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Chair: Mr. John Williamson



Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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• (1635)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick South-west, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 154 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[*English*]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask all in-person participants to read the guidelines written on the updated cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents in order to protect the health and safety of all participants, including and especially our interpreters. I have a kind reminder to all those here in person as well as online. For the safety of our interpreters, it is very important that your microphone is muted when you're not speaking.

[*Translation*]

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), the committee is resuming consideration of report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, of the 2024 reports 5 to 7 of the Auditor General of Canada.

[*English*]

I'd like to welcome our witness, appearing as an individual and joining us online, virtually, Mr. Andrew Noseworthy.

Mr. Noseworthy, you have up to five minutes for an opening statement, if you'd like. The floor is yours.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy (As an Individual): Thank you, Chair.

Yesterday, I had a minor accident and injured my face and lips, which sometimes makes it so that my voice is raspy and less clear. I

apologize for any inconvenience this creates for the committee. Please let me know if you wish me to repeat anything.

I appear before you today as a private citizen, having retired last January after 40 years of public service. I began working at ISED in 2016. My initial role was to co-chair a federal-provincial working group on clean technology. As the department's mandate on clean technology expanded, my role also expanded around strategic policy issues and outreach within Canada's clean technology community.

Beginning in 2017, I became the department's liaison with SDTC. I regularly attended board meetings between 2017 and early 2023. I played no formal role in board meetings, and the board minutes referred to me as being there by invitation.

Consistent with others who had held this role before me, I saw my role as assisting the board in understanding federal policy and program developments that may have relevance to its work. This engagement was also helpful to me in my broader work on clean tech, as SDTC was recognized as a long-time player in the sector.

A management action plan tied to ISED's 2018 evaluation of SDTC set out priorities that guided my work with SDTC. These included activities for improving performance data and reporting, policy development to move beyond early-stage technology pilots and promote commercialization and entrepreneurship, and finally, the development of a cross-government service to better integrate and coordinate the services that government provides to the clean-tech community.

SDTC's contribution agreement with ISED states that federal officials must not be seen as exercising control or influencing the decisions of that organization. I was therefore especially careful not to offer views or advice of any kind that could be seen to influence or bind its operations, policies or project decisions.

I did not attend, nor was I privy to, meetings of board subcommittees or other internal SDTC meetings where projects, conflicts of interest, HR issues or administrative matters were discussed. My vantage point on conflicts of interest was limited to what was contained in a package of documents provided to board members, typically a few days before each meeting, and what I witnessed in the personal conduct of board members at meetings. I did not have any special insight into the real or perceived conflicts of board members. I knew that it was their responsibility individually to address them if they existed.

What I saw in board meetings was a process entirely consistent with many boards, where members routinely note potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves. No issues or concerns about board member conflicts were ever raised with me by SDTC staff or other members of the board.

With respect to the appointment of Ms. Verschuren as chair, I had no direct role in the PCO-led process. I played no role in interviews or screening activities. I offered no advice to anyone on potential candidates.

I was asked by the deputy minister's office of ISED on two occasions to send emails to the clean-tech stakeholder community to encourage them to nominate potential candidates for this position. I understand that this is a common procedure supporting central agency appointments processes—

● (1640)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Noseworthy. I apologize.

There seems to be an issue with the sound, and maybe with interpretation as well.

I'm just going to suspend for a second and consult with the clerk.

Mr. Noseworthy, the clerk might have a question or two for you. I'll turn it over to our clerk, please.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Hilary Smyth): Mr. Noseworthy, could you speak for 15 seconds? How is the weather today?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: The weather in Newfoundland, as you might anticipate, is atrocious.

The Chair: And tomorrow, will it be any different?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Fall in Newfoundland, sir, is always a charm.

The Clerk: It seems to be a little bit better now.

The Chair: Mr. Noseworthy, you may proceed.

If you want to back up 20 or 30 seconds if you're in the middle of something, that will be fine. I will ensure you have the time to finish up. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Thank you, sir.

I was asked by the deputy minister's office of ISED on two occasions to send emails to the clean-tech stakeholder community encouraging them to nominate potential candidates for the position of chair of SDTC. I understand that this is a common procedure supporting central agency-led appointments processes.

In June 2018, I was also asked to contact Ms. Lawrence, as CEO of SDTC, to advise her that an order in council had been issued appointing Ms. Verschuren as SDTC chair. I remember Ms. Lawrence and I discussing the CEO selection process several times in 2018, and I believe that she was the one who advised me of Annette Verschuren's candidacy, noting that she had encouraged her to seek the advice of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I did discuss this matter with the deputy minister, and we both understood that Ms. Verschuren had sought advice, which we assumed would be implemented and taken into account in the appointments process. At no time did I doubt that this was happening.

With respect to my relationship with Ms. Verschuren, I first met her in 2017 or 2018 as part of the department's outreach on clean tech. She was a member of the CEO clean-tech sector table, to which I acted as secretary. Our relationship was solely a professional one.

On the allegations regarding HR and administrative issues at SDTC, I had no knowledge of this until I learned of the whistleblower's allegations. I immediately discussed this situation with the deputy minister, and we agreed that I should withdraw from any further engagement with the board while the matter was under investigation. To avoid any risk of real or perceived bias in the investigatory process, I also played no role in it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's over to you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Noseworthy.

I'm going to get through three rounds in this session. The first round will consist of four members, for six minutes each.

Mr. Perkins, you'll lead us off, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Noseworthy.

Mr. Noseworthy, when you were assistant deputy minister at the industry department, you served as an observer on the board at SDTC for six years, as I understand it, until you retired in 2023. Is that correct?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Sir, first, I take issue with the word "observer", which I believe implies a greater responsibility than I had. I was there at their invitation to offer information, and nothing further.

I withdrew from the board before I retired, when we first became aware of the whistle-blower's allegations. I believe that was—

● (1645)

Mr. Rick Perkins: You say you were there at the board's invitation. Your boss at the time, for most of that time, former deputy minister Knubley of the industry department, said he insisted that you be at the meetings as his eyes and ears. Are you incorrect in your assumption, or is he incorrect in what he told the committee?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Sir, I'm not sure these things are mutually exclusive. If you take a look at the board minutes, they clearly indicate that I'm there at the invitation of the board.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I will take it that your immediate boss, the deputy minister, had the correct framing of what your role was, to be his eyes and ears, because he said that not all deputy ministers agreed with that approach to agencies and boards, but he insisted on that in the ones at ISED.

So, since you were there to be his eyes and ears on what was going on, you must have had regular meetings with him about what was going on.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, I spoke regularly to both Deputy Minister Knuble and Deputy Minister Kennedy when I was in my position. We carried on discussion over a wide range of issues. SDTC would certainly come up when there was a matter of specific concern.

With respect to Mr. Knuble, our key concerns were around the issues related to the implementation of the management action plan that came out of the evaluation of that organization in either 2017 or 2018 and how to better see the organization integrate into policy on the federal side.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Being the eyes and ears of your deputy minister in the Liberal green slush fund, did you ever read the SDTC act?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Yes, of course, sir, I did.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Then you're familiar with the clause on page 9 of the act on directors not profiting. It says:

Except as provided under subsection (1), no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities.

Yet, we know that the Auditor General has found that nine directors, for a total of 82% of the transactions, were conflicted when money was voted to companies they had, representing \$330 million in that loan. Then, of course, there's the \$59 million that the Auditor General found that they voted for companies, some of which were their own, totally outside of the contribution agreements you referenced.

I would like to know this: Since you read the act, and since you saw them voting for each other's companies, did you ever raise that with the deputy minister?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Sir, what I saw in front of me at SDTC was a regularly functioning board where people would recuse themselves when they thought there was a real reason to.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'll read it again, because I don't see anywhere in the act where it says it's okay to vote yourself property or investments if you recuse yourself. Let me read it again:

Except as provided under subsection (1), no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities.

When tens of millions of dollars were going to directors' funds.... I'm not sure what level of conflict would have worried you. You watched Andrée-Lise Méthot vote \$10.7 million to her own companies, by her own admission, although the number is actually higher. You saw Stephen Kukucha and Guy Ouimet vote money for their own companies and have fellow directors vote for that, for a total of \$300 million, and you were sitting there. It was 82% of the time.

They began each meeting by outlining which director and which project was conflicted: "You know, my friend here or this director here, his project is up, so he's conflicted and he'll just get out and recuse himself."

It was 82% of the time. You sat in those meetings when things were happening, and you never reported that to your boss.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Sir, I had no way of independently assessing conflicts of interest by the board, specifically with the interpretation that you are applying to the act. I am not a lawyer—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Interpretation...? I'll do it again:

Except as provided under subsection (1), no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities.

That's not very complicated. That's not tough. You don't have to be a lawyer. Even a bureaucrat could figure out that means you cannot vote for your own companies to receive money from the board you're on. It's against the act.

You, sir, were responsible for being the eyes and ears of the deputy in that meeting. I just don't believe that you never told him that these things were going on. Who are you covering up for?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, I had very limited information upon which to look at issues of conflict of interest—

• (1650)

Mr. Rick Perkins: When they said, "This director has a conflict" and then that director got the money, and then the next director got the money, and you were sitting in the meeting, was that not information to report back?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I had no way to independently assess, Mr. Chair, what holdings individual board members had or who, in fact—

Mr. Rick Perkins: They declared it and voted themselves. It didn't need to be independent. It was right before you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Were you even listening?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins. I'm sure we'll come back to this.

Ms. Bradford, you have the floor for six minutes, please.

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Noseworthy, for your attendance today.

What did your role consist of at ISED, particularly in relation to the SDTC file?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My role was assistant deputy minister of clean technology, where I had a broad range of responsibilities related to policy and coordination, in particular. Part of the work involved the department feeding into other work of the pan-Canadian framework on climate change. We did a great deal of work around understanding the specific needs of industry, in terms of both regulatory requirements and capital to grow capacity.

SDTC was an organization that we saw as important within that catchment group of federal organizations that supported clean tech. We had an outreach and some standard relationship with them. We did have one or two staff members within the department who were specifically responsible for financial oversight of the organization, and those folks focused most specifically on understanding the details of what was required in terms of cash appropriations and the like.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Did you have an oversight role?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I would say that the role was limited on an oversight basis. I believe it complied with the requirements of the contribution agreement. I saw our role, and I believe the staff saw our role, as principally one around policy and coordination, with SDTC recognizing its independence. Our role was simply the administration of the contribution agreement.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Can you speak to the extent of your participation during SDTC board meetings? What did your role and responsibilities consist of, exactly?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, I saw my role as very limited in board meetings. I spoke at the invitation of the chair to provide an update where necessary on what was happening within the federal system on policy or program developments that would be germane to the work of the board. To my memory, I never spoke at the board on any matters during my time there. I was especially careful not to do so, to not bias or create a perception that I was seeking to influence the board's decisions or views.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Following the board meetings, what was expected of you, both by the department and by SDTC? Were you meant to act as a conduit of information, or was information directly translated to individuals on both sides of the institution, and you were merely there to listen and answer any questions that may have been brought up?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, I think that's a very interesting question. I believe that I was there mainly to offer information. I did occasionally receive information. I did not see my role there as having any measure of oversight or input on the administrative or project decisions of the organization.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Many colleagues here blame you and the department for sitting idly and failing to flag and act in the face of SDTC's failure to abide by its own conflict of interest policies, jeopardizing an entire foundation and taxpayer funding in the process. How do you respond to this criticism?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, I take that criticism seriously. However, I would like the committee to understand the capacity that I had personally to assess those matters. I saw a package of materials that contained information on projects, usually two days before a board meeting. I attended the meetings, and other than that material, I had no way of independently assessing whether there were potential conflicts.

Most importantly, I recognize that it was the fiduciary responsibility of the board members there to act in accordance with their own rights and responsibilities, and I also had an expectation that SDTC would provide sufficient monitoring of that process and raise concerns with me if they felt there was a failure in that system. No one from SDTC ever raised a concern about conflict of interest with me, other than the specific concern the committee is aware of with Ms. Verschuren's chairmanship.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Were any potential conflicts of interest discussed during board meetings? How did you respond to those discussions, and were they escalated to ISED?

• (1655)

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: None, Mr. Chair, were escalated to ISED, and I don't recall a substantive discussion of a conflict of interest at the table, other than the recusals of people or the identification of issues that people felt merited a recusal. My understanding of the SDTC process is that most of the discussion on those types of matters would have happened at its project review committee, to which I was not a party, and I did not see its information.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: How were issues raised during board meetings communicated to ISED leadership? Was there a formal reporting process, and did you feel it was effective?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: SDTC was an independent organization. In that context, it made its own decisions. It regularly informed the minister of decisions when it decided to fund projects, for example, or take major policy initiatives. It did that directly. There was regular communication between the department and SDTC on a range of things—that would be fair to say. For the most part, we were aware of significant policy approaches that they were looking to undertake, especially issues around potential changes in governance. Beyond those issues, we respected the fact that SDTC was an independent organization, and it informed the minister of its decisions.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Who was responsible for taking the minutes of the meeting?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I believe it would have been a corporate secretary, Mr. Chair. I cannot recall a specific person who would have been responsible for taking those minutes.

The Chair: Thank you. That is the time.

Up next is Madame Sinclair-Desgagné.

Mr. Noseworthy, could you just make sure your headset is set to English?

[*Translation*]

Make sure you select the right channel and hear the interpretation service so you can understand what Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné is saying.

