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Chair: Mr. Joël Lightbound



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• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 132 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

Before we begin, esteemed colleagues, I would like to ask those of you here in Ottawa to consult the little card in front of you for guidelines on using the microphones and the earpieces to protect the health and safety of the interpreters.

Thank you all for your co-operation.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. To ensure that the meeting runs smoothly, I would like to remind members that it's important they raise their hand or identify themselves if they wish to speak.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting to look into a request to consider the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's Verschuren report and other findings related to Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC.

Without further ado, I will now give the floor to Mr. Perkins, who has circulated a motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, colleagues.

Chair, since this is the first meeting since the new addition to your family, maybe I could start with congratulations on behalf of His Majesty's loyal opposition on the addition of Abraham to your family. We all wish you well in that new and exciting adventure. I hear the first 20 years are the most difficult.

The Chair: That's good to know.

Thank you, Rick.

On that note, thank you for chairing the committee at the end of the summer. I missed you guys, but I wouldn't have missed my girlfriend's delivery for anything in the world, not even this committee.

Thank you.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Those are the right priorities.

Last week, the Ethics Commissioner of Canada produced a report on the activities of the chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, a Crown agency charged with distributing money to pre-commercial green technology companies. That was in response to a letter from Conservatives way back in November asking for and seeking clarification from the commissioner on what we knew then. We know a lot more now, but we wanted to know what we knew then.

The shocking part of it, for those who weren't following, was that the Prime Minister's hand-picked chair was found to have breached ethics laws and the Conflict of Interest Act of Canada as a public officer holder for her private interests, and she improperly furthered those private interests.

This emergency meeting to discuss having some hearings on this was not only put forward by the Conservatives but was signed by both the NDP and the Bloc to have this as a statement of the urgency of this issue.

I'll briefly explain why this is important. We actually now have two shocking reports, the first one being the Ethics Commissioner's report on the conduct of the chair on a very small segment of what she did. He dealt with three instances essentially of conflict. The Auditor General's report that came out in June was even more shocking because, in the case of the chair, it actually found 20 conflicts of interest, and most of those were not examined by the Ethics Commissioner.

The report by the Auditor General found that for a little over \$800 million of taxpayer money given to green technology companies in the five years she audited, 44% of the time, or 186 times, nine Liberal-appointed directors were found to have had conflicts of interest. The actual total of those conflicts of interest the Auditor General reported is \$330 million of the \$800 million. It was also found by the Auditor General that another \$58 million was illegally spent outside the parameters of what SDTC was allowed to in their agreements with the Government of Canada. That's almost \$400 million of the \$800 million that was misappropriated or had a conflict of interest when it comes to this situation with the green slush fund.

Therefore, we are seeking a meeting with the Ethics Commissioner to discuss his findings. We need to do that quickly, because the transition of this fund to the NRC is ongoing right now, and money is starting to be spent again by the slush fund without our ability to still go in and understand the extent to which these funds were abused by insiders on the slush fund who were appointed by the Prime Minister.

We need to get to the bottom of this. We want to see the Ethics Commissioner come before this committee within the next four weeks. We'd like to see the subject of this report, Annette Verschuren, the former chair, also appear to discuss why she thought it was appropriate to, on almost 20 occasions, be in a conflict of interest where her personal financial interests were benefited by her being the chair.

The report also mentions an organization called MaRS. I think it's important for people to know that the industry department, through the regional development agencies, also funded over the last five years \$48 million to MaRS from the federal taxpayer. Guess who the chair of MaRS is. It's the same chair who resigned in disgrace from the green slush fund and is the subject of the Ethics Commissioner's report.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I understand, Mr. Perkins, and maybe I missed it, that you are moving a motion that you've circulated.

• (1655)

Mr. Rick Perkins: I should read that into the record and do that formal part, which is to move the motion that was circulated. The motion reads:

Given the Ethics Commissioner's "Verschuren report" finds that the former chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada broke the Conflict of Interest Act, the committee holds two meetings within four weeks of this motion being adopted and calls the following witnesses:

(a) the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Konrad von Finckenstein, to appear for two hours;

(b) the former chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada and current chair of MaRS, Annette Verschuren, to appear for two hours.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

We're debating the motion brought forward by Mr. Perkins.

I have Monsieur Villemure, Madam Damoff and Mr. Badawey.

Monsieur Villemure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I also want to congratulate you, but you'll understand that I'm not doing so on behalf of the Queen.

Although the Bloc Québécois agrees with the spirit of the motion, I will try to make a comment by removing the few preconceptions it contains. The Ethics Commissioner found that Ms. Verschuren had committed offences by not recusing herself on a few occasions. I read the report, but I didn't see a direct accusation of a conflict of interest. At best, we know that she didn't recuse herself.

We have known since November 2023 that this situation is a problem, and I think it's important that we look into it. However, is it urgent? That's debatable. I'd therefore like to move an amendment to the motion right away, which will be sent to you in both official languages. It reads:

Given the Ethics Commissioner's Verschuren report, finds that the former chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada broke the Conflict of Interest Act; that the committee hold two meetings, and calls the following witnesses: the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Konrad von Finckenstein, to

appear for two hours; and the former chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada and current chair of MaRS, Annette Verschuren, to appear for two hours; and that it is understood that the meetings on this matter will be held in priority to all other committee studies and that the committee will dedicate its first two meetings after Parliament resumes in September 2024 to hearing these witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Villemure.

We will wait until the amendment is distributed to the members.

If I understand correctly, Mr. Villemure, essentially, the amendment you are moving is more about the timeline, since it seeks to have us deal with this matter first when we come back in September. Is that right?

Mr. René Villemure: Basically, we're keeping the substance of the motion, but changing the timeline.

The Chair: Okay.

[*English*]

The clerk is circulating it right now.

I'll reiterate what Mr. Villemure is proposing. It's essentially the same substance of the motion, so it has the same witnesses, but there's a change in the time frame. Instead of being within four weeks, it would be the first item of business for this committee when we resume in September. It still has two hours with the Ethics Commissioner and two hours with Annette Verschuren.

