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# Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

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Chair: Mr. Joël Lightbound





## Standing Committee on Industry and Technology

Thursday, November 28, 2024

• (0820)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.)):** Good morning, everyone.

[*Translation*]

I call this meeting to order.

[*English*]

Welcome to meeting number 148 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

Before I begin, I'd like to ask all members to take notice of the little card that's right before them, so as to prevent audio feedback incidents.

[*Translation*]

It is a question of health and safety for everyone, especially for the interpreters.

Pursuant to the motion adopted on November 7, 2024, the committee is resuming its study of the Examination of Telecommunication Companies Service Contract Practices.

Today we are pleased to welcome by video conference from Rogers Communications Inc., Mr. Bret Leech, president, residential.

Before anything else, I know Mr. Masse and Mr. Perkins have something to say.

Please go ahead, Mr. Masse.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the committee members and the witness for being here.

What is taking place today is not consistent with my original motion, which was passed at this committee. With that, I have a notice of motion that I would like to pass. I'd like to get a discussion going right away, because it's consistent with what was originally decided upon.

Second, I think it's germane to what takes place at this meeting thereafter.

I have submitted the motion and would like to read it into the record. It reads:

That, consistent with the motion passed by this committee on Monday, October 28, 2024, the committee invite, and if this invitation is not accepted, summons, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1), Rogers Communications Inc. Chief Executive Officer Tony Staffieri to appear before the committee for a minimum of two hours by December 12, 2024.

With that, I've built the motion so that it can actually drop the component from “invite” to “accepted” and just go directly to “summons”.

I'd like to be able to speak to this motion, briefly, in the sense that we requested a specific course of action to be taken, and we passed that in this committee. Subsequently there was an alteration to it.

However, now we have Mr. Leech in front of us, who was not invited to this meeting and is a substitute at the very last moment. That is unacceptable, in my opinion, not only to this committee, but I think also to Canadians and consumers. I think it's part of a play on the committee and avoiding accountability.

The date that we originally passed, actually—if you remember, Mr. Chair—was for last month. However, we gave exceptional time and leverage to Rogers Communications to choose a date, which they did, so that the CEO could be here for the practices of hidden billing that are taking place and have been identified as a real concern among Canadians. At the last minute they did a rope-a-dope on this committee. They switched out the witness, and today I really don't have much interest in questioning Mr. Leech.

What I have an interest in is having the CEO here, as I originally proposed and as was passed by this committee.

With that, I would like us to move into that discussion and to see if we can get consensus, because I don't believe today's meeting is going to be very worthwhile at all with regard to the objective that was originally sought in my motion, which was passed by this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

I have MP Rempel Garner and then MP Perkins on my list, or however you want to decide.

Just to give you a bit of context, colleagues, and although we appreciate you, Mr. Leech, taking the time and joining us this morning, we did accommodate for a slightly longer time frame so as to have Mr. Staffieri appear before the committee, and we extended what was originally planned in the motion.

It is my understanding, as chair, that we had a firm agreement that Mr. Staffieri would appear before this committee today to discuss the matter at hand, and it's important.

Changes were made at the last minute, indeed, and this is an opportunity to answer to Canadians, through the members of the committee. That is the context of this motion as I understand it.

I will now yield the floor to MP Rempel Garner.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Would it be possible for Mr. Perkins and me to switch our speaking slots?

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

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

Thank you, Mr. Masse, for moving forward. Your original study and motion got this important thing to go forward, and I want to reiterate that this is the third time we've been stiffed by Mr. Staffieri. We invited him in January and February. He refused and sent underlings, and then, when I tabled a summons motion 48 hours before that appearance, he decided to come. We did it a second time in February. There was another appearance and, again, he sent underlings and didn't come.

The third time is this one. I think it's unacceptable that Mr. Staffieri thinks it's more important to do whatever it is he's doing than to be accountable to Parliament for the company that he is the CEO of.

However, some committee members and I are not perhaps as gentle as MP Masse, so I would propose the following amendment to Mr. Masse's motion, which is to delete everything after "the committee". The motion currently reads:

That, consistent with the motion passed by this committee on Monday October 28, 2024, the committee

I would delete everything after that and replace it with:

summons...Rogers Communications Inc. Chief Executive Officer Tony Staffieri and the Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Navdeep Bains, to appear before the committee, for a minimum of two hours, within seven days following the adoption of this motion;

That, should the witnesses refuse to appear within seven days, the committee make the following interim report to the House:

"Your committee wishes to admonish Rogers Communications Chief Executive Officer Tony Staffieri for failing to make himself available to the committee, despite being invited by the committee on October 28, 2024, then later summoned on November 28, 2024, and the committee insists that this witness-in-hiding appear before the committee for two hours before the House recess for the Christmas break."

● (0825)

**The Chair:** This is a lengthy amendment. Is it possible to send it around? It's basically the text of the motion you had prepared, Mr. Perkins, so perhaps we can distribute that, and members will see what you are trying to do.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Yes, and it comes in after Mr. Masse's one, which is a little different from the one that was put on notice.

**The Chair:** I'll just give a second for the clerk to distribute it.

Now I have, on the amendment proposed by MP Perkins—

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Just to finish on that....

**The Chair:** Yes, of course.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** The reason, obviously, is this: If this happens once.... Perhaps within a two-week period, the CEO of one of Canada's largest companies might not be able to find the time to get on the private jet and fly here, but this is not fool me once, fine, fool me twice.... It's a habit. It is a habit of this CEO to not want to be accountable to Parliament, and I've had enough.

It's disrespectful to our democratic process. He does not think much of our democratic process, and I can understand why he doesn't think much, because we try to hold them to account for these outrageous things like jacking up the price of a rental box for your Wi-Fi or your cable by \$7 a month when you have a fixed-rate contract. I understand that, and it's no offence to our witness here, who probably runs the business as his executive team wants him to. They gouge customers on fine print, but Mr. Staffieri is ultimately the guy who's accountable to the board. If he's not willing to come, I think maybe we'll summon Edward Rogers next, if the habit of this company to defy Parliament continues.

They are, by the way, the most expensive cell company in the world. I know that I don't have to tell Canadians that; they know that. If you don't believe me, believe the international comparison study that's about 800 pages of cell phone companies around the world, called Rewheel. We have copies of it on our side. We could probably get one from the industry department for some other folks if they wanted it.

It's quite damning that, on every package size with every cell phone company in the world, Rogers continues to consistently be the most expensive. I guess that's perhaps why, if that's not bad enough on their rates, they bury in the fine print other unlimited charges that they can jack up.

When some customer signs a fixed-rate contract, they usually think that means a fixed rate for two years. If you're going to pay \$100 for your cell phone with all the bells and whistles, about twice what you would pay in the U.S., you think somehow that fee won't change during the two years, or that, when you pick your bundled package with your cable box, that's on a fixed rate. That's how they're marketed. They're marketed as a fixed rate. You know, we'll give you this great deal. Put all this together, bundle it together, and this is what you're going to pay every month.