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Noseworthy, when Mr. Knuble, your immediate superior at the time, testified before the committee, he mentioned that he wanted to know what was going on in the agencies. He also confirmed that the duty of a liaison officer was to inform the department of what was going on in the agencies.

Mr. Knuble informed the committee that you were his eyes and ears. You attended several board meetings, including the two most important meetings with respect to the COVID-19 payments. In a response to my colleague, you confirmed that you had read the contribution agreement. Payments related to COVID-19 were not in compliance with the contribution agreement. You were present at the board meetings.

Did you say anything?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

Is the question specifically about the COVID payments?

[Translation]

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: I'll repeat my question. I have in front of me the minutes of the two board meetings where the COVID-19 payments were approved. The COVID-19 payments are not in line with the contribution agreement, not in line with what is called for, required in the contribution agreement. You were present at the two meetings where these payments were approved by the board of directors.

Since you said you knew about the contribution agreement, did you say something?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I was aware of the decision made, obviously. I was there. I did inform the deputy minister when that decision was made. I am also aware of the fact that SDTC wrote the minister at the time to inform him of that decision.

The decision that was taken was taken with great urgency and with a view that companies were in the process of collapsing. The advice that was given, which I think many now would believe is faulty—the legal advice that was provided—was that this could be done through an extension of existing contracts and that it did not create any specific issues around conflict of interest. On that basis, I accepted that information at face value and I—

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Just a moment, Mr. Noseworthy.

More than \$38 million was granted without projects going through the project review committee in a diligent manner, even though it's required in the contribution agreement. You were at that meeting, and you had that information in hand.

If you understand what is written in the contribution agreement, that public money must be treated with caution and that projects must be reviewed separately, that you participated in the meeting and that you allowed projects to be approved as a group without having been assessed on a case-by-case basis, that's not normal.

We know that many of these projects belonged to and directly benefited members of the board of directors. You were there. Conflict of interest declarations were even made at that time.

So you didn't say anything?

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I believe, Mr. Chair, that the discussion around the COVID payments was taken with a great deal of urgency and concern. The approach that was being taken was that the projects that were being approved were extensions of existing projects—

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Okay, Mr. Noseworthy, but that's not the case.

Several of the projects that were approved at that time benefited board members. It had nothing to do with existing projects. Did someone mislead you? Did anyone tell you that this was the case when it wasn't? Be clearer. Right now, it looks like you were a tourist in the room. According to the deputy minister, it was part of your job to be in the room and to be his eyes and ears. You were paid for that.

Now you're telling me you're not too sure. Frankly, a little rigour please. Did you say anything? It was clearly a breach of the contribution agreement. You should have at least mentioned it.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I do not recall any discussion of specific projects. I do not recall any discussion—

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: That is precisely the problem. We agree on that point: There were no discussions on certain projects.

Yet the contribution agreement requires that every project be reviewed. It's pretty simple to understand.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My understanding is that the decision that was taken by the board was the extension of existing projects that had been previously approved.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Noseworthy, what was your understanding of your role?

You were getting paid. You are a public servant, so your time is paid for by the government and therefore by taxpayers.

When you were on the board, you were working. What was your role, if not to be the deputy minister's eyes and ears, as he said?

Did you at least inform the board that the requirements of the contribution agreement were being met?

Frankly, what was your role?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: As I have since said and indicated in my opening remarks, I saw my role there exclusively as at the invitation of the board to talk about policy coordination issues and matters of that nature. I did not see my role there as having any type of policing function over the activities of the organization or its decision-making.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: I'm going to move on to another topic.

How long have you known Ms. Verschuren?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: As I think I indicated in my opening remarks, I believe I met her somewhere around 2017.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Since you've been working or carrying out duties at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA, the Verschuren Centre has received over \$8 million. In many—if not all—cases, it had to do with bioreactors, the same project that had been submitted to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, for which costs had been estimated.

We know that the bioreactor cost \$6.5 million, yet ACOA alone, where you were, gave over \$8 million to the Verschuren Centre for the same project. That's more than the total cost of the bioreactor project.

Did you have anything to do with that?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I am not familiar with the details of that project. I never spoke about that project with Ms. Verschuren. I am not aware of the arrangements that were made around its financing, nor did I ever advocate on that project.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Next is Mr. Cannings.

You have the floor for six minutes, please.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Noseworthy, for appearing before us, despite the fact that you're in Newfoundland in terrible weather, but that's fine.

I won't press you on this, because you've been asked many times, but your function seems to have been a dual role, whether you saw it that way yourself or not. The deputy minister, as many have outlined here, has said that you were his eyes and ears.

You saw yourself in the function of a liaison with SDTC's board—there to answer questions if they brought them up. You gave a list of some of the topics that they might ask you questions on. One was the evolving policy that the ministry had. We've heard here that some of the projects that were funded didn't line up with

the criteria that the fund was designed for. Is that something that was the result of evolving policy?

Did they ask you questions about that? If so, were you there for those discussions?

• (1705)

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I do not recall any discussion on policy that would have had any direct reflection on a specific funding decision about a project within the organization. Those decisions would have been made by SDTC on their own.

My role, as I saw it, was around coordination and briefing. I believe that, when Deputy Minister Knuble spoke to you last week, he indicated that he saw my role as eyes and ears specifically on issues coming out of the management action plan of 2018, which focused on policy and coordination.

Mr. Richard Cannings: If you were there listening and observing these meetings, even though you didn't see yourself as an observer.... I'm not sure I really understand the semantics of that part.

Were there discussions around policy? Did you go back to the deputy minister and talk about those things just to report back to say that they had questions on these policies and to ask what you should be doing? Was there any back and forth?

I'm just trying to get a handle on what you said to the deputy minister. Personally, I can't believe there was no reporting back in some way, even an informal way.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: There was regular reporting back when there was a need to do so.

When discussions came up, for example, around issues related to the management action plan about how you track emissions reductions, how the organization was looking at doing things in that manner, of course, because they related back to how I saw my role, I talked to the deputy minister about them. I did not see my role as one of talking about projects or administrative decisions within the organization. That was not how I saw my role when I attended board meetings, and I did not talk to the deputy minister about those issues.

Mr. Richard Cannings: You also said that you had no way to assess whether any of the board members were in a conflict of interest over a decision, yet they were self-reporting on that, from what I understand. At the start of the meeting, they'd say, "I have a conflict of interest in this project because my company is involved." Then, they went on to recuse themselves from the discussion on that, or they just didn't vote.

There are two steps to that. What did you observe about that? Did they just leave the room entirely for the discussion? Did they stick around for the discussion, even to hear it, and then just not vote? I'm just curious as to what you saw in that regard when people admitted that they were in a conflict of interest. What did they do?

We've heard that, numerous times, different board members did different things. Some recused themselves, didn't take part in the discussion and didn't vote. Others might have stuck around for the discussion but didn't vote. Others took part in the discussion and then they voted. I'm just wondering if you saw a pattern there.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I do not recall, sir, any circumstances where an individual didn't recuse themselves and leave the room. It is quite possible that it occurred, and I was not aware of it.

In the cases where I saw people recuse themselves, they left the room. I should also mention, sir, that in my experiences with SDTC, at no time did SDTC staff raise with me a concern about the application of conflict of interest rules by board members. I would have thought that, if there were a concern that board members were being inconsistent or if there were an issue, they would have raised it with me for discussion.

• (1710)

Mr. Richard Cannings: People who have since raised these concerns never brought them up to you, even if you were there in the room with them.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I can say honestly, sir, with the exception of the conversation I had with Leah Lawrence at the time of Annette Verschuren's appointment as chair, where she raised concerns about conflict of interest issues, I don't believe I ever had a conversation with any other SDTC staff member or board member about a concern about conflicts of interest.

The Chair: Thank you. That is your time.

Beginning our second round, which will consist of six members posing questions for varying times, Mr. Cooper, you'll lead this round off.

You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Noseworthy, you were ISED's eyes and ears at the SDTC board, attending each and every board meeting in which there were 186 conflicts of interest involving board members. The Auditor General identified 90 instances in which the conflict of interest policy was not complied with. There were multiple real conflicts of interest, including tens of millions of dollars that were funnelled from SDTC to companies in which board members had interests.

Your excuse for supposedly saying nothing, doing nothing and reporting nothing back is that you had no independent way of assessing conflicts of interest. Really? How can you assert that when the evidence was right in front of you?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Fiduciary responsibility on conflict of interest rests with the member of the board. It is their responsibility to ensure—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Noseworthy, you've made the statement that you had no independent way of assessing conflicts of interest. I put to you that this is false. The evidence was right in front of you, wasn't it?

Mr. Noseworthy, this committee has heard plenty of evidence about the fact that, weeks before each board meeting, an agenda was sent out, board members were invited to identify which

projects they had conflicts of interest in and, at the beginning of the meeting, the secretary would read out which projects involving which directors' conflicts of interest existed.

Again, the evidence was right in front of you, and you said nothing. You did nothing. You covered it up. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I only saw the materials that were circulated for board meetings—

Mr. Michael Cooper: The materials provided that certain members had conflicts of interest. It was said at the beginning of the meeting.

What are you talking about that you had no independent way of assessing? You're just making it up. You're making it up to cover your butt.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: When people declared a conflict of interest and it was raised at the beginning of the meeting, my experience was that they recused themselves and they were not part of the discussion on the project.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Did they leave the room because recusing themselves is not sufficient? Even if they did leave the room, that's not acceptable either—is it?

Section 12 of the SDTC Act states very clearly that “no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property from the Foundation or its activities.”

One such board member, Andrée-Lise Méthot, the good friend of the environment minister, admitted before this committee that \$10.4 million was funnelled from SDTC into companies that she had interests in. That is a complete violation of the SDTC Act.

Yes, she declared the conflict. Yes, she left the room. You were at each of those meetings. Why didn't you report these blatant violations of the SDTC Act? You were aware of the act. You admitted you were aware of the act. Why didn't you report that \$10.4 million was funnelled into her companies, improperly and illegally?

• (1715)

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My experience was that people recused themselves, and my assumption was that, by recusing themselves and following normal board procedures, they would have been in compliance with the—

Mr. Michael Cooper: What part of subsection 12(2)—“no director shall profit or gain any income or acquire any property”—do you not understand?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I am not a lawyer, sir.

I believe that subsection needs to be read in reflection on what the—

Mr. Michael Cooper: There was \$10.4 million going into companies—

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: —that Andr ee-Lise M ethot had interests in—

The Chair: Mr. Cooper, I have a point of order.

We have Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Chair, we've spent lots of months and years trying to make sure that our interpreters are well taken care of. We don't need to yell that loudly when we're talking into a microphone, because I do believe that it is hurting their ears—

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): The interpreters will let us know.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): No, they won't. They'll just walk out.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Chair, if you can please—

The Chair: Thank you. I was hearing Ms. Khalid.

Mr. Drouin, I appreciate your concern. It's one I share.

Mr. Cooper, you have about 40 seconds left, and I would urge you to be aware of the interpreters. I see where you're going, and I know that committee members share your concerns, but could you just keep that in mind?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Noseworthy, what were you doing at each of these meetings, eating chicken fingers? I mean, what were you doing?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: As I've now indicated multiple times, I saw my role there as around policy coordination and providing board members with advice that they might find useful in policy coordination and in ultimately making decisions around the organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Up next is Ms. Yip.

You have the floor for five minutes, please.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witness for appearing.

I've been hearing all sorts of things about your role on the board and the policy coordination function, yet there are also all of these conflict of interest issues.

I know the others have also asked you this, but I really do want to hear very clearly how you saw your role on the SDTC board.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I truly saw my role as a liaison.

I'm sorry. There seems to be feedback on the microphones.

Ms. Jean Yip: Are you able to hear?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I'll speak again. I believe I'm getting feedback from inside the room.

The Chair: Are you hearing it in your earpiece, Mr. Noseworthy?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I'm afraid so, yes.

The Chair: I'll have the clerk look into that.

In the meantime, you may proceed.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: As I've indicated, I saw my role as being around policy coordination and acting as a liaison with the organization to ensure it was aware of what was happening with other federal policies and programs.

I only participated in a substantive way in the first part of the meeting, which was a policy update where I provided that type of information. I was keen to see what the organization was doing of its own accord in collecting information on what was going on in the industry, and we did feed that back to the deputy minister and also to our own work of understanding what the needs and requirements of the sector would be.

I did not see my role participating in board meetings as having any specific or formal role around oversight of administrative matters. When it specifically came to the issue of conflict of interest, I saw myself as having no particular role unless I was called upon by SDTC or by a board member and became aware of a specific conflict issue, and that never occurred.

Ms. Jean Yip: I find it troubling that you were there at the meetings and you saw these conflicts, yet you did not act.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: If I can, these conflicts were not evident in these meetings. It was clearly obvious that people announced their recusal at the beginning of the meeting and then left. I did not see any situation—and I would have acted upon it, if I had seen such a situation—where a board member had intentionally violated their obligations on conflict of interest and sat there to discuss a project that I knew they had a stake in.

• (1720)

Ms. Jean Yip: I'm going to move on because I'm not hearing clear answers.

Can you explain the early impacts of COVID on the clean-tech industry in the context of the COVID payments?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: It's something that we don't talk about a great deal these days. The reality is that the first days of COVID were quite a shock, especially for small companies across the country. Especially in clean tech we saw a complete collapse of markets. We saw a complete collapse of supply chains. We saw access to capital within the sector completely dry up. We saw valuations for companies that were out looking for private funds also dry up. The industry was in, frankly, a state of crisis.