You've all heard the amendment proposed by Mr. Villemure. I will continue the discussion as it is circulated, if you don't mind, because this is essentially the substance of it.

I recognize Madam Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

It's a pleasure to sub in on this committee. Let me join other members in congratulating you and your girlfriend on the little baby you welcomed.

Can you clarify something, Chair? Monsieur Villemure's amendment is for one hour with the Ethics Commissioner and two hours with the former chair. Is that correct, or is it two hours with each?

The Chair: It's for two hours with each.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay, but the timing would be in September. Is that right? I haven't seen the amendment.

• (1700)

The Chair: That's correct. It would be the first item of business when we come back in September. The first week would be dedicated to these two meetings, from what I understand.

The amendment to the motion is being circulated now, so you'll have the exact wording, but that's essentially it, MP Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. I would like to speak to it.

I had the pleasure of sitting on the ethics committee with my friend from the Bloc, where we heard from the Ethics Commissioner, as well as from the former chair prior to her resigning. I remember being really disappointed. That's probably not a good word. I was concerned by and disappointed with the way she conducted herself at that committee. This was someone who had a history, going back to the Harper years, of being appointed to boards and advisory committees, and I pointed out to her that even if she got advice to the contrary, she should have known better and recused herself.

I don't think there's any disagreement among the parties on this. She did not behave in the way she should have. She's not new to the role. I could be mistaken about this, but I think she was appointed under former prime minister Martin, then under the Harper government and then under ours. She's someone who came with the experience, and she should have known better.

I don't think we need two hours with each of them. If somebody added up all the hours both of these individuals testified at different committees in the House of Commons.... I think you should hear from them, certainly, but I think an hour for each one would be sufficient.

I'd like to amend Mr. Villemure's amendment to one meeting of one hour each, if I could, Chair. Is that appropriate right now?

The Chair: That would be a subamendment.

Hold on for one second. I'll validate that with the clerk.

To clarify, Madam Damoff, you're proposing to amend Mr. Villemure's amendment, so that instead of it being two meetings of two hours, it would be one meeting, with one hour for the Ethics Commissioner and one hour for Annette Verschuren.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Exactly. Yes.

The Chair: The rest of the amendment proposed by Mr. Villemure remains the same, so it's just—

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's correct. It's just the timeline.

Both of these witnesses have spoken about this at great length. I think the committee should definitely hear from these individuals, but I think two hours each is more time than is needed to get to the bottom of...well, not even get to the bottom of it. I shouldn't say that, because the minister actually acted quickly when the information came to light, and took action on what was happening with the fund.

Certainly, they appeared at the ethics committee shortly after all of this came to light. I think one hour for each of them would be adequate to have parliamentarians ask the questions they wish to ask of them.

I'll leave it there, Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Damoff.

We have a subamendment. You've all heard the proposition by MP Damoff. Right now, we're debating the subamendment. We can vote on it at some point and then get back to the amendment by Mr. Villemure.

MP Damoff's subamendment is on the floor right now. It's about the number of meetings and the time allocated for each of the witnesses. That's what we're discussing right now.

I have MP Badawey on my list, followed by Brian Masse, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Brock.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll say this, and I'll be blunt about it. Especially for the past year, we've been going through this diatribe of attempts by the Conservatives time after time to create scandal in an attempt to create the narrative that the government isn't acting in the best interests of Canadians. Quite frankly, I'm getting tired of it, because, once again, it's just a narrative they continually try to gain.... Of course, they utilize the media to get out there to try to manipulate public opinion.

With that being said, they're simply playing politics. As Ms. Damoff alluded to, we feel this is of extreme importance. The minister, back on October 3, 2023, thought it was of extreme importance and announced corrective actions after his fact-finding efforts to get to the bottom of what we're discussing today.

The bottom line is that it's being dealt with.

• (1705)

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: One second, MP Badawey. I have a point of order.

Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: I thought the chair made it abundantly clear that we were debating the subamendment and not the substantive motion brought by Mr. Perkins or the amendment brought by Mr. Villemure. What we're hearing is completely irrelevant material on the subamendment. I'd like to get to the point, because a number of members want to add to this discussion. We have a number of motions on the table. All will have to come to a vote at some point.

I would just ask the chair to ask the member to get to the point and be relevant.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Brock.

Just to be clear, we have one motion and then one amendment and one subamendment, and we're in fact discussing the subamendment. I would ask members to try to generally stay on the topic of the subamendment, which we're discussing right now, with regard to the number of hours per witness and the number of meetings, from two to one.

However, Mr. Brock, in this committee we're rather collegial. I've given leeway on all sides to sometimes stray a little past the exact topic we're discussing. I think it can be pertinent to the subamendment to discuss the broader context.

I do give a bit of leeway, but let's try to focus on the subamendment so that we can move with haste and efficiency in this meeting.

Mr. Badawey, the floor is yours.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do apologize for hurting Mr. Brock's feelings. However, the topic at hand is with respect to the issue. I'm speaking about the issue through the subamendment that Ms. Damoff has presented. With that, and the overlying message that I'm speaking on, however, is the time being wasted by the Cons once again to play their political games?

Having said that, and speaking to Ms. Damoff's subamendment, we are looking at an amendment that outlines two meetings. Again, I'm not prepared to play those political games over the course of those two meetings. I think one meeting will suffice. I think with that, giving the opportunity to the individuals who we'll actually be allocating an hour each to we'll in fact come to the results of what we're all looking for out of this meeting, and with that the opportunity to once again bring attention to the efforts by the minister to look at corrective actions being taken ever since he announced that back on October 3, 2023.

I think at the very least, both Mr. Brock and his colleagues on the opposite side will recognize that we are here to get a job done, not a political job but the business of government, and to get to the bottom of which we're all looking for with respect to this one meeting being undertaken.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and again, congratulations.

I think I have a decent record here of trying to be collegial and getting things done in compromise. Let me lay it out in terms of the subamendment and the amendment, because we can have either a long meeting or a quick one.

The subamendment won't fly for me in terms of one meeting instead of two because of a couple of things. It won't even allow all members to participate in that meeting. For me, with all we've invested in it, it's a no go. If the Bloc and Mr. Villemure agree with that, then that's done and over with, because the Conservatives probably won't agree to reduce their amount of time.