However, if you're a Rogers customer, apparently you have to read the 42 pages of fine print they send you in the email contract, because they don't print out paper ones anymore when you go in their store. Buried in that are the escape valves.

Mr. Staffieri has to be held accountable for this. He has to stop thumbing his nose at Parliament, and he has to come here and be accountable for the actions of the company he leads.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

Ms. Rempel Garner, you now have the floor.

[English]

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll speak in support of this amendment.

Colleagues, the situation we have in front of us today is the third time the CEO of a company that receives significant benefit from the Canadian government through tax incentives and direct contributions, as well as a regulatory environment that makes it difficult for new entrants to come into the market, has thumbed his nose at this committee.

I think what we are experiencing here is much like the service that Rogers provides to its customers, which we were going to investigate with the CEO today.

In my inbox—I'm sure in many of yours, as well, across party lines—I frequently receive complaints from our constituents specifically with regard to this company and its customer service. There's a feeling of helplessness and frustration. The behaviour of the CEO toward parliamentarians in a committee that has a mandate to oversee at least part of the regulations and the regulatory environment that it operates in is just....

They think we're stupid, colleagues. They really do.

Mr. Chair, I'll direct my comments, perhaps, to the GR and legal teams watching this from Rogers.

I cannot believe they did this. Did they really think there would be no consequence to telling us that their CEO couldn't come? Actually think about this. Those people actually said, "No, no. This committee doesn't matter."

I want to be very clear to those people. There is a desire to ensure that there is competitiveness in this particular area. I have had concerns about this particular company since the government approved its merger with Shaw.

The CEO has just blown us off three times, like he blows off his consumers on a regular basis. I'll put it this way: It has been noticed, and it has been noticed by my party. Certainly, my colleagues and I are thinking about how we would approach the regulatory environment, should we at some point in the future form government.

Being blown off at the last minute by the CEO makes one want to reciprocate that behaviour, doesn't it? However, that's not how Parliament should function.

Mr. Perkins' amendment—and I'm talking to my colleagues from the Bloc and the NDP, particularly—says that if he doesn't come by this date, we are essentially going to admonish him in Parliament. That type of escalation, given that he's blown this committee off three times, I think is warranted at this point. This committee needs to send a message to Canadian consumers that we're on their side, not on the side of the CEO. We're done with this obfuscation.

I feel that if we don't accept that amendment today and we don't say we're prepared to escalate, we're essentially like Lucy holding the football with Charlie Brown. I appreciate that I'm aging myself with that reference, but that's really what we're doing here. We need to send a message to this company that we're done.

Again, Chair, through you to the GR and legal teams, I am done with this. I cannot believe they wasted my time today, and now we're wasting committee time because they did this to me. That says they don't respect me as a parliamentarian, and that's something I'll remember when they try to get meetings with us and come up to us at events and say, "Oh, hey, girl. How's it going? Haven't seen you in a while." Well, I haven't seen them in a while.

If you don't have the ability to respect the committee's time by doing what we say, why should we respect you? It's the same transaction with its customers and it's the feeling of frustration that its customers have with this company as well.

I wanted to put that on the record, Chair. I want to ask my colleagues, particularly the NDP and the Bloc, to consider this amendment, because it is a justified escalation.

Here's my rationale. I fully expect the CEO to blow us off again. I don't have a lot of.... He will blow us off again, so we're going to have to spend more taxpayer dollars and more committee time moving Mr. Perkins' motion again in the future.

• (0830)

I would suggest that we send a strong message today and say we're done with them wasting our time.

This could have been an opportunity for the Rogers CEO to put a positive message forward, but here we are. It could have been. There was no intent to be hostile here. It was more like, "Why are you doing this?"

His blowing us off three times says he does not respect this committee; he does not respect Parliament, and, frankly, he does not respect the government, so why should we respect him? We have to infer motive at this point in time because of the actions of this man. It's unbelievable.

Please support this amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Colleagues, on my list, I have MP Patzer, MP Masse, Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, Monsieur Généreux, Monsieur Arya and Monsieur Badawey.

Monsieur Patzer.

• (0835)

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's pretty wild to think that this is the third time we are here with the wrong guest before us and that this individual, Mr. Staffieri, thinks this is okay.

As Ms. Rempel Garner was saying, it gets back to respect for authority, respect for these institutions we have within Parliament, and respect for Canadians at the end of the day. It's respect for the person who is paying the bills so that this CEO has the ability to live the life he lives and take the salary he takes. This is the way he's going to treat his customer base, the rest of Canadians and Parliament.

It's disrespectful. I feel disrespected. I know my colleagues do. I can't even imagine how the individuals who have been caught off guard and surprised by the changes to their bills feel about this.

The fact is that this guy has been afforded the opportunity to come multiple times to committee and try to clarify or explain what's going on and what the business decision is. As a Blue Jays fan, I was hoping he would come to the committee and tell us they're trying to make a full-court press on Juan Soto, but I don't think that's the reason and the rationale for this. I think it's a completely different thing. It's just absolutely wild.

I used to work in telecoms. There was a point in time when the company I worked for sold people an item and then I had to go and set it up. I got there; I went through all the work; the person tried it out, and they said, "Well, this isn't working the way I was promised it would work." That was frustrating, as a person working on the ground, but the company took the initiative to try to be more transparent in the sales process and be really up front with the consumer by telling them, "Look, you've bought this. This is what you can potentially expect," because at the time, they were offering an "up to" service instead of a guaranteed rate service.

Being more transparent with consumers is what this boils down to when it comes to the original issue at hand, which is the cost of bilking people who are in a fixed-term contract for extra money every month without even telling them. Imagine the callousness of not even sending them a month's notice or whatever, saying their bills are going to go up by this much a month. There wasn't even advance notice.

Again, that is so disrespectful to the people who are paying those bills. They're the people who signed on the dotted line, thinking that for this much money, they were locking in and guaranteeing a price. To find out that's not the case is crazy. It's absolutely crazy.

I think this is absolutely appropriate, because the level of disrespect the CEO is showing to Parliament, to Canadians, to ratepayers and to this institution is unbelievable. The original motion that Mr. Masse put forward is good, and I think this amendment strengthens it. It's important that we vote in favour of this amendment. I look forward to doing so.

Thanks, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Patzer.

I have MP Masse.

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

Thanks to my colleagues, and thanks also to Mr. Perkins for putting forth his amendment. It is, I acknowledge, more involved than mine. I built mine simply to also get the piece about invitation right out of there. I had the suspicion that other members of this committee would be equally enraged with regard to how this has

been treated. I think Madam Michelle Rempel Garner mentioned the cost to Canadians of the delays and the cost to this committee—I should say to Parliament—but these practices also cost Canadians daily, and that's significant as well.

