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Chair: Mr. Patrick Weiler



Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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• (0820)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to meeting number 135 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

We recognize that we meet on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe peoples.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, February 1, and the order of reference of Tuesday, November 19, 2024, the committee is resuming its study on the barriers to economic development in indigenous communities.

We have a witness today, the Honourable Randy Boissonnault, the Member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre. We welcome MP Boissonnault.

You'll have 10 minutes for your opening statement, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

Mr. Boissonnault, you have 10 minutes.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Colleagues, the last few weeks have been an incredibly difficult time for me and my family. I would like to clarify any confusion about my heritage and my previous business relationship.

In 1970, I was adopted by a supportive and loving family. They are the only family I have ever known. While I was growing up, my family taught me about their indigenous heritage. I was told that my great-grandmother, whom I knew as a child, was Cree. That was our family's understanding. Later in life, I sought advice on how to speak about my family history in a thoughtful way. As someone adopted into an indigenous family, I wanted to speak about that history in a way that was respectful and accurate. That is why I worked with an indigenous researcher, and it is how I arrived at the term non-status adopted Cree. This term ensured that I claimed no indigenous status for myself, while it also honoured the indigenous heritage of the family who adopted and raised me.

During the pandemic, my family delved further into our history, which led to my adoptive mother and my adoptive brother becoming Métis citizens earlier this year. Further revelations have come to

light through the media since October that were as much a surprise to me as they were to Canadians.

It has been difficult to see our family's history challenged publicly. I recognize that the ways in which I described my heritage have not always been as accurate as they could have been. As I have said before, for this I sincerely apologize. To be clear, I have never claimed indigenous status for myself.

Edmonton has one of the fastest-growing urban indigenous populations in Canada. As the MP for Edmonton Centre, I attended the indigenous caucus as an ally. I welcomed the opportunity to represent the interests of indigenous Edmontonians as an ally. I have never attempted to leverage my adopted family's history for personal or political gain. I've never identified as indigenous on any application form, nor have my businesses ever benefited as a result.

I believe the safeguards in place to prevent non-indigenous businesses from receiving funding meant for indigenous proponents are extremely important. With respect to Global Health Imports, GHI, I am glad that the current safeguards worked correctly. I am committed to doing my best, always being clear about my history and being a better ally for indigenous people. I have learned much from this difficult experience, and my commitment to reconciliation has never been stronger.

[Translation]

With regard to my former business partner at GHI, based on media disclosures, I believe Mr. Anderson has been using my name without my consent to further GHI's interests since 2021. In my opinion, he acted unethically, and he was able to mislead many people. I take my obligations as a public office holder very seriously. I did not run any businesses while I was serving the public. I should never have trusted that person as a business partner. His alleged actions have severely damaged my reputation. Despite multiple opportunities to explain himself, including before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, he refused to do the right thing and be transparent. He refused to admit that he used my name without my knowledge or consent.

During my time at GHI, prior to the 2021 election, the company never received any funds from federal contracts, I'm not mentioned in any of the lawsuits against the company, and the events reported in the media occurred after I withdrew from the company.

To be clear, after I stepped away in the fall of 2021, GHI continued to operate as a company under the exclusive direction and control of Mr. Anderson. I deeply regret entering into a business with Mr. Anderson, and I will do everything in my power to protect myself and my reputation with respect to his alleged actions. I consulted a lawyer to explore all options to restore my reputation with respect to Mr. Anderson's alleged actions.

It is an honour to serve the people of Edmonton Centre as their member of Parliament and to have served Canadians as a minister. I remain focused on the job I was elected to do.

• (0825)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Boissonnault. That was right on time. I appreciate that.

I welcome to the committee all of our new faces around the table.

We'll begin the first round of questioning.

For six minutes, we have Michael Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Boissonnault, I'll give you an opportunity to come clean with Canadians: Who's the other Randy?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, could you have the member please clarify his question?

Mr. Michael Barrett: It's a pretty straightforward question. In your previous appearance at other committees in this scandal, you said that it was another Randy. Who is the other Randy at your former company, Global Health Imports?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Barrett, I am not involved in any of the conversations. If you are referring to reports in the media, I am not involved in those conversations. The Ethics Commissioner has indicated very clearly that I'm not involved in any of those conversations, any of those texts, between Mr. Anderson and the person you've just raised.

In fact, if you take a look at recent court cases, the Ghaoui Group has indicated that they've never met me—and I've never met them—and 4M Medical has indicated that they have never met me, and I have never met them, and—

Mr. Michael Barrett: The problem we have is that you previously said that you didn't have any contact with your business partner, Mr. Anderson, while you were serving in Justin Trudeau's cabinet, but then, when you got caught, you admitted that you of course had sent text messages and that there was a phone call between you and your business partner exactly when he was corresponding with potential clients and fraud victims about Randy and Randy being in Vancouver, and that's where you were.

The problem we have is that in committee appearances you've lied about owning 50% of the business, you lied about being in communication—

• (0830)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair—

Mr. Michael Barrett: —you lied about there being another Randy—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That is not a fair characterization, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Mr. Michael Barrett: —you lied about being indigenous and you lied about being a journalist.

How can we believe anything that you say today?

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

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Barrett, just one second, please. We have a point of order.

I don't know who raised it.

I have Mr. Carr.

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair, can you provide us with your reflections, please, on whether or not you believe it's within order to refer to a member in committee as a liar? Perhaps you can consult the clerk if you're unsure.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

On that same point of order, we also have the Conservative House leader, who refers to himself as an American insurance broker, and we know that's a lie. Are we going to invite him to committee?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. All right.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'm just wondering about having the same standards.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. Well, maybe we can change the language a bit and not refer to people as liars.

I'll give you your time back, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: How can we believe anything you say when all of the things I have listed that you've said aren't true? You said you were indigenous. You said you were a journalist. You said you weren't in contact with your business partner. You said that the company wasn't getting any federal contracts. All of those things aren't true. You've said one thing and the exact opposite is true.

Now your Liberal colleagues want to put flowery language around that. If you say something that's not true, we all know what that is. Why should we believe you? How can we believe you today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Well, Mr. Chair, through you, I would like to inform Mr. Barrett that he's simply mistaken and putting false claims out. We've litigated this at the ethics committee twice now.

The Ethics Commissioner himself has indicated that on the 6th, 7th and 8th of September I was not involved in the text messages that the National Post and the Conservatives keep trying to raise. I'm simply not the person involved in those conversations.

There was a text exchange between me and Mr. Anderson regarding a Purolator account that needed to be settled, and I was very clear about that at the ethics committee. There was no communication between us in the following days—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Your story always seems to change once you—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Barrett, let me finish. I was at cabinet on—

Mr. Michael Barrett: No, sir. It's my time.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: —the 7th—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Your story always seems to—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: —and then I was there on the 8th as well.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): [*Inaudible—Editor*] order—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We'll have one person at a time, please. It's very difficult for the interpreters to figure out what's going on here.

Let's have one person at a time, please, and I believe Michael Barrett had a question. Then we'll have an answer.

Mr. Barrett—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I have a point of order.

This has been happening regularly in this particular exchange. I think it's good at the outset just to clear it up.

Let's give the witness enough time to offer a response back.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Chair, I'll speak to the point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: What we've experienced in this committee is that the person asking the question is due their time. In this case, Mr. Barrett is due his time to ask the person the questions he wants to ask. I would challenge the chair to keep that parity.

Thank you.

Mr. Michael Cooper: You can challenge the chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, my goal here is that the length of the answer matches the length of the question. We'll try to keep to that as closely as possible. That way it doesn't mess up the interpreters too much and everybody has their time.

Mr. Barrett, you have the floor.

Mr. Michael Barrett: We have equal time.

You said you were a journalist. Are you?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Barrett, I was a regular reporter for the francophone news outlet CBC/Radio-Canada. I was a member of the Canadian media for several—

Mr. Michael Barrett: That was equal time.

That's not what what the CBC has said.

You said you were indigenous to get federal contracts, disenfranchising indigenous peoples. Are you indigenous?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, that is simply false. That's not true. I've never claimed indigenous status and I've never applied for an indigenous contract, full stop.

Mr. Michael Barrett: We know that's also not true, because the company that you owned 50% of, Mr. Boissonnault, did exactly that. Your company, GHL, is under investigation for fraud and is being investigated by the police. Is that correct?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I have not been contacted by any police service to that effect, and, Mr. Barrett, I was not involved in any federal contracts while I was operating the company. It's very serious—

• (0835)

Mr. Michael Barrett: As much as you want to distance yourself from it, this is very much yours to own because you, in fact, own 50% of it. You were willing to cash the cheques, but you're not willing to take any of the responsibility for where the money came from and how it came to be in possession of the company. Suspicious warehouse fires, fraud investigations—

Mr. Ben Carr: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Carr.

Mr. Ben Carr: For my benefit and that of other committee members, I would very much appreciate if the clerk could provide the timing of the length of questioning that you were allocating. It's six minutes per member. Every time that you—

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): It's six minutes.

Mr. Ben Carr: —stop the clock to deal with a point order or to address something that Mr. Barrett, Mr. Zimmer or others have said, I'd like it to be tracked for the committee that you're not providing more time to Mr. Barrett.

For our benefit, please, if you could have the clerk—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Are you questioning the judgments of the chair?

Mr. Ben Carr: I am asking for the chair, through his clerk—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Are you questioning the integrity of the chair, Mr. Carr?

Mr. Ben Carr: I am asking the chair, through the clerk—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I have a timer right here, Mr. Carr, and I am keeping as close an eye on it as I possibly can.

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Clerk, I'm going to ask through you then, please, sir—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): No, that's not how this works, Mr. Carr.

Mr. Ben Carr: Oh, okay then, Mr. Chair. I am asking—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We trust your chairs at committee when it comes to time—

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair, I'm asking on a point of order—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I've answered your point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order, Chair.