That brings us to the main motion. The main motion as amended by Mr. Villemure is to have the meetings when we return to the House of Commons in September, which I don't think the Conservatives want, but at the same time is a moot point if we don't change our position, the Bloc doesn't change their position and the Liberals don't. That means we can actually get this meeting done quickly, if we want, in terms of getting two meetings done with two hours for the witnesses, and it would be at the beginning of the session.

I have a point with regard to that. Often we waste those first two meetings in that week on planning. We would then get that out of the way, so it is an advancement in time and effort. As well, we don't absorb House of Commons resources for maybe a week or two weeks in advance of Parliament coming back, taking people off of vacations and taking people away from their families. It also en-

sures that the House doesn't have to have encumbrance prices with regard to reinstating the committee.

I would appeal to the members here today that if they do actually want to get things wrapped up and get going on this very important matter.... I won't speak to the substance here or the motivations, but the reality of the math is that the Liberal amendment is a no go if we hold to the position right now and later on, the Conservatives would then have to put a little water in their wine, so to speak, by making sure that the committee does have to have the meetings and that they get to have the time they want. I think it's a good motion, but it won't happen until we get back, which is an advancement in time, because normally that time would be wasted as we start to plan.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Masse, for that clear intervention. I think a quick meeting is what we all hope for, so thank you very much, Mr. Masse, for laying it out so clearly.

Mr. Cooper.

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

With the greatest respect to Mr. Masse and Monsieur Villemure, I see no reason why between now and when the House comes back this committee can't allocate two meetings totalling four hours. I don't think that's much to ask.

It seems like some members would prefer to take a vacation or be in their ridings. I'd like to be in my riding as well, but this committee has important work to do in the face of a very damning report from the Ethics Commissioner with respect to the conduct of the former chair of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which is better known as the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund.

I just want to say, before I get into why time is of the essence, that I am astounded by the remarks by my friend Mr. Badawey and his characterization of Conservatives playing politics and how this is about political games. He said the Conservatives have been on some sort of diatribe—those were his words—over the past year.

What is he talking about? Has he not read the Auditor General's report, which found that \$400 million of taxpayers' money improperly went out the door? It found that \$330 million in taxpayer dollars was funnelled from the green slush fund into companies of board members—\$330 million. Of that, \$76 million went to companies of board members as they deliberated and voted at board meetings to funnel money into their own companies or companies they have interests in.

Those were the findings of the Auditor General. On top of that, there were 186 conflicts of interest, and he says that it's political games, that it's politics. I'll tell you what it is. It's Liberal corruption. He should be embarrassed to be part of a government that has, over the past nine years, resulted in a culture of corruption that starts at the top, starting with the Prime Minister, but has made its way through all aspects of this government, including this billion-dollar green slush fund, which one department official characterized as sponsorship-level corruption.

We now have a report from the Ethics Commissioner, who found that the former chair, who was hand-picked by none other than former industry minister Navdeep Bains—the Prime Minister's best pal—

Mr. Vance Badawey: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, what's the relevance?

• (1715)

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Badawey.

The same goes for Mr. Cooper. I was waiting for Mr. Brock to raise the point of order, but—

Mr. Vance Badawey: I'm sure he wasn't going to do that.

The Chair: As you can see—

Mr. Larry Brock: I view this entire intervention as being relevant.

The Chair: Yes. Well, as you can see, I give quite a bit of leeway, so I'll let you continue, Mr. Cooper, but let's try to...

I think we know where everyone stands, so we can probably proceed to votes fairly quickly and Mr. Perkins can catch his flight.

I'll yield the floor back to you.

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

Right now, I'm going to get into why it's important that we have these hearings. We have a report from the Ethics Commissioner, a damning report, which found that the Liberal-appointed former chair of the green slush fund broke the law, violated ethics laws by contravening on multiple occasions the Conflict of Interest Act.

More specifically, the report of the Ethics Commissioner found that the chair broke the law when she moved two motions at green slush fund board meetings which resulted in one of her companies, NRStor, receiving nearly \$220,000 in taxpayer money. That is a case of straight-up self-dealing, straight-up conflict of interest and straight-up corruption, and now she has been found guilty.

Given the report, it's important that we get to it to hear from the Ethics Commissioner and to hear from Ms. Verschuren. There is no reason why this should not happen for almost two months.

With respect to the Ethics Commissioner's report, it's also important to note it is narrow in scope, and it needs to be read alongside the damning Auditor General's report that was released in June.

With respect to Ms. Verschuren and the need for her to appear for at least two hours and why I think there is a need to hear from her sooner rather than later—and certainly not when we come back in two months—there is the fact that the Ethics Commissioner specifically looked at only two instances where she had what he determined was conduct that amounted to a conflict of interest when she moved those two motions that resulted in \$220,000 being funnelled to NRStor. When one reads the Auditor General's report, the Auditor General identified 20 additional conflicts involving Ms. Verschuren where she participated in and voted in favour of motions that resulted in monies being funnelled from the green slush fund to companies she has an interest in. Those additional 20 conflicts involve a further \$2,560,000, nearly \$2.6 million, that went to companies she has an interest in, in addition to the \$217,000 the Audi-

tor General identified and the Ethics Commissioner looked into, for which he found Ms. Verschuren guilty of violating the Conflict of Interest Act.

It seems to me that based upon the Auditor General's report, there may, in fact, be much more work for the Ethics Commissioner to do to investigate whether Ms. Verschuren contravened the Conflict of Interest Act multiple other times in 20 cases of conflict identified by the Auditor General. It underscores why we need to hear from Ms. Verschuren sooner rather than later. She needs to come before our committee, and she needs to address these 20 additional conflicts. Then, based upon on her testimony, additional steps can be taken, including referring the matter to the Ethics Commissioner to undertake a further investigation.

I have more to say, but I'll leave it there for now.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Brock, you're the last person I have on my list.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair.

I would be remiss if I didn't join the rest of my colleagues in offering congratulations as well, sir. You're in for the ride of your life.

I want to keep my comments brief. I understand I'm the last speaker on the list, unless someone raises their hand.