At that time—I can't recall if it was to the CEO or a group of ministers—there was a group of 200 CEOs from within the sector who wrote government saying, "We are in crisis and we need assistance." It was in that context, keeping the sector alive, that the COVID payments were made.

I am aware of the fact that SDTC undertook its own evaluation of its client base and the effects of COVID, found essentially the same thing that I just said and provided that data to the board in the decision-making around the COVID payments.

Ms. Jean Yip: What is your view on the potential of the clean-tech sector? Can Canada have a global presence?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I believe Canada is a presence in the clean-tech sector globally, and it has significant potential to grow.

When I started working on clean tech a number of years ago, the focus was very much on early-stage development projects. This is pejorative, and I apologize for it, but it was guys working on stuff in their garages.

Clean tech has matured into large industry these days. In fact, while we sometimes talk about clean tech as an industry or a sector, it's not. There's clean tech in all industrial sectors. What we've seen in the last five years is a very dramatic embrace of clean technology by most of Canada's major industrial sectors, which creates significant opportunity.

I think the challenge we face going forward is that we're not alone in this situation. We've seen significant incentives and supports for clean tech in most other large jurisdictions, including the United States, Europe and China. If we want to maintain and grow our global market share, we have to be competitive in how we grow those companies.

The Chair: A very quick question....

Ms. Jean Yip: Can the sector be a major contributor to our GDP and energy transition to net zero?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Certainly.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

We will continue with Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

[English]

Before we go there, are you hearing any feedback now, Mr. Noseworthy, or is it a little better?

Okay. I appreciate that. We're not hearing it in the room, so if it does persist, I might suspend the meeting and have IT call you.

I don't think the interpreters are hearing it either...no. That's good. Keep me posted, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Noseworthy, have you read the Auditor General's report?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Yes.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: I'm going to read from the report, in paragraph 6.63:

Furthermore, we found that Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada had communicated concerns to the foundation's management about whether the first Ecosystem project complied with contribution agreements.

Were you aware of the reservations that you or your department provided to the management of Sustainable Development Technology Canada?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: We discussed that matter at the operational level with the CEO. I believe I discussed it directly with the CEO.

There were a number of occasions over my time with ISED when we raised specific concerns about projects or initiatives that SDTC was seeking to undertake.

In that particular case, we wondered about the eligibility of the project under the contribution agreement. My memory of the situation—and I'm sorry that I don't have this information in front of me—is that they came back to us and satisfied our initial concerns. I believe we agreed to allow the program to proceed on a pilot basis, with the expectation we would review it in more detail later.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: In response to my previous question, you said that you didn't think your role was policing. Now you're telling me that, ultimately, you told the management of Sustainable Development Technology Canada that there were problems and that there was non-compliance with the contribution agreement.

Excuse me, but that's very contradictory. At the meetings of the board of directors, you said nothing when certain projects did not meet the requirements of the contribution agreement, but you intervened on the ecosystem component. It's not consistent.

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: The concerns we raised as a department were raised at the officials' level as materials were being developed on project-specific decisions. With the exception of.... Well, actually, I think in all cases they were resolved and did not warrant discussion at the board level. Indeed, I did not see it my role even at the board level to raise those concerns.

I recall in the case of the particular project you mentioned that the CEO did indicate to the board members that there had been a discussion with ISED, and we were working out issues around eligibility.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Several of the ecosystems projects were in complete contradiction with the contribution agreement. Not only was the component not public, but some projects were also ineligible. It was mentioned. You talked about the senior executive level. Who was it in the department? Was the deputy minister included? I imagine that Mr. Knubley and Mr. Kennedy were included in those discussions at the time.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: We raised our concerns about the potential eligibility of the projects directly with SDTC. They provided recommendations and actions.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Noseworthy, I'm asking you to tell me who you mean when you say "we", please.

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt. We will come back to your questions later.

[English]

Up next is Mr. Cannings.

You have the floor for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

Mr. Noseworthy, I'm new on this committee, so forgive me if this has been asked before and presented by other witnesses. I'd just like to get an idea of how decisions were made at the board level at SDTC.

First of all, here's one side question. We're talking about COVID project decisions. Were these meetings during COVID held in person, or were they on Zoom? How did that work?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My memory is that the board meetings during COVID actually initially started as teleconferences and graduated into video conferences as our collective technological capacity increased. Yes, that was how those meetings were specifically handled at that time.

I do recall that the discussions on the COVID payments were a bit unique. The calls were made on a more emergent basis than we saw. They weren't part of our routine weekly or—I believe they were—monthly meetings. It was a bit of an exception, and it was based on, as I indicated earlier, some of the concerns that were being raised within the community around collapse.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Okay.

Again, just to get an idea for myself about how involved these discussions were around the board table about whether to fund a project or not, I've sat on boards that sound similar, where staff would prepare a report on different projects. In my case, these were big projects worth millions of dollars, but then they were brought to the board, and we would have long discussions on each one to make sure that the money was being well spent even though the staff was recommending this over that, etc.

How did those conversations take place in SDTC? Were they kind of rubber-stamping what the staff came up with? You said there was the project review committee. I don't know who sat on that, but for the parts you saw at that stage, were there long, involved discussions on the pros and cons of each project?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: It varied. I would say there's no doubt that virtually all of the substantive discussion on the pros and cons of a project and the real substantive work around due diligence was done at the project review committee. It was the project review committee that brought projects to the board.

Generally speaking, projects were reviewed in some measure of detail for the board. There was a presentation by a vice-president of SDTC, who would walk folks through the content of the project, what was ultimately involved and what was hoped to be achieved by funding it. It was not unusual at all to have a number of questions from board members as part of that process.

I do not recall at any time a board member calling fundamental concerns about a project that had been recommended by the PRC, but sometimes the discussions on projects could actually be quite lengthy. It could be up to maybe 20 minutes or a half hour.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is the time.

Up next is Mr. McCauley for five minutes, please.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Thanks, Chair.

Mr. Noseworthy, how long did you work with Mr. Knuble when he was deputy minister?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I began work with Mr. Knuble in 2017—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Just give a simple answer, please. How many years, please?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I'm just trying to work it out in my head, sir. I apologize. I believe it was about five years...four or five years.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Let me ask you, he stated that you met often and that you were his eyes and ears on the board. Did you bring up the issue of the conflicts with him at all? You obviously worked together a long time. You met many times together. The whole public service operates under the basic and guiding principle of risk-aversion and CYA, and you know what the A stands for—basically, it's cover your backside.

Did you bring up these conflict issues with the deputy minister?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: If conflict issues had become apparent to me or were made apparent to me by SDTC, I would have immediately raised them with the deputy minister.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You didn't raise anything.

We had Ms. Kolbuc, who's the vice-president, with us on Monday. She, like you, Mr. Knuble and everyone else, seems to be completely, like *Tommy* in the rock opera, blind, deaf and dumb to the conflicts of interest, accepting no accountability or responsibility. However, she did state that conflicts were minuted during the board meetings you were at, yet you seem to be saying that there were no conflicts that you were aware of.

Could you explain that to us, please?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My understanding is that, when a conflict was—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: No, it's not your understanding. I'm asking a simple question. The vice-president, Ms. Kolbuc, stated the conflicts were minuted during the meetings you were at. You were at all the meetings. She stated the conflicts were minuted. You were at this meeting, so conflicts were discussed.

What did you do with those conflicts?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: When I became aware of the conflicts that were minuted and they were dealt with in due process, I saw no need to bring them further. It was a matter within the purview of the organization and its conflict of interest—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: You talked about your role being to ensure the administration of the contribution agreement. Article 20.03 of the contribution agreement states very clearly that conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interests have to be reported to the Minister of Industry. You were aware of these conflicts. You were there to administer the oversight of the contribution agreements.

Did you report these conflicts, as you were required to under article 20.03 of the contribution agreement, to the minister?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My understanding of the contribution agreement—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'm not asking for your understanding. I'm asking, did you do your job? You stated you were there for the administration of the contribution agreement. The contribution agreement states very clearly that conflicts of interest have to be reported to the minister. Did you—

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: It's by the organization, sir.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Right, so you thought, “Oh, it's someone else's job.” Even though you stated you were there to ensure the administration of the contribution agreement, that's not your job. You knew about the conflict, but it's not your job.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I saw my responsibility as I have stated here. If I had seen any deviation from conflict of interest obligations, as I've indicated, I would have reported them. I saw it as the obligation of the organization to report to the minister, because that's what the contribution agreement says.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: It's not his job to do it. It's \$400 million of taxpayers' money, but it's someone else's job to do it. You were aware of it, but it's someone else's job.

I mentioned before to Ms. Kolbuc that we had a lower-level person in the public service brave enough to be a whistle-blower and to come forward to you as well, but you didn't have that bravery or see it as your job for oversight, even though you stated earlier today that part of your role was to ensure the administration of the contribution agreement. I guess, not necessarily....

• (1735)

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: No one ever.... The whistle-blower never came to me. I'm not aware of the work of the whistle-blower, and I never spoke to that person.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Don't you think it was your role, as an ADM who has fiduciary duties under the Financial Administration Act, to act on this? You just thought it was someone else's job. Who should have done that, then?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: As I have indicated, I saw the responsibility of reporting conflicts of interest—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Let me just add—

The Chair: Mr. McCauley, you're out of time, but that is a pertinent question: Whose job was it?

Why don't you answer that, Mr. Noseworthy? Then we'll move on.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: As I was saying, I saw it as an obligation of the organization to report to the minister, consistent with the terms of the contribution agreement.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Up next is Mr. Erskine-Smith, who is joining us virtually.

You have the floor, sir, for five minutes.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Mr. Noseworthy, have you read the Auditor General's report?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Yes.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Do you disagree with anything in that report?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: No, I do not. I actually think it's a well-prepared report, and I support its recommendations.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: What am I to make, then...? In your last exchange with Mr. McCauley, for example, and in the role you saw yourself occupying, that report... I'll read from finding 6.77:

We found that [ISED] had not received records of conflicts of interest at [SDTC] other than those documented in the materials and meeting minutes of the board of directors. Since 2018, the contribution agreements required the foundation to report without delay to the department about conflicts of interest. We found that the department had not asked for or received such information and did not determine what actions it should take when informed of conflicts of interest by the foundation.

It goes on to say at paragraph 6.78:

As described in paragraph 6.52, we found several situations that may have involved conflicts of interest that the foundation did not report to the department over the audit period.

Finally, at paragraph 6.79, it says:

[ISED] should ensure that it assesses, challenges, and monitors conflict of interest at [SDTC].

If that wasn't your role, but you agree with the report's conclusions, whose role did you see it to be?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I accept that the department should have done more in that space, sir. I believe that there is considerably more that the department could have done in its oversight of the organization. We did what we could with the limited resources.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: With respect, aren't you the department?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: We did what we could with the resources we had.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: I mean, in this particular case, you're the individual who attends the board meetings. If it's not your role, whose role in the department would it possibly be?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I believe it's a joint responsibility that I would have shared with the vice-president responsible for administration and finance at the department, but I'm not sure on that.

I accept the fact that we could have done more to report on conflicts of interest. Again, I saw that the specific responsibility in that space, under the contribution agreement, is with the organization reporting to us. I—

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: After the fact, you have the benefit of the Auditor General's report, which you agree with.

Do you think that how you saw your role was, in retrospect, incorrect?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I think the Auditor General's report actually speaks specifically to my role and the fact that there were two distinctly different views of what that role would be. I believe that in the future, if there is to be a person playing the type of role I played on whatever future organization or board exists to replace SDTC, the specific roles and responsibilities of that person need to be very clearly specified.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: With respect to the knowledge of anyone else at the department—and let's include actually those in the minister's office—you were attending these board meetings and you were seeing the conflicts. Your testimony here today is very clear that you saw people recusing themselves as a general practice. That's a little bit at odds with what we heard from the Auditor General, but that's the general practice you witnessed, as you describe it.

That being the case, did you ever have a conversation with Minister Champagne about what you were witnessing at the committee?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I do not believe I ever had a conversation with either Minister Bains or Minister Champagne about SDTC matters as a general principle. Briefings on SDTC would have occurred with the deputy minister's office.

Generally speaking...in fact I'm certain I never had a bilateral discussion with either of those ministers on SDTC.

• (1740)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Here is my last question. Ms. Lawrence raised with you the potential conflict in relation to Ms. Verschuren and her appointment.

Did you raise that with the minister at the time?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I had no discussion with the minister about that. The deputy minister at the time, John Knuble, and I had a discussion. We both recognized that Ms. Verschuren was speaking to the Ethics Commissioner, and we had confidence that the results of that discussion would be taken into account as part of the appointments process and the advice brought forward to the minister by PCO or the central agencies.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Did she never flag any other conflict to challenge to you to say, "This is going on. I raised

this first conflict. Here are other conflicts I am concerned about with respect to board members."

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: No.

The Chair: Thank you. That is the time.

We are beginning our third and last round. Again, six members will ask questions at various times.

Mr. Perkins, you'll lead us off for five minutes, please.

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

Mr. Noseworthy, you're clearly of a similar age to me, so you will appreciate this analogy. There appears to have been a Road Runner Acme anvil dropped on the coyote at every bloody meeting on this, and you seem to have missed it. I don't quite get it in terms of conflicts of interest.

I have spoken to a number of the past board chairs, and I've had some interesting conversations. One of them shared with me an interesting story, and I'd like to ask you a question based on that conversation.

