committee to do the 20 hours of work that this motion called for, yet the government chose not to do that.

The government has chosen to try to reduce that discussion.

MP Blaikie, in his discussion earlier, said that the most fundamental thing we do as members of Parliament is to discuss and vote. Yes, but voting without the benefit of what expert witness testimony can give us on key aspects of this half-trillion dollar spending bill, which is adding fuel to the inflationary fire in this country, is voting in some form without the knowledge that members of Parliament should have from outside groups.

Yes, there are votes, perhaps, based on instinct and your own knowledge, and I don't dispute the fact that Mr. Blaikie is a very knowledgeable and experienced parliamentarian, has been through many of these budget processes and understands the budget in great detail, but I'm sure even he would admit that having 19 hours of witnesses is not a lot to ask. The government is saying, "No, we don't want that." The government has said that by not scheduling the full 19 or 20 hours this week to get the work done so that it can be done by the 29th, by next Monday.

There's been a lot of time and parliamentary resources. There was no excuse—for those watching—because we are on the constituency break. I think PROC is the only other committee meeting this week, so very few of the committees have been meeting. Therefore, interpretation and staff and other resources have been available to do the 20 hours of work on the original motion, which the government has chosen not to follow.

• (1130)

I believe it's the government that has not acted in good faith. It's actually acting in bad faith against the motion. It makes it difficult, as the official opposition, to believe that when we negotiate something with the government members in the future, they will live up to those conditions, that they won't just be playing a game, saying, "Okay, we got your agreement and we're going to impose a form of committee closure by shutting it down once we start the process. We can do that in a couple of ways. We can do it through formal programming motions"—which the government has done of late, over the last six months or so—"or we can do it simply by not scheduling the meeting and by not inviting the witnesses to attend to do the work in the week that was set out and agreed to."

To me, that's obstructionist. To me, that's a form of passive filibuster—stopping the opposition from questioning witnesses on things they don't like to hear.

They heard some very passionate and heartfelt testimony from some of Canada's food banks. The Ottawa Food Bank, right here in Ottawa, in testimony last week.... I'm sure it was hard for the government members to hear it, because it was extremely critical of the government. In fact, most of the testimony in the 10 hours was critical of the government. I can understand from their perspective why they wanted to shut the debate down, because witnesses were not providing them with the government talking points that they were hoping to get at the table. They were actually pushing back.

This is what happens when you have 51 acts of Parliament....

Some have made comments about elvers. This bill does amend the ocean protection act. I know that members don't like to hear members of Parliament on the opposition talking to the details of what was in the bill and what the bill is attempting to amend. Perhaps they're confused themselves by the fact that the ocean protection act would be amended in a budget implementation bill—their omnibus bill.

Everything that was said in that discussion—trying to get the minister to come to committee for two hours, which she didn't do—was done relative to what is in the bill, the 51 acts that are being amended. If the members of the government want the discussion to be only about the budget itself, then they shouldn't bring in these kinds of omnibus bills. They shouldn't bring in issues of amending the Canada Elections Act or the ocean protection act, or amending the royal symbols and titles act. These things are not to do with the budget.

That's why we need to have more witnesses come in. There are witnesses who were on the schedule who aren't going to be here, witnesses like Jack Mintz. We all know Jack Mintz, who is a very important economist in Canada. I don't know why Liberal members wouldn't want to hear from Jack Mintz from the University of Calgary. We all know that former finance minister Bill Morneau has had some interesting things to say about this budget. Again, he's on the witness list but has not been called because the Liberals have shut it down.

Perhaps that's the reason the Liberals are shutting it down and not allowing 19 or 20 hours of debate. They're limiting it to 10 hours of witnesses because they're trying to prevent their former colleague, who not too long ago was the minister of finance and now is just a random Liberal, from appearing. Perhaps that's the real reason, as they were preventing the current Minister of Finance from appearing for two hours. They clearly don't want to have the former minister of finance come to talk about the issues around the incredible record spending of this budget.

By the way, that budget is \$3.1 trillion over the next five years, if you can believe the economic projections. MP Morantz went over some of those issues earlier. I won't belabour the fact that the inflation projection is so unrealistic as to make this entire budget projection a joke.

We want to hear from the Edmonton food bank, but apparently the government does not want to hear from the Edmonton food

bank. We asked for Feed Nova Scotia, which is a very important organization in my province. It deals with the issue of food insecurity and supplying food and is the umbrella organization to our food banks in Nova Scotia. There is a massive increase across my province, which we've had under this government, of demand on food banks.

• (1135)

No, the Liberals are deciding only 10 hours of debate on half a trillion dollars of spending this year and \$3.1 trillion over the next five years is enough time, just as they thought the minister didn't really need to actually come to the meeting, and the only reason she ended up coming was that we embarrassed her into it.

We embarrassed her into coming or she would have blown it off like before, and she wasn't even able to give us a full two hours, which was incredible, really, when you think about it.

How about the Regina Food Bank? They're invited as well.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: On a point of order, go ahead, MP Chatel.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I'm rising for the same reason as before. Can my colleague focus on his motion? We're debating a motion that proposes that the committee hear 19 hours of testimony. I don't believe the Minister of Finance is on that list. So can Mr. Perkins focus on his motion?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chatel.

Again I'll say, MP Perkins, as I have said to all members, please focus on relevance to the motion.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Chair, we didn't put the Minister of Finance on this list, because it would be another invitation that she blew off.

I'll go over this again since, clearly, MP Chatel didn't hear about the witnesses I was talking about who are being missed because of her action to vote against having 19 hours or 20 hours of witnesses. She doesn't want to hear from Jack Mintz, a national renowned economist, about the impact this budget will have on people's finances or the fact that food banks have gone to seeing 1.5 million people a month. That's a new record. I'm sure MP Chatel is proud of that in her riding of Pontiac. I'm sure that they've also seen an increase in these food banks.

I'll repeat again about former finance minister Bill Morneau. I don't understand why the Liberals don't want to hear from their former colleague. Is it because they think that somehow he's not going to use PMO's talking points anymore, but will actually speak the truth about the impacts of the fiscal plan? Perhaps one of the reasons he left cabinet was not unlike the Right Honourable John Turner's. He left the current Prime Minister's father's cabinet over the issue of the fiscal framework and the desire of the government to do things and spend money at a level that hurts every Canadian.

Again, there's Edmonton's Food Bank and Feed Nova Scotia. MP Chatel probably didn't hear that part, so I will repeat it again. Feed Nova Scotia is the umbrella organization in my province of Nova Scotia that oversees all the food bank usage in our province.

I can understand why food bank usage has gone up so much and why government members would be unwilling and unable to stomach hearing more people from food banks talk about the impacts that this budget has and the previous budgets of the current Minister of Finance have had on increasing the number of people using their services. It's the one business in this country—perhaps the only one—that doesn't want to see an increase in customers, but the government has managed yet another record of increasing the customers of food banks.

I mentioned the Regina Food Bank. On the food banks in Quebec and the umbrella organization in Quebec, I am sure my Bloc friends would love to hear the impact of this budget on food banks in Quebec, but, no, the Liberals are shutting it down. The result of that is the situation we're in now.

All of this could have been avoided if the Liberals had stuck to the original plan that they agreed to, which was to allow 20 hours of witnesses. Now we've come into another compromise, as we always do as the opposition, of saying we'll cut that back an hour; you could simply do it. I know that my colleagues and I are willing to work over the weekend. I'm sure the government members would have no problem working over the weekend to hear the witnesses to get that job done before clause-by-clause is completed.

I just don't understand why government members aren't willing to put in the time over the weekend to hear the witnesses. All they have to do now is agree and say—and I would certainly take a point of order from any of the Liberal members here saying this—“We agree. We agree on 19. We're wrong. We made a mistake. We could have avoided all of this as the government if we had only stuck to the plan that we agreed to on 20 hours.”

I'll challenge any of the Liberal members now to a point of order to say they will agree to the 19 hours and vote for this motion so that witnesses can be heard over the weekend. However, if government members aren't willing to do that and aren't willing to work on the weekend to deal with a half-trillion dollar spending budget, they will sit silent and I will continue.

There's the Parkdale Community Food Bank in Toronto. I'm sure that's an organization that MP Beech is familiar with. Certainly, they would be familiar with the impacts of his government's policies—and him as the parliamentary secretary—increasing their customer base's demands and the massive increase to their budget that they need, not only food donations but monetary donations, as a re-

sult of that. I was sure he would want to hear from the Parkdale Community Food Bank, but apparently he does not and neither do the other Liberals sitting around the table.