I've listened very carefully to everything my colleagues have said, and I want to underscore the importance of this being not only important and an issue that needs to be fully examined at this committee but also urgent.

As my colleague Mr. Cooper has alluded to, I share the same view that the Ethics Commissioner's report was narrowly focused. It underscores what we have heard by way of various reports in national media that the level of corruption with this Justin Trudeau government and how they misuse taxpayer money is merely the tip of the iceberg. There's not a day that goes by that I don't hear from followers on my social media who are thanking the opposition parties, particularly the Conservatives—and it's Conservatives, not “Cons”, to correct the characterization by Mr. Badawey—

• (1720)

Mr. Vance Badawey: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Just one second, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: A comment like that in the House would have been met with a strong rebuke from the Speaker of the House.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Relevance, Mr. Chair...?

The Chair: Mr. Brock, just one second. I have a point of order from MP Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: It's regarding relevance.

An hon. member: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] say that in the House.

Mr. Larry Brock: In reference to us as “Cons”?

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Badawey. I can't hear your point of order. I think the boom mic is not properly placed.

Mr. Vance Badawey: My point of order is on relevance, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I've ruled on this many times before. I give quite a bit of leeway. I've done that for you, MP Badawey, and I'll do the same for Mr. Brock. You can pursue this.

Just as a reminder, colleagues, we're on the subamendment. I think we know where every party stands. In the interest of time and efficiency, we could probably let this debate go to a vote at some point.

Mr. Brock, the floor is yours.

Mr. Larry Brock: Without further interventions from the Liberals, Mr. Chair, I'm sure I can finish my remarks in a minute to two minutes.

To get to my point, I hear constantly about the government misusing taxpayer money. The comments I receive on social media daily are, "Great. You've exposed the scandal, as you continue to do, but when are we going to get our money back?"

The Liberals have already passed a timeline in which to report to the House as to how they were going to recoup the monies with the arrive scam scandal. That deadline has long passed. It was in the month of June. It's close to \$60 million. We have close to a half a billion dollars of wasted money that went to the preferred interests of a chair hand-picked by Justin Trudeau, who should have known better and should not have relied upon the advice of a lawyer who was also conflicted. She should have obtained advice from an independent legal counsel. She did not. Given her business acumen, she should have taken the appropriate steps. She wilfully and deliberately chose to break the code of ethics as set out under that particular act. She was found guilty not once but twice. Now, this will be another debate for another time and perhaps in a different committee, but the penalty is \$500 per infraction, so \$1,000 for essentially stealing close to half a billion dollars.

This is what happens when you are closely connected to the Liberal Party of Canada, and more particularly when you're closely connected to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. You get rewarded with zero consequence.

On the issue of consequence, I hope the RCMP are following this meeting very carefully. I hope they have reviewed the Ethics Commissioner's report very carefully. I hope they review the Auditor General's report very carefully, because there's criminality involved here.

When Ms. Verschuren appeared before the ethics committee several months ago, I warned her point-blank at that point, without even getting into all the details that had been uncovered but just the stories that had come out in the national news about the breaches of the ethics rules and the conflicts of interest that were overlooked, that she should lawyer up. I advised her about the potential criminal charges involved in the actions she has taken—the breach of trust, the fraud, the potential forgery. All of these issues are live issues that need to be explored. We need to find out how deep the rot real-

ly is at SDTC and what that number really is in terms of governmental waste.

That is why we will support the motion brought by my colleague Mr. Perkins. We believe two meetings are appropriate, two hours each, for those two witnesses. There is a high degree of urgency here. It cannot wait until Parliament resumes in the middle of September. The public needs to know exactly what the true value is and what steps we will take as a committee to ensure accountability.

Mr. Chair, accountability and good governance do not and should not take a vacation.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

According to what the Liberals are saying, they agree that there have been some extremely serious breaches in the management of Sustainable Development Technology Canada by its chair and the members of its board of directors. They recognize that. The Bloc Québécois also recognizes that these are extremely serious ethical breaches. In fact, the Ethics Commissioner tabled his report, which is very clear on the matter. The Auditor General did the same thing in June.

Now we find ourselves in a dilemma as we are about to vote on a subamendment on which we do not agree at all, because Ms. Damoff proposed that we reduce this to a two-hour meeting with the Ethics Commissioner and the former chair of the fund, at one hour per witness. Mr. Villemure, from the Bloc Québécois, is proposing that we continue our vacation, no problem. We're suggesting two two-hour meetings, for a total of four hours.

I don't think it's too much to ask all parliamentarians to do this before the end of August, to shed light on the extraordinarily significant breaches of this fund. That's been proven and everyone agrees on that. No one is questioning that. It's therefore important that we vote as quickly as possible so that we can hold these meetings as soon as possible and get to the bottom of how this fund was managed, and how funds were wasted and provided to businesses with which members of the board of directors, including the chair, were associated.

I therefore call the question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Généreux, we still have members who want to speak. We have to wait until everyone has spoken before we go to the vote.

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've been listening to the debate for a while now, and sometimes people are using different words to say the same thing. We all agree that something needs to be done and that this is important, but we don't agree on how to get there. I'd just like to make a friendly suggestion, and my colleagues may or may not agree with me.

We'll be hearing from the Ethics Commissioner and Ms. Verschuren and, based on my Conservative colleague's comments, I understand that we have a lot of questions to ask him. My friendly suggestion would be to hold a three-hour meeting, with one hour for the commissioner and two hours for Ms. Verschuren. It's a friendly suggestion to satisfy all parties. Obviously, the meetings would still be held when we come back from vacation.

To answer the member for the Lower St. Lawrence, it's not a matter of being on vacation or not; it's a matter of having our constituents be more attentive to a very important matter. Holding these meetings now, during the summer holidays, would be tantamount to saying that we're going to act in secret. When Parliament resumes, we'll have everyone's attention.

I think we can agree on a three-hour meeting as I just proposed, with one hour for the commissioner and two hours for Ms. Verschuren.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

[English]

Madam Damoff.

• (1730)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

I always appreciate what Mr. Villemure brings to the table, and I also appreciate what Mr. Masse was saying about getting to this quickly.