My original intent in trying to get at this issue was what was taking place.... It was well identified by the Rogers team, but it's a practice that is also partially used by other types of operators. I want to get to the issue, and that's why I wanted to follow up specifically on this.

With the amendment that's been proposed by Mr. Perkins, I really don't care to hear more excuses from Mr. Bains. I've been around here long enough, even with him as minister, to hear enough excuses on different things, and that doesn't really get to the issue and the decision-making. I think it's necessary.

It's clear that there's probably advice coming from Mr. Bains to the whole Rogers team on how to deal with Parliament and so forth. To be quite frank, I don't feel either way about that situation. I mean, we can have him here or not have him here. The reality for me is that I know what's going to happen. I'm going to hear a whole litany and inventory of excuses, and I just prefer to get to the source.

I agree, Mr. Perkins, that maybe we do need to talk to Edward Rogers at this point. I remember the Rogers family quite differently when I started in this place to where it's at right now. It used to be a Canadian icon with regard to building itself in radio telecommunications in particular. This weasel language that's now put in there is certainly very difficult for people to accept, especially when they're on fixed budgets and incomes and have expectations.

To go back to your amendment, I would like to test the waters to see whether or not we could just go right to the source of where we started with this, with Mr. Staffieri. As well, I just want to hear some clarification in terms of procedure about going to the Commons.

I have a copy of the original one that you sent in last night. This one that you're proposing here is a bit more involved, so I'm waiting to see if we're going to get a copy of that, but I'm open to those ideas.

Secondary to that, have that as an immediate backup if we want to report back to the House later on as well, and then, just a notation, maybe not at the end of Christmas but at the end of Parliament's scheduled sitting. I put in by December 12, but we could report any time before Parliament rises.

With that, those are my questions and concerns. I just want to point out, too, that we don't have unlimited time on this, so I'm hoping that we can get at least some consensus on your subamendment, Mr. Perkins.

I don't know where the Liberals are with this, but it's clear that, until we have him here—and this is what we were supposed to be here about—then we're treading water.

Again, I'll just complete with that and hear what other members are saying.

• (0840)

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Masse.

If I understand correctly, you're not suggesting a subamendment; you just want to float the idea of perhaps going back to the original motion, which was to invite Tony Staffieri. Also, maybe you had some issue with the delay. You're saying within seven days or perhaps December 12.

I understand that there's been maybe a mismatch between what we've received as paper copies here in the room and what you've gotten by email.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Could we suspend?

**The Chair:** That's not a bad idea. I think we'll suspend very briefly, just so that you get the proper information.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, I know you have something to say, but would you mind waiting a few moments? I want to make sure everyone has the same information.

[*English*]

The amendment proposed by Mr. Perkins will be sent, Mr. Masse, because I think there's been a mistake in what's been sent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Actually, it isn't about the amendment. I would also like to propose something, but it can wait until after the break.

Since it appears there are no questions for Mr. Leech, I suggest that we let him go, if everyone agrees. I'm sure he has other things to do.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Is there any objection to letting Mr. Leech go? I don't think we'll get to his testimony.

I see no....

Mr. Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I propose keeping Mr. Leech here, in case there isn't consensus on this.

I would specifically say that part of my amendment would be to remove Mr. Bains from it, but I don't really.... Again, I'm just trying to feel out the room here. At the end of the day, if we have to have Mr. Bains here, I'm okay with that too, but I would suggest that we keep the witness here so they can see exactly what they're doing.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I have a feeling that all of the people from Rogers who are watching will hang up.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

I'll use my discretion as chair. We have a full committee here, and we had an agreement that Mr. Staffieri would appear before this committee. This is a waste of MPs' time and the resources of the House. It's not to be taken lightly when you're supposed to be accountable to Canadians, through members of Parliament, and I think that's what's happened today.

I will err on your side, Mr. Masse, and say that if Mr. Leech can report back to Rogers what he's heard today, I think it's useful for him to be here.

• (0845)

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** On the same point, Mr. Chair, I'd prefer that the witness stay here so he can get the entire sentiment of this committee back to his CEO.

**The Chair:** I agree a hundred per cent.

That being said, we appreciate you being here.

I will briefly suspend, so that members can get the amendment proposed by Mr. Perkins. We'll come back in a minute.

The meeting is suspended.

• (0845)

(Pause)

• (0850)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

Colleagues, we are resuming the meeting.

It's my understanding, MP Masse, that you've received the motion. Basically, from what I understand, the amendment proposed by Mr. Perkins was that we keep the first sentence of your motion, but after "October 28, 2024, the committee", we go to "summons Rogers Communications Chief Executive Officer Tony Staffieri", and then the rest of the amendment reads per the motion Mr. Perkins gave notice of. I think that explains it.

I'll give you back the floor, Mr. Masse, because you had the floor when we suspended.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I appreciate the subamendment. My suggestion to the mover is to remove Mr. Bains from it. The rest is fine with me. I just don't want another distraction, to be quite frank, and that's really what I think it is. That's why I'd prefer to go back to where we started from.

I'll put that out there to try to find some consensus among all of us here on this. I'll leave it at that and see if Mr. Perkins is okay with it.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

Given that you're not in the room, I will read what you're suggesting as a subamendment, which is to remove Mr. Bains.

I'm reading the room, and I think there is consent to remove Navdeep Bains from the motion. I see no objection.

(Subamendment agreed to)

**The Chair:** That brings us to the amendment as amended by Mr. Masse.

I will go back to the list I had. We're on the amendment now. You know you're all good with the subamendment that was proposed.

[Translation]

Is everything clear, Mr. Savard-Tremblay? It is your turn to speak about the amendment as modified.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** So, if I understand correctly, Mr. Bains's name has been removed, but the remainder of the amendment is unchanged, whereby the committee reports to the House that it wishes to reprimand Mr. Staffieri.

**The Chair:** That's correct.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I agree with the amendment as modified, since I also agreed with the idea of removing Mr. Bains's name. As the former minister of industry, he is well known to this committee, and we know he tends to avoid answering questions. So I think it would really have been a waste of time if we had decided to invite him. Furthermore, if Mr. Staffieri decides that, as CEO, he doesn't have time to waste by testifying before mere MPs, it is on him that we have to maintain the pressure. That must not be diluted, of course. So, once again, I support the amendment as modified.

• (0855)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

Mr. G n reux, please go ahead.

**Mr. Bernard G n reux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivi re-du-Loup, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to add my two cents to what has already been said about the amendment as modified.