• (1140)

They would rather just sweep it all under the carpet and not have any witnesses telling them what they think the impacts of the budget are so that decisions can be made on clause-by-clause—as MP Blaikie said—that will allow members of Parliament to not only vote on those clauses based on instinct but to vote understanding the interest groups that are most impacted and what their views are. That would be an informed vote, which is something the Liberals obviously want to make sure members of Parliament don't have access to.

We have on the list that Algoma Orchards and their executive director want to appear. We have Grace Yan from the Philippines Chamber of Commerce in Calgary, who is also a small business owner. Why would we want to hear from small business owners about the increased tax burden that this bill and the 51 acts that it amends impose on them—not just in taxation but in regulatory burden—and how the impacts of inflation that have resulted from this and the subsequent interest rate increases have probably driven their sales downwards as a result of record spending and debt?

By the way, that will be \$1.3 trillion at the end of this five-year fiscal framework. The national debt will be \$1.3 trillion. What that builds up is a massive interest payment.

My colleague MP Chambers asked the Minister of Finance, in this committee meeting on this bill, what the interest rate on that debt is this year. Apparently the Minister of Finance didn't know that because she couldn't answer it. She wasn't willing to say “\$47 billion” this year. That's as much as we transfer to the provinces on health care.

It would be good to understand from the many health care organizations that could come before this committee, in the remaining nine hours of witness testimony that we're proposing, about the impact that's having on the federal transfers to health care and not being able to actually spend more of the taxpayer money that Ottawa receives on health care because we're having to pay this ever-increasing amount of interest to bankers on the record debt. The current Prime Minister and his father have together added \$1.1 trillion of debt to the taxpayer burden. What the interest on that debt—like that on your credit card—does is restrict the ability of the government to provide more adequate funding for health care. That is getting only about 22% of the cost. The government used to spend 50% of the cost of provincial health care. Now it's only 22% as \$47.8 billion is being spent on the interest on the debt. If we weren't doing that, then we could be back up to having the option to spend 50% of health care funding. Imagine how much better that would be.

We've heard in the news all this week about emergency room issues in the health care system across this country, from Alberta and the Prairies to Ontario to my part of the world, yet the government seems more intent on building up interest costs and paying bankers interest than it is on hearing from health care providers on this budget and on the impact of the constraint those interest payments place on the ability of the government to adequately support health care in our country.

The NAM Centre for Holistic Recovery and Dr. Gill, the founder of that, want to appear.

The Mustard Seed company in Calgary and the Hope Mission would like to appear to deal with the issue of homelessness. That is something we keep talking about but do not seem to be improving. The budget is fairly silent on that, although the framework allocated \$82 billion and committed that chronic homelessness would be cut in half by next year. In fact the Minister of Housing and his officials admitted last week at a public accounts committee that it has actually gone up by 12% and not down by half. That is yet another example of having government input—saying that \$82 billion of spending through this fiscal framework will produce results—but not really worrying too much about the output. When homelessness is going up instead of going down, we can see that the government, yet again in another critical area, is ineffective.

I'm sure they don't want to hear, in the next nine hours, from the Hope Mission about how the chronic homelessness, which they have to serve, is going up while the government idly sits by and, as my colleague MP Morantz said, spends record amounts of money for the lowest level of results we've seen.

• (1145)

The Greener Village food bank of Fredericton in my next-door province would like to appear—that's Dan Taylor—but it's apparently yet another food bank that will be silenced by the fact that these Liberals are unable and unwilling to allow witness testimony for another nine hours, as they originally agreed. Actually, they originally agreed for a total of 20 and have been willing to allow only 10. Presumably, that's because they didn't like what they were hearing.

The Calgary Food Bank and the Whitehorse Food Bank want to appear on the list and won't be given an opportunity to appear. BeTheChangeYYC, which is another Calgary-based organization, wants to appear.

Richard Dias wants to appear to talk about monetary policy. It's a critical part of something that is in the fiscal framework, because we have economic projections about what's going to happen, yet he won't be allowed to attend. This is because, as we know, the Prime Minister doesn't think about monetary policy, although most Canadians do as they see interest rates going up.

There's the Canadian Real Estate Association. Housing is a major issue, as we know. The CMHC projects that getting back to housing affordability in Canada requires the building of 3.5 million new housing units by 2030. At the current rate of about 200,000 housing units completed a year under this government, we will be two million short. Even by the standard set by the government's

own Crown corporation, there will be nowhere near that number of housing units built.

Even though they're spending \$82 billion in this budget over the fiscal framework to try to deal with issues of homelessness and the housing affordability crisis, the housing minister won't even say the words “housing affordability crisis”, although it is written that way in the Crown corporation that reports to him in their annual report, CMHC. This is just like how the Minister of Finance won't say the words “\$47 billion in interest”. She is embarrassed to say that, because she's embarrassed that's the result of her spending.

I think it's incredible that we could have a discussion on this bill without a discussion with the Canadian Real Estate Association on what is probably the primary thing concerning Canadians besides food inflation. Food inflation is now a structural food inflation, it appears, averaging about 10% a year. We see it every month, month after month, making it more unaffordable. Again, apparently, those are issues that the governing Liberals don't like to hear about, so they would rather impose a form of closure on witnesses in this committee by not scheduling the meetings required this week to do the 20 hours of witness testimony. There's still time.

MPs on the government side, MP Chatel and MP Beech, there's still time for you to commit right here and now. Wait. I didn't hear you doing that. I'll give you a moment again. You can come in and say, “Yes, we will finish this this weekend and we will do the 19 hours that this motion calls for.”

Wait. There's silence again. Apparently, the members on the government side are uninterested in hearing another nine hours of witnesses to have a total of 19 hours of witnesses on a half-trillion dollar spending bill. Why allow public organizations to—

• (1150)

Mr. Terry Beech: If the member opposite wants to give up the floor, I see that Julie's hand is raised.

The Chair: I don't know if he wants to do that, PS Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: I didn't think he wanted to.

The Chair: MP Perkins, were you looking to give up the floor?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Did it sound like it?

The Chair: It did to PS Beech. He was just inquiring.

I see MP Dzerowicz's hand is up.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Perhaps they want to be on the speakers list.

The Chair: We have MP Dzerowicz on the speakers list. She's ready to go, I think.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'm good for a little while too. I have a few more things I'd like to say about the obstructionist government that is trying to prevent this committee from hearing witnesses on the budget bill, as duly and honestly negotiated with the official opposition to have 20 hours of witnesses.... We had lots of time this week to do that, but the government has chosen not to do it and to bring in a form of closure.

I know that all members would love to hear from the Business Council of Alberta about the impacts that this budget bill the government is proposing will have on the business community in Alberta, but alas, the MPs on the Liberal side do not want to hear from them. If they did, they would be saying so any time right now and coming in with a point of order and clarifying, "Oh yes, MP Perkins, you're right. You've convinced me. We need to have another nine hours of witnesses and I, as a government member, am willing to spend the time this weekend or the rest of today to do the work because I know there are committee resources available."

All the government has to do is say yes.

The Business Council of Canada is a very important organization that is usually consulted with in pre-budget consultations, in budget consultations and after budgets. I know that the Minister of Finance may be speaking to them when she is occasionally in Ottawa. Perhaps not, but I have the belief that on national issues the Business Council, which I have met with on several occasions in the last six months, has a lot to say about the effectiveness of the Infrastructure Bank and the spending there, or the ineffectiveness of proposed clones of the Infrastructure Bank that believe, like the Infrastructure Bank does, that there are these massive amounts of money out there from the private sector, which—gee, if we only knew—would come in. The CGF that's proposed in the budget, in this bill, with a corporate structure, I'm sure will have the same effectiveness in attracting private sector money to its goals as the Infrastructure Bank.

I'm sure the Business Council—

The Chair: MP Perkins, I'm just going to hold you right there.

We're going to suspend, members, for the next 20 minutes or so.

Thank you.

• (1150) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1225)

The Chair: We are back, everybody.

To all the members, in speaking with MP Chatel, she was telling me she is going to run the half marathon this weekend here in Ottawa.

We're going to cheer you on, Sophie. Good luck.

Now we are back to MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, members.

Good Luck, MP Chatel. That's a lot of training to be able to do that. I admire you for that.