I would ask for the unanimous consent of the committee to withdraw my subamendment and put forward what Mr. Villemure has suggested, which would be one hour with the Ethics Commissioner and two hours...so it would be a three-hour meeting—

The Chair: Ms. Damoff, we'll proceed step by step. I understand what you're trying to do. You're seeking UC to withdraw your subamendment.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's correct.

(Subamendment withdrawn)

The Chair: You still have the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I would put forward then, Chair, that we subamend Mr. Villemure's amendment to have one three-hour meeting, which would mean one hour with the Ethics Commissioner, and I don't think the other part needs to be amended, because it already says two hours.

It would just be one three-hour meeting. Amend it to one hour with the Ethics Commissioner, instead of two hours. It would remain a meeting in September.

The Chair: Thank you.

We've all heard what MP Damoff is proposing to amend the amendment by MP Villemure to have one three-hour meeting. Basically, it will be one hour with the Ethics Commissioner and two hours with Ms. Verschuren.

I see no more speakers, which I'm quite happy about. We can now proceed to a vote on the subamendment. If it's all clear, we are

voting on the subamendment proposed by MP Damoff to Mr. Villemure's amendment.

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

The Chair: This brings us back to the amendment to the motion. The amendment proposed by Mr. Villemure essentially puts this three-hour meeting on SDTC as the first item of business when we come back in September. I see no speakers, so I would like....

Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: There's been a lot of discussion since I introduced the original motion. I'll just briefly say, without repeating everything that's been said by my colleagues, that the lack of urgency on this large corruption scandal is appalling to me.

Every time there's a report, whether it's the investigations by various parliamentary committees, whether it's new documents produced by the whistle-blowers or whether it's the then new testimony from the former president of SDTC, who declared a number of shocking things about the way the board operated.... Then we had the incredible Auditor General's report finding of almost \$400 million misappropriated. Every time there's an investigation, now from the Ethics Commissioner, we uncover a deeper and deeper and deeper level of conflict of interest self-dealing and, frankly, feathering their own nests for their financial interest in the nine Liberal directors appointed by the Liberals that were outlined in the Auditor General's report.

The minister, who cares so much about this, unfroze the funds. The fund, the slush fund, is now open again. The only difference is that they've moved the slush fund to another group headed by a bunch of former retired bureaucrats, which, in their testimony before this committee, or before another committee, gave zero confidence that they had any ability or idea of how to stop this corruption that's gone on, or that there will be any new processes.

There should not be any spending in this fund going on right now. It shouldn't be happening until all of these reports are delved into and we have more shocking testimony. We need to get on this, because what's happening is that as the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP don't want to bother doing this for another month and a half to two months, the money of taxpayers is going out the door to these same companies, in all likelihood, in stage three, stage four or whatever. Former Liberal directors now are still benefiting from their insider job of being on this committee.

I know that everybody has lots of other things to do. We all do. But I don't think there's anything more important than dealing with the fact that this is 10 times the size of the sponsorship scandal during the Chrétien Liberal government. That was \$42 million. This is almost \$400 million so far on every investigation, and every time there is a report the number grows.

It's shocking to me that members of Parliament in this committee think that this isn't of the greatest urgency to delve into now with the Ethics Commissioner and that we can wait until the House comes back in September and maybe spare a single meeting. We'll spare a single meeting when \$400 million and growing of taxpayer money has gone to conflicts of interest and has been spent illegally, according to the Auditor General, outside the terms granted to the green slush fund. There isn't a sense of urgency in people here to stop this, fix it and get to the bottom of it. They want to wait until the middle of September to give one whole meeting to it.

Come on, guys. This is why we opposed the amendments to the meetings. It was because of our desire as Conservatives. Why are we having an emergency meeting today? We're having an emergency meeting today because we put forward a request to have these urgent meetings. It was because of the Ethics Commissioner's report that came out last week. I thought the Bloc and the NDP thought it was also urgent, because they co-signed the letter, but now, apparently, they come to the meeting and it's not urgent: It can wait.

I would urge members to reconsider their change of heart, that's happened in this meeting, that supports the Liberals in their hiding and covering up the corruption in the green slush fund, because that's what it is. More delay is more cover-up. If you vote for this amendment, in my view you're voting to continue the Liberal cover-up in the green slush fund.

• (1735)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to speak to this, especially after that intervention, which is rather unfortunate because the Conservatives actually talked themselves out of one meeting that they would have had earlier had they actually moved appropriately on this.

First of all, I want to acknowledge that what we're talking about here specifically, when you do the math, which has always been the Conservatives' mortal enemy, is there are actually nine business days as the difference here, because if we can't get the witnesses in the next four weeks, the time between that time period ending and when we resume our responsibilities back here in the House on the Monday is nine business days. That's what we're talking about as the difference here.

I think it's pretty rich to come here and then chastise us and the Bloc for agreeing to have a meeting to sit down with responsibility and in earnest to try to find a path forward like we promised. When we dealt with this issue last in Parliament, we promised that we would return to this once we got the reports, and we did so immediately. When I was contacted, I came over here right away. Just because the Conservatives are insisting on spending tens of thousands of dollars to have this nine business days in advance, and they are trying to chastise us and the Bloc for trying to make Parliament work, that's terribly unfortunate, especially given the fact that these members also filibustered days of this committee in the last Parliament. For all their sanctimony about having to get to this right away, we could have been doing this work in the last Parliament,

but what we had in the last Parliament was the Conservatives filibustering on auto files and other things like that and chewing up this committee and chewing up other committees on a regular basis, and not just on an individual aspect here, but submitting multiple motions in multiple places and multiple times. They did so consistently.

If we want to talk about scandals, I've been around here long enough to see a lot of scandals. I could list a whole series of them here. There have been Liberal scandals on certain things, but there were also the Harper administration scandals on everything from electoral fraud to the whole series of different interventions when it came to Airbus and former prime minister Brian Mulroney. I could go on and on. We could speak to the relevance of all those different things, but at the same time we want to get to the subject matter here. That's why we sat down here.

The request that we have in front of us to have the two meetings in this time frame was a little bit optimistic in trying to guarantee that we can get two independent witnesses, that we can get prepared, that we can get the House of Commons resources to restart. At the same time, we're looking at basically a week and a half's difference of when it can take place.