This is clearly disruptive.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's intended to be disruptive. Let's get back to work. Let's get back to the work of this committee.

Mr. Ben Carr: I'm sorry; I wasn't done my point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I already ruled on that point of order, thank you. If you wish to challenge the chair, go ahead.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): On a point of order, there are too many people speaking. We need to be respectful of the interpreters.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, absolutely.

I've ruled on that. If you wish to challenge the chair, there is a process for it.

Mr. Ben Carr: I will challenge the chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: This is a waste of time. You're running interference for Randy.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We'll go to a vote.

The challenge is.... Would you prefer...?

Mr. Ben Carr: You said that you made a decision, Mr. Chair. If you haven't made a decision, then I have no challenge to make.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I have made decision that—

Mr. Ben Carr: If you have made a decision—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): The chair, as always Mr. Carr.... I know we have some time here. The chair in any committee has been responsible for the timing, whether it's been Mr. Weiler or me.

Mr. Ben Carr: That's correct.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We have never had a problem with that. I don't anticipate there being a problem now, but now you are calling into question my integrity.

Mr. Ben Carr: I have not, Mr. Chair. I've simply asked that the committee—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I've made a ruling that I will keep track of the time. I have two people beside me who will watch. I have done nothing to impugn my integrity. The fact that you're still questioning that is rather frustrating.

Mr. Ben Carr: I haven't suggested that you had, Mr. Schmale. I have simply asked for time to be made public.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Having said that, we don't want to waste any more time. If you wish to challenge the chair, we'll challenge, and we'll have a quick vote. If not, we will move on with Mr. Barrett, who has the floor.

Mr. Ben Carr: Just so that I can confirm here, you are not agreeing to allow for the committee to be aware of how much time is being allocated.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I have the timer right here. It's in full view of two other people.

Mr. Ben Carr: At any point, are you comfortable if we check in on that?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Absolutely.

Mr. Ben Carr: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you.

Mr. Barrett, you have 45 seconds. The floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Boissonnault, while you were claiming to be indigenous, the Liberal Party was also echoing that claim on their websites and posting that you were indigenous. The ethical problems that this presents are self-evident.

I'd like to know from you, if you're aware, how much money the Liberal Party of Canada fundraised off of your false claim and their false claim that you were indigenous when that was simply false.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Barrett, I sat in the indigenous caucus as an ally between 2015 and 2019. During the 2019 election, the party mistakenly included me on a list of indigenous candidates. When I realized I was on that list, we contacted the party and had that mistake corrected.

I have never received, as a candidate in 2015, 2019 or 2021, any funding to support indigenous candidates. That is appropriate and as it should be, because I do not claim indigenous status.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Boissonnault. That completes this round of questioning.

I believe Mr. Hanley is up. Is that still correct?

Mr. Hanley, you have six minutes.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Boissonnault, for making the tremendous effort to appear before the committee today. I know this is not an easy task.

Mr. Chair, indigenous identity and heritage are obviously very important to us in the north and in the Yukon, as are the nature and practice of first nations procurement.

Mr. Boissonnault, through the chair, as the minister for tourism previously, and then for ESDC and official languages, you've been a great friend to the north and certainly a frequent and welcome visitor to the north. I have never heard you claim indigenous identity. You've always been very well received by first nations chiefs and leaders in our territory. I wanted to put that on the record.

In your testimony, you said:

I am committed to doing my best to always be clear about my history and to be a better ally for Indigenous people. I have learned much from this difficult experience and my commitment to reconciliation has never been stronger.

Those are words to take note of.

Mr. Boissonnault, I'd like you to take an opportunity to expand on what you have learned through this experience and what you can share with all of us as members of Parliament.

• (0840)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Dr. Hanley, I appreciate your comments.

As you mentioned, I never claimed indigenous status. I always wanted to be clear about my family's history and my own identity. I see now, in hindsight, that the term I used in the past was not as clear as it could have been, and I've learned about my own family's history in recent months. For me, I think it's a combination. I hope the committee can look at this at some point, because I think there's a nexus among identity, indigenous identity and how you talk about your heritage when there is indigenous heritage but no claim to indigenous status. I think it is important that this committee is able to have a conversation about that, elaborate on that and have experts come to the table to talk about that.

Dr. Hanley, I wanted to honour my family's history. The other option would have been to simply not talk about it, which I didn't think was right. That didn't sit well with me. That's why I wanted to refer to my family's history, but also indicate that I am non-status. I don't have indigenous status, and I don't claim indigenous status. My commitment to reconciliation and to working with indigenous peoples manifested itself in coming to the indigenous caucus and asking if they would let me sit around the table as an ally. That's what the caucus decided to do in 2015. We worked through a great number of issues together in order to defend and advance the rights of indigenous peoples. I'm happy that I was able to participate in that work.

In my own city of Edmonton, we have the fastest-growing urban indigenous population in the west, and we have a lot of work to do together. I approach that work with humility, but also with resolve, because there's a lot of work we have to do together. I'm committed to continuing to do that work. I have reached out to elders and community leaders, Dr. Hanley, to get their advice on how to talk about these matters, express myself and share my family's story in a way that can be understood but that is also sensitive and respectful not just of my family but also of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thank you for that, Mr. Boissonnault. I think that's very helpful, particularly your advice on what the committee can take on, probe, study further and understand.

I too am an ally and a member of the indigenous caucus, so I certainly respect and understand that position and the importance of us, as allies, being involved in indigenous concerns and issues.

You mentioned indigenous heritage, status and identity. I wonder, for the remaining time, if you can help us, through your experience, distinguish among heritage, status and identity. It's important to make that clear.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: My experience—and I think it's the case for everybody—is that identity is deeply personal, and it's important to get it right. In my case, being adopted into the family that raised me—the only family that I know—I wanted to honour their

history and I wanted to do so in a way that was sensitive and respectful to indigenous peoples.

This has been a really tough couple of months for us, but now, here today, I can say that I'm thrilled for my brother and my mother to be part of the Métis Nation of Alberta and to be connected to that community. It helps me to have that clarity. We went all the way through Library and Archives Canada to see which of my ancestors actually had scrip. I have that information. I understand the genealogy completely.

I think it's important for all Canadians to be able to talk not just about their identity and who they are, but also about the heritage that they come from. As more people dug into genealogy, which we saw during the pandemic, there were revelations about people's own identities and about their own family histories that they found surprising, so here we are today.

To your earlier point, Dr. Hanley, the work of this committee could be very important in unpacking that nexus of identity, heritage and status.

• (0845)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much.

I believe we are welcoming to the committee a new Bloc member, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

You have six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to reiterate that you have my full confidence in allocating the speaking time that you give to each person around the table.

Good afternoon, Mr. Boissonnault. Thank you for being with us today.

We took note of the apology you made in your opening remarks. Of course, it won't be up to us to determine whether that apology will suffice. That will be up to the first nations, the indigenous peoples, who felt disrespected by your behaviour.

As you know, reconciliation is founded on the recognition of first nations. Pretending that you're an indigenous person, benefiting from some of the services put in place by the government as reconciliation efforts, doing that wrongly, undermines reconciliation efforts in a way. You have to know that there were a lot of mistakes made.

You weren't just an MP; you were a minister. When a public figure of your stature does that, what message do you think it sends to first nations?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

Let's be clear. I've never claimed indigenous status. I've never applied for an indigenous-only contract. My companies and I have not received one dollar of government money for indigenous-specific funding.

I want you to know that I completely agree with you. I think we need to look at the issue of pretendians. What they're doing is wrong, it's wrong, and it shouldn't be done. I'm completely on your side and on the side of the first nations, who have worked very hard to take back their rights. They have worked very hard to try to achieve some equity with non-indigenous people. We must outright denounce the fact that people are falsely claiming to be indigenous, period.

I'm not a pretendian. I've never claimed to be an indigenous person. The fact that my former business partner sent this email to the government without my knowledge is reprehensible. That's part of why I'm going to take him to court. I'm very disappointed to have learned about his actions in the media. To me, it's completely reprehensible. In fact, that's why I resigned from cabinet, so that I could take him to court and have as much leeway as possible.

I completely agree with you and with indigenous peoples. Only indigenous peoples must have access to funds reserved for indigenous peoples. In this case, the criteria and procedures in place prevented that company from receiving funding, and that's a very good thing.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: So you maintain that you had absolutely no knowledge of the fact that Global Health Imports had so-called indigenous status that allowed it to obtain public funds for several years, even during the years you were an elected official. You also maintain that you were not aware of anything and that you were not in contact with Mr. Anderson.

Do you still maintain that today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Yes, I stand by that, and I'd like to point out three things.

When I was a private citizen, I met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to check what my obligations were as a former member of Parliament under the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons.

I told him that I would not do any federal work or deal with him, either through my consulting company or my company Global Health Imports. The commissioner found that not only was it a good idea, but it was very wise. So I was very clear with all my associates that I would not do any work for the federal government, that I would have no contact with its representatives, either through contracts or other means, because it would have been inappropriate.

Second, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, when I was a private citizen, my consulting firm went through a certification process to be fully certified on LGBTQ issues. That certification process was done by a third party.

I've never run my business through a similar indigenous process, because I don't have a status—

• (0850)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Boissonnault, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but my time is very limited.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Okay.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: I have information in front of me that GHI only changed directors on March 17, 2023.

You say you didn't benefit while you were an elected official. However, the directors information was only changed in 2023, when you had been back in office as an MP for several years.

How do you explain that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I explained the situation to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, as well as to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. It was the agencies responsible for registration that delayed making the change to the public registry of information at the Office of the Commissioner.

I resigned from that company when I was elected in September 2021. When I was elected, my lawyer contacted Mr. Anderson's lawyer, and it was clearly the company's responsibility to make that change. It did not.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: I'm sorry, Mr. Boissonnault, but I disagree with that. It's not the company's responsibility; it's the director's. In this case, you were the director, and it was your responsibility.