The Chair: MP Perkins, could you lower your boom?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Is that better?

The Chair: Yes, that's good. Thank you.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I don't know if you heard me congratulating MP Chatel for all the work that goes into preparing for a half marathon or a marathon, so congratulations on making it this far. Good luck on the weekend. I know the Ottawa marathon is a big event.

To refresh those who perhaps are not aware of what we're doing, I moved a motion on this issue of the amount of time the finance committee should spend on hearing from witnesses. It's really just a follow-up motion to the original one, which I think passed unanimously but was negotiated in good faith by all parties, that the committee spend 20 hours hearing from witnesses. That work was begun by the committee, but it has been cut short partially because the committee didn't schedule all the time this week, even though it had an end date of the coming Monday to have this completed. As a result of the movements, in my view, of the government members to limit it, the government now wants to limit this legislation—Bill C-47, the budget implementation act—to only the 10 hours of witnesses who have been heard so far.

My motion is built on the earlier motion that MP Beech put forward and that was passed by the committee, which called for 20 hours. I suggested, as a compromise, 19 hours, so that's only nine more hours of witnesses, which I think could easily still be done today, tomorrow and Sunday before clause-by-clause recommences on the deadline on Monday. There is no reason for government members not to want to hear from the witnesses. Specifically, that motion reads as follows:

That the committee reiterate its desire to hear a total of 20 hours of testimony in relation to Bill C-47, Budget Implementation Act No.1, as agreed to on May 16, 2023, and notwithstanding that motion, the committee maintain its goal of receiving 20 hours of witness testimony but not proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill until the committee hears a minimum of 19 hours of witness testimony.

That's what we're here discussing. In my discussion, before we took this break, I had offered, on several occasions, to have the government members say, "Hey, I think that's a reasonable alternative given this is a constituency break week. There was no reason why we didn't schedule 20 hours of witness meetings. You make a compelling point." MP Beech, as the parliamentary secretary, could easily say to the committee and say right here that we'll continue that now and have those witnesses. I've offered the opportunity, but I have been met with silence from the government members. I'll offer it again.

Silence again. I'll keep going then, and I'll discuss why that's important.

I had left off discussing a number of the witnesses who had been put forward and whom we should hear from in the committee, who would add to the expert testimony that's been received already. Most of the 10 hours of witness testimony did not put the government's budget in a good light, particularly that from the food banks, which have seen a massive increase in their customer base, unfortunately. The massive increase was not only in the donations required to supply that need but also in the donations of financial resources required to help them meet that need even though they operate, for the most part, across the country as volunteer organizations.

We are here in this dilemma of trying to argue and to use the tools that the opposition has to try to compel the government to live up to its agreement to hold 20 hours of hearings. We don't think that's a big commitment and didn't at the time. That's why we all agreed to it a week or so ago. For those watching, we are on a constituency break, which means parliamentary committees, for the most part, aren't meeting. Therefore, the resources of the House of Commons are there to support this committee in achieving its goal to hold hearings for 20 hours this week. However, the government chose not to do that.

● (1230)

As a reminder, this is dealing with hearings on this budget bill, which amends 51 acts of Parliament and sets the cumulative spending for the next five years at \$3.1 trillion, a record number. Again, it's been said in the past.... I will utilize what others have mentioned. If these numbers are to be believed, they would add another \$130 billion to Canada's national debt. The reason why I say, "to be believed"—we'd like to hear more witness testimony on this issue—is that, only six months ago, the government, in the fall economic statement, had a window for the first time.... I shouldn't say "the first time". For the second time in their eight years in power, they projected a window for a balanced budget within five years of the fiscal framework.

The last time the government did that was when they were freshly, newly elected in 2015. They said they'd run these tiny deficits as a stimulus, and then, in 2019, at the end of four years, they would be back to a balanced budget. As we know, that promise was broken. They ran larger budgets and deficits than they projected. They added \$110 billion to our national debt pre-COVID and, in 2019—the year it was supposed to be balanced—they actually ran a deficit budget. After re-election, they said, "Now we'll do it. What's really important is the accumulated debt, and the debt-to-GDP ratio is our anchor. We won't let it go. We want to see that continue to decline." Of course, as we entered COVID and afterwards, all pretense of having any kind of fiscal anchor declined.

It's perhaps the easiest job of any finance minister in history. Generally, finance ministers have to say no quite a bit. Am I right? There are a lot of good, worthy things other ministers have put forward. In every government in the past, the fiscal framework does not allow for those things. It requires choices and saying, "That actually is more important than this thing over here that we're already spending money on, so we'll stop doing that in order to do this more important thing." If your answer is that there is no end to the amount of debt we can accumulate and no end to the burden we can put on future generations, the finance minister's job is quite easy. It's basically to say yes. That's why we ended up in this situation.

The only thing she has not said yes to, of course, is accepting invitations from this committee. She has ignored most of those invitations, including the one we had a discussion on for this budget.

The national debt, under this plan, will rise to \$1.3 trillion. We have a debt ceiling in this country. It's \$1.8 trillion. This is going on in the U.S. right now—the discussion on whether the federal government will be able to default and not pay its employees or programs, because they've reached their debt ceiling. If we continue in this manner of unlimited deficits and spending, the way this government does, we're going to face the same issue in the not-too-distant future. This is why we need to hear from witnesses. I don't think another nine hours of hearing witnesses is too much to ask for.

One thing, of course, is that debt builds up interest. We've been spoiled by the interest payments the government has been paying, because we've been at these historically low rates prior to the last six months. Now we have a situation. As that debt rolls over, which it will, because of the bonds that have been bought on the market.... They're short-term and long-term bonds. When those short-term bonds roll over, they're going to roll over at higher interest rates, and those higher interest rates are going to be crippling. They're already significant in the amount we have to pay. We are actually paying as much, essentially, in interest on the accumulated debt as we transfer to provinces for health care.

● (1235)

With the growing exposure of the government to higher interest rates, it's not too hard to see that we could be in the position that the governments were in during the 1980s and early 1990s where 38¢ out of every tax dollar that came in from taxpayers went to pay interest on the debt. Back then, we paid more on the debt than we paid on health care and national defence just on interest. We made no progress on paying the debt down. We barely were treading water in paying interest.

The more that happens, and the likelihood that interest rates will rise.... We know we have projections from RBC and others that we're going to be in a recession this year, because the economy can't handle the level of debt, which is causing the inflation, which is causing the interest rate rises, which is causing the affordability crisis, from housing to food to fuel to everything this government is doing.

As part of that, of course, we have carbon tax one, which everybody knows about. Now carbon tax two is coming in the clean fuel standards. Built into this fiscal framework we're going to raise the carbon taxes one and two, plus the HST on top of that—because the government likes to tax its own tax—and that will rise to 61¢ in additional payment per litre of gas for people in this country. These are people who are already suffering and having trouble meeting the 10% annual food inflation that we're dealing with.

This is a serious issue, which requires more witnesses in order to have a serious consideration of such a massive spending bill.

There's \$84 billion in new tax credits for businesses in this budget and fiscal framework and this budget implementation bill. That's \$84 billion. It's not that long ago that this was almost the whole size of the federal government's spending.

A colleague of mine mentioned earlier the interest rate projection here, which we need to have more witnesses in to talk about. It would be good to have the ability to talk to Jack Mintz about this question, or the Business Council on national issues, both of whom are on the list to appear but aren't able to because the Liberals are cutting off the discussion with witnesses on their bill. That's because, of course, they're right and everybody else is wrong.

That attitude that they're right and everybody else is wrong is really hard to believe, as they've never met a fiscal target they've set. They broke the one they set only six months ago about having a balanced budget. They'll never have one in your lifetime or my lifetime.

In this budget, just this year alone—we know we're dealing with inflation—the budget projects that inflation is going to be 3.5%. That's 3.5%. It's been tracking at 6%, 5%, 4% for most of this year, so for that to be achieved, inflation, in July, is going to have to be at 2%. There's absolutely no way and no sign that this is going to happen, particularly if we go into recession.

I don't understand why the government is shutting down its own witness motion of 20 hours of witnesses back to 10 hours for any other reason than they don't want to hear from witnesses telling them that this is the absolute wrong thing to do. I know they're afraid, beyond afraid, of former minister of finance Bill Morneau, the random Liberal finance minister who is on the list and we'd like to see appear. He's been quite public that this is a government out of control on its spending. That's why we need to hear from him as a witness.