Did you ever ask a sitting chair of SDTC for a job?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: No.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's not what this chair said to me.

I will move on, then, because you're aware that doing so would be a breach of the ethics code of the public service.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I certainly did not.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Okay. I'm going to move on.

Let's get back to this issue of the former SDTC CEO's testimony on this and on the appointment of Ms. Verschuren. She testified before Parliament and said it was you who informed her that Ms. Verschuren would be appointed and would replace Mr. Balsillie.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Yes, I was asked by the deputy minister's office to call her and inform her that an order in council had been cut appointing Ms. Verschuren to the position.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I think this was before that, because she expressed her concern, according to her testimony, to you about the conflict of interest. It took several weeks to get back to her, where she testified that, then, again, you confirmed that, in spite of the conflicts, she was going to be appointed.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I recall two conversations with the former CEO on Ms. Verschuren and her conflict. The first was when she informed me that Ms. Verschuren was a candidate and that she had informed Ms. Verschuren that she should seek the advice of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The second was the conversation I just described.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You mentioned that the deputy's office told you to say this. We couldn't quite get that out of either of the two deputies. Who in the deputy's office told you to tell Ms. Lawrence?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I don't recall. It's a common practice to inform the CEO—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Was it the deputy?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: —of that type of a decision. I suspect that was at the time that Mr. Knublely was in the process of retiring. I suspect it was someone within his office, perhaps the corporate secretary or someone else. I don't recall the specifics.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Who would have been the corporate secretary for Mr. Knublely?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I can't recall the name, sir, but I'm sure the department can provide it.

Mr. Rick Perkins: We will follow that up.

Did you say to her that the conflicts would be managed?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I don't recall ever using that term in a discussion with Ms. Lawrence. When I advised her, as she has reported, that Ms. Verschuren was to be appointed, or had been appointed, she expressed concern about the conflicts. I'm sure we talked at that time about the importance of the organization having solid conflict of interest—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Were you aware that Mr. Ouimet had applied or had been considered and was rejected before Ms. Verschuren was the chair?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: No.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You were not, but you do recall him being appointed after Ms. Verschuren. Ms. Lawrence testified that he was rejected because of his conflicts. Then, after Ms. Verschuren was appointed, where she would be in managed conflicts, she testified that he was then put back on the list to be a director now that conflicts were okay.

• (1745)

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. Rick Perkins: You have no knowledge of that. There's another Acme sort of squashing thing happening here.

You remember quite a lot of details about your expertise or thoughts about how good this organization was, but you don't seem to remember any of the meetings you attended when it came to conflicts of interest, when everybody was having to leave that meeting. Somebody every meeting—or at least several—was having to leave and recuse themselves. There must have been a lot of wind blowing by you as they went out the door before their colleagues voted them more money, and then you never said anything. It's incredible to believe that you would sit there and say nothing to anyone about this.

I'll ask you this: Do you regret now never having raised these issues of conflicts of interest with your direct supervisor?

By the way, did you get a bonus every one of those years you were on this board?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I could only speak to my deputy minister about what I saw in front of me. The conflicts of interest, which have since come to light with the organization, were not obvious to me. They were not presented in a way that caused me sufficient concern to raise them—

Mr. Rick Perkins: Could you answer the second part of my question?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I think I received compensation, which includes an annual performance bonus that is similar to every other ADM in the federal system.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next, Ms. Khalid, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Noseworthy, for coming in today.

I know you've been asked a lot of questions today, so maybe I'll just take a step back and ask you this: Why are you here today? Can you help us understand why you think you're here today?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I'm here to assist the committee, in whatever way I can, in understanding what happened. I am, myself, a student of this, looking to see what happened here.

I can say to the committee, with absolute confidence, that I did not see issues of conflict of interest based on the vantage point I had in that organization. I accept, at face value, the determinations that have since come forward, by the Auditor General in particular, and I think that, as a matter of public policy, what happened here is something that requires interesting reflection in terms of the future governance and structure of federal organizations.

I would like to try to support the committee as it works through those issues.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thanks so much. You spoke about your vantage point and your involvement with SDTC with respect to the issue that we're discussing today.

Can you tell me whether you were in a position to have access to the information about conflicts of interest, whether you did have access and whether you acted on it or not?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I certainly did not have access to that information. I suspect that, if I had gone looking for it, in some sort of forensic way, I possibly could have received it. I did not see that as my role. I saw the responsibility on conflict of interest, as is the case with every board, as a fiduciary responsibility of individuals and as a responsibility of the organization to have good practices.

I expected, at the end of the day, the organization to bring issues to my attention if there were problems, and that did not occur. If it had occurred, I absolutely would have gone looking.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Do you find that you have failed ISED in the role you've played, with this whole debacle we've been experiencing over the past number of months and years?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I certainly look at the situation that's in front of us with regret. I believe that my staff and I did what we could with the resources we had at the time. I believe that there is a fundamental issue here around the governance of organizations like independent foundations and around how governments need to balance the issue of independence and oversight. I believe that there are important lessons to learn in that space.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Have you made any money, being in the role that you are in, from the organizations that have interacted with SDTC?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: No, none whatsoever.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

How do you view SDTC's transition into the NRC? How do you think it will improve, or what are some of the challenges you think they will face?

• (1750)

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I have not looked at it in detail. I can only look at the issue in principle. I believe that there is a decent alignment between the work of the NRC in the programs it has and SDTC. I believe there is a potential efficiency associated with integrating SDTC into that organization. I'm optimistic that doing so will eliminate the types of issues and concerns we've been talking about here today around administration and oversight.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Lastly, I'll ask you this: Have you had any interactions with any minister with respect to the SDTC file throughout your tenure and especially with respect to the issue that we're discussing today?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: The short answer would be no.

I believe there may have been one or two occasions when I briefed either Minister Champagne or former minister Bains when they were going into a meeting with a company that had obtained SDTC funding, where we told them what happened in terms of funding for that company. However, that would have been an extremely routine thing. I believe former minister Bains, at one point in time, spoke at an SDTC event, and I reviewed his speech with him in advance of that.

To my knowledge, those are the only interactions I had with ministers on this matter.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: That's all.

Thank you very much, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Khalid.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Noseworthy, I asked you this question, and I would have liked the answer during my last turn: When you said that you were speaking with SDTC management about your doubts about the ecosystem component, who were you talking about?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: It was me and my staff, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Wasn't Mr. Knuble part of those discussions? Did you never inform him of the doubts you had about the ecosystem component, which wasn't compliant with the contribution agreement?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: It would not have been routine to discuss that kind of matter with the deputy minister.

The discussions we had at the staff level with SDTC allayed our concerns, to the point where we were comfortable with the project proceeding on a pilot basis with further review.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Noseworthy, do you think it's no big deal that a foundation using public money doesn't respect the contribution agreement, in other words, the contract between the government and the foundation to manage that money? Do you think it isn't serious and that there's no reason to report it to your superior? That's pretty serious stuff. That was identified by the Auditor General.

Do you acknowledge those findings? Did you think it wasn't important enough to talk to your deputy minister about it?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Of course, at the time we assessed it, we saw compliance. We saw potential concerns, but we were looking at it further and anticipating it proceeding as a pilot, so there was no need—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Perhaps it's a matter of interpretation, but are you telling us that you saw compliance or that there wasn't compliance?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: We raised concerns with SDTC. They satisfied those concerns in a manner sufficient for us to allow the project to proceed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: It's very simple. A proposed fund whose description doesn't even mention sustainable development was enough to supposedly convince you that it corresponded to the contribution agreement.

Two projects were identified in the Auditor General's report. In the case of the ALUS project, it was \$5 million paid to the best friend of the CEO of SDTC, Leah Lawrence.

In the case of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies project, the application was written by the same person who was doing the assessment. Both of these projects were approved right under your nose, with no mention of sustainable development and no compliance with the contribution agreement. You allowed millions of dollars to be approved, and you didn't see fit to talk to your supervisor about it either. Don't you think money is important?

The Chair: We'll let our witness answer, please, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

[*English*]

You have the floor to answer the question. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, I was not aware of the conflict related to that project with the individual who was just mentioned. It was not brought to my attention by SDTC staff, nor was my staff aware of it.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Up next is Mr. Cannings for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

I'll go back to where I was in my previous questions. That was around how these board decisions were made and how much consideration was undertaken at each meeting for each decision. Again, we're talking millions of dollars here.

I think you started to say something about how the board treated each of these conversations and that it varied. Perhaps you could finish what you were saying, because you were cut off before.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Certainly.

Very quickly, the process was that the project review committee presented information to the board. That was the basis of the board's discussion. There was usually a small package on each individual project. A vice-president of the organization reviewed the project with the board. Board members asked questions. In some cases, there was a very fulsome conversation when there were questions. In some cases, I recall, there were very limited conversations around projects.

It was not unusual to have an animated discussion on specific projects, but I never saw any fundamental disagreements. It was more around challenging the evidence that was brought forward by the PRC.

Mr. Richard Cannings: In all of those decisions—I don't know how many were made—how often did the board go against the recommendation of the project review committee?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I don't recall the board ever going against the recommendation of the project review committee.

Mr. Richard Cannings: In a sense, the board, even though there were animated discussions sometimes, essentially rubber-stamped each decision. The real decisions about whether to fund projects seemed to be made at the project review committee stage. If that's the case, please remind me, because again I'm new here, who sits on that committee.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, my understanding is the project review committee comprises some board members and, I believe, some staff. I have no particular insight into it, because I did not participate in it and have no window into its activities.

My impression is that it was, without question, the substantive venue for the detailed discussion and due diligence of projects. It is the place where experts were brought in to discuss the merits of projects and to provide views. It would have been the place where, I would say, the vast bulk of discussion on individual projects would have taken place.

The Chair: If you have a brief question, sir, go ahead.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Briefly, it comes back to the question about Zoom meetings.

If lots of these meetings were essentially Zoom meetings during the COVID-19 period, was leaving the room just leaving the Zoom room or going off-line? Is that all that happened?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, as I understand the situation, when people recused themselves, they went off-line and were then brought physically back in by the corporate secretary or someone else after the discussion of the specific project had been completed.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have two more members to hear from.

Mr. Cooper, you have the floor for five minutes, please.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Noseworthy, the Auditor General, in her report, noted that with respect to the \$38.5 million in so-called COVID-19 relief payments, ISED supported SDTC's decision to funnel those monies out the door. Is that correct?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: We accepted the decision of the organization to provide that funding, yes.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Notwithstanding that those monies did not comply with the contribution agreement.... Is that correct?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: The advice that we were working under is that as those projects were extensions of existing projects that had been previously approved, they were in compliance with the contribution agreement.

Mr. Michael Cooper: The minister was informed of those payments. Is that correct? You stated that SDTC wrote to the minister.

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: That is correct.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you for that.

I will now be moving a motion. It reads:

That, in relation to its study on Report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada of the 2024 Reports 5 to 7 of the Auditor General of Canada, in which the Committee is examining the Liberal government's \$400 million Green Slush Fund corruption scandal, the Committee:

a) make the following interim report to the House:

“Your committee wishes to admonish the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for failing to make themselves available to give evidence on the Committee's examination of Sustainable Development Technology Canada despite being invited by the Committee on June 6, 2024, and October 7, 2024, respectively, and recommends that the House order that these ministers-in-hiding each appear before the Committee for two hours before the House recesses for the Christmas break.” and

b) if necessary, hold additional meetings to accommodate the ministers.

• (1800)

The Chair: Mr. Cooper, could I ask if you have sent that motion to the clerk as of yet? if not, would you do that right away, please.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I believe so, and if not, we will do so momentarily.

The Chair: I'm going to suspend for a few minutes. I'm going to consult with the clerk, and I'm going to endeavour to have the translated motion sent out very quickly.

Mr. Noseworthy, you can just hang around for a few minutes. If you'd like to get up and walk around, that's okay, but perhaps you could stay within earshot. You have about three to five minutes, anyway, until I come back.

Thank you.

We will suspend.

• (1800) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1805)

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

Mr. Noseworthy, can you hang tight for a few minutes? I'd like to take the temperature of the members to see whether this is going to be quick business or go on for a while. If it does, I will come back to you as soon as I can. I certainly won't belabour it, but we'll get a taste of the room and see where we're at.

Mr. Cooper, your motion is in order, and it has been sent out to members. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This Liberal green slush fund scandal is massive. Four hundred million taxpayer dollars went out the door improperly, including \$330 million involving 186 conflicts of interest among board members, and tens of millions of dollars funnelled directly into companies in which board members had interest. As we heard today, we have an assistant deputy minister who was the eyes and ears of the department sitting in on each of these meetings as money improperly went out the door, including instances of board members padding their own pockets and contravening the SDTC act.

What we also have are two ministers in Justin Trudeau's cabinet in hiding with a lot to answer for: environment minister Stephen Guilbeault and the ISED minister, François-Philippe Champagne.

This committee called on Minister Guilbeault to appear before it all the way back on June 6. It's now November 27 and Minister Guilbeault hasn't found the time to fit an appearance before this committee in his calendar. He is essentially thumbing his nose at this committee, at answering questions and at being accountable as minister.