When you took up your duties as a member of Parliament, it was your responsibility to ensure that you were no longer a director of a company that continued to receive contracts from the federal government.

That was your responsibility, and I would like you to assume it today. You took responsibility for a number of other problematic situations, but, in this case, you say you're not responsible. That's unfortunate.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I was not a director, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné. It simply wasn't reflected in the registry. I have documents signed by lawyers that attest to the fact that I was no longer a director after I was elected.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much for that line of questioning.

Next, we have the NDP and Ms. Idlout for six minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you, Chairperson.

First I would like to ask this question: When you stated that you were Cree, what Cree nation did you say you belonged to?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I don't seem to have translation.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): He is not getting translation.

Can we do a quick test?

Do you have it now, Mr. Boissonnault?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I have selected—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay.

Ms. Idlout, do you mind repeating your question? I will not run the clock for your repeat question.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*] Thank you, Chairperson.

Thank you for appearing.

First, when you claimed your family was Cree, what Cree nation did they belong to?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, I'm very sorry, but I have Inuktitut chosen on my screen, and yet I'm not hearing anything come from the interpreters.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On a point of order, Chair, we can all hear the translation. Maybe it's a difficult question, but we can all hear the translation.

One just needs to select the English channel, obviously.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Genuis, hang on.

I believe, as it has been pointed out—

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Chair, the French interpretation is not working.

I thank my colleague for his advice, but it's not working.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Do we have any interpretation that we're hearing right now?

English is working.

I'll switch over to the French channel here. French is working.

Ms. Idlout, maybe our Inuktitut interpreter could...?

• (0855)

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you for appearing.

First, I would like to ask you about when you claimed your family was Cree. My question is this: What Cree nation does your family belong to?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thanks very much, Ms. Idlout. I appreciate your question and I appreciate your repeating it.

I grew up understanding that my grandmother was Cree, and I didn't question my family about which nation or which place. It was our family, our story, and it was as I understood it growing up in our family. It was one of those things we learned about. We didn't talk about it a lot, but growing up with my great-grandmother, I know that she wasn't part of a nation. She married a settler.

There was no first nation she was connected to, because she had married into a European family, so after that I didn't call it—

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you for answering my question. I'll keep going.

I also know a white person who was adopted by an indigenous family, but he has always stated that he is not indigenous and that he is a white person. There is nothing to discredit him as being indigenous.

I will ask you this: How important is your consent before publications are made about you?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: If I understand the translation, Ms. Idlout, I take very seriously the fact that I am not indigenous. I've never claimed indigenous status.

All of the articles about me that have been full of misinformation—

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

I'm sorry. You're not answering my question. I'm going to ask you this: How important is your consent before publications are made about you?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I think that it's important to have consent about who I am and about identities before things are published.

It doesn't always happen that way. People publish things about me without my consent regularly. When it comes to my family's indigenous heritage, I wanted to be clear about it, to be sensitive about it and to never claim indigenous status. That's what I attempted to do in the past. I understand that I could have been clearer about that. For that, Ms. Idlout, I have apologized, and I hold to that apology.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you.

There are now several incidents when you said there were others who published mistakes about your identity. My question is this: How clear have you been to others that you need to provide consent when they publish anything about you? How clear have you been to others?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Any time I've seen my name associated with indigenous status, I have been quick to change that, because I have no claim to indigenous status and I have never claimed indigenous status. If ever I heard somebody refer to me as an indigenous person, I went to great lengths to correct that. I don't claim Indigenous status. I never have and I never will.

Ms. Lori Idlout: I need to say this. There are so many mistakes that we're all now talking about regarding your identity.

We heard about you claiming to be Cree. We heard you claiming that you are part of the Métis Nation of Alberta. You now seem to have changed your story about the publication from the indigenous Liberal Caucus, asking them to fix that mistake as well. There are so many publications. There are so many interviews in which you claim indigenous identity and claim that's who you are. Then when you race-shift among being Cree, Métis, white and now adopted, what you are sharing with us is hard to believe.

How can we believe that you never told your staff you don't want a publication about your being indigenous? We heard that you instructed your staff to say you are. Now you're saying you've never claimed to be indigenous.

• (0900)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Ms. Idlout, respectfully, I've never indicated to any staff, at any point in my life, to refer to me as indigenous. That's simply not the case. I've always tried to be consistent about who I am. I've never claimed indigenous history. I never said I was Cree. I came up with the term “non-status adopted Cree” because I thought it would honour my family. I thought it would indicate very clearly that I have no status.

I am not Métis. My family recently became members of the Métis Nation of Alberta, but adopted kids like me have no claim to citizenship in the Métis Nation of Alberta. That is as it is. I will never claim indigenous status. I never have. I was adopted into the family that I was adopted into—the only family I know. That is why I have always tried to be very clear about that history.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Boissonnault.

We'll go now to our second round of questioning. We'll start with a five-minute round for the Conservatives.

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Boissonnault, you said today that you came to the term “non-status adopted Cree” through consultation with an indigenous researcher. What was the name of that researcher?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I met with Chad Cowie, who was—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. Thank you very much.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: —a student doing his Ph.D. at the time, and—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We know who Professor Cowie is.

In an interview with the National Post, Professor Cowie denied your version of events. The National Post quotes him as saying, “I would not say that I gave him the term that he was ‘non-status adopted Cree’”.

Did Professor Cowie tell the truth to the National Post, and do you now want to correct your opening statement?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: My opening statement was very clear, Mr. Genuis. I said that I chose the term “non-status adopted Cree” after having a conversation with Mr. Cowie. That conversation was almost 10 years ago.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay, now it's clearer than it was. You sat down with Professor Cowie and he gave you some advice. You ig-

nored that advice and came up with this term independently, on your own. Then you came back to committee and said, “Well, in the context of a conversation, I came up with this term.”

Frankly, that's what we've come to expect from you, Mr. Boissonnault. I think this is now further revelation of what we have come to expect.

Here is my next question: The Liberal Party's indigenous peoples' commission put an Instagram post up on June 30, 2016, that falsely claims you are indigenous. That post is still up.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Wow.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You said the error was corrected. Why have social media posts falsely calling you indigenous been left up, even until the present day?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I don't have an answer for why that is still on that party website, Mr. Genuis.

I can tell you that when my name was on a list of indigenous candidates in the 2019 election, I acted very quickly to remove it. I'll see to it that it's removed from—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Let's just get some clarity on what you meant when you said that the error had been corrected.

There is an error in a June 30, 2016, Instagram post. That error has not been corrected. The post remains up today, in December 2024. What exactly did you mean when you said that the error was corrected?

• (0905)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, I wasn't aware of that 2016 Instagram post. I was referring to the list of indigenous candidates in 2019 that I was falsely on, and I made that correction, and the error was a—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You corrected a list in 2019, apparently, but you—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Not apparently, Mr. Genuis—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —and your team are not closely monitoring the social media activity of the party that you're a part of.

Was the false claim that the Liberals elected nine indigenous MPs in 2015 ever used in Liberal Party fundraising?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I don't have that information in front of me, and I would not be on that list of candidates.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. Maybe we need to follow up and see how much money the Liberal Party raised off the false claim that there were nine indigenous MPs elected in their caucus in 2015.

Mr. Boissonnault, you have said repeatedly that you've never claimed indigenous status. It should be obvious to everyone that it is an intentional formulation when you say you've never claimed indigenous status, because that is not the same thing as saying you've never claimed to be indigenous.

A person might claim to be indigenous without claiming indigenous status, so let's get around the lawyerly formulation here and ask you the core question: Have you ever claimed to be indigenous?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, I'm not indigenous and I've never claimed to be indigenous or to have indigenous status. This is a distinction. I'm not sure you where you're going with this, but I'm not indigenous, I don't have indigenous status and I've never claimed either.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You've never claimed to be indigenous? On April 12, 2016, when you said in the House of Commons that "As a Canadian and as an adopted Cree", you weren't claiming to be indigenous, and when the Liberal Party of Canada posted that you were indigenous and it was not corrected, you still had never claimed to be indigenous. When your partner claimed that your company was indigenous-owned, you had still never claimed to be indigenous.

There are all these people around you who have publicly claimed that you are indigenous. You have said in the House of Commons that you're indigenous, and now you're before this committee saying that you never did. How can anyone believe anything you say, Mr. Boissonnault?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, I've never claimed to be indigenous. What I said in the House was that I—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's on the record.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: It is not. You're misinterpreting the record. That is not what I said—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We'll let Mr. Boissonnault answer the question.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: How many seconds do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): You can answer the question, and that will be the end of this round.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I have never indicated to the Liberal Party of Canada that I'm indigenous, full stop. I tried to come up with a term that I now understand was not clear. For the record, I'm not indigenous, I don't have indigenous status and I would not claim either of those.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Genuis.

Next we go to another five-minute round for the Liberals.

Welcome, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I don't think I'm up.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): My list says you are.

Does anybody else want to go? No?

I'm sure the Conservatives will take your time if you don't want it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: I will be pleased to speak in French.

Mr. Boissonnault, thank you very much for being with us today. I also thank you for the statement you made earlier.

You're here as a member of Parliament, but I also want to thank you for what you've done with respect to official languages.

I would like to give you a chance to respond to Mr. Genuis regarding what you said in the House and the interpretation that some Conservative members are making of it.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you very much, Mr. Drouin, for being here today.

When I was first elected as a member of Parliament, I tried to find a short term that reflected my family's indigenous origins and the fact that, personally, I have no indigenous ancestry. I'm not an indigenous person, and I've never claimed indigenous status. It wasn't easy to come up with a term like that. At the time, I created the term "non-status adopted Cree". However, it could have been clearer, and I apologized for that.

I'll say it again, because I want to make it very clear: I'm not an indigenous person and I'm not claiming indigenous status. However, I am part of a family that has just been granted citizenship in the Métis Nation of Alberta.