As Mr. Savard-Tremblay just said, in the eyes of the CEO of such a large company, we are probably just lowly MPs. The way democracy works in Canada, however, is that the people we represent, the people of Canada, also have a voice in the matter, and we are here to represent them. So for him to show a minimum of respect, he has to come and meet the members of the committee.

I would also like to point out that Pierre Karl P ladeau, the head of a large corporation in Quebec that is in the same industry as Rogers, appears before the committee every time he is invited. I have a lot of respect for that, even though he is an *ind pendantiste* and we are not at all in the same political family. At least he complies with the committee's requests and makes an appearance to explain his company's positions and talk about the services it offers its clients.

**The Chair:** Yes, I agree with what you said. I think Mr. P ladeau would appear before the committee every month if he could.

Mr. Arya, the floor is yours.

[English]

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chair, this is a very important discussion and an important motion brought by Mr. Perkins.

Canadians may not be aware that Rogers, Bell and Telus are not just ordinary Canadian companies. They are sort of protected and have been coddled for a long time. People may not know that, under Canadian law, any telecom company that has a market share of more than 10% has to have 80% Canadian ownership and 80% Canadian board members.

In 2012, the then government amended that so that telecom companies with less than 10% market share can have increased foreign ownership. That still left Rogers, Bell and Telus in control of this market, and Canadians are getting squeezed.

We have heard about pricing, but let me talk about the technical quality. We are in the capital of a G7 country, and here, my service provider has one bar.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Some of my colleagues are happy; they have two bars. That's great, lucky them. Okay, it's one bar.

Whenever we travel abroad, when we don't have telecom facilities, we go in search of Wi-Fi. Here in the national capital of a G7 country with only three providers, when we sometimes have to surf the net or look something up online, we have to go in search of Wi-Fi. This is unacceptable.

We are not talking about not getting quality access deep underground in parking garages; we're talking about a regular building. This parliamentary precinct is the heart of Canada's democracy.

The telecom companies have been too protected. This protection is outdated and harmful, with no competition. It stifles innovation.

With the changing global scenario in which international free trade is dead, all countries are adopting protectionist measures, so I don't know where to draw the line to protect domestic companies when these domestic companies abuse the protection measures provided to them. I don't what to do about it.



Maybe it's time to relax the foreign direct investment rule to allow trusted allies like the Five Eyes partners to bring in competition, so that they can invest in the telecom sector in Canada irrespective of the market share or whether they can buy out the existing firms or not.

My understanding is that it's the third time the CEO of Rogers is thumbing his nose at this committee. This committee is an important committee for industry. It is a committee for industry and technology. If he thinks that he has political connections that can prevent him from appearing before the committee, he is wrong.

If required, a summons should be issued, but I suggest that the motion says to submit an interim report. I think it's wrong to assume that he will not answer the summons.

Let's take the next logical step available to us. That is, we issue a summons if he refuses to appear next time. If he refuses then, we can take what steps are required next.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (0900)

**The Chair:** Mr. Arya, are you proposing a subamendment?

In the interest of clarity, the motion does read: "That, should the witnesses refuse to appear", then "report", just to be clear.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Again, Mr. Chair, he has refused to appear. Let's send him the summons. If he doesn't appear, then I think we should go ahead with this.

**The Chair:** This is a subamendment you're proposing, Mr. Arya.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** If that is the case, that is the subamendment I'm proposing.

**The Chair:** How would it read, then, if we look at the proposed amendment?

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** We have already adopted—

**The Chair:** The second part—"That, should the witness refuse to appear within seven days"—would be removed.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Mine is, "That, should the witnesses refuse to appear within seven days, the committee may issue a summons"... I'm sorry, it was not a summons. My thing is that he has refused....

I'm sorry; I think we should stop there.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I don't think that would be in order, because essentially what Mr. Arya is doing is trying to amend the motion back to its original form.

**The Chair:** I will disagree, because the original form called to "invite". What I understand from Mr. Arya, and he can correct me if I'm wrong, is that he's fine with the committee issuing a summons.

Mr. Arya, you just want to remove the second part, which is reporting to the House.

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** That's correct.

**The Chair:** I will reject that point of order. I think it's in order.

The subamendment that Mr. Arya is proposing would be that, basically, the motion would read: "That, consistent with the motion passed by this committee on Monday, October 28, 2024, the committee summons Rogers CEO Tony Staffieri, to appear before the committee for a minimum of two hours within seven days following the adoption of the motion."

That would be it. That's the subamendment proposed by Mr. Arya. I'll get back to the list once we've dealt with this. On the subamendment proposed by Mr. Arya, which is removing reporting to the House, I have Mr. Perkins and then MP Rempel Garner.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I thought MP Arya was bang on until he wrapped up his concluding paragraph, which was to neuter this. This individual, Staffieri, has stuffed and stonewalled this committee all year, three times. He has better things to do in his little office on Bloor Street than to come and be accountable to the people who represent all Canadians, and I've had enough. He needs to know the consequences of ignoring the summons again.

If he ignores it, he's going to be admonished and brought to the bar of the bloody House of Commons. I've had enough, and for the Liberals to go and say, oh no, let's give him a fourth chance, let's give him a fifth chance.... How many times do you have to be kicked in the you-know-what by this guy before you actually say you've had enough?

I've had enough. Yes, I'm bloody mad. I'm bloody mad that these guys are so contemptuous of Parliament that they're above it, earning their \$10 million to \$20 million a year; that they don't need to lower themselves to come here. The last time he was here, he lost his Zoom call, because he didn't have the guts to show up in person. And I dare him, when he's had a summons, to have the guts to show up here instead of sitting in his office in Toronto with his faulty Wi-Fi, which collapsed in the middle of the last time he was here. Thank God he had access to Bell's, I guess, because that's how he must have got back on the committee.

This is pathetic, and the fact that every member of Parliament and every Canadian isn't outraged at the arrogant nature of this individual, who refuses to be held accountable to Parliament, when Parliament gives him the spectrum that allows him to do what he does in overcharging Canadians. To remove this is, to me, the worst possible signal you could send to this individual.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Perkins. Let's be mindful of the tone and the words that we use with regard to Mr. Staffieri as well. I understand the frustration, but just please tread carefully, colleagues.

We have MP Rempel Garner.

• (0905)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** I agree with the need to have a punishment or an admonishment attached to this motion, for the following reasons.

I guarantee you that right now, the legal counsel and the GR team at Rogers are saying there's no penalty associated with avoiding a summons, so they're just going to blow it off again. I guarantee you that's what's happening. If you don't believe me, all you need to do is ask millions of Canadians.

I have someone who's very close to me who went for, I believe, three weeks without the Internet. They were on hold multiple times with Rogers, had multiple technicians come out and were charged multiple times. This is somebody who is a very intelligent and very determined person, but Rogers' customer service was essentially built on the principle that it doesn't need to do anything; it's going to go to the ends of whatever contractual or legal obligations it has and then try to violate them.