Minister Guilbeault has a lot to answer for, because it was Minister Guilbeault who was a lobbyist for Cycle Capital and a close associate of Andrée-Lise Méthot, who is and was the CEO of Cycle Capital. She sat on the SDTC board when \$10.4 million was funnelled illegally, in contravention of subsection 12(2) of the SDTC act, to companies in Cycle Capital's portfolio, in which Andrée-Lise Méthot had interest. This is a minister who lobbied, on behalf of Cycle Capital, the Prime Minister's Office 50 times, all the way up to the chief of staff. Minister Guilbeault is someone with interest in Cycle Capital who may have profited from the monies that im-

properly went out SDTC's door into Ms. Méthot's companies in Cycle Capital's portfolio. Minister Guilbeault sat around the cabinet table when it voted to approve 700 million taxpayer dollars going to this corrupt SDTC green slush fund.

Then there is Minister Champagne. It's been nearly two months since this committee invited Minister Champagne to appear before it. Minister Champagne, like Minister Guilbeault, is in hiding.

I have to say that Minister Champagne has an absolute responsibility to appear before this committee, because this green slush fund falls directly under the purview of his department. He is the minister responsible. It should be noted that many of the conflicts of interest and much of the corruption that took place at SDTC, which Minister Champagne is responsible for and must answer for by virtue of being minister, took place directly under Minister Champagne's watch, which provides that he has even more to answer for. It's not just that he inherited a mess in which things occurred before his time. Conflicts of interest, money improperly going out the door, self-dealing and corruption occurred directly under his watch as minister. Minister Champagne has a lot to answer for in terms of what appears to be his attempts to cover up the corruption, conflicts and mismanagement at SDTC.

• (1810)

Minister Champagne has repeatedly claimed that when he found out about the corruption and self-dealing, he took action. Well, how convenient, because all of this was happening while he was minister, and he did nothing until the whistle-blower was about to go public. Then, all of a sudden, when he realized that he had a scandal that was going to go public, Minister Champagne took an interest in the matter.

We know that RCGT was retained to undertake an independent fact-finding investigation. According to the whistle-blower, an interim report was prepared as far back as May 2023, with RCGT having been retained in March 2023.

According to the whistle-blower, much of what was in the interim RCGT report was damning. What was contained in that report ultimately has been confirmed by the Auditor General. Instead of seeing that the report be made public, according to the whistle-blower, the minister's office interfered in the release of that report.

In the whistle-blower's testimony before this committee on September 18, 2024, he said this with respect to the interim fact-finding report of RCGT:

All of this should have led to immediate action, but once those findings reached the Privy Council Office and the minister's office, everything changed. The investigation was delayed for another four months, allowing SDTC to continue misusing funds and mistreating employees, when at this point the federal government had in fact known this was true.

Minister Champagne needs to come to committee and needs to answer questions about that. Not only that, according to the whistle-blower, between May and when the RCGT report was finally released, Minister Champagne and his office were involved in tampering with and demanding material alterations to the RCGT report to water it down.

According to the whistle-blower, by late August or early September, there were discussions at ISED about firing the SDTC board and about firing the corrupt executives at SDTC, but suddenly, when the minister got wind of it, that changed. That didn't happen. We know that it was in fact what didn't happen, because when the RCGT report was issued in October, which was a damning report with much, if not all, of it supported by the Auditor General's later report—and by the way, the Auditor General found even more damning evidence in terms of what was going on at SDTC—the minister kept the board in place, including the corrupt and conflicted chair, Annette Verschuren.

For all of these reasons and more, we need to hear from Minister Champagne. These ministers, in this Justin Trudeau government, a government that really is defined by a culture of corruption and by a complete lack of transparency, need to be hauled before this committee, and they need to answer questions about what they knew about corruption and mismanagement at SDTC.

I would hope that members would support this motion so that we can hear from these ministers as soon as possible. It's time that they get out of hiding and come before the committee.

• (1815)

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Up next is Mr. Drouin.

You have the floor, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand my colleague's accusations. This proves just how much he has absolutely no interest in what really happened at Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

His motion has already been moved, and accusations have already been made. In some respects, we don't have a problem with the intent of the motion. However, the preamble is unacceptable.

In fact, it would be like me telling the chair that I wanted to invite the members of the Conservative Party, because they weren't being honest with Canadian taxpayers; they took part in partisan activities using Canadian taxpayers' money; they took part in caucus meetings while they were at a partisan meeting held in Quebec City, for example. We have ample evidence. The chair ruled on this motion as being out of order. I don't want to make accusations, but I would like to know how to get to the truth. I know that a number of accusations have been made against Mr. Guilbeault, particularly by Mr. Cooper and Mr. Perkins, but I don't agree with them.

Andrée-Lise Méthot testified before the committee, and she was accompanied by her lawyer. She warned them that they had the privilege of having the protection of Parliament and that she could not sue them for things they had said. That's why they're repeating it here, and I understand that.

Furthermore, as you know very well, Mr. Chair, I won't be running in the next election, but I respect the people. I'm prepared to repeat everything I say here outside the House of Commons and on

Wellington Street, without the protection of Parliament. However, my colleagues don't have the courage to do the same thing. They didn't, and I understand that.

They always talk about Mr. Guilbeault, and the fact that certain actions made him suddenly richer. We heard from the CEO, who explained to us that she manages assets, whether they are worth \$1 or \$100 million. If the asset is worth \$1 and the return on investment is worth \$100 million, that's one thing, but if you manage \$600 million and the assets don't generate any money, that's something else. I think my colleagues on the other side of the table don't understand finance. I invite them to go back to university and take a basic accounting course. That way, they would understand how things work.

Whether the value of an asset is \$2 or \$1 billion, the return on investment is always what matters, but my colleagues are confusing these two things. They've never had the courage to say outside what they're saying here. They just have the courage to say it while they have the protection of parliamentary privilege. They never had the courage to say it outside the committee room. I invite them to say the same thing on Wellington Street, on Sparks Street or on Bank Street, because—

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins: On a point of order, I've said lots outside. You just don't pay attention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: It seems that some people are offended by what I'm saying.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: I understand my colleagues' hesitation in moving such a motion. I invite them again to think about how many hours we want to spend on this, given that they've been talking about Sustainable Development Technology Canada in the House of Commons for two months. They don't want us to bring forward legislation. They don't want us to introduce bills to support Canadians and Quebecers. I understand that, and I'm not accusing the Bloc Québécois or the New Democratic Party.

The Conservative Party has an obsessive need to filibuster everywhere, in the House and here in committee, by moving motions that don't respect the will of the committee to insist on exposing the truth.

We held 16 meetings and heard from 36 witnesses here in committee. I know that the Auditor General will be presenting another report next week, which is part of the normal procedure. I think the committee will be sitting, and there will be a briefing from the Auditor General at that time.

It's important that we move on as a committee. I'm reaching out to the opposition parties. We're not necessarily opposed to the possibility of inviting Minister Champagne to come and testify here.

At the last meeting, Zoë Kolbuc appeared before the committee.

Mr. Chair, you said that one witness, Leah Lawrence, didn't have the opportunity to come and testify because she's conducting certain studies.

I don't know what power our committee has in this regard, but, at this point, I believe we're able to agree on future testimony, knowing full well that other Auditor General's reports will soon be tabled in the House that our committee will have to consider.

I therefore move a motion to adjourn the debate.

• (1825)

[English]

The Chair: I have a motion to adjourn the debate. If the clerk could call the roll please, then, unless I stand to be corrected, we will get back to Mr. Noseworthy and wrap that up.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It depends on the vote.

The Chair: Yes, it depends on the vote, of course. Pardon me.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3)

The Chair: The debate on the motion is closed. We're going back to our witnesses now.

I have two more members who will be questioning Mr. Noseworthy.

Mr. Cooper, there are four minutes on the clock for your time, if you'd like to take that or hand it off to one of your colleagues, and then I will go to Mr. Drouin to close down this section.

Mr. Brock, you have the floor for four minutes, please.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Noseworthy, I'm extremely disappointed in your responses because your version of events simply does not add up. You talk about the conflict of interest component and state that you weren't in a position to assess it. The fact of the matter is that the board members declared the conflict of interest and, according to your evidence, from time to time recused themselves.

Before I get to the fullness of the question, I want to be satisfied that you understand what recusal means. What do you think it means?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Recusal, sir, is that I saw the individuals depart the room and not participate in any further discussion.

Mr. Larry Brock: That's right.

The evidence is very clear, as revealed in the Auditor General's report. While you were in attendance at the majority, if not all, of the board meetings, conflicts of interest were declared. Sometimes

people left. However, the evidence is clear that those conflicted Liberal directors, including the hand-picked Liberal chair Annette Verschuren, voted in favour of lining their own and their companies' pockets in your presence.

Your fantastical evidence today seems to suggest that you had no moral, ethical or legal obligation to report that to the deputy minister and, ultimately, to the minister. No one, sir, believes that.

You are a senior public servant, and I would hope you have the best interests of the taxpayer in mind. This massive scandal has cost the taxpayers well over \$400 million. Your evidence, sir, of remaining essentially mute because your belief, pursuant to the contribution agreement, is that the board was to report these conflicts, which clearly they didn't, does not absolve you of your responsibility. You were extremely negligent, so the jig is up. I don't know who you're trying to protect.

Do you have anything to say about your lack of respect for the Canadian taxpayers, sir?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: Mr. Chair, when I saw potential conflicts of interest, I saw people recuse themselves. I saw nothing to report.

• (1830)

Mr. Larry Brock: On your last occasion, sir, you lied. You claimed that Annette Verschuren at all times conducted herself completely appropriately. That is an absolute lie. In the words of Annette Verschuren herself, after she was outed by the Ethics Commissioner, she was found guilty of not recusing herself by not leaving the boardroom in your presence.

Why did you lie to us?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I do not recall that circumstance.

Mr. Larry Brock: You do not recall the circumstance. How convenient.

Do you have a problem with your memory generally, or just specifically when you're asked tough questions?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I am not sure there is an appropriate answer to that question, sir.

Mr. Larry Brock: That's because you're caught in a lie.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, that is your time.

I'm now going to Mr. Drouin for five minutes.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly appreciate Mr. Brock's intervention, and I certainly wouldn't make any accusation before we conclude this report. I think that's important. This is what I was getting to in the debate around the previous motion. We need to ensure that, yes, we get to the bottom of the truth, but let's conclude this report so we can make recommendations to the House.

Mr. Noseworthy, we know what your role was. How often did you meet with SDTC? Was it every board meeting?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: I attended most board meetings. I typically had a conversation with the CEO in advance of those meetings to understand what was coming up on the agenda, and to ask whether there were any specific issues related to coordination that she wished me to raise in my comments.

Mr. Francis Drouin: That's fair enough.

How often would these meetings happen? Was it once a week, twice a week, once a month or once every quarter?

Mr. Andrew Noseworthy: My memory, Chair, is that meetings happened roughly monthly. However, I do not have minutes of the meetings, so I can't recall specifically. That information would be readily available.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Mr. Noseworthy.

Mr. Chair, I, too, would like to move a new motion:

That, notwithstanding any previous decision of the committee,

- a. The committee agree to conduct two more meetings on Report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, for the purposes of hearing from Zoë Kolbuc, Leah Lawrence, and the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry;
- b. At the conclusion of the second meeting, the committee provide drafting instructions to the analysts on the final report of the study; and,
- c. That no more meetings be conducted on Report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

Mr. Chair, I don't provide advice, but I'm sure you will suspend. I will send you that in writing, in both official languages.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, is your questioning of Mr. Noseworthy done?

If it is, all right.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes.

The Chair: Can you send that in?

I'm going to suspend again.

Mr. Noseworthy, in the meantime, you are excused. I appreciate your coming in and your participation in this study. If there's any additional information that you'd like to submit to the clerk or if any has been asked of you today—I don't believe there was—you can send it to the clerk.

For now, sir, you are excused. Thank you for your time this evening.

I'm going to suspend, and I'll be back in a few minutes. I'll explain how this meeting is going to proceed after that.

Thank you very much.

• (1830) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1835)

The Chair: I'll bring the meeting back to order.

There is already a lengthy speaking list.

I'll begin with Mr. Nater on the motion that has been distributed to members.

• (1840)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm sorry, Chair, I thought Frankie—Mr. Drouin—was going to speak to it.

An hon. member: Frankie?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm sorry.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Well, Mr.—

Mr. Francis Drouin: I get Francis, Frankie and Frank.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin was not at the table, so I recognized Mr. Nater.

Mr. Nater, you have the floor, please.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts on this guillotine motion from the Liberal Party. That is exactly what this is. It's a guillotine motion, a term that's often used in Westminster for the shutting down of debate, the shutting down of the opportunity to study something. That is exactly what this guillotine motion does. It will prevent this committee.... I'm going to quote from the actual motion, "That no more meetings be conducted on Report 6, Sustainable Development Technology Canada." We all know this fund as the green slush fund. That is exactly what this motion does. It's an attempt by the Liberal Party to once again prevent Canadians and this committee from getting to the bottom of the absolutely terrible conduct of the Sustainable Development Technology Canada board and its entities.

The fact that we still don't have answers from SDTC itself, from the ministers responsible, from the ministers implicated in this.... We will remember, as well, that not only is there a minister responsible for this program but that there's also a minister who's complicit and involved in this program in terms of financing and getting funding into the hands of a company in which he has a direct financial interest. However, that's exactly what this motion tries to do.

I don't think anyone is surprised that what's happening here is reflective of the Liberal actions in the House of Commons as well. What we're seeing there are constant attempts by the Liberal Party to try to sweep this issue under the rug to prevent Canadians from seeing how the depths of the corruption and the issues within this institution really are.