● (0910)

Mr. Francis Drouin: The work done in caucus is not often televised, but there was an indigenous caucus within the Liberal Party and they had allies. In fact, I remember very well that you were part of it in 2016, as were other people who were not members of first nations, Métis or Inuit.

How important is it for you to have allies who are not indigenous to advance these issues within society?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I think we need allies and champions, Mr. Drouin.

When I became the member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre in 2015, I reached out to the indigenous caucus because I wanted to be an ally and become a champion for indigenous people.

In Edmonton, there's a very large presence of first nations, Métis and Inuit people. Since I was their representative in Parliament and one of the four MPs from Alberta at the time, I felt it was very important for them to be represented in a caucus as important as the indigenous caucus. It was in that spirit that I reached out to members of the indigenous caucus. I wanted their support and permission to sit as an ally in that caucus. That's what I did during my tenure.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I remember it very well. We don't usually discuss what's going on in our caucuses, but let me say this: There is always a period of time when we can put pressure on the Prime Minister. At that time, it was about reconciliation. A lot of money was promised in our platform. I understand very well why you were part of the caucus.

I want to go back to the picture that was posted in 2019. You are a member of the caucus and I'm aware that there was a mistake, but you corrected it in 2019.

To be honest, Mr. Boissonnault, I don't check all of my own party's Instagram posts. I have no idea what happened in 2015, I have no idea what happened in 2016 and I have no idea what happened yesterday. I have other things to do than look at my party's posts. I say that with all due respect.

When you saw the error involving you, you did correct it in the 2019 election.

Is that correct?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Yes, that's correct. The facts have been corrected.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: How much time do I have?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): You have about 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Boissonnault, it's not our custom to receive members of Parliament at parliamentary committee meetings to judge whether what they said was true or not.

Several members have made false statements, and they have not been asked to appear before a parliamentary committee. I want to thank you for your transparency and the time you've spent on this.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you very much, Mr. Drouin.

I thought it was important to update the facts and defend my reputation. I also want to mention that I remain a strong champion and ally of indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Drouin. I appreciate that.

We're going to a two-and-a-half-minute round.

Welcome, once again, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné. You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Boissonnault, a number of people have heard you recount, and potentially romanticize, stories your great-grandmother told you as she peeled apples or stories she told you when you were young. In addition, we've heard you speak Cree at the beginning of speeches on a number of occasions.

Do you think for someone who doesn't claim to be an indigenous person, that kind of behaviour is recommended, or even advisable? Can this be associated with cultural appropriation?

● (0915)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I hope that's not the case, because I've always done it in the spirit of sharing my personal stories.

I spoke with indigenous elders at the beginning of my term, and I remember a few people telling me that I was good at languages. They thought it was important for me to add words in the Cree language at the beginning of my speeches. It was in that spirit of reconciliation that I decided to do so.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: In your opinion, that is not cultural appropriation for someone who isn't Cree. That's what you're saying today.

However, some people have said that this type of behaviour could be detrimental to reconciliation efforts, that is to say trying to romanticize a narrative that doesn't belong to you, since you don't claim to be indigenous.

Again, I leave it to first nations to decide what is potentially offensive to them.

My next question is on a more practical topic. It's the procurement program for indigenous businesses.

Do you think it would be a good idea to establish a registry created by first nations to identify true indigenous people and for that list to then be used by the government for programs, funds and contracts?

Do you think that would prevent this type of situation from happening again?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, I can draw a parallel with my own expertise.

When I was an ordinary citizen, at the time, I took my company, which was wholly owned by me, through a certification process to become fully LGBTQ certified.

I think it's very important to have third-party agencies or organizations certify underrepresented groups. I think this committee can make very important recommendations so that the government knows full well which companies it can work with, and so that it ensures government funding is granted to companies from Indigenous communities.

Indeed, I think that's an idea worth exploring.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I'm sorry; that's the end of this round. It's only two and a half minutes.

We go now to the NDP and Ms. Idlout for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you, Chairperson.

When you are appearing before committees, what are you doing to correct all of the mistakes about your identity?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Ms. Idlout, I would be happy to meet with you separately and get your advice—

Ms. Lori Idlout: No.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: —on what you think I should do.

I have not stated that I am indigenous and I've not ever stated that I seek indigenous status, so I haven't taken any steps—

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

I'll stop you right there, because I don't have a lot of time.

Pretendianism is not only harmful; it is fraud. I want to understand. What are you doing to seek guidance on how to make amends?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I really appreciate the question, Ms. Idlout.

I think pretendianism needs to be denounced. It's deeply harmful. It disrespects indigenous peoples and all the hard-fought battles that they have won to date.

I have been speaking with indigenous elders and community leaders, and that work will continue. The questions that I've been asking are these: How do we build trust in the relationship going forward? How should I best talk about who I am, my family and their history?

To Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné's conversation, I'm going to check in—and I have checked in—with indigenous leaders and elders about using Cree in my speeches. Do they still want me to do that? Do they still think that it's appropriate?

I'm having these conversations. I think that's part of my own learning journey here, Ms. Idlout, and I will continue to do that.

I will take your advice as well on how I should make amends, because I never intended to be unclear about my history or my family's history, and I think that is an important personal act for me when it comes to reconciliation.

• (0920)

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you.

My last question is this: How are you repairing the pain and suffering you have caused to Canada's indigenous people? How will you be repairing this for indigenous peoples?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I hope that I have started by apologizing for using a term that was not as clear as it could have been. I will seek advice, as you've said, on how to make amends and listen to the harms done by people who seek false indigenous status and indigenous heritage, which I have not done and I won't do, and I will be very clear. I've apologized, and I hope that allows us to build from here.

I really appreciate your sensitivity and how difficult this is for the people you represent, Ms. Idlout. I take that very seriously. If I could, I would say thank you in your language, if that were appro-

priate, but I'd seek your consent to do that first, so I will just say thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Boissonnault.

We will continue this second round of questioning, but we'll go back to five minutes.

We'll go now to the Conservatives and Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Boissonnault, have you commenced legal action against Mr. Anderson?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I have sought legal advice, Mr. Cooper, to look at all of my legal options against him.

Mr. Michael Cooper: The answer to that is no, so let me get this straight. You claim you are not the “Randy” in Anderson's text messages. The first report of this Randy being implicated in the half-million-dollar shakedown of the Ghaoui Group was all the way back to six months ago, on June 4 of this year.

On July 17, Anderson testified at the ethics committee that the only Randy at Global Health Imports was you. That day, you issued a statement in which you said you were “deeply troubled” by Anderson's testimony and suggested he was using your name without your consent. That was five months ago.

If you truly had no involvement in this shakedown in the operations of Global Health Imports and if Anderson was using your name unbeknownst to you, I would put it to you that you would have sued Mr. Anderson five months ago, but you've done nothing. That is what you've said.

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

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I'm seeking your advice. Is Mr. Cooper offering legal advice to Mr. Boissonnault, or is he just pontificating on something? Is he a lawyer?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: This is nonsense.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I am a lawyer.

A voice: Do you not know he's a lawyer by now?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you. I don't think that was a point of order. I think that was a question, and I appreciate it.

A voice: Does Michael Cooper have a photographic memory?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Boissonnault, the floor is yours.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To Mr. Cooper's question, I have started the process to take legal action against Mr. Anderson now. I'll be very clear: One of the reasons I stepped away from cabinet was to be able to—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Besides retaining counsel—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, do I get my time?

Mr. Michael Cooper: It's my time. I'm reclaiming my time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Hold on.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Besides retaining counsel, have you taken any legal steps whatsoever against Mr. Anderson in the past five or six months?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, how many seconds do I have from Mr. Cooper's opening statement?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Well—

Mr. Michael Cooper: It's a very simple question. Just answer it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): As I said at the beginning, the time of the answer should be as close as possible to the length of the question. I've been giving a bit of leeway here, but I want to keep it as close as possible.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Schmale, to Mr. Cooper's first—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We'll give you—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I haven't been able to answer his first question because he has interrupted me three times, so can I answer his first question?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Well, he took the floor back, so I guess—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I'm ready to answer his first question.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): The time is yours. However, usually you answer the question he just asked you.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I'll answer the question. In the recent court case against Mr. Anderson, it is clear that Mr. Anderson has been using my name without consent. I'm not involved in those other conversations—

Mr. Michael Cooper: My question to you was whether you had commenced a legal action, and you have, through your non-answer, said that you haven't, so, Mr. Boissonnault—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: We are working on the legal—

Mr. Michael Cooper: I'm reclaiming my time, Mr. Chair.

● (0925)

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

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We have two points of order. I don't know who was first, Mr. Drouin or Mr. Carr.

Mr. Michael Cooper: It is running interference.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, Mr. Cooper, you're running interference.

I thought the rule was that if there's editorializing on a particular issue, then the witness has the same amount of time to answer the question, but that's not—

Mr. Michael Cooper: No.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): There's the preamble, and there's the question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On the same point of order—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Hang on. I have Mr. Carr and—

Mr. Francis Drouin: Hold on a second. I'm not done.

For the respect of the interpreters, Mr. Cooper keeps interrupting the witness. I get that he doesn't want to ask questions and just wants to editorialize on certain issues and make false claims here, but at the end of the day, Mr. Boissonnault has offered his time to be here, which is unprecedented. I've love to have Andrew Scheer here about his fake insurance claim—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You don't have to give him the time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay, I think we got that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On the same point of order, Chair—

Mr. Francis Drouin: Let's be respectful.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I think we're good.

Let's go to Mr. Carr and then Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Carr, go ahead.

Mr. Ben Carr: I think Mr. Drouin covered it. For the sake of our interpreters, particularly given that we have three different languages being interpreted here today, I think it's for the benefit of the committee that all members involved in the discussion be mindful of that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay.