I don't think it's very unreasonable, and I don't think the Bloc is playing games on this. I think they came to this meeting prepared to find a solution with an alternative. I've been in discussions with different people, and to be publicly chastised by the Conservatives to come here and then have them say we're in cahoots in trying to stop accountability is wrong for every single time we've agreed to have these meetings. I won't let that stand on the public record, because the public record shows that we've been pushing this issue even when I couldn't get the things that I wanted for the workers.

When we talk about the workers here, the Conservatives have not put forward anything on the whistle-blowers. When we had testimony the last time we were here, not a single one of the organizations even mentioned the families and the whistle-blowers. On that, I tried to work to get an amendment in the House of Commons on one of the official opposition day motions, but it was worded in a way that wouldn't allow for that. It was nobody's fault; it was just the way that it was, but we have families of these members. They just basically talk about the Liberals and the scandals and so forth and try to tar them with that, but what about all the workers who had to leave their jobs and had to sign non-disclosure clauses that still haven't been dealt with today? What about the workers who couldn't carry their pensions over and had to cash out? What about the workers who had to find different types of employment, and then the new system they have in place still didn't give them the ultimate protection that I want, which is full public service protection as whistle-blowers? We have all of those issues there.

Mr. Chair, I take offence to the characterization that this committee is not working. I take offence to the characterization that the NDP and the Bloc are playing games with this when we came here to do the proper work and do the right thing. Over a few business days, they want to cheapen this entire process, which is entirely significant. Even if we actually had those things take place and we did it within their time frame, do you know what would happen? We wouldn't be able to do anything as a committee until the House resumes anyway. There's very little that we can do with regard to this until the House resumes. We can't bring it to the chamber, and we can't do any of the things that are necessary. Now we have a chance to prepare, get ready and do something that is actually meaningful. I think it's unfortunate that they characterize us as they have. I guess what the Conservatives want is to go back to a dysfunctional House of Commons. On an issue right here, when you look at it, even the Liberals have voted consistently to actually have hearings on this. Yes, there have been differences about how we approach it, who gets to come at certain times and what the amount of time is, but they are on the record, as well, as looking at this issue.

• (1740)

To do that as we warm up to get back here in September to do the hard work that's necessary, and to poison the well right away when there are sincere efforts to do so, well, fine. They'll get their moment of glory, their clips and all of those things they want, but at the same time, they will not get what they want at committee unless they actually co-operate and try to make sure that things are going to be done with sincerity, because that's the history of this committee.

I'm sticking with it, when I go back, to make this place work. If they want to come here and use these types of cheap tactics and games for serious issues, shame on them. Just because they didn't get a few days of business time that they could actually have.... It is whining, complaining, sad and irresponsible, and it shows a lack of class for a party that's supposed to be saying it's going to be the next government.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Masse.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Now that's a clip.

Well said, Brian.

The Chair: Mr. Perkins.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I appreciate what the NDP member has said, but let's be clear. Our original motion, as he's well aware, was to have the meeting within two weeks. To accommodate him, we provided some generosity by going with four weeks to get it in his schedule. It could happen in two weeks. I'm willing to have this meeting tomorrow, but the member has a busy schedule, as we all do. We're trying to accommodate that. It's totally incorrect to say that we weren't trying to accommodate that.

What the member has voted for, what the Liberals have voted for and what the Bloc has voted for is to turn two meetings, or four hours of hearings, into one meeting almost two months from now, and to cram it all together and then move on. You can disagree with that classification, but that's the change to our motion that the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals are supporting. That's what I oppose.

I'll leave it there, because I still believe this needs to be dealt with now, not some time in the distant future.

• (1745)

The Chair: MP Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Chair, I'm a bit taken aback by Mr. Masse's comments. He talked about nine business days' difference. What is he talking about? The motion the Conservatives put forward provides for two hearings, involving both the Ethics Commissioner and Ms. Verschuren, within the next two weeks.

This notion that there's nine business days' difference is simply not true. He says Conservatives have difficulty with math. It seems that he has difficulty with math, with the greatest respect.

He talks about being sad and irresponsible. I'll tell you what is sad and irresponsible: the fact that the NDP takes its orders from its boss, named Justin Trudeau.

Ms. Pam Damoff: On a point of order, the motion I was sent, which Mr. Perkins submitted, clearly says "four weeks". I don't know what Mr. Cooper is talking about, but Mr. Perkins' motion says "four weeks", which takes us to August 28. If you add up the days, it is, in fact, nine days.

I know the Conservatives like to deal in misinformation, but let's stick with the facts. The motion clearly says "four weeks".

Mr. Michael Cooper: No.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Damoff, for your point of order. I tend to agree. Looking at the calendar, it calls for four weeks.

Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Michael Cooper: No. Very simply, we could have been meeting next week if the Conservatives' motion had passed. We could have been meeting the following week—

Mr. Brian Masse: On a point of order, I just want to make sure.... He's just agreed with the motion again. Maybe we can get clarification. He insisted that it was two weeks, when it's not two weeks, but four weeks. I hope the member can at least—

Mr. Rick Perkins: It's "within four weeks", not in four weeks.

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes. It's "within four weeks", so it could happen at the end of the four weeks. We're not talking about two weeks.

Mr. Rick Perkins: It could happen tomorrow.

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes, but it won't. If you put it ending in four weeks, it means you're actually willing to do it within four weeks.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: It's not tomorrow, because you want to go back to your event.

The Chair: The reality is that "within four weeks" allows the chair and the clerk to invite witnesses. The chances of it happening tomorrow are very slim.

Mr. Cooper, the floor is yours.

Mr. Michael Cooper: We wanted it to be within two week". That's what we initially wanted. We were prepared to provide for within four weeks, but it certainly means that the committee could be at work. This notion that it's nine days is nonsense.

What is sad and irresponsible is that the NDP take their marching orders from Justin Trudeau. Here you have \$400 million that improperly went out the door, including \$330 million to companies in which Liberal insiders padded their pockets. What are the NDP doing? They're doing the bidding of the Liberals. They're doing the bidding of Justin Trudeau to delay hearings and to delay the ability of this committee to do its work—to hold a lawbreaker, Ms. Verschuren, accountable; to get answers about the 20 additional conflicts that the Auditor General identified and that perhaps the Ethics Commissioner ought to start looking into; and to see that taxpayers get a refund, that taxpayers get their money back.