Four hundred million taxpayer dollars went into this entity. That's \$400 million that I know each and every Canadian out there could have seen better dealt with than going to friends and acquaintances of these Liberal-appointed directors.

I don't think it's lost on anyone that when we did have former Liberal minister Bains at this committee twice on this matter, we still failed to get actual answers on how this was being undertaken. It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous.

I would be remiss if I didn't point it out, as well.... I can only say so much because we can't talk about what happened in camera, but I can talk about the fact that this committee did go in camera earlier this week so that Canadians would be prevented from seeing the actual debate on a previous version of this. It's rather convenient for the Liberal Party that they wish—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: How convenient for you guys—

Mr. John Nater: How convenient for the Liberal Party that they're preventing—

I'm being heckled by Ms. Khalid, but I don't think she should be one who's talking about in camera meetings, given concerns that have been raised in the past.

This is just par for the course when it comes to the Liberals. They simply want to ensure that Canadians don't have the answers and that these Liberal friends and acquaintances aren't held to account.

Let's remember how last June the majority of the House of Commons voted to require that documents be provided to the law clerk unredacted and that those then be referred to the RCMP. What we've seen over the last two months is the fact that the Liberals did not comply. The Liberal Speaker of the House himself ruled that this was a contempt of the House of Commons. The Liberal Speaker of the House of Commons ruled that the government failed to comply with a legitimate order of the House, and it was an order. It wasn't a "Well, if you have time, if you wouldn't mind...." It was an order of the House of Commons, and the House of Commons isn't the Liberal Party. The House of Commons is a majority of members present. I would note that—

• (1845)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Can you say that again?

Mr. John Nater: I would say, for the benefit of Mr. Perkins, that the House of Commons is not the Liberal Party.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Wow, that will come as a shock.

Mr. John Nater: I know that is a shock. Certain Liberals think that Canada and the Liberal Party are one and the same, but I think we know very well that the Liberal Party of this incarnation is certainly not the Liberal Party of the past, and it is certainly not a Liberal Party that Canadians have any trust in or respect for. That is one of the reasons that the Canadians I talk to are strongly demanding an election, so they can have the chance to show their real points of view on the Liberal Party and on where they are with this.

I don't think I need to talk too long on this matter, but if we want to be honest—and we always like to look for the good in a motion—there's a small, teeny-tiny part of this motion that sounds reasonable, which is that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry appear before this committee. That's reasonable. Let's make sure that part is kept in because we do need to hear from the minister responsible for this program.

That is the basis of ministerial responsibility. A minister is responsible for the activities in his or her department. Ministers are responsible for those issues and are then accountable to the House of Commons. They are accountable to the people's representatives, the members of Parliament who sit around this table and the mem-

bers of Parliament who collectively sit in the House of Commons. That's how it works, as my friend Mr. Perkins so kindly pointed out, and there is a degree of responsibility that must be undertaken.

It's interesting because, if we look back at what happened when the Liberals were first elected, there was a very strong indication that they would be responsible to Parliament and that they would undertake visits to committees, but that obviously hasn't happened.

Therefore, I would offer a simple amendment to this motion, and I think it ought to be accepted because it is reasonable. I would move that the motion be amended by deleting parts (b) and (c). I can pause there.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm just going to pause for a few seconds.

Mr. Nater, your amendment is in order.

Colleagues, the amendment is to delete (b) and (c).

Would you like to continue speaking to this, or would you like to hand it off to one of your colleagues?

Mr. John Nater: I don't think I need to say any more than that.

The Chair: All right.

I'm looking for a speaking list for the amendment.

I have Mr. Brock and then Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Brock, you have the floor.

Mr. Larry Brock: Clearly, I will support my colleague Mr. Nater on the proposed amendment, because it does away with the whole concept—I'm glad Mr. Nater used the concept appropriately—of a guillotine motion. That's precisely what it does. Are we surprised? Should Canadians be surprised about yet another scandal rocking the Justin Trudeau government, after nine years of abject failure in delivering results, broken promise after promise—of transparency, accountability and responsibility, which are completely out the window—and actions, like those of my colleague Monsieur Drouin, to shut this completely down and not call out all the bad actors? Where have we heard that before—"bad actors"?

We heard that from Justin Trudeau. Justin Trudeau and various ministers have always championed how those responsible for misusing taxpayer dollars, not following the rules and padding their own pockets ought to be held responsible. Well, no one has been charged yet. We have all of these RCMP investigations, but it's never Justin Trudeau's fault. It's never a minister's fault. I'm glad to hear that Minister Champagne is part of the Liberals' motion. He's certainly still part of our amendment to the motion, because he has a significant amount of answering to do.

He's been accused not once but up to three times publicly, in the press, by Witness 1, who testified here on a couple of occasions. I apologize if my math is wrong. I'm not a sitting member of PACP, but I have participated from time to time over the last year and a half, since this scandal has been percolating. He publicly called out Champagne for lying to committee. That is a serious allegation that warrants a full investigation by this committee. There are potentially not only civil but also criminal consequences if it's proven to be accurate that he deliberately misled committee. The evidence, according to the whistle-blower, is that he took concrete, active steps to soften or water down the initial RCGT report, that he lied to Canadians both inside and outside the House, and that he didn't know about the full extent of the shenanigans going on at this green slush fund until September, when the evidence proves that, as early as June of the same year, he was briefed by the deputy minister.

We had Assistant Deputy Minister McConnachie here in the committee room. Although he did his best to distance himself from his taped conversation with the whistle-blower.... You know, in my old career, we used to always rely on the best evidence. The best evidence rule is maintained not only in civil but also criminal proceedings. You don't get much better evidence than a taped conversation. The conversation wasn't softened. It wasn't speculative. He claims he was set up, which is complete garbage. That, in and of itself, is an absolute lie. He laid bare his true, unvarnished thoughts on how completely disgusted he was by the shenanigans going on at this billion-dollar slush fund. These are taxpayer funds, when we have families struggling to feed themselves, house themselves and clothe themselves. They are lining up at food banks and—

• (1850)

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I hear Mr. Brock's enthusiasm and hope he's going to support us on the GST holiday if he wants to provide relief to families.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Brock, you have the floor.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I were to poll all the members at this table, I think we would probably be unanimous that all of us have toured and visited and heard from our local executive directors of our food banks. What's sad about this scandal is that people who are actually utilizing food banks across this country were once the same individuals who contributed money and food. This is what has happened to Canadians under Justin Trudeau when you have absolutely no regard and no respect for the Canadian taxpayer.

I started off my comments by talking about this being probably the most predominant and most substantial scandal that is rocking this country right now. If this isn't proof positive that we need a carbon tax election to get Justin Trudeau the hell out of Ottawa, then I don't know what is.

That's what Canadians want. The polls clearly establish that. He has lost his moral authority to govern this country.

• (1855)

The Chair: Mr. Brock, I would urge and advise you just to watch your language. This is just a flare on that, please.

Mr. Larry Brock: What did I say that was offensive, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You said H-E-L-L.

Mr. John Nater: You said H-E double hockey sticks.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll reflect on my language.

I think the point is made here that, according to the witness, Mr. McConnachie, in his true words, the minister is going to literally flip out—flip his head or flip out—and he probably did. He probably screamed and said—I'm not going to use the word again—“What is going on? How did this happen? Where was the oversight?”

We had Mr.... What was his name, the first guy?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Do you mean Mr. Noseworthy?

Mr. Larry Brock: Yes.

We had Mr. Noseworthy with this incredible tale that, essentially, he was a fly on the wall, eating chicken wings and armed with the authority to provide government input. However, he also claimed that he never spoke. He was there, I guess, to be the eyes and the ears, to report back to Minister Champagne, and I'm sure he did.

Minister Champagne didn't care. They only care and they only show a modicum—I'm not even going to give him credit for a great deal but just a modicum—of concern when they are caught. That really has been the hallmark of this Justin Trudeau government, and that is pathetic because I thought, as many Canadians did in 2015, that he would be true to his word of being accountable, transparent and responsible, particularly responsible to the taxpayer.

How much more do Canadians have to put up with this absolute failure of a government, the deep rot, the corruption, the cover-up, the denial, the deflection of responsibility? There was a point in time in this country under previous Liberal administrations when there really was a Liberal Party of Canada, not the Justin Trudeau Party of Canada but the Liberal Party of Canada, where ministers believed in accountability. It has been the case with Conservative governments: ministers taking responsibility, ministers resigning voluntarily.

A case in point is former minister Randy Boissonnault, who just doubled down, tripled down and did whatever he could to give out this illusion that there was some other Randy when there was just an abundance of evidence to prove the opposite. It wasn't until various strong indigenous and first nations leaders across this country and organizations started to call out the repulsiveness of fake Randy's claiming indigenous and Métis status that the Prime Minister, the PMO and Katie Telford put the wheels in motion and came to this miraculous mutual understanding.

Ms. Jean Yip: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order on relevance. I thought we were doing SDTC.

Mr. Larry Brock: Oh, we are. I'm getting to it, Ms. Yip. I'm just getting started.

The Chair: Mr. Brock, it's back to you.

Mr. Larry Brock: He came to this miraculous mutual understanding that he had to step down. But the day before, less than 24 hours prior to that, the Prime Minister, outside the country, was fully supportive. He was fully supportive of Randy Boissonnault, whose integrity and character and reputation have been shoved down the proverbial toilet.

That's what this government does. They don't believe in accountability. No minister believes in accountability. That's why we definitely need to hear from Minister Guilbeault. As I've raised numerous times in the House and at committee, just the potential, whether it's real or whether it's potential, a potential influence, a potential benefit.... He still has shares in Cycle Capital. To have a minister conduct himself in that fashion, advise Cycle Capital for as long as he did and maintain the shares, knowing full well that Cycle Capital breached significant ethical rules in stealing taxpayer money, essentially, by funnelling it into their coffers, that benefits Minister Guilbeault, he has a lot of questions to answer. It's no small surprise that he is denying a willingness and an invitation to attend committee. That's why we have to bring in an appropriate motion.

That's why I thought there was value and merit in Mr. Cooper's original motion that this ought to be reported to the House. This behaviour needs to be reported to the House, as I'm now reporting it to Canadians who are watching this. This will be shared, because they are accountable to Canadians. They may think they're accountable to themselves, or beholden to themselves, or beholden to Justin Trudeau, but we are all servants of the people. We are here because constituents in our ridings place their trust in us. When you breach that trust and you show disrespect to not only your constituents but also taxpayers, there has to be consequences. Those consequences start with answering allegations and making them available for us to pursue an investigation.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Larry Brock: At this point, I'm prepared, sir, to—

● (1900)

The Chair: Give me one second, Mr. Brock. I'm getting some feedback from someone online.

I would ask everyone to please make sure their microphone is muted. We're hearing something.

Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: I'll cede the floor at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll just say a few things. I'll remind members that when an amendment to a motion is put forward—I checked with the clerk on this—I do begin a second list. I already have a half-dozen members.

I can put you on it as well, Madam Sinclair-Desgagné.

I am going to send up a first flare that I will shortly excuse our next witness—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: I have a very long list here, Ms. Khalid, and unfortunately I must hear from all members. I will come back on that point shortly. In the meantime, Mr. Drouin has the floor, followed by Mr. Perkins, Mr. McCauley, Mr. Cooper and Ms. Khalid. On the original list, I have another half-dozen people. You're on that as well, as is Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor, please.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Thank you, Chair.

I've heard a former Crown prosecutor just discuss and make some fake linkages to evidence. I've also heard Frank Caputo make the same arguments. It's no wonder we have so many criminals out on bail if they were making the same arguments back then, when they were Crown prosecutors, in front of a judge.

What we're facing is a kangaroo court. One has to wonder how many more witnesses they want or if this is a fundraising exercise. I do respect the honourable member, but he talked about corruption and whatnot. Never in my nine years have I read any news headline that Mounties searched Liberal headquarters.

Maybe he wasn't paying attention back then, but I have a quote from April 15, 2008, about their beloved Stephen Harper—some of those members were advising Stephen Harper—that—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I have a point of order, Chair, on relevance.

Mr. Francis Drouin: —“Mounties search Tory headquarters.”

I know they don't want to hear that. They don't want to hear the truth, and I get it. They don't want to hear the truth.

● (1905)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Don't yell at the translators.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I understand that.

An hon. member: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Look at the points of order.

The Chair: I have to address this.

Mr. Drouin has the floor.

Are you still...?

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'm still going on.

The Chair: Okay, sir, very good.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Brock was allowed to go around in a big circle. I will go around in a big circle, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'll bring it back. Let me bring it back.

The Chair: Mr. Nater.

Mr. John Nater: Chair, out of respect for the interpreters, we should try not to yell into the microphone. As a former vice-chair of the official languages committee, I have a special interest in ensuring that we have the ability to participate in both official languages—

The Chair: —as do we all.

Mr. John Nater: —and without our excellent interpreters, that wouldn't be possible. Perhaps we could try not to yell into the microphone.

The Chair: As a second notice, I'm going to shortly excuse our next witness.

Mr. Drouin, you have the floor again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: If the Conservatives want me to repeat what I said in French in the name of official languages, I'll do it.

The RCMP is looking for evidence, not from the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois or the NDP, but from the Conservative Party, of course.

This reeks of corruption. The Conservative Party worked very hard to circumvent the laws. Who is in charge of all this? It's obviously the new leader of the Conservative Party, Mr. Poilievre, who I know is doing a lot to protect taxpayers. He's the only leader I know who moved from Ottawa to Ottawa. He sold his house to move to a taxpayer-funded house.