Mr. Genuis, go ahead.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'll just speak briefly on the point of order.

The rules are not equal time between the questioner and the witnesses.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): That is correct. However, given the circumstances—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: The rules are that the member controls the time. That needs to be understood.

Second, let's be clear that Mr. Boissonnault is not here because he chose to come. He is here because there was a House order requiring him to be here for two hours. A House order requiring him to be here was an unprecedented move. He has to be here for two hours, answering two hours' worth of questions, and these Liberal disruptions are just extending the amount of time we're going to be here.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, you are correct, Mr. Genuis; that is the rule. I allowed a bit of latitude in terms of the length of time because, in fact, we do have three interpretations going on at the same time. However, I do understand that witnesses do try to stretch things out and that members do have the ability to take the floor back.

Let's go back to Mr. Cooper.

I even forget what question you asked, to be honest with you.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Chair, I asked Mr. Boissonnault if he had commenced legal action. He did not answer in the affirmative. I then asked Mr. Boissonnault if he had taken any legal steps whatsoever against Mr. Anderson. He changed the subject and didn't answer in the affirmative.

I would put it to him that he hasn't pursued legal action after five or six months because the brass tacks of a court proceeding would expose him as the other Randy, the Randy who violated the Conflict of Interest Act and had an active involvement in a shady, pandemic-profiteering PPE company implicated in fraud.

Mr. Boissonnault, your credibility as a witness is very much in doubt. You came before the ethics committee on June 4, and you left the committee with the distinct impression that you had not been in contact with Stephen Anderson, when that wasn't the case.

MP Brock put to you, "Did you call Mr. Anderson?" You said, "No. Why would I call Mr. Anderson? I would not. No." You said that. Then, after new text messages were revealed connecting Randy in Vancouver to the time you were in Vancouver, suddenly you changed your story and said that you had actually spoken with Anderson and had a text message exchange with Anderson.

If you have nothing to hide, if you're not the Randy involved in the shakedown, why did you materially leave out that relevant fact?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Cooper, let's go back to your earlier question. I stepped away from cabinet to deal with these issues. I have met with lawyers, and we are working on legal action against Mr. Anderson right now. Let's put that on the record.

The Ethics Commissioner, not once but twice, has indicated that I'm not the person to whom you're referring in—

Mr. Michael Cooper: I asked you, Mr. Boissonnault, why it is that you materially omitted that fact, and—

Mr. Ben Carr: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: —I put it to you....

I'm going to ask you another question—

Mr. Ben Carr: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Michael Cooper: —as Mr. Carr runs interference to protect you because you're a liar.

An hon. member: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Easy....

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): The floor is Mr. Carr's.

Mr. Ben Carr: —there are three things here. The first is that Mr. Cooper, a moment ago, referred to Mr. Boissonnault as a fraud. I'm not sure that that's within the scope of standing order provisions.

Second, he just repeated the word "liar", which you've already ruled on today, Mr. Chair. The third thing, Mr. Chair, is that you made a ruling earlier in this meeting that it's equal time for questions and answers.

• (0930)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): That's correct, but I—

Mr. Ben Carr: With regard to the point of Mr. Genuis, which is fair, regardless of whether or not the standing order provides a provision for that or not, you ruled on that, Mr. Chair, so we would have to come back to that commentary that you made earlier in the meeting.

Nonetheless, I hope, Mr. Chair, that you will advise Mr. Cooper to be mindful of language that he's using that you have already ruled to be out of the scope of order here.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Withdraw it.

Mr. Ben Carr: Quite frankly, it is really not well placed for parliamentarians.

Thank you.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, on that same thing.

Mr. Cooper should withdraw his comment. It is unparliamentary language toward another member of Parliament.

Withdraw it. Otherwise, I'm going to keep calling points of order on this. Withdraw the comment. It is unacceptable.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I'll ask another question, then.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Cooper, do you care to respond?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Drouin can—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Are you responding to the point of order, or are you continuing your line of questioning?

Mr. Michael Cooper: I'm continuing with my line of questioning.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay.

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

Withdraw the comment.

He should not be allowed to ask questions. This is the pure rules. Withdraw it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Do you wish to withdraw it?

Mr. Michael Cooper: I'll continue with my line of questioning.

Mr. Boissonnault—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I have a point of order on the same point of order that's been raised.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: It's a very simple thing. All he has do is withdraw the comment. He knows very well—he is an experienced parliamentarian—that it is not parliamentary language.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I will withdraw it and restate that he misrepresented to the committee in saying that he hadn't spoken with Mr. Anderson when he had—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I have a point of order, Chair, a point of order—

Mr. Michael Cooper: That is a fact—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): He withdrew.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: He did not exactly withdraw. The word that was used is “liar”. He should withdraw that word.

Mr. Michael Cooper: I did.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): He withdrew, and he substituted with.... Was it “untruths”?

Mr. Michael Cooper: I said that he misrepresented to committee—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): It was “misrepresented”.

Mr. Michael Cooper: —that he hadn't spoken with Mr. Anderson at a material time when in fact he had.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. Are you going back to your question?

Mr. Michael Cooper: If [*Inaudible—Editor*] is going to continue to disrupt and run interference—

Mr. Brendan Hanley: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I think we're good.

You have one minute.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Here they go again.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Hanley.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. What I heard withdrawn was the word “lie”, but what I heard Mr. Cooper state was “liar”. I think the word that needs to be withdrawn is “liar”.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): At least I knew what he meant. I knew what he meant.

Okay. Mr. Cooper—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Boissonnault, you're continuing to mislead committee. You did so today yet again. You said in your opening statement that all of the cloud of scandal and corruption reported in the media occurred after you had been elected in October 2021, but you know that isn't true, because you were a partner at Global Health Imports in June 2020. Is that correct?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I was.

Mr. Michael Cooper: You were not elected in June 2020.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That's correct.

Mr. Michael Cooper: That is the very time that Global Health Imports, purporting to be wholly indigenous-owned, submitted an application or a bid on a federal contract.

Why did you say that all of the allegations occurred after you had left Global Health Imports as a partner because you were elected, when in fact you knew that this wasn't true?

One of the very material issues before this committee is that you have falsely represented yourself, or your company was falsely represented, as being indigenous. That occurred while you were not just a 50% owner but one of the two partners at the company. Why did you mislead the committee this morning on that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Cooper, nothing could be further from the truth. As I've stated very clearly, I was not involved in any federal work whatsoever in any of my businesses, and I confirmed that with the Ethics Commissioner. Mr. Anderson was solely—

Mr. Michael Cooper: Those were your words [*Inaudible—Editor*]. Why did you mislead the committee? Why did you mislead the committee?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Time is—

Mr. Ben Carr: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, a point of order—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Your time is up.

Mr. Carr, go ahead on a point of order. Then we go to the Liberals.

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair, Mr. Cooper very clearly heard you say on three occasions that his time was up, yet he took to the microphone again. I think that is a clear attempt to disrespect your authority in the chair.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I appreciate that. I appreciate the co-operation of all members here.

We're going to the Liberals now for five minutes.

Ms. Gainey, you have five minutes.

Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Boissonnault, for joining us here this morning.

An earlier part of the questioning made me think of one of our colleagues and the question around language. I have a quote here from Zoe Miller, who is a Mohawk teacher, among other things.

She stated:

Learning a little bit about a different language is an excellent way to learn about the people around you and the land on which you stand, and it helps to bridge the gap [between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities]. This is what reconciliation ought to look like.

She taught Mohawk to our colleague Minister Miller, which he worked very hard to learn and deliver in the House of Commons, which I think at the time really made a meaningful mark on this exercise that we've all been very diligently trying to participate in while learning quite a lot along the way.

I wanted to raise that with respect to your interest in Cree, learning Cree and maybe contributing here and there to the use of the language. I think that it shows an interest and a commitment to learning about others. That's just a positive contribution I wanted to make in this conversation this morning.

A lot has been said. I'm just wondering in these minutes if there's anything else that you would like a chance to add here that hasn't been addressed or that was cut short. I'd like to give you the floor.

• (0935)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you, Ms. Gainey. I really appreciate that.

Look, I also heard Minister Miller speak Blackfoot when we were in southern Alberta. It was very well received by that first nation.

Let me go back to the last line of questioning.

Mr. Anderson should never have applied for a federal contract through funds reserved for indigenous people. There's no scope for the company we ran to be 100% indigenous. He did that without my knowledge or consent. I found out about it in the news. I'm very happy that the safeguards in place prevented the company from getting that contract. If you take a look at the actual information request, you'll see that only Mr. Anderson was corresponding with the federal government.

Ms. Gainey, it's very important that the monies our government set aside for indigenous peoples are accessed by indigenous peoples. I think this committee has very important work to do to make sure that all necessary safeguards are in place to do that work and to prevent anybody who's not indigenous from accessing those funds.

Ms. Anna Gainey: Based on this experience, which I know has been difficult on a few fronts, are there any other lessons you would take from this? You mentioned a couple of suggestions that you think this committee could probably look at a little more closely in moving forward. Do you have any other insights based on what you are going through, in terms of how we can do better as parliamentarians in tackling these kinds of challenges?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Maybe there's a role when we become MPs, or regardless of how long we've been MPs, to sit down with indigenous peoples and get a sense of how we share stories. How can we be an ally and a champion, and tell and share stories, without crossing any line and tell a story that is more than our own? I think it's about understanding how we can go beyond a land acknowledgement, which is very important.

To your point, what is the sensitive approach to using language? I enjoy sharing the words of Cree I know when I'm at an event. I use those words of Cree with one of my elder friends, because she's teaching me the words. She likes to see me use the words when I text her. If we can figure out how to navigate these waters in a thoughtful and respectful way that doesn't cause any harm or bring any pain to indigenous people, it could be a very constructive use of this committee's time.

This is also a very good onboarding experience for new MPs—and seasoned MPs, because this space also changes. In the 10 years since I came up with the term I referred to myself with, I have learned more about my own family's history.