It does that with its customers, and now it's doing it with parliamentarians. Colleagues, if we do not have some sort of admonishment attached to this, I guarantee you that is what this company will do again with its CEO. He's blown us off three times.

Again, just to the company, I cannot believe the company has made me, as a parliamentarian, spend two hours debating this motion this morning. I am so furious that my time has been wasted in this way and that it thinks my time is worth nothing. I want to equate it back to its customer service level. If it's willing to make tens of millions of Canadians wait on hold for an endless amount of time for customer service, why should we expect anything less?

Colleagues, it's very important that we have that admonishment attached here, so that when Rogers' legal and GR teams go back and ask whether they should they put him in front of this committee or not, they have to at least weigh the corporate brand reputational damage of having a parliamentary admonishment to a company that heavily benefits from government intervention through regulation, direct subsidies and other incentives.

I really want to reject Mr. Arya's assertion. I think we have to escalate this. Going back to the motion as amended by Mr. Masse and Mr. Perkins, it works well. Let's get on with life.

I really hope this man apologizes to everybody on this committee. I would certainly love a personal apology from him for wasting my time, my staff's time and, frankly, the time of the 120,000 or so people I represent.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Arya, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I know that if the summons is not honoured, we can take the next step, but a summons carries much more weight than a plain invite.

I think we should give it its due. Otherwise, we are diluting it, and every time any committee issues a summons, we'll also have to attach the next threat that if the summons is not honoured, we are going to do this.

Let's issue the summons. If the management team at Rogers has slightly above average intelligence, it will understand the seriousness of it, and I think it will oblige. At least, that's my opinion. If it doesn't, obviously, we can take the next step.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Arya.

MP Masse.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I can't support the subamendment for a couple of reasons.

First of all, Rogers management team had no hesitation, like this committee is showing right now, when it decided to enact weasel words in clauses to increase the cost to consumers. You look at the response that's come from Rogers on this practice.

If you're a single mom who has to go to work, and you don't have two to three hours to be on the phone to try to get your bill corrected or lowered, or to have it live up to the original contract that you expected when you signed, or if English is your second language or you're a person with a disability... Their response to this has created a privileged system to reward those who can fight for their rights to get lower costs versus demographically challenged individuals who don't have the same luxury of time because they're not either semi-retired or fully retired and able to spend endless hours. Maybe they don't have consumer advocacy skills that can meet the professionally trained individuals on the other end of the phone.

With that said, I just want to move on. I think any time that we delay on this.... The seriousness of it is very significant, because it's a social justice issue to me as a New Democrat as much as it is a pocketbook issue for Canadians and consumers.

The failings of this are not just the cost of the box related to your personal contract. There's also the societal cost of pulling winners and losers out of Canadian citizens because of their skill sets related to how they can defend themselves and their families from these contractual arrangements. These contracts, which can be manipulated not only by what is put in fine print but also later on by phone, show how the fine print is measured and determined on your final bill. It's all wrong.

For all those reasons, I support Mr. Perkins' amendment to my original motion. I don't support this one that's being put forth, because it's this serious, and I want to move on. I don't want to be sending signals that we have some type of reservation about doing what we can do. Perhaps what we're suggesting here has to go even further, which I am prepared to do.

• (0910)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Masse.

We're still on the subamendment proposed by Mr. Arya.

Looking at my list, I have Jeremy Patzer.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would just say to Mr. Arya that I don't want to waste another meeting having to draft another motion to make another request for him to come to Parliament for an admonishment after the fact.

In other committees, we've already seen people ignore a summons to committee in this Parliament. It's been done, so I think we should show them what transparency looks like, and guess what? We have a motion, and here are the consequences if you don't show up. It's going to be an admonishment; you're going to be dragged to the bar in Parliament, and we're going to deal with this right then and there.

Maybe we could scribble it into some little fine print at the bottom of the motion so nobody will read it, and maybe that would work. We could do the same to them as they're doing to Canadians when it comes to jacking up prices on what is supposed to be their fixed contract. Maybe that would be a good way to go about it. I don't know.

To the points my colleagues have already made, there needs to be something written in here to show that there are consequences. It's good to go straight to the summons, but there needs to be something backing that up right behind it. I think we need to write a very strong, compelling motion that says that this committee and Parliament mean business. We're not something to be ignored or something to be pushed by the wayside. We take seriously what's going on, and there are consequences for the behaviour that we are seeing from the CEO of this company.

I think we should demonstrate to them what our intentions are, put it right here on paper and make it loud and clear, so that there is no misinterpreting and no confusion as to what we mean. We'll show them what it means to communicate clearly, and we can clearly communicate that, if you do not show up, you will be brought before Parliament, and you will be dealt with.

**The Chair:** In order for that to happen, though, I think the filibuster would need to stop, so that's something to keep in mind.

MP Van Bynen.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** At your suggestion, Mr. Chair, I will be brief.

Number one, I think we should follow due process. As a committee, we shouldn't allow our anger and our assumptions to lead what's being said in this amendment. I think we should follow due process.

We are now giving Mr. Leech an opportunity to speak truth to power. I'm sure he's going to let Mr. Staffieri know the mood, the tone and the intentions of this committee.

I think we're jumping the gun with the amendment that talks about the interim report, because we're making the assumption that he's not going to respond to the summons, and I don't think that's appropriate, so I would support the amendment.

• (0915)

**The Chair:** To be clear, that's the subamendment of MP Arya.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Colleagues, I have no more speakers on my list, so I will ask the clerk to put the subamendment to a vote.

(Subamendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** This brings us back to the amendment to the motion. I have two more speakers on my list. I have MP Badawey and then MP Gaheer.

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** A quick question is all I had. The UC motion that we passed last meeting had other names on it. Have we heard from those individuals?

**The Chair:** Yes, they have been invited. We've had confirmation that they received the invitation, but no firm date. However, they are invited as part of this study.

Bell and Telus have also been invited. My hope as chair is that we can get them all together, because time is running out. It would be within the next seven days, ideally.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I think it will not be lost on Bell to listen to what's happening at this committee, and it will perhaps be more responsive than it's been thus far.

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** That's one of the reasons I asked the question. It can be part of a future motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

MP Gaheer.

**Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

I had the same concern as MP Badawey, that we haven't received any communication from Bell or Telus, and we passed a UC motion last week to invite them as well. I'm wondering whether, in your judgment, we should amend or subamend this motion to include them, or we should wait and see what happens.

**The Chair:** I think it would be premature, given that we passed the motion to invite Bell and Telus last Thursday and they were invited last Thursday.

In the case of Rogers, we passed a motion at the end of October and we had discussions through the clerk to make sure that Mr. Staffieri would appear before this committee on November 28, and at the very last minute, he cancelled his appearance.