However, maybe that's the primary reason we're being shut down. It's perhaps bad enough that they hear from me, from my colleagues, from some of the witnesses over here or from other leading economists and business groups in this country about how bad this is for the economy, but to hear it from their own is perhaps cutting right to the heart of the Liberal belief that this is the right thing to do. The right thing to do is to continue on the path of causing 1.5 million people to have to go to food banks—a new record.

Let's just put that in perspective in terms of the spending this government is doing compared to what they inherited.

• (1240)

We know they like to blame the previous government for not passing legislation that prevents them from doing the things they've been doing. It is the Harper government's fault that we didn't pass legislation that prevented them from breaching the ethics act or dealing directly with Chinese interference in our elections. Somehow, over the last eight years, they've had no responsibility as a government. I know that's a big issue for them. In the last year of the Harper government, government spending was \$280 billion. It handed over a nice, fat \$1.9-billion surplus to this government, which, as I already said, proceeded to run deficit after deficit every single year since they've been in power, contrary to what they promised Canadians.

This budgets projects, I believe, \$456 billion in spending this year. That's up \$176 billion since 2015, a 63% increase in spending since the Liberals have been in power. The fiscal framework that Bill C-47 outlines, which we need to hear more witnesses on, says the projected government spending in five years.... The government publicly puts out five-year projections when they do budgets, every year. Five years from now, government spending will be an incredible \$543 billion. That's only if there are no new spending programs announced. We know that, every time there is an occasional appearance by the Minister of Finance in the House and she makes a statement about finance—whether it's a fall economic statement or a budget—she spends more. There hasn't been one where this government has not used the opportunity, every six months, to update and spend more money.

It's not to be believed that, in the next five years, there won't be any additional spending and that government spending, five years from now, will only be \$543 billion. I think, at the rate this government is going, it will probably be—if they see out the mandate of the supply agreement or costly coalition with the NDP, which will probably see us into a 2025 budget by this government—a projected \$700 billion in spending, maybe even closer to a trillion dollars, because there is no limit. We're skeptical on that and want to hear from witnesses about what that kind of spending plan will do to drive our economy into further productivity.

All you have to do is look at the OECD. I know the Minister of Finance likes to quote the IMF and other international things to say that we're this, that or the other thing in terms of our economic performance, but the OECD actually says we rank last in the OECD in per capita GDP growth—last. Six, seven or eight years ago, in 2015, when this government took over, we were one of the top in the OECD in per capita performance relative to the United States. We were so for decades, including into 2015. We were essentially parallel. We were just as productive as the economy in the United States. Today, the OECD's numbers project that we are 40% less productive based on that measure of GDP per capita growth. We are 40% less productive than the United States.

What's happened since 2015? What's happened is this: a record of this government spending with abandon and focusing, now, on their industrial strategy of branch plant economy and not actually on producing invention, creation or commercialization of Canadian technology. They just want to build things for other countries. Volkswagen believes there is no Canadian technology being used in that \$14-billion, massive and largest-ever government subsidy to one company. You reap what you sow.

As the Minister of Finance said only a month before that, matching the Inflation Reduction Act was a “race to the bottom”. Apparently, that's something she's now proud of. We're going to be doing that, since what happened with Volkswagen inevitably led to what's happening with Stellantis now and the demand by every other....

• (1245)

The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry brags that everybody wants to come here. Of course they want to come here when we have an unending subsidy barrel to subsidize companies that have more revenue every year than the Government of Canada. This government says that's a great strategy. The great strategy is that they wouldn't come here if we didn't subsidize them, so let's subsidize everything they want to do. There's no end.

At the end of all of that, you end up with this situation they have with Stellantis, where Stellantis says, “They're treating us differently from our competitors, so we'll go to the U.S. We'll go somewhere else.” You end up in these blackmail situations like that in the race to the bottom.

The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry go around saying it's Ontario's fault. It's not the federal government's fault that it's subsidizing Volkswagen for \$14 billion a year. It's the Ontario government's fault now. The Ontario government needs to do what they're doing. It needs to come out and print money and run deficits beyond comprehension in order to do it. Everybody should pour gasoline on the fire and adopt this strategy.

I am probably the only person at this meeting today who has actually read those contracts. I could share a lot with them. I'd be open to any questions from the government as to what's in those contracts. They are shockingly bad contracts, but there will be more to come on that. I can hardly wait to see the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report on that, because he has access to it too, and I suspect it will be scathing.

Getting back to that, \$543 billion is not a believable number, because no number this government has put out in the budget plan is

believable, and we need to have witnesses on the economic side of the ledger come and talk about those issues in the committee. If that \$543 billion were believable, it is \$263 billion more than the government spent in 2015. That's a 94% increase—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Can I jump in on a point of order, please, Mr. Chair?

I apologize to Mr. Perkins for the interruption.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Any time, MP Blaikie.

The Chair: I have MP Blaikie on a point of order.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm looking for some guidance on how debate will proceed, so what I'd like to do is explain the circumstances that I'm concerned may develop because of the way this debate is proceeding. I'd then like to look to guidance from you, and you may want to consult with the clerk before giving an answer. That's fine, but I want to get this out before Monday.

If we proceed with debate on this motion and we don't get back to the clauses, what I'm concerned about is that, the way things are currently structured, we're going to go to clause-by-clause at, I believe, 4 p.m. on Monday. As I said, that's something I support and I don't feel that I'm—

The Chair: MP Blaikie, it's at 4:30 on Monday.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I say, that's something I support. I won't revisit the reasons I gave earlier as to why I unfortunately don't feel I'm in a position to support an extension of time, despite having some sympathy for certain arguments being made.

What happens then, according to the motion, is that we proceed to vote on every clause and every amendment without further debate or discussion. If all of the time we have before then is used up debating the motion, that means we're going to be in a position of voting on clauses—but I think more importantly and more especially on amendments—without being able to put any reasons on the record for why we voted the way we voted. I think that's the most important thing. We will also—and this is important but I think perhaps of secondary importance, which is not to say not important—miss out on the opportunity to ask each other questions about our own amendments, to seek clarification and to get clarification from officials about certain clauses.

Here's the thing, Mr. Chair. In light of that concern, my instinct would be to say I'd like to get the floor. Then I'd like to go through all the amendments in advance of 4:30 p.m. on Monday and talk about all of the amendments that have so far been proposed and give my own reasoning and the position of the New Democratic Party in respect of those amendments in advance of the votes.

However, my own reading of the situation is that this would be out of order, because until amendments are moved, they are not public. Therefore, I'm not in a position to speak to amendments that are simply proposed and won't be public. If they're not moved until the process that will be triggered at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, there's no way for me to talk about them in advance, which means I'm currently in a position where, unless we wrap up debate on these motions, nobody is going to be able to give a position on the amendments. We'd actually be out of order doing that. It would be an issue of parliamentary privilege that one could complain about, and rightfully so.

I'm at a loss as to what to do, and I'm looking for guidance. I made an attempt earlier to beseech my colleagues to allow us to do the work on clause-by-clause. Right now that's not the trajectory we're on, to get to that work. Maybe that trajectory will change. There are people around the table who may know things about what they intend to do or not do, which I am not privy to, but I am very concerned about the situation that is developing, and I am very concerned that currently the rules of order, rightly in this case, I think—I'm not taking issue with the rules—prevent me from doing the one thing that I might be able to do to get our positions on the record in advance of the vote.

I'm looking for guidance from you, Mr. Chair, and I'm looking for a way, because I don't know if there's a solution to this that you can just effect on your own. I would turn to the committee and say I think we need to figure out what we're going to do about this, because I think it would be a travesty if we got to 4:30 p.m. on Monday... I respect that we have Conservative members of the committee who are set in their position. Others are set in the position that we need to get on with it and that there has to be some end in sight on this. Some of us thought we were close to that. I get that's an issue. I'm not trying to participate in that debate, but, if everybody just sticks to their current position right now, we're going to create a really bad outcome that's not becoming, I think, of a senior committee of Parliament.

I wanted to raise this with you. I'm happy to get some advice from you, Mr. Chair, as I said, not necessarily immediately but perhaps before we close on Friday, and perhaps with enough time for there to be a little bit of discussion for the committee to figure out if we really are stuck in the dilemma that I think we are. That would be just one dilemma we're stuck in. Perhaps we might find a way out to at least be able to provide, I think, one of the very basic things we owe to Canadians, which is a statement on the record as to why we're voting for or against certain suggestions with respect to the legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie.