I think that this calibration, if you will, and that ability to be sensitive in this space, as parliamentarians, is very important.

Ms. Anna Gainey: I agree. It's been a privilege to learn, not only as an MP more recently but also as someone involved in the Liberal Party for quite a long time. I've had that opportunity, through our party's commitment to these things, to learn. I see this now in my kids, through their schools. This has grown dramatically.

Really, we've seen a tremendous shift over this last decade of commitment to reconciliation, and to learning better and clearer parts of our history. Language—

• (0940)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Ms. Gainey, I'm sorry. We're over.

Ms. Anna Gainey: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I appreciate that.

For the next round of questioning, we are going to Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Is it my turn?

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): No, I'm sorry. We're going to Mr. Barrett for five minutes. I apologize.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Boissonnault, on November 15, your disclosure with the Ethics Commissioner's office was updated to reflect a loan receivable from an individual.

Is that related to any business venture, including with Ms. Poon, Mr. Anderson, GHI or Xennex, or to your surrendering your shares in GHI?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Who is the individual?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That is a matter with the Ethics Commissioner, and that's where it should stay.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I will note for you, sir, that it's not your prerogative to not answer questions. You cannot refuse to answer a question before a parliamentary committee.

Are you refusing to tell us the name of the individual, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, can we have clarification on that?

This information is with the Ethics Commissioner, and that's where it should reside.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Stop the time, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): It's already stopped.

Mr. Francis Drouin: I have a point of order on that, please.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay.

Mr. Francis Drouin: If the member wants to bring up Ethics Commissioner questions or ethics questions, he's a member of the ethics committee. He can bring them up over there. This is not related to what we're discussing today, and I agree—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's not a point of order. That's debate.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I agree. That is—

Mr. Francis Drouin: It's a matter between the Ethics Commissioner and individuals.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I agree. That is debate.

Mr. Francis Drouin: He doesn't share his private information with everyone. It is with the Ethics Commissioner, and he should have respect for other members of Parliament.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Mr. Francis Drouin: It's going to come back on you guys. You know that. If you go that low....

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Barrett, the floor is yours.

Mr. Francis Drouin: You guys know if you go that low....

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'll give the rest of my time to Mr. Shields.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Go ahead, Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Boissonnault, for being here.

You made the comment that you've made amends for the mistakes you have made. The Liberal Party publications have been out there and have been referred to a number of times today. Has the Liberal Party apologized for the mistakes they made that you asked them to correct?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you, Mr. Shields.

I think I would say that I am in the process of making amends. I think it's a longer process. I've apologized, and I think that was the right place to start.

The Liberal Party corrected the error in 2019. I'm not responsible for posts that I didn't design or post. I'm not aware if they made an apology, but they certainly corrected the 2019 error.

Mr. Martin Shields: You made an apology and you said they made the error. They've corrected it but they have not apologized. That's my understanding of your answer.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That's my understanding as well.

Mr. Martin Shields: I'm going to read a quote to you: "A Prime Minister committed to true reconciliation would have removed Randy...from Cabinet long ago. Instead, we get to watch white people play ancestry wheel of fortune. So shameful and extremely destructive!"

Are you familiar with that quote?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I am not.

Mr. Martin Shields: It comes from your former colleague, Jody Wilson-Raybould.

Mr. Ben Carr: Acquaintance—

Mr. Martin Shields: Former colleague—

Mr. Ben Carr: Acquaintance—

Mr. Martin Shields: Do you believe in what she has stated in that quote?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Shields, I have no response to that. I'm focused on clearing my name and helping everybody understand that I'm not indigenous. I've never claimed to be indigenous. I don't claim indigenous status and I never have.

Mr. Martin Shields: As the first indigenous cabinet minister and in the role that she played as indigenous minister, she's very disappointed in what has occurred. She's very disappointed.

What has that reflected on the indigenous people in our country, as we had a leading cabinet minister—the first indigenous one—in that role that she played? She has a significant voice in this country, and she's very disappointed.

What's your opinion on why indigenous people should not be disappointed in this situation?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Shields, with all due respect, I have no comment on that. I'm focused on myself and my commitment to reconciliation.

Mr. Martin Shields: When we talk about reputations that you are looking at rebuilding, as you said, and rebuilding reputations with indigenous people, in public life, no matter what level you are at—whether you're a sports person or in politics—a simple mistake basically is irreparable. How do you believe that you can rebuild this reputation with indigenous people in this country?

● (0945)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I think the conversations will be really important. I have started that work with elders, with community leaders and with individuals who have reached out to me.

Mr. Shields, I will keep having those conversations. I will do the work of reconciliation and of being an ally and champion to indigenous peoples. That is how I will continue to serve as a member of parliament for Edmonton Centre, because it's my duty and firm commitment to indigenous peoples.

Mr. Martin Shields: As you mentioned, in representing your constituents in your constituency, this is a major error. This is not a minor one, as when the first baseman of the New York Mets misses a ball coming down the line. This is a major personality challenge. How can you continue to represent all of those constituents in your riding with these major disasters?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Shields, I think it's by being honest and straightforward with people. It's in part why I am happy to answer your questions and the questions of all the members here today. I think it's a part of doing the work, and that's what I will do.

Mr. Martin Shields: Is my time up?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, very much so. Thank you, Mr. Shields.

We will now continue with the five-minute round.

It's Mr. McLeod, I do believe, unless things have changed.

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate MP Boissonnault joining us here today.

I sit on the indigenous caucus. I've sat on the indigenous caucus since 2015. I'm probably the only person in the room who has been sitting on the indigenous caucus right from day one.

As an indigenous person, we're very sensitive that, historically, people used to hide the fact that they were indigenous. If you were indigenous, you couldn't vote and you couldn't consume alcohol. There were so many things that you couldn't do if you were indigenous.

Today we have to be very careful when we use the term "indigenous", or in the Northwest Territories it's Inuvialuit, Dene or Métis. There are lots of people who are now interested in being indigenous, so I'm very aware of those facts.

I remember the discussions that I had with MP Boissonnault, along with others, about the indigenous caucus, and he was very forthcoming in his position. I think one of the first sentences out of his mouth was to state that he was not indigenous. He was very keen on joining us as part of the caucus because he wanted to work with us to help resolve some of the issues. He also said something that was very interesting for me: He wanted to learn more about indigenous people and indigenous issues. That was very important.

It's kind of insulting when people say in public that MP Boissonnault lied and got a seat on the indigenous caucus, as though we didn't do the proper vetting or didn't do any kind of research on Mr. Boissonnault before we encouraged him to join us. That's what we did. The indigenous caucus was about trying to get people together so that we could move forward on some of the challenges that are facing indigenous people.

We've met with other party members who represent indigenous people. We've met with national indigenous organizations. We've met with senators. We're trying to find ways for everybody to work together to move the agenda for indigenous people forward. We had many discussions on the purpose and the role of the indigenous caucus. As an MP from the north where we practise consensus government, this was a very welcoming approach.

At no time did I ever believe that MP Randy Boissonnault was indigenous. He was very clear on that. There was nobody who sat on our caucus then who would have misunderstood that.

It was very important for me to join the indigenous caucus. It was very important for me to work with all levels of government, because we had a short period of time. MP Boissonnault might remember that I used to count how many days we had left in a term, because I believe we're only here for short time periods and we have a lot of work to do.

My first question is to Mr. Boissonnault.

Could he just talk a bit about why it was important for him to sit in with us at the indigenous caucus? Why is it important that all the MPs who represent indigenous people work together to move the agenda for indigenous people so that they have a better quality of life?

• (0950)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: MP McLeod, Michael, thank you for that. You're bringing tears to my eyes.

You reminded me of that conversation I had with the indigenous caucus almost 10 years ago now. The whole point of coming and asking for permission to join the caucus was to do exactly what you said, which was to represent the people in my riding and the indigenous people of Alberta, and to learn.

I learned a lot from you, and I learned a lot from MP Rusnak; from MP Robert-Falcon Ouellette; from MP Vandal, who is now a minister; from MP Sarai; from MP Drouin; and from everybody who sat in the indigenous caucus.

When I was a minister, I stayed very close to you and to MP Battiste, who's the chair, because I care deeply about these issues. I think the path of reconciliation and doing the right work with indigenous peoples is one of the reasons that we're in Parliament, and so—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Boissonnault.

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Boissonnault, let's go back to your ties with GHI.

When we examine the public declaration you made after your election, we see that it was only on November 15—just over two weeks ago—that an excerpt was removed. That excerpt stated that you were the sole owner of an Alberta-numbered company, an investment holding company in Edmonton, Alberta, which held a significant interest in GHI.

That means you held a significant interest in a company that did business with the government.

Is that correct?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: No, that's not true at all.

The GHI shares were voluntarily returned to the company in June of this year, without monetary exchange.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: According to your declaration dated March 23, 2023, when you were even a minister, you were the sole owner of a company that held a significant interest in GHI and did business with the government. There's something wrong here.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That's not the case. I was a shareholder, but not a director of the company. Everything was done in accordance with the law. I resolved the issue with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné, the company in question was under the management of a third party, and that's exactly what the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner recommended.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: So why was that excerpt removed from your declaration two weeks ago?

What changed two weeks ago, Mr. Boissonnault?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That's a question for the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. As for me, I submitted the necessary documents.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: You are responsible for your own declaration. It's your own online declaration that I'm looking at right now.

How come that excerpt disappeared two weeks ago?

Something must have changed two weeks ago.

Previously, it said that you held a significant interest in a company. You are entitled to do so.

Why, then, did that reference disappear two weeks ago, Mr. Boissonnault?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: That's a question for the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, because the shares in that company were disposed of.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: The commissioner would be directing us to you, Mr. Boissonnault. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner would tell us that you're the one who needs to answer that question since you're responsible for your own declaration.