I think it would be premature, but know that they are invited as part of the study, Mr. Gaheer.

**Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer:** I think that if the CEOs of the different companies appeared together at the same meeting, it would be useful, because the questions are going to overlap.

**The Chair:** That is my understanding too, as I've just outlined it. Thank you, MP Gaheer.

Are there any other comments on the amendment? Do I need to put it to a vote, or is there unanimous consent on the amendment proposed by Mr. Perkins, as subamended by Mr. Masse to remove Mr. Bains?

(Amendment as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** It is adopted unanimously, which brings us to the motion as amended. Looking at the room, I think it is also passed unanimously.

(Motion as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That's that dealt with.

Mr. Perkins, are you going to move another motion unrelated to the topic? In that case, I will liberate Mr. Leech.

Mr. Leech, I hope you relay what you've heard to Mr. Staffieri. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, a lot of resources go behind the organization of these committee meetings. It's a solemn occasion to answer to Canadians through MPs, and to cancel at the very last minute, I think you've heard loud and clear, is quite disrespectful, so I hope we'll be able to hear from Mr. Staffieri in the next seven days.

Thank you very much for your presence today, Mr. Leech, and I wish you a good day.

Mr. Perkins.

● (0920)

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

I have a motion on notice that I'd like to move with regard to Telesat. It's been there for a while, and somebody might have to propose a slight amendment to it. It's because of the timing issue.

I can't propose an amendment to it. I would suggest that one of my colleagues look at that when we do it:

That, in relation to the Government of Canada's recent \$2.1-billion loan to Telesat, the committee agree to hold two meetings examining the feasibility and business case justifying the deal within 14 days following the adoption of this motion—

That's the part that will have to be corrected in the motion. It goes on:

and the committee agree to invite the following witnesses...

I think we may have had some chat on this before. I think (a) has been corrected by MP Turnbull in terms of who the current deputy minister of ISED is, and then there's Daniel Goldberg.

I don't think we voted on it, did we?

**The Chair:** I'll verify with the clerk to be sure, because I believe we dealt with that issue.

Let me verify. I'll take a minute, colleagues.

We voted on it. Thank God someone is paying attention.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Chair, the interpreters have informed us that the motion was not sent in French. It would be helpful to have it.

**The Chair:** Actually, I believe the motion has already been adopted so we cannot discuss it any further.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** That's why the interpreters didn't receive it. Okay.

**The Chair:** I believe it has already been adopted, but I would like to check something with the clerk. If memory serves me well, we resolved that during the meeting on committee business. I will check that in the minutes.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Can we still ask our colleagues to send the French version of the motion?

**The Chair:** Just a minute, Mr. Savard-Tremblay. If the motion has already been adopted, this is all to no avail. The clerk cannot be in two places at once.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Very well, I have just received it.

**The Chair:** I will suspend for a minute.

● (0920)

(Pause)

● (0920)

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay. We're back, colleagues.

Mr. Perkins, this is moot, given that the motion was adopted last Thursday.

You still have the floor.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I will move to resume debate, because I don't believe we voted on the motion I had on Mastercard's production of documents.

Members will recall that, as part of the credit card study that MP Masse put forward, we had Mastercard and Visa here, and we had some discussion during that meeting around the government support for the cybersecurity centre and the \$15 million that Mastercard received from taxpayers.

I will just remind members that the motion we tabled and, I believe, began debate on but did not vote on, was as follows:

That the committee order the production of all documents, emails, memos and any materials related to the [Liberal] government's \$50-million [handout] to Mastercard, including all communications between ISED, PCO or PMO and Mastercard regarding the grant; and that the committee report to the House to express its concern regarding the value for money for taxpayers on the nearly 50 million taxpayer dollars given to Mastercard by the [Trudeau Liberal] government.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Perkins.

Had we started the debate on this, but then it was adjourned? Was the meeting adjourned?

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** I think that's what it was, but I'll check.

Is that correct?

**The Chair:** Yes. I'll suspend for a minute to make sure that all MPs have it before their eyes.

[*Translation*]

I want to make sure the motion was sent, Mr. Savard-Tremblay, particularly since I don't think you were here when we discussed it.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** I have received a copy, but the interpreter doesn't have it.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Okay.

I will suspend for two minutes.

• (0925)

(Pause)

• (0935)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll resume debate on the motion proposed by Mr. Perkins, which he's read into the record.

Do I have any speakers on the motion that Mr. Perkins has presented?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, I want to make sure you received the correct motion. Do you have it before you?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Yes, I have what I need. Since you have opened the door, I have a question for Mr. Perkins, if I may.

**The Chair:** Yes, of course.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Perkins, I admit that I am not keen on the idea, but I am willing to change my mind. You just have to convince me.

To me, it appears quite simply to be a very conventional research and development grant. At first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything fishy about it, which doesn't mean there isn't. If we start doing this for every fairly conventional research and development grant, it will never end.

I am not a fan of Mastercard, which has a near monopoly. That is not the issue. I would however like you to explain the reason for this motion: Do you have more serious doubts? In other words, why are you doing this? At first glance, I don't understand.

• (0940)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Perkins.

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Thank you for the question. It's a good question.

This wasn't research and development. We began the credit card study with Mastercard and Visa here at the committee. When we questioned the executives of Mastercard, we asked them about the basics of their business.

One of the basics of their business is making sure that credit cardholder information is safe using cybersecurity. In fact, this is a company that had \$26 billion U.S. in revenue last year, and they announced a cybersecurity centre. This centre was basically to do the security that's required as part of this, in Vancouver. The government then threw them \$50 million to help do it, so they could be at the announcement. They didn't do anything; they were required to do this anyway as part of offering their services. When asked if they had been offered money from any other country, they said no, and they were just going to locate it here anyway due to education, the quality of the workforce and all of those things.

When Visa was asked—and they were sitting right next to them—whether they had ever taken government money to ante up at the poker game, which is securing and providing cybersecurity for customers, Visa said they would never take government money for that.

I haven't seen an adequate rationale from anywhere, from the government, any of the papers or from Mastercard, as to why a company with \$26 billion U.S. in revenue, a company with \$11 billion U.S. in gross income last year, a company that has to provide security to its customers or no one would carry its credit card, needs \$50 million from the taxpayer to do what it is supposed to do as part of its business.

There was no adequate answer from the executive, other than to say that he was proud of the centre. There's been no adequate explanation, in the two or three years since this was announced by the government, of why they were doing it, other than getting to be at the announcement of the centre opening up. Here's a cheque for \$50 million so Minister Champagne can stand at the announcement and say, "Look what I did. I did something that was going to happen anyway but, in order to make you think that it wouldn't happen without me, I'll give them \$50 million," when it's one of the richest companies in the world and doesn't need Canadian taxpayer money.