I'm going to come back to the subject, Mr. Chair, but we're talking about corruption. We're talking about misspent dollars, so let's talk about the dollars that were misspent. At least when I look at Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, I can say that her former leader, Gilles Duceppe, never had the audacity to move to Stornoway; he even lived very far from Stornoway. However, Pierre Poilievre moved from Ottawa to Ottawa to spend thousands of dollars. I don't need to remind Mr. Cannings, because Mr. Charlie Angus often reminds the House how many thousands of dollars have been spent.

Mr. Chair, you were the president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I know you're outraged by that. You can't say that right now, and I understand that very well.

For all Canadians, I'll now come back to what we want to know, which is the truth. We agree on that. We're not shutting down this debate. There have been a number of studies at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. In fact, the same committee members on the other side were at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

The majority of the committee agrees to have Zoë Kolbuc appear; she testified at the last meeting. We also want to invite Leah Lawrence back, and we agree on that. We also agree on summoning the minister once again, because he does indeed have to be accountable, even though no testimony has established a direct link between the minister and SDTC, Sustainable Development Technology Canada. There was no testimony that made that connection. Several opinions have been expressed in the media, such as those of Brian Lilley of the Toronto Sun, but no testimony or evidence has shown a connection between the minister and SDTC. Despite that, I agree that the minister must come and be accountable before the committee. That's why we brought this motion forward.

However, there's another report in the works, which brings me back to the amendment that the Conservative Party has just proposed. The Conservative Party members proposed this amendment saying that they didn't want this study to end, knowing full well that

other Auditor General's reports will be tabled as of December 2, next Monday.

I'm asking the members of the Conservative Party how many more meetings they want to hold as part of this study. Also, will these meetings be used to make more videos like the ones they made here, when the meetings were suspended? We've seen them on a number of occasions. Some members on the other side have encouraged people to call our offices. However, that will do nothing to help the committee get to the bottom of the truth, which is the purpose of this committee. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts has never been partisan. So let's agree on that.

The majority of the committee agrees to hear from certain witnesses. However, it's the Conservative Party that's filibustering, as it's doing in the House. Nothing has changed since then.

Mr. Chair, I'm ready to vote now, to welcome the witness now, and to move so that we can get to the bottom of this matter.

So I'm ready to vote now. If the Conservative Party is ready, let's go ahead and vote, and we can hear from the witness right away.

Thank you very much.

• (1910)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I have a question before I turn the floor over to Mr. Perkins.

You'll understand this reference. Are you going to talk about elvers?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Elvers? I will do it by request.

The Chair: All right. No.

I am going to excuse the witness because I have a long list of members to—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: He came all the way over here. It's not fair.

The Chair: I know.

I regret this, but we will endeavour to reschedule. I appreciate your patience and understanding. The clerk will be in touch. Have a nice evening.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

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

MP Drouin got me. I think that's it.

You convinced me. Actually, you didn't.

I sometimes feel sorry for the Liberals. Then I remember they're covering up a \$400-million scandal. I give my head a shake as to why it is they want to cover up such a scandal.

What they're doing here is a closure motion. They try to do closure motions anywhere they can. They can't do them in the House. You can't shut down the fact that they are filibustering in the House regarding providing documents. It's 29,000 pages, if I recall what the government House leader said. They provided 29,000 pages, but not of words. It's ink blacking out the words. They view that as compliance. You might as well put in 60,000 blacked-out pages. For all we know, there are only 12 pages of information and 30,000 pages of nothing but Liberal black ink. That's the only time Liberals find black ink. Usually, they live in the world of red ink.

Finding MP Drouin concerned about the spending of millions of dollars is just beyond me. I wonder if this government, which has spent more money than all other governments combined, would actually be concerned about expenditures of dollars. Let's talk about the red ink and how they spend taxpayer money.

This organization called SDTC had a legitimate role helping pre-commercialized companies in the green space. That means it's fairly experimental stuff. Getting some money from the government allowed those companies to leverage others. It's like a good-house-keeping seal of approval. If the Government of Canada's arm said, "This is a company worth taking a risk on even though they haven't proven their technology or driven any revenue", it allowed them to get a lot more money from other sources and other government departments. The recently disgraced chair of SDTC used the staff as her own business development agency for her own personal business interests. We've had lots of testimony on that from employees.

The agency was doing this work and had a chair who's very well known to most Canadians, a fellow who changed the world. His name is Jim Balsillie. Our chair here, as well, changes the world every day with his excellent work in New Brunswick Southwest. I'm referring to Jim Balsillie, the co-founder of BlackBerry, who was brought in to fix a lot of the administrative issues that existed. He hired a new president and they cleaned it up.

Guess what happened, though? This is from testimony of the former CEO of SDTC. Jim Balsillie didn't think the government was doing a very good job on what's called the surveillance economy. That's the big tech companies, including Google, Meta and Facebook, using your data in ways without your permission. They were making major data breaches with your personal information. The chair of SDTC at the time, Jim Balsillie, went before parliamentary committees exposing the failures of this Liberal government.

By Leah Lawrence's own testimony, one of the witnesses we had here today, ADM Noseworthy, communicated on behalf of the higher-ups. He doesn't remember any of their names now, for some reason. The higher-ups told him to ask Leah Lawrence if they could get the chair to shut up. They wanted to get him to stop talking about the failures of this government. After all, he's a Governor in Council appointee. He was appointed chair of the board but getting no pay. Multi-billionaire Jim obviously needed this job because he had no other income, I guess. They, with their pressure, said, "You should value that job more than your freedom to expose the government on their failures." Guess what? Jim didn't stop.

● (1915)

According to the CEO, Leah Lawrence, it was communicated by Mr. Noseworthy, who again forgets the contents of these calls, that

there was something in the water over at industry, that the CFO had just left and that he should be warned not to drink the water in that building over there because, apparently, former Liberal minister Navdeep Bains, when he appeared before this committee, couldn't remember anything.

He said that he made 100 appointments and that out of the 100, he appointed six people to that board. He said that he told them to appoint Ms. Verschuren to the board, even though she had conflicts of interest, but he didn't remember that. He did remember that he was in charge of the industry department. He did remember that he was in charge of reducing Canadians' cellphone bills, but then he left government to go work for the most expensive cellphone company in the world, Rogers.

He forgot what his responsibility was in government and said that he was going to get on the gravy train. He appeared before this committee and couldn't remember anything. We might think he was just another Liberal minister with maybe not a lot going on upstairs.

Unfortunately, his chief of staff—let's start with the chief of staff—remembered a number of things. He went off to great success from Navdeep Bains' office to be the salesperson for the Phoenix pay system, adding more Liberal competency to the public service and to Phoenix pay. However, he couldn't remember any of the phone calls, although he could remember the names. He didn't remember anything.

We had the former deputy minister here, who said that Mr. Noseworthy was his eyes and ears, but he didn't remember if he ever talked to him about it. He did give him bonuses, though, every year for his excellent performance of never telling him anything.

Then we had former deputy minister Simon Kennedy. He worked for the current minister, Minister Champagne, who sat there and said that he knew nothing for 40 months, even though his ADM sat in on every meeting. He was doing that *Hogan's Heroes*, Sergeant Schultz thing, too, when he spoke about this in the House, and he said that he "acted".

A lot of you will remember an old Hollywood actor named W.C. Fields. Does everyone remember him? One of my favourite movies with W.C. Fields is *David Copperfield*.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That actor—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Chair, there's a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: —on his deathbed—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Perkins.

I did not hear the point of order.

Ms. Khalid, go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm just questioning the relevance of this. I'm not sure how this pertains to the motion and—

Mr. Rick Perkins: It's about the forgetfulness of Liberals, and you'll find out right now.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: My sincerest apologies, Chair, on the forgetfulness, but I'm just not as old as Mr. Perkins, so I just don't know what he's referring to at all.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Well, you're clearly not as well-rounded and as well-educated as me, either. That's obvious as well.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, hold on for one second.

Ms. Khalid, please don't encourage him. We put him on a timer, a word counter, at the Atlantic caucus.

Mr. Perkins, if you can, please swerve back to the point.

Thank you.

Mr. Rick Perkins: W.C. Fields was on his deathbed, and he was a known atheist. Just like the minister said he was on top of things, he was a known atheist. Someone walked into the room and found him reading the Bible. They asked him why he was reading the Bible, and he said that he was looking for loopholes. He had a deathbed conversion to the fact that there might actually be something after.

Here's how that compares to Minister Champagne. Minister Champagne is 40 months on the job, with an ADM in every meeting and with a deputy minister who's also about as connected to what's going on in his department as Mr. Knuble, Mr. Bains and everybody else. This is the warning about the water over there, because they all seem to forget things. Mr. Knuble remembered Annette Verschuren's and Mr. Noseworthy's résumés back to grade six, but he couldn't remember any meetings on this, for some reason. By the way, most of them are former employees now. That must have something to do with the green slush fund.

Minister Champagne said that he didn't know anything, just like former minister Bains and just like former deputy minister Knuble—

• (1920)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Just like Sergeant Schultz.

Mr. Rick Perkins: He's just like Sergeant Schultz in *Hogan's Heroes*. He's just like, apparently, most of the Liberal caucus. They don't know anything about this. They don't know anything about it. They've sat through hours of testimony, and yet their ears are closed. I know why they're closed. We'll come to that.

Minister Champagne says he acted. Well, let's see how he acted. We were about to have a witness here who met for three months, in 30 hours of taped conversations, with the whistle-blower, and we're expected to believe that at no time did anyone in the deputy minister's office or the minister's office know that was going on.

Of course, that's what they're going to claim, that they didn't know anything, just like Mr. Noseworthy, just like Mr. Knuble, just like Minister Bains, who can't remember whether he got on a private jet or not. He has to actually have somebody hold up a sign at the Ottawa airport with his name on it just in case he forgets he has a corporate limo picking him up from Rogers.

Minister Champagne says he acted; 30 hours of meetings taped and he does nothing. After six months of frustration for whistle-blower number one—he waited six months, thinking, “Oh, I'm sure they're earnest like me over at industry, and I'm sure the minister is just as concerned as I am about the loss of \$400 million,”—there was nothing. There was dead air. There was absolutely nothing. He goes to *The Globe and Mail*. All of a sudden, the minister goes, “Oh, look, I just discovered this; I'd better hire somebody to come in and look at it.”

This was going on for six, seven and eight months. The department was being briefed. He had ADMs in every bloody meeting, where 82% of the things that happened in the meeting were conflicted. There were so many SDTC directors leaving the room and recusing themselves that Noseworthy was getting windburn because they were leaving. They were having trouble holding quorum in the board meetings there were so few directors who could actually vote on anything.

Apparently, as MP Cooper said, Mr. Noseworthy was busy eating chicken fingers as all of these folks were going in and out of the room. But he didn't see anything. He didn't see anything. It's deniability, right? It's covering your you-know-what. We have another word for it in Atlantic Canada. It's the “A” word. For some reason, he wants to be the fall guy, because everybody points to Noseworthy. He was in the room. It must be his fault. Let's point at this guy.

What is all this that happened that people sat there? You had nine directors named. Now, the government claims that they did this. Well, no, the actual first letter raising this went from our incredibly diligent ethics critic. It's funny, but they don't have an ethics minister over there, for any reason, in the government. But we have an ethics critic, and I have to tell you, he's a pretty busy fellow.

MP Barrett wrote a letter early on in this to the Ethics Commissioner and wrote to the Auditor General. This is how this stuff came about. It wasn't because Minister Champagne actually said to call in the Auditor General. No. He said to call in an accounting firm, and not to do a forensic audit: Let's see if there's some governance issues there and let's have a report. We'll get a draft. Then we'll alter it. Then we'll bury it and hope nobody asks for it.

Then he'd stand up and talk about it in the House: I'll take no lessons from anyone, including the whistle-blower who was telling me for six months that there was a problem. I'll take no lessons from him on the fact that I'm not in charge of my department. I'll take no lessons from him that I'm not on top of the game. I'll take no lessons from him. The fact is that I never read a contract I ever signed, even though I'm a corporate lawyer. I signed contracts to give us all these battery contracts, a whole 26 pages.

He then admitted in committee that he never read it. Boy oh boy, I'm sure he advised all his clients, when he was a corporate lawyer, that they should sign contracts without reading them, especially when they're spending \$15 billion of taxpayer money.

That's the care this minister gives to the taxpayer dollar as he flies around the world in first class, hobnobbing with people, handing out big cheques, and then running around with the next one all at your expense. Let's not forget the big cheque he handed out to Northvolt, which has just declared bankruptcy. That's the diligence this minister puts on things. He's a failure. He's a failure because he doesn't care about the taxpayer dollars under him. He's shown that not only with this but also with other things.

• (1925)

These are directors Navdeep Bains put in. Do you know what Navdeep Bains claimed? He said, "I never called anybody who wasn't on a list from the Privy Council Office." Everybody here knows who the Privy Council Office works for.

Mr. Michael Cooper: It's the Prime Minister.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It's the Prime Minister's personal department. It was the Prime Minister's Office that told PCO to tell Navdeep Bains to appoint Annette Verschuren and these conflicted directors. They are hand-picked.

I know the Liberals like to say, "Well, they gave money to so-and-so, and you're saying this and that." The Liberals appointed them.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, excuse me.

I understand someone took some photos. Could they delete them, please. I know it's someone who works for another member. There are no photos, obviously, when committees sit.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Who took them, Chair?