• (0955)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I'm going to look at the file, and I'll personally get back to you, Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you.

I'd like an answer on that, Mr. Boissonnault.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Give a quick answer, please, Mr. Boissonnault.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: We have finished.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. Now we will go to the NDP for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, Ms. Idlout.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:]

Thank you.

First, just to clarify, I want him to answer not just to Nathalie. I want him to answer to all of us, because we all need to hear.

My question now is this. If you are not the source of the mistakes about your identity, then who is responsible? Is your party so loosely organized that advertisements can be published without you ever seeing them first?

In my office, my staff shows me all advertising proofs for approval before publishing. Does a minister not have the same standard?

Thank you.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Thank you, Ms. Idlout.

At the time, I was not a minister. I was an MP, and this wasn't prepared by my office. I made an effort to correct the issue in 2019.

As it pertains to the 2016 Instagram post, I didn't see it; I wasn't aware of it. It's an important thing for the party to be mindful of and to correct.

To your point, I think it is a learning for all of us, out of this experience that I've gone through, to be very vigilant about how each of our respective parties refers to us and the lists on which we are associated.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:]

Why haven't you tried to correct this mistake for four years?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I wasn't aware of the 2016 post, and I'm aware of it now.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:]

Your answers are not really clear. When I first asked you how important it is for you to have consent, you said that it was important for you.

It's unfortunate that you are giving us contradicting answers, so you need to clearly tell us who you are.

When you responded that you wanted to ask me how you could make amends, this is not right, because we as indigenous people are distinct people. Inuit are different from first nations and Métis, so you need to ask your family how you will make amends to the people you have hurt.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Unfortunately, we are out of time, Mr. Boissonnault. Maybe you'll have a chance to answer that question shortly.

The next round is for five minutes. We go to Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Boissonnault, you granted a personal loan and you wouldn't answer Mr. Barrett's questions about who it was to. I do understand the sensitivities around this, but the committee does have a hard time believing you and obviously has many questions about your business dealings.

I want to ask if you would be willing to provide that name in writing to the committee with the understanding that it would not be made public unless the committee saw it as being in the public interest to be made public. Would you be willing to provide the name on that basis?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, I will share this with the committee. It was a loan for a friend for a property, and it's not appropriate to share that person's name with the committee or with Canadians.

• (1000)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay. My request was that it be provided on a private basis to the committee for the committee to consider. It sounds like you're not willing to do that.

We'll move on to the next question. You continued to own GHI after you were elected. When did you step back from GHI operations?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Once I was elected in September of 2021, I sent an email to my lawyer, who contacted Mr. Anderson's lawyer to let them know that I was stepping away from the company.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I resigned as director.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: GHI claimed to be a wholly indigenous-owned company in a bid made in June 2020. You had not stepped aside at that point. You were involved in the operation of the company when it claimed to be fully indigenous-owned.

Were you aware of the bid to the federal government for masks in June of 2020?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: No. Mr. Anderson was uniquely and totally responsible for federal contracts. It would have been inappropriate for me to work on any federal contracts. I confirmed that with the Ethics Commissioner, and it was the same approach I used—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Boissonnault—

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, Mr. Anderson—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: —we are talking about a time. Let's underline the date. It was June 2020. We're talking about a time when you were not elected. You have said—and this is obviously disputed—that you stepped back from any involvement in the company after you were elected, but we're talking about a time when you were not elected and therefore a time when the company was still claiming to be wholly indigenous-owned.

In June of 2020, were you aware of a bid to provide masks to the federal government?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, I have been very clear that I worked with the Ethics Commissioner, and I was very clear with Mr. Anderson that any federal contracts were entirely his responsibility—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You're saying that included the time when you were not elected.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Absolutely. There was a wall in our company so that I would not have anything to do with federal contracts. It would be inappropriate. I was still governed by lobbying provisions. I took my code of conduct—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: At no point in that bid, did he ever even ask you if you were indigenous?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, do I get to finish?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Just answer the question.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Genuis has the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Did he at any point ask you if you were indigenous? How did he come to the conclusion that you were indigenous?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: He did not. None of our company was certified indigenous. He should not have done this at all, and

I'm glad that the provisions, the safeguards, prevented the company from getting the contract.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: All right. I guess we're to believe that Mr. Anderson sat down with the Liberal Party of Canada, and they both decided to falsely claim that you were indigenous without ever consulting you.

Mr. Boissonnault, you've said that your Cree name means “strong eagle man”. Now, I've consulted with indigenous leaders on this. I understand that being gifted a traditional name has a very specific cultural and ceremonial context. I wonder if you could share with the committee what that name is, when you were given it, who gave it to you and what the ceremony involved was.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Absolutely. That was a gift of a name and an eagle feather by elder Ed Lavallee of the Edmonton 2 Spirit Society. It was done in a medicine blanket ceremony the Friday before the election in 2021. It was elder Ed Lavallee who presided at that ceremony. My mom attended that ceremony. I really respect that gift. The Cree name is *maskawi kihêw nâpêw*. It translates to “strong eagle man”. The Edmonton 2 Spirit Society conferred this great honour on me because they said that I gave voice to the voiceless.

They chose “strong eagle man” because I would be flying back and forth to Ottawa after the election, and it was my responsibility to take care of—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay, well, we'll be able to verify that. I do thank you for providing that context.

Finally, you said that you participated in the Liberal indigenous caucus “as an ally”. Were there ever any other non-indigenous people who were counted as members of the Liberal indigenous caucus? All of the public representations of the Liberal indigenous caucus exclusively show members of Parliament who are or have claimed to be indigenous. Why is it that no other people were invited into the caucus on the same basis that you were?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I'm not sure that other allies made the same representation that I did.

When we met as a caucus between 2015 and 2019, we frequently—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can you just confirm that that's a “no”, that you were the only one?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Genuis, we frequently opened the meeting up to other allies.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: But you were a member, right?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: I was a regular attendee.

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

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Time has just expired.

Do you still have a point of order?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes.

With all due respect to Mr. Genuis, if he wants to join our Liberal caucus, he can join. We'll explain to him how we work inside our caucus. However, our caucus is none of his business.

• (1005)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you, Mr. Drouin. That's not a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: With regard to the point of order, there are public posts about this Liberal indigenous caucus that show its members. It's convenient for it now to be a private caucus—

Mr. Ben Carr: I have a point of order. This is debate.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Time is up.

Mr. Battiste has the floor now for five minutes.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the previous speaker, MP Michael McLeod. I think that out of this whole discussion we've had around indigenous identity and the indigenous Liberal caucus, his four minutes were the most powerful in that preamble.

As the current chair of the indigenous Liberal caucus, I would like to put on the record that Randy has never stated to me that he's indigenous. He's always attended the indigenous caucus as an ally. We welcome several allies. Actually, we're hoping to get more from this. I think having indigenous allies has allowed us to get to the place we are on reconciliation in Canada, because there are very few indigenous members of Parliament.

As a first nations member of Parliament, I've been reflecting on this. I've had dozens of conversations with the leaders who are here for the Assembly of First Nations special chiefs assembly happening this week. In those dozens of conversations, people aren't really talking about indigenous procurement. They're not talking about indigenous identity. The conversations urgently happening at the AFN are about things like indigenous policing and the safety of communities.

Yesterday the Assembly of First Nations called for action. They called for a public inquiry on systemic racism in policing. In my conversations with folks over the past few months and days, chiefs have told me they're deeply concerned. They're deeply scared of what's happening in our country, and for the future of indigenous policing. I talked to parents who lost their daughter because of a wellness check. I heard community leaders like Chief Leroy, who's from my community, say that at one point we had 20 Mi'kmaq-speaking indigenous policemen in the community, and now we're down to two. I've had folks tell me that there should never be a death in Canada when someone is being checked on for wellness. First nations in Canada should not be scared of the very people we pay to protect them.

During these conversations, people are asking for action. I've asked them what that action means. Does it mean funding for police as an essential service? Does it mean setting targets for how many first nations police we can acquire over the next three, four or five years and saying, "Here's what we need in our communities"? Is it figuring out ways we can collaborate with provincial, federal, municipal and first nations on policing, moving forward?

I think it's incumbent on us as a committee to look into this and talk about this issue. I have tremendous respect for my colleagues and the choices they make about which studies we put forward first.

I have tremendous respect for my colleagues on this matter too. That's why I waited until the end.

This is incumbent on me. I told the national chief I would do this. I want to table a motion that you all received beforehand. You've seen this motion. I tabled this motion on September 17. It says that in light of "the recent reports of tragic deaths of indigenous Canadians in incidents with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the urgent emergency debate that took place on Monday, September 16, the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, immediately following the conclusion of legislation at INAN, move to begin work on the indigenous policing study".

I know this study takes precedence. I'm not asking for that. I know that what the Assembly of First Nations is asking for is a public inquiry. I'd be willing to listen to amendments on how we can improve this study, but the original study we tabled way back in April 2024 called for the committee to undertake a study of indigenous policing options to ensure indigenous communities have essential services for public safety.

The motion further reads:

The study should examine how federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions can work collaboratively with indigenous governments to advance the safety of their community members. The study should also look at the obstacles and systemic racism within the justice system and examine what barriers exist that prevent indigenous people from becoming law enforcement officers.

• (1010)

I know I have only five minutes, but I wanted to move this motion now so that we can get to discussion on it. I would like to move that we have a discussion about whether we can do this with the remaining five to 10 minutes that we have in this study.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, Mr. Battiste.

The motion is being worked on already. I see it being typed up.

We will go for discussion.

Go ahead, Mr. Melillo.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is obviously a very important issue, and I did actually have an amendment to the original motion that Mr. Battiste moved, which I hope he would be amenable to. I just have a question about the procedure.

It was my understanding that the original motion, which was tabled April 11, 2024, was never actually moved. Before we go any further, I'm not sure if this motion, which now refers to the other motion that was not moved, would actually be in order.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): I'll check to see if it was, in fact.