I did look to our experts to the right and to the left here—Mr. Méla, our legislative clerk, as well as our clerk Alexandre Roger—and you are correct in all you have said. There would not be an opportunity to debate those, and when we get to 4:30 on Monday, we would go to clause-by-clause voting on those without any debate.

We do have, I believe, 682 clauses. To actually group some of those at that time, we would need unanimous consent, so you can just think about the amount of time it would take to get through those 680-plus clauses for the members. That is where we are.

Mr. Méla, would you like to add anything to that, to what MP Blaikie had to say, in terms of whether there is a way out of this conundrum?

No, we don't see that there is. There is no way.

Is this on this a point of order, PS Beech?

• (1255)

Mr. Terry Beech: Yes. I hear what Mr. Blaikie is saying and, unfortunately, it's a tough circumstance that we're in. Almost anything at committee is fixable by unanimous consent, if I recollect correctly. I certainly agree that members should be able to put a position on the record, and we're not currently providing that.

Question period on Monday generally ends around 3:15 or so. There is a world where we could all agree to perhaps meet at 3:30, an hour before the votes begin, and we could equally divide the time among members, so people could put some things on the record. That's an idea we would be willing to consider, but of course that would require unanimous consent.

The Chair: MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: On that same point, Mr. Chair, I certainly appreciate Mr. Beech's suggestion.

My concern is that, until we get to the clause, as I understand it, procedurally you can't move the amendment. We would have to rip through all the clauses somehow, and then get to each clause separately, and then move.... We can't talk about the amendments until they're actually moved. We can't move amendments for a particular clause. We have amendments for clauses that are at the back end of the bill. We'd have to get through 400-some clauses in order to move the amendment, and we can't talk about the amendment until it's moved. I hear what PS Beech is saying, and I appreciate it. There may be a way through unanimous consent.

Another way we might do this—and here I would just beseech my Conservative colleagues to consider this—is to meet earlier in the day on Monday, so that we have some of the 10 hours. It's been nine hours so far, and it will be 10 by the end of our meeting today. It would be a way to try to recover a bit of that time. That would allow us to cycle through clauses. We would have to understand, first of all, that we were going to group clauses by unanimous consent and dispense with many of the clauses relatively quickly.

I wonder if we can go back to clause-by-clause instead of filibustering on this motion. Could we get through a number of clauses, get through to a point where we can move amendments, discuss the amendments and dispense with them?

Right now, the Conservatives are on track to filibuster until 4:30 on Monday anyway, at which point we're going to do all the voting. Could they just filibuster on the last clause after we've dealt with all the amendments? The effect will be the same, except with a very significant difference, which is that the committee will have.... Honestly, I thought this would have broken by now, so I wasn't even thinking about these things until the midpoint of this meeting, when I realized this filibuster is not going to break, and we're going to go until 4:30 on Monday. We're going to have some perverse outcomes, but how do we try to avoid those outcomes?

I get that the Conservatives want to go until 4:30, when we start voting, and I believe that is what's going to happen at this point, because everyone is pretty dug in. Could we do the clause-by-clause work, and then resume the filibuster either on a motion or on the final clause right up until 4:30 on Monday?

The Conservatives will get to use all of the time that is there to protest. I may not agree entirely with the protest, but I defend the rights of parliamentarians to do that. I just don't want to see it get in the way of the important work we're tasked with doing by the people who elected us.

If we could get to do the work, and then have the protest continue, at least we won't have sacrificed the opportunity to do our job and to make ourselves accountable for the decisions we make about the amendments being proposed on the bill. Demonstrating that level of accountability for ourselves is an important thing to do. We talk a lot about accountability for others. This is a way we can create accountability for ourselves and go right to 4:30 on Monday if that's what certain members of the committee want to do.

I'll throw that out there for consideration by committee members as a way to possibly proceed, but I am very concerned that.... I would encourage you, Mr. Chair, if you can, to convene as early as possible on Monday, so we have time to do this work. I respect it may be a frustration to some, but let's try to do this work and then have the protest, instead of having the protest make us unaccountable for the decisions we will ultimately make beginning at 4:30 on Monday.

I'm not quite sure how to proceed. I'll look to you, Mr. Chair, for direction, and I appreciate that folks will require some time to consider this. I am not looking to put anyone on the spot, because I don't think that will be conducive to the best possible outcome. I'd like folks to reflect on it a bit, but if we could make some kind of decision about how to proceed on Monday, including meeting a bit earlier to have more time to do clause-by-clause, that would be a positive thing.

I would be supportive of that, and there is a way, as I said, to honour our own work and responsibilities and to be accountable without depriving Conservatives of their right to protest until the deadline they had previously agreed to.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie.

There's a lot to digest there, and I'm looking, with the legislative clerk and the clerk, for a path forward.

I am going to suspend at this time so I can confer with them to be able to digest and mull over some of the things that MP Blaikie has put on the table.

• (1300)

(Pause)

• (1305)

The Chair: We're back, everyone.

MP Blaikie was correct in all he had to say. We are kind of at a stalemate with this and we're stuck. It looks as though we're coming back.... It depends on what happens right now with the discussion on this motion by MP Perkins. It's MP Perkins' decision.

MP Perkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the thoughtful words by MP Blaikie. I think it's fair to say that some of our folks are thinking about that. In the interim, as they do, I will continue and we'll go from there.

As I was pointing out, the budget projects spending going up 94%. That's obviously not a revenue issue, since revenue is projected to go from \$282 billion in 2015 to what's in this fiscal framework at the end, which is \$543 billion. In other words, government tax revenue will have gone up by \$261 billion, or 92%.

It's not a question of whether or not we have a problem where we've had to meet all of these needs, or the government has felt it had to meet all of these needs without adequate financial backing and was forced into this situation. Obviously it wasn't, when revenue will have gone up by the end of this by 92%. Revenue, in other words, for those watching, is taxes. How much you are sending to Ottawa is going up by that amount.

MP Blaikie earlier, a couple of interventions ago, said he was concerned that Canadians don't know what the heck is going on when they're watching this, and I get that. The whole issue of these discussions that have happened in this committee and in others is that, when you're in opposition and you believe there is a parliamentary tradition—some of it is written rules and some of it is just tradition—the examination of government legislation happens in certain ways.... When that doesn't happen and it doesn't give the opposition adequate time to question or examine, either through expert witnesses or ministers of the Crown, it leaves the opposition with little opportunity but to use the few tools we have to try to bring the discussion back to what we think is an open, fair and democratic process.

We had a long discussion, as the chair has pointed out on several occasions. We had about 27 hours of discussion on whether the Minister of Finance should appear for two hours. I know that seems silly. It could have been prevented at any stage during that process by the Minister of Finance simply committing and guaranteeing 100% that she was going to come for two hours, which she was unwilling to do as she had already missed three other invitations and chosen not to appear.

We have this situation where we now have compressed time for witnesses because the minister wouldn't appear for two hours. That could have all been resolved. If the minister had agreed up front to appear for two hours, all of these witnesses and more could have been heard from, and there would have been lots of time for clause-by-clause. However, the government, in the management of the agenda, chose not to make that very simple commitment to have the minister come, do her mere two hours—presumably she knows every aspect of this budget well enough to be able to defend it at a parliamentary committee—and defend her budget. The government chose not to do that.

It wasn't the opposition who chose to do that. We chose to use the only tool we have available to us to try to get the minister to show up. We believe she showed up, unlike with the last three invitations, because of that effort of finding Freeland or freeing Freeland.

The finding Freeland exercise was successful to some extent, because the minister actually came for this invitation for one hour, and then at the last minute added another 20 minutes to her appearance. It was hardly enough time to go through this spending bill—it's an omnibus bill, which this government promised never to use—which amends acts that have nothing to do with the budget, like the Elections Canada Act or the ocean protection act. These things have nothing to do with the budget.

• (1310)

That barely left us with any time to ask her anything or to probe into those questions. The minister was unwilling to even answer how much interest her spending plan actually generates and what the result of that is. What do we lose in terms of the ability to do things to help Canadians by paying that interest?

We thought that we were through all that. She appeared. We were back on schedule.... Well, we're not on schedule, but we were back to the meat of it. Let's hear from witnesses. We all, in good faith, agreed to 20 hours of witnesses. We were partway through that when the government decided that we were not going to hear from witnesses for 20 hours. We were only going to hear them for 10 hours for some strange reason or because that's what's been done. This is a break where that could have been done. It could have easily been accommodated in the five workdays and still could be accommodated this weekend.