The current Minister of Industry, who professes to be so concerned about this scandal, did nothing. He did absolutely nothing as his assistant deputy minister sat in on each and every meeting, in which there were 186 conflicts, until it hit the media. Then he said, oh, well, I'm now concerned. Then, in the face of the Auditor General's report, what does he do? He starts releasing funds back to the very same corrupt Liberal insiders. It's a total and complete racket.

It's disappointing that Mr. Masse is going along with the Liberals to delay the work of this committee, which could be meeting as early as next week to, as a starting point, hear from the Auditor General.

Mr. Chair, it's very disappointing.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Cooper.

I have Brian Masse, René Villemure and MP Brock.

Mr. Masse.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to reconfirm what we are actually doing here. It's the "within four weeks" and the difference between then and when we could go. I would be interested to know the procedural tactics that would be employed to actually get the Ethics Commissioner or somebody else here tomorrow, with less than a few hours' notice. It's almost sad to hear as an argument, because I think the member is better than that, suggesting that we can somehow have the power to do that, especially given the fact that we had to actually assign this as a special meeting. I don't know how we would subpoena somebody within a matter of hours or days for that. Why we would do that to a commissioner of the Crown who reports to all of Parliament and who has been co-operative in doing their job related to this seems rather abusive, that's for sure.

If we want to talk about scandals, if the Conservatives want to do that, I have a whole list here. We have the Nadon issue. We have the illegal transfer of funds. We have the Phoenix pay system. I could go on for hours and hours and hours, because I lived those Harper scandals. We have Dean Del Mastro. We have others of electoral fraud from the east coast in particular. We have a whole series of different things.

Again, this is something that we want to get to, and I think we're being responsible in doing so. To then be attacked for it is unfortunate, because I think it just cheapens the entire issue. I'm rather stunned in some respects that there wasn't an interest to actually cooperate to get what they could have achieved. I guess maybe they're having a tantrum right now, because they came into the meeting with probably a stronger position. What they're getting now is because they played their hand so poorly. That's the end result, at the end of the day.

There were actually two meetings with two hours. That was agreeable. I spoke to it at the beginning of my intervention, suggesting that I wouldn't reduce the time for the other request. Then we went to another attempt to have a sincere approach to getting this committee moving and getting things done, which was offered by the Bloc. That's where we landed and where hopefully we'll land here today and move on. If not, if we don't get this done in the next few minutes with regard to this, then I guess we have to call another meeting—or do we extend? I'm not sure of the procedure for that, but that's where we could end up, if that's where the members want to go, and continue the process.

• (1750)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse. We still have resources, I believe, until 6:40, more or less.

Just as a reminder, colleagues, we're still on the amendment. I thought we were about to get this meeting over with, but we're still on the amendment by Mr. Villemure, as subamended by MP Damoff.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to try to calm things down so that we can turn bad faith into good faith.

We all agree that something has to be done and that it's important. What we don't agree on is when to act. My friends in the official opposition can block any proposal, but I urge them not to filibuster.

No one is saying we shouldn't hold these meetings, or that they're not important. We're simply suggesting that they be held when our constituents will be more attuned to them. This is no time to create sound bites by trying to make them look like the bad guys. This is too important, and we all agree that something needs to be done.

So I urge all my colleagues to take a deep breath, show some wisdom and accept the proposed amendment.

The Chair: Thank you for that comment, Mr. Villemure.

Mr. Brock, you have the floor.

[English]

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

To address Mr. Villemure's latest comments about the utility of a meeting when Parliament resumes, because presumably people are paying more attention, they really belittle the issue that's before this committee right now.

We have an explosive scandal that is some seven times the size of the ArriveCAN scandal, which I still get commentary on and Canadians are still talking about. The government is doing nothing to try to recoup the lost tens of millions of dollars.

Now we have a scandal that is, according to the deputy minister for industry, akin to the sponsorship scandal at close to half a billion dollars. If that doesn't cry out for some degree of urgency, I don't know what does. In my view, it certainly attracts the attention of Canadians. Yes, most Canadians are on holiday right now, but Canadians could be on holiday throughout the entire year.

This scandal strikes at the core of good governance. What we have right now is a failed Liberal government that simply disregards the interests of the taxpayer time after time after time. I've lost track of how many active RCMP investigations are currently under way with respect to the actions of this government, so I find it appalling, quite frankly, when my NDP colleague Mr. Masse displays his anger and disgust at our wanting to insist on an earlier meeting.

The wording of our motion was abundantly clear. It wasn't "after four weeks". It was "within four weeks". We are here in Ottawa today. We are here to press upon our colleagues and press upon the chair that this matter is of some urgency and it needs to be addressed.

Yes, I, too, would like to be back in my community. I've missed two very important events in my community. I'm missing events with my family right now.

The nice thing about our roles as politicians is that we are politicians for the entire year. Our work doesn't end in the middle of June and resume again in September. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can fulfill our obligations on this committee to ensure that taxpayers are receiving good value for their money, hold the government to account and be there for our communities as well.

Therefore, I take offence to some of the comments made by Mr. Masse. We are not playing games here. We all want to get to the heart of the matter. We want to shed true light on this scandal to find out what exactly has transpired over the last three years with SDTC, and how taxpayers can expect to receive some portion of that money back.

• (1755)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Masse, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll respond when my name is brought up.

I'm sorry that Mr. Brock finds it offensive, but Mr. Brock wasn't here when his colleagues filibustered this committee for hours and days and prevented us from getting to this issue and other things that were on the table. That's on the public record, and it was done within the House of Commons' time.

Yes, what we're discussing here is within the four weeks, which is what the request was. After that, if it is at the end of those four weeks, there will be only a few business days left before starting. This will be the first time, I believe, in my 18 years here at this committee that we will have business on the first day. In my 23 years in Parliament, this will be the first time we will deploy this committee to have meetings of substance immediately. That has never happened before. It might be the first time in the history of this committee.