In fact, at the meeting, I asked if he would pay it back, since it's not going to anything other than what they already do in their business. He mumbled and bumbled and, of course, it's sort of like when Loblaws took \$18 million for fridges. Aren't fridges sort of a requirement if you're going to sell milk? I know they are at a convenience store, so I'm sure they are at the largest grocer in Canada, yet the richest company in Canada with over \$40 billion a year of revenue thought it was appropriate to take \$18 million from Canadian taxpayers to pay for something they have to have anyway, fridges. I'm not buying Loblaws milk if it's not sitting in a fridge.

Why would I subscribe to Mastercard if they're not protecting my security with the latest cybersecurity? There's absolutely no requirement whatsoever for Mastercard to take taxpayers' money to do what they have to do in order to operate their business.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Perkins.

[Translation]

Do you have any further questions on that, Mr. Savard-Tremblay?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** None right now, but I expect there will be a discussion if another question is asked.

**The Chair:** There has already been one that included Mr. Garon, who had certain concerns about the motion.

Esteemed colleagues, debate on this motion was some time ago now. Parliamentary life being what it is, sometimes we forget things. So let me just remind you that we adopted an amendment to remove the words “libéral” and “Trudeau Liberal government”.

[English]

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** That's what I referred to earlier.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Yes, that's right. When you read the motion in front of you, bear in mind the amendment that was adopted.

Mr. Van Bynen, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As an amendment, I would propose that we remove “that the committee report to the House to express its concern regarding the value for money for taxpayers”. I believe it's premature. We haven't seen these documents. We haven't had a chance to review them.

We also need to think about the fact that we are in a global marketplace. There was a \$510-million investment made by Mastercard to establish the centre. This is a corporation that can go anywhere. In terms of providing an incentive to create the jobs.... I don't recall the number of jobs that were created as a result. I see here now it's around 270 jobs by 2029.

There are times when we need to be competitive. There are times when we need to create incentives in order to have these global corporations, which have liquid capital and can move anywhere around the world, establish themselves in Canada. They can create employment in the areas they've located to in Vancouver. Let's make sure we get all the facts before we, again, jump to conclusions, as we did with the other recommendations.

I would move that we delete the second portion of that.

• (0945)

**The Chair:** Colleagues, you've all heard the amendment proposed by MP Van Bynen. The motion would end after “regarding the grant”. The rest would be removed.

On my list, I have MP Badawey, MP Masse and MP Patzer, but I'm going to start a new list on the amendment proposed by Mr. Van Bynen.

Mr. Patzer.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think it would be good to keep that in. Otherwise, it's just a ubiquitous motion at that point. Much like we heard earlier with Rogers, it's good to have a little something else at the end of it to provide a bit of extra motivation for the government to produce these documents.

At last week's meeting, there was a dump of documents that came that had literally been copied and pasted off the government website and sent in. There was a code of conduct thing that was sent in that was unrelated. We were told they were the documents. Well, no, they were not the briefing documents that were prepared. There's a lot more information that is needed on this.

Let's just look at the witness testimony that Mastercard officials gave when they were at the committee, to address one of your other points. You're making it sound as if this money was needed to secure the data centre in Vancouver. Mastercard officials said, no, they selected Vancouver for a very specific and strategic reason. They were going to build it regardless.

They were a bit cagey about whether they asked for the money or the government approached them and gave them the money. They were more focused on saying this was a job-creating avenue. That was it. They didn't want to say one way or the other.

They said they were building it regardless. When they were asked if anybody else offered them money to build it in their country instead, they said, no, nobody else did. They picked solely Vancouver to be the location to build this data centre.

They also said they had other places around the world that they had built on their own, without government money, in other countries. Why on earth did the minister decide to just randomly chuck \$50 million at Mastercard? We need to get the information here to understand it. Was there a request? Was there a specific rationale behind it?

If there wasn't, of course we want to express concern to the House about the value for money that taxpayers got for over \$50 million that wasn't needed. Mr. Perkins said one of the richest companies in North America had no need for it because it was building it regardless. It wanted to do it because it knew it needed to do it. It definitely has the wherewithal to be able to build this without taking taxpayers' money.

I think we should keep the wording in there as it is. Based on the witness testimony that we received, there's enough to go on there as well.

We just want to see from the government what the back-and-forth communication was. Whose idea was it to do the \$50 million? What was the rationale from the government to do it? We heard from Mastercard that it didn't need it. Why did the government give it \$50 million? That's why we need these documents.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Patzer.

Let's move on now to the amendment proposed by Mr. Van Bynen, which would amend the motion to remove the requirement to report to the House.

Mr. Arya, the floor is yours.

• (0950)

[*English*]

**Mr. Chandra Arya:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, when it comes to technology companies, Mastercard may be a credit card company, but it's also a technology company. Most of the technology companies are big today. Take Ericsson. Take companies like Google. There are a lot of companies.... For example, Ford is an automobile manufacturing company, but its technological development centre is in Ottawa. We need to invite, to ensure that these companies that are leading in technological development are located in Ottawa. It is in the interest of Canada. It's in the interest of Canadians that this technological advancement take place here.

As a developed country, we have to take measures to ensure that Canada is at the forefront of new technologies. New technologies come most of the time from big companies like Google. It is very important for us, I think. To use layman' terms, we need to chase these companies, to go after them and convince them to set up operations here.

When they do that, the knowledge that a lot of the experts, the engineers and the technologists who work in these companies gen-

erate here will be available to Canadian society as a whole. I think that should be the approach. That should be the tone taken. It should not be: "You know what? Let them go to Seattle, not Vancouver." That should not be the approach.

I think we have to treat the companies with respect. We may have differences, obviously. We will have differences when it comes to Mastercard or any other credit card company charging undue amounts to Canadian consumers, and I think we should call them out. We should take necessary actions, but when it comes to technological development, I think we should treat them with due respect.

I support the subamendment proposed by my colleague Mr. Van Bynen.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Arya.

Would anyone else like to speak to the amendment proposed by Mr. Van Bynen?

[*English*]

It is essentially just removing the part that's "report to the House".

[*Translation*]

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, we will soon be voting on the amendment proposed by Mr. Van Bynen. The purpose is to remove the requirement to report to the House and so forth. That is the only part of the motion that would be removed.

Mr. Patzer, I think you have something to say.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes. Thank you very much.

I really wanted to speak again here, because being able to speak in the House of Commons on the \$50 million that was given, I think, is important. We work on accountability here in committee, but something like this is well suited to being in the chamber as well. I think we need to make sure we have the ability to get this to the House of Commons.

I do think it's urgent and relevant for Canadian taxpayers, especially when we look at just the general cost of living crisis that people are going through, when they see the government wasting money on projects that were going to be built regardless. I do think it's relevant to the House of Commons. I would love to see that last bit stay in this motion. I will be voting no to this as well.