I remember being hauled through the grinder when somebody accidentally came into a room.

The Chair: It was the staff of a government member.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I would like to know who it was.

The Chair: If you insist, it's the staff of a government member, Ms. Khalid.

I'm just trying to move—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I would like to know who it was.

The Chair: You can consult your colleagues.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'd like a warning next time you take pictures, so I can smile for the camera.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rick Perkins: Here we have a minister who, like all of his predecessors, claims he knew nothing. He claims he knew nothing as the Prime Minister's hand-picked directors were put on this board, then went and funnelled money to their own companies.

Now, I know there are members around this table who question the issue of Minister Guilbeault's involvement. They say, "Why would we ever want to have Minister Guilbeault's involvement in this?" Come on, guys. I don't know whether you've been listening, but the ethics reports we all file require disclosure, even by ministers. This minister's ethics disclosures.... Anything over \$10,000 in value—not \$10,000, but over \$10,000—has to be listed on our pub-

lic declaration. Guess what's over \$10,000 and listed on the public declaration of Minister Guilbeault? It's shares in Cycle Capital.

Now, the reason this is important is because we had the founder and CEO of Cycle Capital here, who was Minister Guilbeault's boss for 10 years, before he got elected. That's where he worked. That's why he got the shares. She sat here in this committee with her ignorant lawyer and said, "He owns nothing." Either Minister Guilbeault was lying on his ethics committee report—which I doubt, because I don't think a member of Parliament ever puts, on their ethics report, that they own shares in something they don't so it can be scrutinized publicly—or Andrée-Lise Méthot was, yet again, lying before this committee by saying, "He owns nothing."

There is a third option: She's just ignorant about who owns her own company, which I doubt.

We have pushed that. Why does that matter? Well, Cycle Capital, by that SDTC board member's own admission, got \$10.7 million that she was aware of, or willing to admit to this committee. Apparently, for Liberals and Andrée-Lise Méthot, \$10.7 million of corruption shouldn't warrant scrutiny by the police, and \$10.7 million funnelled to your own company is just pocket change for the Liberals, the Prime Minister and their appointees. I don't know. Is it \$40 million, \$50 million or \$100 million? What's the threshold where they say, "Okay, over this level of Liberal corruption we have a problem, but under that we're okay, so fill your pockets"? Apparently, \$10,000 or more value in a company that received over \$100 million from the green slush fund, whose minister of the Crown, the Minister of Environment sat in cabinet meetings while that cabinet allocated \$750 million more of your money to that organization, which was giving the biggest beneficiary of that over \$100 million.... It was the company he owned shares in. That company got \$17 million more after Minister Guilbeault was put into cabinet while he still owned shares. Those are the reasons why.

I know he's from Quebec and some people don't want that exposed. The fact is that there's corruption, regardless of what province they're from. That company and that person abused their position on the board of the Liberal green slush fund. The minister is one of many beneficiaries of it. That's why he's been hiding. Perhaps that's the reason why 29,000 pages have black ink on them before Parliament.

• (1930)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Are there 29,000?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Twenty-nine thousand is what the government House leader announced. Here's what happened, just for those who are asking what I'm talking about with regard to 29,000 pages.

It's been referenced that, believe it or not, in June the Bloc, the Conservatives and the NDP were together on something. It does happen more than people think. It happens a lot in committee. We were together on the issue that these documents need to be provided to Parliament, to be handed over to the RCMP. That's a majority of members of the House of Commons, representing a majority of the people. The issue going forward that this is about is that the government was given 30 days, on the orders of the majority of the people, to produce these documents. In the motion, it didn't say to censor them. The power of Parliament to order documents is the supreme power that Parliament has. It goes back hundreds and hundreds of years. The Crown is not more powerful than Parliament. King Charles I lost his head over that issue. Parliament made a demand, and after 30 days—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I still don't know what it has to do with our motion.

Mr. Rick Perkins: MP Khalid wants to know what this has to do with the motion because MP Khalid and the Liberals are putting forward a closure motion on the study because they don't want to hear from more witnesses.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: No, we're not.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, you are. The motion says “no more meetings”. That's called a closure motion.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: It's absolutely not.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Maybe you should take a look and read it then.

The issue going forward is that this government was ordered to do this in 30 days, and it didn't do it. It provided a small amount, and they were all inked out in black. Then, in August, it supplied them again. On September 16, when the House of Commons came back, what happened? A point of privilege was raised by the opposition House leader.

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

I understand that. How much longer do you want to move on with this? I just want to know when I should clap for Mr. Perkins' great performance out here.

The Chair: I would encourage you not—

Mr. Rick Perkins: You can clap any time.

The Chair: —to encourage Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I only have about another four or five hours in me.

The Chair: I would advise members to not make any sudden movements.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Rick Perkins: Keep your hands and your feet away.

An hon. member: Don't make eye contact with him either.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, you can do that kind of golf clap, the slow clap. You can speed it up, too, if you like.

On September 16, the opposition House leader raised a point of privilege, which was supported by both the Bloc and the NDP. On September 26, guess what happened.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of clarification, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I think you mean a point of order. There's really no point of clarification, not really.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order, indeed.

I am seeking clarity as to how long we have resources for in this room today.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'm good until the votes tomorrow.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I want to bring a change of clothes in that case.

The Chair: Pardon me. Mr. Perkins will have the floor in a second.

As you know, I keep the score clock in the same way a European football player does, so we will expire when we expire.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I don't plan on expiring.

Mr. Francis Drouin: We all do one day.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Speak for yourself.

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: On September 26, in case members are forgetting when that date was, probably one of the most partisan Speakers in the country's history, the current occupant, the Liberal MP who occupies the seat, actually went against the government and said that it breached the privilege of the House. The government breached the privilege of the House because it didn't provide the documents. Now, it wasn't about whether or not the government provided 10 documents, 20 documents or 60,000 documents; it's about the nature of what it did to the documents. The government edited them, and the edit came from an order from the Privy Council Office. We know that. The Privy Council Office ordered the editing, and the Privy Council Office, of course, works for the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

What was the order that the Prime Minister decided he wanted to do to defy Parliament—that he has so little respect for the elected people?

• (1935)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

If it suits you, Mr. Chair, I would seek perhaps a five-minute health break for members at the table—

The Chair: No.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: —and especially for our staff and for interpreters who have been at it for a very long time.

The Chair: I know you'll miss the show, but folks are free to leave the room to do what they have to do.

Mr. Perkins has the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I think I have to rewind to W.C. Fields just so everyone's clear on the train of thought.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I think you should start from the top.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Start from the top? Okay. I appreciate the suggestion from the Liberals.

Here we are debating a closure motion that the Liberals have put forward.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Oh, he actually started from the top.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That closure motion is to shut down this committee hearing on delving into the \$400-million green slush fund. It is technically called SDTC, Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, I will call it. You're being repetitive now. Pick it up where you had it. Do not start from the top, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I was just taking requests from other members. The Liberals wanted to hear it again.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: We have more requests if you'll take them, Mr. Perkins.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'll bet you do.

The Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I appreciate the humour. Thank you.

There were 29,000 pages finally provided in tranches. That ended about a week ago. About a week ago, the government House leader proudly went and held a press conference—because, you know, this was a big deal—and said they had complied. They had complied by providing 29,000 pages with blacked-out paper; 29,000 pages.

Of course, that's not complying. I know that sometimes it can be challenging for government members to actually read the motion that was passed in the House. I've read that motion a bunch of times. Nowhere in it does it say, "Please edit and pick out what you don't want us to see and what helps protect your Liberal appointees. Don't supply that." It didn't say, as the Prime Minister's department ordered departments to do, "Please exempt the documents based on the Privacy Act." It didn't say, "Please exempt the documents on the Access to Information Act." That's exactly what the Prime Minister's Office ordered PCO to tell departments. As a result, since September 26 we've been having a discussion in the House about the cover-up on this. That cover-up could be stopped.

The Liberals complain that, "Gee, we now all of a sudden care about money being spent on debate in the House." Well, last time I checked, the House was debating Liberal corruption on the green slush fund and their filibuster preventing those documents from coming or not. I believe, on the Standing Orders, the House would have been sitting anyway, debating more useless government legislation putting Canadians into bankruptcy and more attempted bribes of providing temporary tax-free restaurant meals. That will give great, great comfort to the two million Canadians every month who use the food bank. I'm sure they'll appreciate, when they go to the restaurant, not having to pay the GST for Christmas. Oh, wait. They're going to a food bank. I don't think that's probably in the cards for them.

We would have been debating those incredibly cynical and silly pieces of legislation that this government continues to think will save them from the depths of 19% in the polls.

What has happened is that this all could have been solved. We probably wouldn't even be here having these discussions if the government had just listened to democracy and actually produced the documents.

There was a Liberal prime minister that I think these folks seemed to admire. I don't admire him as much as the Liberals do, but Prime Minister Chrétien at least thought financial responsibility and balanced budgets were of some value, unlike the red-ink Liberals. He had numerous scandals too. You wouldn't be a Liberal government if you didn't have pretty significant Liberal scandals. There was one called the sponsorship scandal. There was a demand for all these documents too. Do you know what he did? Does anyone know what Prime Minister Chrétien, a Liberal, did? He turned them over to the police.

● (1940)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: No.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes. When he was asked, he turned them over to the police.

Mr. Larry Brock: That's obstruction.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: He turned them over. Do you know what? He didn't redact them. He didn't redact them. He didn't redact them. He said, sure, if something and somebody did something wrong, they should pay for it.

Apparently, this version of the Liberals, under the ethically challenged Prime Minister who himself has been convicted twice of ethic breaches—

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Just one second, Mr. Perkins. There's a point of order.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Again, I'll talk about relevance and about what is misleading in what Mr. Perkins is saying. He's just spinning the facts to how he likes them as opposed to what the facts actually are.

Come on, guys. Let's not do this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I know how much the Liberals hate it when I find another Liberal who actually did the right thing.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order again, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have found Mr. Perkins' speech quite entertaining, although not truthful. He's welcome to speak for as long as he likes, but again, I would appreciate it if he could keep it relevant to the motion that is before him today.

Mr. Rick Perkins: That cover-up Liberal is not one to ask about ethics.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Chair, let's not call people names here.

The Chair: We are agreed.

Mr. Perkins, you—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I would ask the member to withdraw her remarks about the truthfulness of what I'm saying.

Do you believe the sponsorship scandal happened? There were Liberals who went to jail. You recall that. Am I right?

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Yes, there were.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins, address your remarks through the chair. This is not an inquiry.

Mr. Francis Drouin: The only one who went to jail in handcuffs was a Tory, Dean Del Mastro, but go ahead.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Perkins, you have—

Mr. Rick Perkins: I will list all the Liberal Party executives who went to jail. Francis, you should know better than that.

Mr. Francis Drouin: The truth hurts.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It doesn't hurt me, because it ain't truthful.

What's truthful is that the Liberals have a history of scandal. This one is only 10 times bigger, but apparently stuffing \$400 million into Liberal people's pockets is not enough corruption for these folks. They just want to shut it down.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of order again, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: We heard testimony from a card-carrying donor of the Conservative Party—

Mr. Rick Perkins: That's debate.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: —that she was part of what these guys are calling the green slush fund.

Please, let's be cordial here.

The Chair: Ms. Khalid, I'm not sure who you're referencing, but you are on the speaking list and we'll get to you—

Mr. Francis Drouin: Well, we don't know.

The Chair: —at some point.

Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'll go until the House prorogues.

Here we go.

Mr. John Nater: Is that happening?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: As soon as they finish speaking, let's go.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The issue here, which the Liberals are very embarrassed about.... I know it must hurt their ears.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I have a point of clarification, Chair.

We're not embarrassed.

Mr. Rick Perkins: There's no such thing as a point of clarification. I'll hand you the rule book if you'd like to learn it.

Here we go with the Liberals trying to interrupt all the time with points of debate because they don't like hearing about what's been going on. This is what this motion is about. This motion is about Liberals trying to shut it down. Every time we have a witness, we find out more information. There is new information. That's why we need more witnesses, and why the Liberals are refusing to bring witnesses forward.

I know they're having a happy little party debate over there.

Why don't you read into the minutes what you're discussing?

Mr. Chair, if they would like the floor, if the staff members would like to get themselves elected, they could probably have a seat at the table.

The Chair: Are you yielding?

Mr. Rick Perkins: No, I'm not, but I would like the chair to get some order on that side of the table.

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

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: We were just discussing the fake, outrageous crickets thing—

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, you do not have the floor.

Mr. Francis Drouin: —that the Conservatives clearly.... They think we're forcing people to eat crickets. It's unbelievable. We also noticed that Pierre Poilievre met with some actors. They're acting great. They're fairly inspired.

The Chair: Mr. Drouin, this is not a point of order.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

Mr. Rick Perkins: The only crickets we're hearing at the table is the Liberal defence of corruption.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Do you want to let us speak?

Mr. Rick Perkins: It's as silent as crickets. That's why they want to silence us. Like the crickets they are, they want to silence members of Parliament's inquiry into their corruption.

What is it these nine directors do?

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

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'm no longer going to yield the floor to fake points of order.

The Chair: No, I have to.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Dr. Lewis was right—

The Chair: No, Mr. Drouin, you're done. We're talking over each other. You're not doing any favours for our interpreters.

Mr. Francis Drouin: He wants to be prime minister. I can't believe this guy would say something like that. This meeting is adjourned.

The Chair: Well, we are, in fact, out of resources.

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