I'm sorry that Mr. Brock is disappointed by that, but at the same time, when you're looking at trying to get public servants to come forward to do this properly and continue the studies that we have, why would we then try to force something to happen in the short term and re-employ everything right now versus in the few days that will be left over, when we could have this, we could start again and we could do it properly? We'll also have access to all of the features of the House of Commons to deal with it, which is going to be important because we're going to have an officer of Parliament here who's responsible to all of Parliament, not just this committee. We're also going to be able to provide enough time and a place to get a response from Ms. Verschuren. I can't remember if it was her or someone else we were close to having to subpoena to get them to this committee.

Given that we have those obstacles practically in front of us, that is one of the reasons I still believe it was reasonable to come here today to lay out our meeting. If we don't get this done today, then we will have to have another meeting or plan for that first meeting when we come back if we don't pass this.

I thought that was a decent compromise for everybody. It was a guarantee that this was going to happen. The full thing that we could have done today—and we still can—was to guarantee that when we resumed this House we would have gotten to an issue where there had been all-party support in many respects. There would have been different shades of it, but it would have still been there, and we could have made it happen right away and we could have had the full resources of the House.

I'll keep responding if we want to and if people are disappointed in me, because I'm not going to let it stand that we didn't come here and that we haven't been responsible. In fact, we've been consistently calling for further supports for this, including for the whistle-blowers. What I'll be looking for when we return is how we're actually going to make improvements for them.

I've had motions in the past that dealt with their situations, and I'll raise those on a continuing basis and try to employ opportunities for them to be heard as well.

This was a start, and I didn't even raise that component to add it here because I wanted to make sure we were going to get those meetings done right away. We're going to be able to hear from them in the meantime. They're going to hear this. Whether they're going to be interested in participating.... I have been in touch with a couple of them to hear what they're thinking. They're seeing what's going on here today. I'm going to be focusing on that and letting them get prepared to see what's going to happen. Those are the families of the people who, at the end of the day, we need to protect. Those are the people I'm most interested in, as well, because they've been left out there. They will get an opportunity now to see what has happened today, to see what's on the public record, to prepare themselves and to see what we're going to do as a committee. If they want to come forward at some point in time, I'll be proposing an opportunity to do so, but I want to make sure they are protected and they have the opportunity to do that.

• (1800)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse.

Mr. Perkins, you have the floor.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thanks.

MP Masse is not the only one who's been in contact with whistle-blowers. I've had a lot of conversations with them since this became an issue and they went public on it after their unsatisfactory response from the government. In fact, we've had them in. On the subpoena you referred to, I don't know if it was in this committee or another committee that we were doing that.

Just to be clear, I will reiterate that we've had great conversations to try to get to today. As some of the members know, or at least the opposition members, our original proposal was for two weeks. In the spirit of compromise, we said, well, let's give the clerk and the committee a little more time, but be somewhere in there. It could happen next week. It could happen two weeks from now. It would provide a little more flexibility, also given the schedule of some members, to allow that to happen. Through that process, we've now gotten to a position where two meetings for four hours have been put down to one meeting and been pushed off.

I think there was a lot of compromise going on before we got to this meeting to try to accommodate everyone, so for anyone to suggest that I or anyone else played political games.... I think the political games have gone on here. Amendments that were proposed were contrary to the conversations we had before that with the parties in the opposition about what would happen. All of a sudden, on both sides of the opposition table in terms of the other parties, contradictions have happened here in the committee.

I'm just pointing out that I'm more than willing to prepare and do all those compromises and work on that stuff together beforehand in the meetings as we do, but only if people live by those things when they come to this meeting. They don't seem to do that. It happened here through supporting amendments to my motion that are contrary to the compromise motion we agreed to.

If you want to air dirty laundry in public, we can air dirty laundry in public. I don't want to do that.

• (1805)

Mr. Brian Masse: You've got a text right here saying the Bloc supports your motion.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Well, I'm just going by what you're telling me. If you want to get the floor, you can get the floor. I know you'll put your hand up, MP Masse. If you want to start doing that stuff in public, we can, but you're the one who raised it in public and said that those...and flipped on some of the things we talked about. I don't appreciate that you are denying the conversations we had.

Anyway, at the end of the day, this isn't about you and it isn't about me. It's about the corruption that's gone on here and trying to get to the bottom of this in a timely manner. That was the simple request. It was to get to this in a timely manner. The timely manner is not two months from now when we have it before us now. The extra time was just to allow a little more flexibility than my original two weeks.

Some of the government members, but not all, have recognized that there is a problem here. Some members have said even today that there's a problem and they're willing to do it. Others have made different comments.

At the end of the day, our first business back, as I understand it, was not a steering committee or business meeting. It was the continuation of clause-by-clause on Bill C-27, the privacy bill. That's already on the schedule. I'm not sure what filibusters were referred to, because we had 21 hearings on Bill C-27, followed by 10 meetings so far on clause-by-clause on Bill C-27, which was where we were at the end of the day, and a bit of time on the NDP leader's private member's bill that had to be dealt with by this committee.

With that list since last fall, I haven't seen filibustering in this committee, except for the last five meetings on clause-by-clause, where the Liberals basically continued to talk about one amendment through five meetings. Maybe it's the Liberals you're referring to about the filibustering that was going on in committee, but it wasn't us over those 21 meetings, plus the six meetings for MP Singh's bill.

I'll leave it there.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Seeing no further debate, we will proceed to a vote on Mr. Ville-mure's amendment, as amended by Ms. Damoff's subamendment.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: We will now go to the vote on the motion as amended.

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Can you read the motion again?

The Chair: To recap, with the amendment by Mr. Villemure, the first item of business when we resume in September will be a three-hour meeting, with one hour with the Ethics Commissioner and two hours with Annette Verschuren. That is essentially the motion we're voting on as amended.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead with the vote, Madam Clerk.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

• (1810)

[*English*]

The Chair: That's amazing, colleagues. The motion is adopted, which was the only item of business we had today for this committee.

It's been a great pleasure to see you all, and I can't wait to see you back in the fall.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Have a great summer, everyone.

This meeting is adjourned.

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