Thanks.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Patzer.

Would anyone else like to comment on the amendment?

Please go ahead, Mr. Van Bynen.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, if we're curious about what the government's rationale was, we could invite members of the officials to appear before this committee and indicate to us why they made that decision. That's number one.

Number two, again, getting back to how we expressed concern over the investment without even looking at the facts of the investment, it's like saying you'll have the benefit of due process and fair consideration, after which you'll be found guilty.

With me, the rationale doesn't fit, and that's why I think we should remove that. We'll have plenty of time to take other steps if the information we're seeking leads us to conclude that's an appropriate step, but to go to that step now is, I think, totally inappropriate, and it defeats the whole purpose of due process.

• (0955)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Van Bynen.

Go ahead, Mr. Patzer.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Yes, I'm sorry, just one more time here, briefly: We did have the officials at committee, and they did not answer our questions around some of these things. That's what the impetus for this motion was in the first place, because we did have officials at committee testifying to this. Based on the feedback they gave and then based on the testimony we received from Mastercard, there was still a void there.

We have now asked for the production of documentation because of that. Had officials been more direct in answering questions, then maybe we wouldn't have to do this, but they weren't, so now we need to ask for the production of documents, and yes, any time the government wastes \$50 million on a project that was going to be built regardless.... There was no threat of relocating or cancelling the project, but maybe there was and Mastercard denied telling us that.

That's why we want to see these documents and, even if they did, then it would be great to bring this to the House of Commons and talk about that, but the officials came to committee. They weren't clear. Mastercard did not have a great showing either, so now we need to have this production of documents. Of course we should report to the House our concern over the government's handling of 50 million dollars' worth of taxpayer money.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Savard-Tremblay, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** To be honest, I am still thinking about the main motion regarding the production of documents. For that reason, I think reporting to the House right away would be premature. That being said, if there was something appalling in the documents in question, I would be the first to want to

report that to the House. We could even be tougher than simply saying that the committee is concerned about value for taxpayers' money. We need to have a look first before we can make a judgment though. So I am in favour of the amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

Mr. Van Bynen, I think the parties' positions on your amendment are becoming clear.

Please go ahead, Mr. Masse.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Masse:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chair; the translation wasn't coming through. It was lagging.

I understand where Mr. Savard-Tremblay is coming from, but just going back to the history that you noted, Mr. Chair, the reason I won't support the subamendment but I do want to support what was proposed before that is that, if memory serves me correctly, I took out the language that was really kind of a poke in the eye for the Liberals, and that passed to get us to the point where we could deal with this in this way. Had there been other concerns about other parts of this motion, I would think they would have been raised at that point in time.

To be fair, I can't remember if Mr. Van Bynen was there or not, so I'm not trying to be negative about his attempt on this, either. It's just that going back to where we were and where we are now, it is a good point that Mr. Savard-Tremblay is making with regard to why we're picking this particular one out. It really came from the testimony that we got back from the officials and from Mastercard, and I've seen enough of this to say that it's a big concern, and there have been some questions in the House and so forth.

For those reasons, I can't support the subamendment, because I have already come to the conclusion I need to from seeing all the information that we have already received in the testimony of this committee and elsewhere, and then second to that are the original "how we got here" reasons.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Just to refresh members' memories with regard to where we were when we ended the debate on this motion and after the amendment that was passed by the committee, which you've just mentioned, MP Masse, the motion read:

That the committee order the production of all documents, emails, memos and materials related to the government's \$50-million commitment—

That's instead of "handout".

—to Mastercard, including all communications between ISSED, PCO or PMO and Mastercard regarding the grant, and that the committee report to the House.

That was the motion. The amendment proposed by MP Van Bynen is to remove "and that the committee report to the House". This is so we're clear on what's being proposed.



Go ahead on the amendment, MP Van Bynen.

**Mr. Tony Van Bynen:** I'll pass.

**The Chair:** At this point, I have no more speakers on my list, so I will put the amendment to a vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Since the amendment has carried, let's get back to the debate on the motion as amended.

Mr. Badawey, you have the floor.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Chair, I've been involved in a lot of communication dialogue with the development of the economy, both with the country and, more importantly, within my riding. A lot of those discussions are with respect to trying to incentivize development based on some of the programs that we have here federally, but, as well, matching those programs with our provincial partners and sometimes even with our municipal and private sector partners.

The reason I say this is that, for the most part, when I look at these programs, I don't necessarily look at them with a political lens. I look at it from a business lens to ensure that, with the incentives we have available to us, it's going to meet the criteria, not only of the program itself, which, by the way, is applied to and then, through a matrix, scored.... Therefore, either they get it or they don't, based on the merits of their application.

I'll go back to my initial comments. It's the business of the government versus the politics of the government. Therefore, what's the return on investment that we're going to get for Canadians? Regardless of who that company is, it's the merit of what the company is going to do and what the company is going to create, especially as it relates to the economy, which the SIF program attaches itself to, and its whole purpose.

This funding goes back to 2020 and, quite frankly, has nothing to do with credit card fees. The context of it is that the federal government has worked with and enticed Mastercard Inc. to open a technology research and development centre in Vancouver with a \$49-million incentive through its strategic innovation fund, the SIF program. It's no different from some of the economic development that—as I'm sure many of you have heard—we brought to Niagara and other parts of the country. A news report said:

The global payments network giant will fund most of the \$510 million cost—

I'll repeat, Mr. Chair: \$510 million.

—to create the centre, its sixth global R&D operation. It will focus on product development in digital and cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and internet-of-things technologies aimed at improving digital identification as Mastercard aims to enhance the security of its payments network from the growing threat of data theft and cyberfraud from increasingly sophisticated hackers.

This, I might add, is in the best interest of Canadians and, quite frankly, overall, is a priority of this government, and I can only say a priority of most members of Parliament who sit in each and every chair in the House, I'm sure.

This is what Mastercard said: “The centre will create 270 jobs by 2029 and hire 100 students on co-op work terms.” They went on to say, “The centre, in Vancouver's Old Exchange Building, is home to NuData Security, a 100-person business specializing in biometric identification that Mastercard purchased in 2017.”

Mr. Chair, the funding was focused on creating technologies as well as standards to ensure that Canadians and others around the world can safely use any device that could be connected to the Internet—not only the phone, but a tablet or computer—without concern that their personal and financial information could be stolen. In collaboration with the universities—

● (1005)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, MP Badawey, to interrupt this passionate speech, but the bells are ringing, and I would need unanimous consent to pursue—

Pardon me?

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** I was on a roll.

**The Chair:** I know.

The vote is.... The bells are ringing, but I still need UC to continue the meeting.

Do I have unanimous consent?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** No, I don't have unanimous consent.

The meeting is adjourned.

Thank you, colleagues.





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