Thank you Mr. Melillo. According to the clerk, the original motion was never actually moved or voted on, so you are correct that the reference....

Mr. Battiste, do you quickly want to respond?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I'd like to move it now.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. He is moving the motion.

Is there any discussion?

We will go to Mr. Melillo and then to Ms. Idlout.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I mentioned, I would like to move an amendment to that motion, and hopefully we can dispose of it and can get back to the questioning. It would be additional text at the end. It would say this:

That the committee also request the Parliamentary Budget Officer prepare research and comparative analysis of policing provided through the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program and non-Indigenous police services, beginning at least as early as 2015-16 to 2023-24, and future years as data availability permits. Factors to compare are to include but not be limited to funding for facilities, equipment, personnel, compensation and employee benefits, culturally responsive and specialized services, training, and oversight and accountability mechanisms. That this research and comparative analysis be submitted to the committee within 60 days.

The rationale for this is to understand, from a financial aspect, what would be necessary to help fill the gaps in first nations policing.

Are you good with that?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We're going to circulate that in both official languages, if it hasn't been circulated already.

Ms. Idlout, on the amendment, please go ahead.

Ms. Lori Idlout: [*Member spoke in Inuktitut, interpreted as follows:*]

Thank you.

I also want to put in an amendment, but the amendment I'm proposing is tied to the Liberals' request. I would like to see the Conservatives' amendment first.

I will mention this. Don't just tell us about this, but also show us what's being done. We all know what's been published or what has been proposed. I want to see them first, because without seeing them, I can't really provide input, but I will want to provide input afterwards.

• (1015)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Genuis is next.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Chair, I think this is a very important discussion. I'm not a regular member of the committee, but I'll just say that there's a House order that we hear from the witness that we have for two hours. That's a House order. Committees can't stand against a House order. There seems to be some confusion about that in terms of the setting of priorities here. Committees have to respect a House order.

I understand that there are some members who want to review this amendment. My proposal would be that we proceed to hearing from the witnesses at this time. There'll be time to do other things afterwards, but we should proceed to hearing from the witnesses.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Are you making a motion to adjourn this debate?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Do you agree that we should...? We have a House order for two hours.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Right, so—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Maybe I'll just ask the Chair.

Do we have extra resources?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We do have extra resources.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We have extra resources.

Okay, so we're going to finish the time allotted—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): When we're done with that round, we will go on to the fourth round of questioning. At that point, we have Conservatives and Liberals, and then the Bloc and the NDP for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm not moving anything because I can't—I'm not subbed in—but I just wanted to get clarity about the process here. I'll leave it to the regular members to decide, but we're going to get our full two hours either way. Is that correct?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): That's correct.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: I waited until the absolute end, the absolute last point, to ensure that this happened. It was 11 minutes and 22 seconds ago when I started my question. It's been six minutes extra that we've discussed this.

I do believe we should give time to the Bloc and the NDP to finish this round, but I made sure, with absolute certainty, that this would not take away from the discussion and the House order and that we absolutely made sure this thing that's being called upon by the national chief and by the Assembly of First Nations was addressed.

I think this is minimally impairing us. At most, it will take six minutes to finish this round, and then we can get back to this discussion. Hopefully, by that point, we'll have the amendments circulated.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. We have secured additional resources.

Mr. Carr is next in line, and then you're correct that there is time for one extra round.

Mr. Carr, go ahead.

Mr. Ben Carr: I have two things, Mr. Chair.

First, can you or the clerk please confirm what time this meeting began?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We did start late. I will get the exact...

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Malachie Azémar): We started at 8:17.

Mr. Ben Carr: What time did Mr. Battiste's intervention begin?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Do you have the exact time?

There was time for one more round of questioning.

Mr. Ben Carr: Okay. Then why are we talking about additional resources when we will have satisfied the two hours that the House order put upon us?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We did start late, and there were multiple disruptions, so we were going to allow one more round of questioning.

Mr. Ben Carr: Yes, but disruptions or not, the committee proceedings were two hours.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On that point, the Liberals can't say their repeated efforts to disrupt the testimony count to satisfy the House order. We will have two hours with Mr. Boissonnault in accordance with the House order.

I have no problem discussing other matters in the interim, provided there's not a failure to understand the obligations this committee has in terms of the House order.

I think, Chair, that you very responsibly secured resources so that this important issue that's been raised can be discussed and that we can also satisfy the House order at the same time. For the Liberals to say that their repeated disruptions count toward the time is obviously absurd.

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order on that note.

If a member opposite uses language like "liar", which is in contravention of the rules, and as a result of their use of that language takes time away from the committee, that is hardly the fault of members opposite them. They used that language by choice. The time that has to be used to deal with that is not a penalty against any other member; it's the result of and a by-product of the behaviour that they chose to comport themselves with.

For clarity, Mr. Chair, I think that's important.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Your point is taken.

Mr. Melillo, go ahead.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, this is a very important motion. We're waiting for a subamendment to address this more fully, but we do have rounds of questioning to finish. I would like to respect everyone's time. I would move that we proceed back to questioning of the witness and come back to this discussion once that subamendment has been circulated.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Do we have the motion?

• (1020)

The Clerk: No, we have the amendment.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Okay. The motion, as moved by Mr. Melillo, is to proceed to the next questioner. That would be Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Chair, I—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We will have a vote to proceed to—

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes. Hang on.

Mr. Drouin, go ahead, and then Mr. Carr.

Mr. Francis Drouin: We can—

Mr. Ben Carr: It's dilatory, but there was a motion that wasn't dealt with before you introduced a new motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: It's dilatory.

Mr. Francis Drouin: It's to adjourn debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: No, it's not to adjourn debate. It's a different motion.

Mr. Francis Drouin: We don't need to vote; we just need unanimous consent to remove both motions, and then you guys can proceed.

An hon. member: That's all.

Mr. Francis Drouin: We're good. We're good. We're good.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: There's UC [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Mr. Francis Drouin: We don't need [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Mr. Ben Carr: Is it there from the Bloc and the NDP?

Mr. Francis Drouin: It will be quicker.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We don't need a recorded vote, then. Everyone— [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Ben Carr: Well, we agree. Do they agree?

Ms. Lori Idlout: There are multiple conversations going on, and I don't know what I am being asked.

Mr. Michael McLeod: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, go ahead, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chair, it's getting very difficult to follow. I'm not sure how the interpreters are doing it, and I'm a person who has a hearing disability. The camera is not following the speaker, which is making it even more challenging.

As well, there are a number of voices all coming through on my headset at the same time. It's really difficult to keep on top of what's happening in committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, that's fair. Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

There was a bit of a discussion here, and I think that we've all agreed across the table to pause discussion on this until the amendment to the motion is circulated and we have time to discuss it. In the meantime, we'll proceed to the next round of questioning.

That's our understanding here, unless we missed something somewhere along the way.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Well, we went through two full rounds. Is that right? That was the end of that. It was three rounds, essentially.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Yes, and there was time for more until the motion was ended.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Well, how much time is that, six minutes?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): If we go now, we have resources, and we can continue. We can try, if we move quickly, to have at least three questioners and maybe four if we move quickly.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, but there are two hours. That doesn't add up.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We did start late, and then we had a number of delays.

Mr. Francis Drouin: How late did we start?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We were going to go to another round. Unless—

Mr. Francis Drouin: We started two minutes late.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): —someone moves a motion and questions me, we have one more round of questioners.

I'd like to get back at this so that we can all move along here.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, but—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Mr. Cooper, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, hold on a second, Mr. Chair—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Whoa—

Mr. Francis Drouin: No, no, no. We're not restarting a new round. We were in agreement. If this were the end of one round, we're not restarting. It's two hours. We were okay with Madame Sinclair-Desgagné and Madame Idlout asking their final questions, but if they've already asked their final questions, then we're done.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: On the same point of order, Chair, Mr. Battiste moved his motion at 10 after the hour. This meeting was scheduled to start at 8:15 a.m. and it started late. Mr. Drouin can heckle me and say “No, no, no”, but we have a House order that says two hours, and these guys don't understand this. They keep saying, “Oh, thank you, Mr. Boissonnault, for coming to this committee.” There was a House order requiring this committee to hear him for two hours.

Mr. Francis Drouin: That's irrelevant.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: This isn't irrelevant, Mr. Drouin; this is the central point. There is a House order that we have to comply with.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Behave like members of Parliament.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: There was a House order for two hours, and this committee has to follow it.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Yes, and behave like members of Parliament. You didn't. That's not my fault; it's your fault.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Now we're getting into debate, but Mr. Genuis is right—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You can say whatever you want.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): —that the House order did specify two hours.

Go ahead, Ms. Idlout.

Mr. Francis Drouin: We did two hours, Mr. Chair.

I am looking at the time, and we're at 10:24 a.m.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We still have another round of questions.

Ms. Idlout, do you want to respond on that point of order?

Ms. Lori Idlout: It's not a point of order, but I have a personal appointment that I am running late for.

Knowing that we were going to end at 10:15 or close to 10.15, and knowing that we started only two minutes late, we have met the requirement of the motion that brought us to this debate.

Given that we were given notice of the extra resources only at the last minute, I need time to look at the subamendment that was submitted by Eric.

There are too many things that are unknown or need clarity, and I think that we need to take the time to consider the amendment tabled by Jaime as well as the subamendment and what I mentioned as a subamendment that I want to provide.

Given that we need to make sure that we move forward in an effective way, I move to adjourn.

• (1025)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: You mean adjourn the debate, I assume?

Ms. Lori Idlout: No, it's to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Well, then you have to come back for five minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Just to clarify, I move to adjourn the meeting.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): We have a motion to adjourn the meeting.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jamie Schmale): Thank you very much, everyone.

Thank you to our witnesses.

This meeting is now adjourned.

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