To MP Blaikie's question about how we break through this, one way to break through this is for the Bloc members and the NDP member to support my motion and finish the nine hours over the next couple of days of witness testimony before Monday, so that we can get to that part of the work that they want. It's a simple solution, in my mind, as to supporting my motion. That will allow us to get on with things, get that part of the business done as a committee

and move on to clause-by-clause by the 26th, like the motion says and which we all agreed to.

However, that 26th was on the condition that we do 20 hours of witnesses, not 10 hours. In this case, my motion only calls for 19. That's only an additional nine hours to hear from witnesses.

Some of the witnesses, we know, have not been able to come during the nine hours. When I left off, we were talking about the Business Council of Alberta and the Business Council of Canada.

During COVID, one of the hardest hit of the many hard-hit industries—basically every industry was hard hit—was the tourism industry. It's very important. It's the second-, if not the third-largest industry in my riding of South Shore, with the beautiful towns of Lunenburg and Mahone Bay. Summer tourism is a big part of our economy. We haven't had an opportunity to hear about whether or not the measures in this budget help or hurt the tourism industry in Canada. Hearing from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada would be helpful, but we will not get the opportunity to do that if we are limited to the 10 hours of witnesses who have been put forward already.

The Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association.... There are a lot of things in this budget around agricultural policies and around the fiscal framework. We have the impact of the fuel taxes and what that's doing. We have the fertilizer taxes this government has been adding and what those are doing to reduce our productivity and make everything more expensive for our farmers who grow and make the food we all need and eat. Everybody wants to shop local and buy Canadian food.

Why can't we hear the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association talk about the impacts of the economic policies in this budget on their important industry?

As we all know, the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association also wants to appear but has not been able to because we have unceremoniously broken the agreement that was made to hear from witnesses for 20 hours. We didn't break it. We want to hear them, but the government has broken that agreement that we would hear witnesses for 20 hours. That's not a lot. It's two hours for the minister and 20 hours for witnesses on a half-trillion dollar a year spending bill. It's \$3.1 trillion over the next five years.

These are things that are important to these groups that drive our economy and our food. They understand the impact this budget has had on our food prices. The cost of feed, the cost of growing, the cost of fertilizer, the cost of taxes—all these are compounding and creating this structural 10% annualized food inflation that we have, which is causing people to have to choose between eating, heating and paying their mortgage or rent.

These are things that obviously the government doesn't want to hear witnesses talking about because those witnesses might change the government's mind and might cause some disruption among government members about why we're doing these things that have hurt our folks so much.

• (1315)

Harvest Manitoba is another important association, and the Canadian Canola Growers Association is also very important. They've been subjected to a lot of unfair trade barriers by China's retaliatory stuff in that closed economy that they have against our canola industry, and they've also been impacted in their growing by the fuel standard taxes that everyone is doing in this government, and that they've done in budget after budget. Most of this goes up every year.

The carbon tax is scheduled to go up every year. The two taxes combined, carbon tax one and carbon tax two, combined with the tax on the tax, will add 61¢ a litre to gasoline and fuel. That of course, by its nature, is inflationary and will drive inflation and food costs up more, on top of the government spending that is unrelated to the imposition of these taxes.

Will the government allow those who grow our food to speak about the impacts of this budget and this budget bill? The answer appears to be, "No," and I could give them an opportunity right now to do a point of order if they'd like to, because I know they're shy.

In terms of that point of order now, MP Beech could easily say, as the parliamentary secretary: "You're right, MP Perkins, and we're going to hear over the next two days another nine hours of witnesses so that we get to the clause-by-clause on Monday and live up to the agreement that we made with the opposition for 20 hours of hearings." So—

• (1320)

Mr. Terry Beech: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, and responding to that particular point, how can we guarantee that you wouldn't filibuster? The last time we had witnesses you filibustered for 27 hours, if I'm correct, Mr. Chair, which is exactly what put us in this situation in the first place.

The Chair: I have Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I don't think I can take credit for 27 hours of filibustering.

Mr. Terry Beech: That's fair. You were probably at 23 hours.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Beech.

Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You're talking about the global official opposition in that, I assume, MP Beech.

I think it's fair to say that MP Chambers and others on our side would agree that this would stop if you voted for our motion now. I certainly would stop, and I'm sure you would like me to stop.

That's the simple way to have it happen: to say, "Yes, we'll agree to your motion if you agree to stop the filibuster." I can say that,

yes, I'll stop talking on this issue of meeting 20 hours, or 19 hours, of witnesses in total, if the parliamentary secretary would agree to that motion.

The committee can do that on the weekend. I know I'm prepared to do it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

How many motions have the Conservatives sent to the clerk on various points?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll look to the clerk.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: The motions that have been sent to the clerk's office are confidential, just like any motion submitted by any committee member.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Okay.

With regard to the witnesses listed by Mr. Perkins, I want to mention that it was the Conservatives who prevented all of them from testifying before the committee.

If we vote in favour of the motion, what other motion are they going to introduce to keep up the filibuster? It makes no sense.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Chatel.

[*English*]

We'll go back to MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Maybe I could be helpful to the member, to help her understand, as I've said, that none of this would have happened if her party had not broken the agreement on the original motion to hear 20 hours of witnesses—

Mr. Terry Beech: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'll like to clarify further to Mr. Perkins that the motion itself has actually not been broken. That is false.

You can read the motion. There is nothing in this motion that has been broken, and that is why the chair continues to follow this motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent. Please stop misleading the public by saying things that are false.

This motion was adopted. It's written down. That's the fundamentally frustrating part of it. I said that I wasn't going to fall for this foolishness of the Conservatives misleading people again, so we have to write it down so that everybody is clear on what we agreed to.

We wrote it down. It's in writing and it was agreed to unanimously. I can't help it if MP Lawrence didn't understand what he agreed to on behalf of your party. He is a lawyer. I'm not a lawyer. I have full confidence that he understood every single clause that was in this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Beech.

MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you, MP Beech for that.

I don't believe it's false, because there have been only 10 hours of witnesses, and the motion was for 20 hours. The government hasn't agreed to having 20 hours. In fact, it stopped that, so the ability of the committee to hear the whole 20 hours of meetings is patently false. There haven't been 20 hours.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I recognize MP Chatel on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Perkins says that we heard only 10 hours of testimony. However, there were 27 hours of systematic obstruction by—

[*English*]

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting. I am not getting interpretation.

MP Chatel, just a moment.

I apologize. Could you just repeat your point of order?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Mr. Perkins mentioned that we heard only 10 hours of testimony. However, the Conservatives filibustered for 27 hours to prevent witnesses from testifying. That's the problem.

The problem is that the Conservatives opposed hearing from the witnesses, and now they are opposed to hearing from the officials who have come to testify on this. What are they going to oppose next? They just like to hear themselves talk, and we're a bit fed up.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chatel.

We'll go back to MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I will tell you, MP Chantel, who is fed up, and that is the official opposition. The reason we had 27 hours is because you couldn't make the single commitment for the minister to appear for two hours, two measly hours for a half-trillion dollar spend in an annualized budget. That is not too much to ask of a minister, who needs to be accountable, like every other minister, to parliamentary committees as part of the process.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: On that point of order—

[*English*]

The Chair: MP Chatel.

Mr. Rick Perkins: My point is on yours.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: On that point of order, Mr. Chair, I would point out that during the 27 hours they insisted on talking about fishing and eels, the Minister of Finance was scheduled to appear before the committee. She did appear for an hour and 40 minutes.

This is childish. I'm sorry, but there's no other way to put it.

[*English*]

Grow up.

The Chair: MP Chatel—

Mr. Rick Perkins: What's ridiculous is—

The Chair: MP Perkins, just hang on, and also MP Chatel.

First is the use of parliamentary language by everybody. I know everybody is a bit heated, and we've been at this for quite a while, but I ask for decorum and respect from everybody.

MP Perkins, as much as you can, could you be focused and relevant to your motion?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Well, my motion is about having 19 hours of witnesses, not the 10 hours that have happened so far, and that brings us back to the original motion. I know MP Chantel asked how many motions we have put forward. Perhaps it was amendments—

The Chair: MP Perkins, just to correct you, because you have done it a few times, and it's probably because you don't know. It's MP Chatel, not Chantel.

Thank you, MP Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'm trying not to use first names, so, MP Chatel, I apologize for that.

The first original motion by MP Lawrence was the following:

That the committee reiterate its desire to hear a total of 20 hours of testimony in relation to Bill C-47, Budget Implementation Act No.1, as agreed to on May 16, 2023, and notwithstanding that motion, the committee not proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill until the committee hears 20 hours of witness testimony.

After much discussion the government adjourned the debate on that original motion. Then MP Lawrence proposed another alternative in the spirit of compromise and trying to find a way through that. I'll read that one, since the government members seem to have lost track of these:

That given the committee has yet to achieve its objective of obtaining 20 hours of witness testimony on Bill C-47, notwithstanding the motion adopted by this committee on May 16, the committee allocate an additional 10 hours for witness testimony and that clause by clause begin immediately following the 20th hour of witness testimony.

I think that's an eminently reasonable motion. The government then adjourned it on that motion, being unwilling to go the full 20 hours as was originally agreed to.

In the spirit, again, of compromise, MP Morantz proposed a motion that said the following.

That in relation to the motion adopted on May 16, 2023, the committee reaffirm its intention to receive a cumulative duration of 20 hours of testimony concerning Bill C-47, also known as the Budget Implementation Act, No.1. However, irrespective of the aforementioned motion, it is ordered that the committee refrain from initiating the clause-by-clause examination of the bill until the committee has completed the full 20 hours of witness testimony and that once the committee has completed 20 hours of witness testimony, clause-by-clause consideration begin on the business day following the culmination of testimony.

Again, there was more discussion on that, and again that motion was in fact voted down today.

We've proposed three compromises already to try to get back to the original intent of the motion that the government signed off on, which was for 20 hours of witness testimony before next Monday. That has led us to the motion that's on the floor now, which I proposed:

That the committee reiterate its desire to hear a total of 20 hours of testimony in relation to Bill C-47, Budget Implementation Act No.1, as agreed to on May 16, 2023, and notwithstanding that motion, the committee maintain its goal of receiving 20 hours of witness testimony but not proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill until the committee hears a minimum of 19 hours of witness testimony.

Each one of those was put forward in the spirit of trying to find a path forward, which we have been stopped from doing at any time, to get back to our original desire as a committee of Parliament to actually hear 20 hours—

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: A number of Liberals are in the room, while our Conservative colleagues are participating remotely. I just want to know who is online right now. Is it just Mr. Perkins representing the Conservatives?

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order.

The Chair: MP Chatel, we don't speak about the members who may or may not be online or in the room, but we're listening to MP Perkins right now. I see many of the members popping up now in front of us. They are all saying hi.

Hello, Mr. Morantz.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: We can't see Mr. Chambers.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Chatel.

[*English*]

MP Perkins, go ahead.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you.

The attendance call reminds me of school. I see Mr. Chambers waving at the Liberal members to make sure that they know he is present as well.

As I was saying, I think we've had a number of attempts to try to find a path forward to get us to the original 20 hours or something close to that, which is again not a lot to ask on a bill that amends 51 acts of Parliament and on which we have witnesses. I know some of those meetings that happened last week were robust but still challenging, because with six, seven, eight witnesses at the table at a time, it was tough to get all the breadth of viewpoints across adequately in the time. I think the witnesses provided compelling testimony as to why there are challenges and provided members of Parliament with lots of good insight to enable thoughtful amendments to this important bill.

Every finance bill is vitally important. No matter which government puts it forward, it's important. It's the most fundamental element, I think, of our duty as parliamentarians—to go to MP Blaikie's thoughts earlier.

One of the most important elements of what we do in any parliamentary tradition is to let witnesses testify on proposed government spending and to make educated judgments on how a member of Parliament should support and vote for that. It's fairly fundamental and goes back to the creation of our Westminster parliamentary system—the role and authority of members of Parliament—and back in those days, the Crown, which had spending authority. We have that responsibility here, which I think everyone takes seriously.

For those who want to know, as MP Blaikie said, what the heck is going on, it is that we're trying to ask for these modest things as the opposition, which is the attendance of the Minister of Finance for two hours—which she still hasn't done—or a modest 20 hours of testimony. To give those watching an idea, that's only 10 meetings. It's not very much on a bill that is so fundamental to our responsibility as parliamentarians to scrutinize and review and understand and ensure that the value that taxpayers expect is being delivered. It is part of the plan.

Yes, part of that role is to question when we think that spending isn't being done properly and when budget planning isn't being done properly. It's pretty hard to sort through all of the budget promises that were made every six months in the last eight years by this government when they've not met a single target. It's like the climate plan. They've never met a target on the climate plan. Now, I guess, the Minister of Environment must take the lead from Finance, which has basically made promises every six months in the last eight years with budget documents and economic statements, promising certain economic performance of this government, and has missed every single target.

I know those watching will be very shocked to know that they never undershot their projection, that they never underspent their projection, that they produced less debt than the government thought they would. They were terribly conservative, as Paul Martin used to be when he was finance minister in the Chrétien government. He was terribly conservative. He actually always underspent his budget.

This Liberal government has not prudently done that. In fact, when the minister was before the committee last week for her brief and shining appearance, she was asked about the \$12 billion. Believe it or not, folks, there is \$12 billion of unallocated spending, meaning that they're going to spend the \$12 billion, they just haven't figured it out yet. I would have thought this government was expert at knowing how to spend the money, but it has provided itself with a large cushion of \$12 billion to spend in the next year on things it hasn't even thought of yet. When asked about that, the minister said that it was for things like Volkswagen.

• (1335)

Wow. I can't believe that of the \$12-billion spend in the next year.... I asked her—but she obfuscated on it, shockingly—why she would be spending any portion of that \$12 billion in the next year on Volkswagen, since Volkswagen doesn't even have a plant here. What could she possibly be spending that money on, if it's not that? That was the best example the Minister of Finance could come up with.

These are the issues that we have to have witnesses for and it's why we need to have people before this committee to help us sort through this mess of a spending plan.

I know that officials—it's hard to tell here—from the Department of Finance are there. I would just plead with you—and I'm sure you are pleading with your ministers, this one and the one before—to provide some restraint, to actually say no once in a while, to not say that we're going to spend this record amount this year, \$3.1 trillion in the next five years and add, as part of that, at least \$12 billion that they have set aside just to come in on budget.

We know that the \$12 billion will not cover it. That's what always happens, since this government misses every single budget target. They actually have never come in and said that they've produced less debt than they projected. They actually come in every time, every six months, and say that they're producing more debt. They promise less debt than the last one and they promise that it will only be a deficit of \$44 billion, \$47 billion or whatever billion they want to do this year, but it comes in higher than that. They say that it's somebody else's fault.

In fact, when asked about it, the Minister of Finance, in committee last week said that it's the banks' fault. She said that she bases her budgets on the bank projections, and the banks must have gotten it wrong.

It's the old “dog ate my homework” excuse that people used to give in school. When you guys were all in high school, you knew of students who always had some excuse for why they weren't able to produce their report. In this case, the Minister of Finance continues to use the “dog ate my homework” excuse and it's somebody else's fault. It's the fault of the war in Ukraine, it's a global recession,

or they forced her to spend so much during COVID. Only half of it was on COVID. The other half was on things unrelated to COVID, but she'll use that as an excuse to blow the doors off our spending. She says that it's somebody else's fault, when it's their own fault.

They make the decisions. They propose the budget. The Liberal members of this committee and the Liberal members in the House, combined with their coalition partner, the NDP, consistently say, “That's okay. We forgive you.” Being a Liberal means always having to say you're sorry about everything, but never mind. Now we have another situation where we're trying to get people who aren't from this government with the PMO's talking points to come before the committee and discuss parts of this massive omnibus bill that is being proposed here. We're only asking about the basics of this budget. We can't get into the details.

I have more witnesses here I would like to go through, but in the spirit of compromise and in reflection of what MP Blaikie said earlier, I would like to move the following motion, Mr. Chair:

That notwithstanding the May 16th motion passed by the committee—

• (1340)

The Chair: MP Perkins, hang on. We're going to suspend for a second.

MP Perkins, you cannot move a motion when we have not dealt with the motion that is on the floor. We need to deal with the motion on the floor that you were speaking to before you have the floor to be able to move another motion.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Then I won't propose my compromise amendment that would have, I think, addressed some of MP Blaikie's concerns. At this stage, I will continue with some of the witnesses who have not been able to speak on this important piece of legislation. I think I left off at the Canadian Canola Growers Association.

The next one, I know, is the Fish, Food and Allied Workers union. Now, I know I get eye rolls from the government side when we start talking about fisheries, but I have 7,000 commercial fishermen in my riding. The Fish, Food and Allied Workers union, FFAW as it's known, is part of Unifor, a very important organization, particularly representing those in Newfoundland. They have lots of things they would like to say about not only the overall economic thrust of this Bill C-47, but also the amendments that this omnibus bill makes to the ocean protection act. They represent thousands and thousands of harvesters throughout Newfoundland. You would be familiar perhaps with this if you've been reading the press lately, because they've been dealing with the issue of the crab pricing in Newfoundland.

Previous members talked about the fact that we've not heard from any first nations or indigenous groups. There is a long list of those organizations that we should be hearing from, as well as those in the hotel association, and the construction and municipal associations—many more.

I know that some of the folks around the table, the Liberals, would appreciate this. I believe, Mr. Chair, that I can make a motion to adjourn the debate, which I will make now.

• (1345)

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, you cannot adjourn your own motion, because it would be another motion. You would be debating two motions at the same time, so you cannot do that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Just on that point of order, Mr. Chair, a motion to adjourn is a dilatory motion. It's not a substantive motion, so it's not the kind of motion that you would typically have on the floor in the same way as you would another substantive motion. I wouldn't mind a little more explanation as to why it would be in order for one member to move adjournment but not another.

Mr. Terry Beech: I would go if it was in order.

The Chair: I'm just going to allow the clerk to define the ruling in the book, and then we will read it into the record.

We're going to suspend.

• (1345)

(Pause)

• (1350)

The Chair: We're back.

I'll look to the clerk to read the ruling from the book.

The Clerk: In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, page 550, under the heading "Motions to Adjourn the Debate", the second paragraph reads:

A motion to adjourn the debate is in order when moved by a Member who has been recognized by the Speaker to take part in debate on a question before the House. It may not be moved during Routine Proceedings, except during debate on motions moved under the rubric "Motions". The mover of the motion being debated may not move to adjourn the debate since this would involve moving two motions simultaneously. In addition, the restrictions which apply to motions to adjourn the House also apply to motions to adjourn the debate.

The Chair: Members, is there any discussion on that?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Can we challenge the chair so that we might have an adjournment motion for this debate?

I'll call for that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: There's been a challenge.

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Do we go back to MP Perkins?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I believe we should go directly to a vote on adjourning the debate, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes. We'll go to the vote on adjourning debate.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: It's unanimous, so we're going to adjourn the debate.

I saw PS Beech's hand up.

• (1355)

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you.

I am very happy that the entirety of the committee was able to agree on something in the last number of hours, but I think it's worth recapping what we just went through.

The Conservatives put forward a motion. It was defeated. That was Mr. Lawrence's original motion. They then brought forward a

very similar motion. It wasn't defeated, but we ran out of time listening to the Conservatives discuss their own motion instead of listening to our officials and running through clause-by-clause. It was very similar to what we did when witnesses were lined up at the table and the Conservatives wouldn't let us listen to them.

Now—today—Mr. Perkins has introduced a motion that was exactly the same as the one we already defeated, except that, instead of listing 20 hours, they listed 19 hours, so it was different—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Where is that point of order coming from?

MP Perkins, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes.

I'm sorry, MP Beech.

I presume we have a new speakers list. Could you please put me on the new list?

The Chair: I'll let you know that I have PS Beech, MP Dzerowicz, MP Morantz and MP Perkins.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Could I get on your list after Mr. Perkins, please, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

It's MP Blaikie after that. Is there anybody else?

No. Okay. We'll go back to PS Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think I was describing the latest motion, which was introduced by Mr. Perkins, a member of Parliament, who, in most recent memory—certainly in the last 30 days—has the running record for most filibustering time, at least at this committee. It's been quite impressive actually. Mr. Perkins introduced a motion that was substantially the same as the one we defeated before, but instead of 20 hours of testimony, it was 19 hours of testimony—

The Chair: Hang on, MP Beech. Somebody has their mike on. Please mute yourselves, except for the person speaking.

Thank you.

Go ahead, PS Beech.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Just before Mr. Beech gets started, I'll maybe come in with a quick point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm concerned about the time. If there is a possibility that we might get a decision on how to proceed in a good way for Monday, I would be open to extending the time a little bit but not indefinitely. I want to do it in order to get to a decision. I don't want to do it just to hear more talking and end because we've run out of resources.

If we think there's a possibility of getting to some kind of decision—

The Chair: MP Blaikie, I apologize. I was speaking with the clerk, and I didn't hear when you came in. PS Beech had the floor and was speaking.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Yes, I was just offering a quick point of order noticing the time, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, we're getting close. Two o'clock is approaching.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Yes, I'm just indicating that I am willing to continue on for a little while—not a long time—if we think there might be a possibility of getting to some kind of decision about how to proceed in a good way on Monday so that we avoid the dilemma that I explained earlier.

If folks think that they're in a mood to get to a decision, and I would remind everybody that it entails voting on something about how we proceed on Monday, then I'm prepared to stay. If folks don't think that they would allow a vote to happen on anything today, then there isn't much point. Currently there's nothing on the table except clause-by-clause.

The Chair: I don't know what folks are thinking right now. I can't get into people's heads. I do have a speaking order. I have PS Beech.

I know we've been at this for a long time. What MP Blaikie said is that, yes, we are coming up on the hour.

Members, you have to be really clear to the point before we're going to be done for the day.

• (1400)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Would you entertain a request for unanimous consent to extend the meeting by a half an hour to see if we can find a way to maybe get a plan for Monday?

The Chair: First, MP Blaikie, let's hear from members about the half an hour. I'm not sure if that's going to be possible.

Go ahead on a point of order, MP Morantz.

Mr. Marty Morantz: I'm not sure what Mr. Beech is going to be speaking to, because there's no motion on the floor, unless we're going to go right into clause-by-clause.

I would suggest, with unanimous consent of the committee, that Mr. Perkins has an important motion he would like to present. If the committee so wills it, I suggest we let him introduce that motion.

The Chair: MP Morantz, right now PS Beech does have the floor. We were moving to clause-by-clause consideration. We were at clause 7.

PS Beech, you do have the floor.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly, my patience is being tested a little bit here.

The Chair: PS Beech, I will tell you that time is limited.

Mr. Terry Beech: Yes, I'm not going to take much time, if people would stop interrupting.

I think it's very important that we clarify what just happened here.

Mr. Perkins put forward a motion that has already been defeated simply so he could filibuster on it. Then he tried.... He didn't try. He successfully adjourned debate on his own motion so that nobody else around this committee would have an opportunity to talk about it. Despite the fact that the clerk read the rules out of the green book that we all agree to follow, we've now overturned that.

I'm not willing to give up the floor for some magical, new motion that the Conservatives have figured out. I am willing to suspend and, if Mr. Perkins wants to call me and talk about what motion he has in mind, I'm happy to hear about it, but I am not going to give up the floor so that the person who has taken 24 hours of this committee's time doing nothing but nonsense can put another motion forward so we can discuss more nonsense.

I'm happy to suspend, Mr. Chair. That's the committee's right. If Mr. Perkins wants to call me with something that is an actual proposal about getting to work, I'm happy to entertain it. I'm not happy to just give him the floor back because he's had more than enough time at this committee.

The Chair: I am going to suspend for a few minutes so that members can discuss this. Do it an hurried manner, because we are looking to end this meeting in very short order.

We'll suspend right now.

• (1400)

(Pause)

• (1420)

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

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Unfortunately I didn't get any calls from the Conservatives, but I will try this.

I move for unanimous consent on the following motion that the committee reconvene at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, May 29, and that the committee provide 15 minutes for a representative of each recognized party to provide their views on Bill C-47 as well as the amendments to the bill. During this time, no other motions can be moved nor can questions be put to the representative of each party, and the chair and clerk will be empowered to enforce the 15-minute speaking slot.

• (1425)

The Chair: Thank you, PS Beech. You are asking for unanimous consent on that. I am looking to the members.

Is there any discussion? I see thumbs-up. I see a thumbs-down from MP Perkins, and I heard a "no".

Mr. Terry Beech: I tried my best, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Members, we're adjourned.

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