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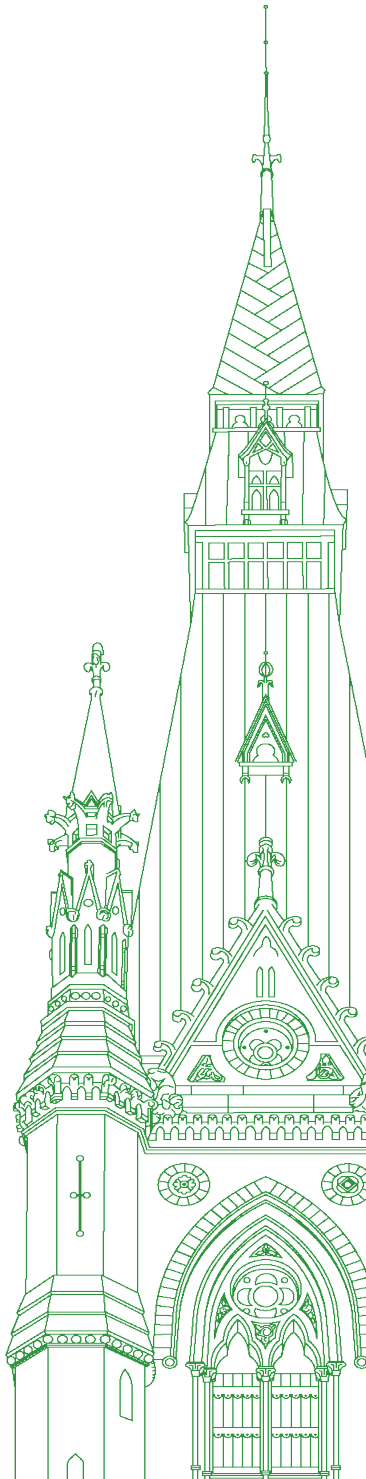

Chair: Salma Zahid

Standing Committee on Science and Research

Monday, November 24, 2025

● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.)): Good morning, everybody. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 17 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. The committee is meeting today to study artificial intelligence.

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

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French.

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

For this first panel today, I would like to welcome our two witnesses. We are joined by Dr. Diane Gutiw, vice-president, corporate services, and AI Research Center lead, CGI Inc. By video conference, we also have Angela Adam, senior vice-president, sales, marketing and government relations, eStruxture Data Centers.

Both witnesses will have five minutes for their opening remarks, and then we will get into rounds of questioning.

Welcome to the committee.

We will start with Dr. Gutiw.

You will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Please go ahead.

Diane Gutiw (Vice-President, Corporate Services, and AI Research Center Lead, CGI Inc.): Thank you, Madam Chair and esteemed members of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, for the opportunity to provide some insights.

My name is Diane Gutiw. I am a vice-president at CGI as well as a co-chair on Canada's strategic AI council. The following remarks draw upon my 30 years of experience in applied AI research as well as implementation of data analytics and machine learning artificial intelligence in both the private and public sectors.

AI research has deep roots in Canada, driven by the early work of Geoffrey Hinton, Yoshua Bengio and Richard Sutton, which positioned Canada as a leader in deep learning in the 2010s. The country's major AI institutes, Mila, the Vector Institute, and AMII, alongside our industry-funded co-chairs in academic institutions, have placed Canada as a leader in AI research.

Your questions today were around fundamental AI research and applied AI research. Fundamental AI research has most recently focused on improving performance and making systems faster, more efficient and better at complex reasoning, and a lot of focus has gone into memory-driven architectures and multi-model systems to handle more sophisticated tasks and workflows.

Applied AI research has progressed to better analyze and generate data, text and images that enable personalized services, better decision-making, leveraging of evidence and more intelligent automation and efficiency. An example of this would be CGI's digital triplets that allow end-users, through natural language, to interrogate data from performance data down to assets and molecular-level data, which really is moving the mark on how we leverage data to make decisions.

Canada has a lot to be proud of in the areas of fundamental and applied AI research. Mila's Yoshua Bengio and Canada's CIFAR AI chair, Doina Precup, authored the first GFlowNets paper and approach for drug molecule discovery. Canada's TRIUMF and Perimeter Institute's quantum-assisted AI model combined deep learning with quantum computing to simulate particle collisions for CERN's Large Hadron Collider, and AMII's Richard Sutton won the 2024 Turing Award with Andrew Barto for conceptual and algorithmic foundations of reinforcement learning.

At the same time as these successes, the path from research to commercialization needs strengthening. By focusing investment in high-value sectors and closing the gaps in the global AI ecosystem, Canada can move to lead in translating research into real-world impact. Research institutions face slow, rigid funding, limited data access, policy barriers to collaboration and intense competition for talent. Canada must shift its culture from risk aversion to responsible innovation. Building public trust requires AI literacy, equitable access to tools, greater transparency in data use and protection, and an innovation culture grounded in security, fairness, sustainability and reliability.

Current funding models are slow, misaligned and unclear, making it difficult to scale promising ideas from research through to commercialization. Canada needs to invest in high-potential innovations beyond early research, strengthen collaboration between academia, government and industry to accelerate development, and create more opportunities for talent downstream. It's also important to ensure that our work permits, permanent residency pathways and student visa policies are aligned to attract and retain high-quality talent.

Your next question was on the role of the federal government. The federal government must play a central role in reducing risk aversion, building public trust, and enabling adoption and smooth pathways to success. To keep Canada's research competitive and ethical, clear governance is needed that aligns with Canadian culture and is supported by AI literacy. Federal oversight, strategic investments and supportive policies are vital for driving innovation and building trust in responsible AI.

The federal government should also clarify the definition of sovereignty. We need to clearly define what we must absolutely protect, such as data, intellectual property and our talent; what we're willing to give up if we collaborate and for what benefit to Canada; and who we're willing to collaborate with, and which sector...that shares our culture and ethical standards.

Looking ahead, maximizing the value of innovation requires mechanisms to bridge research to market, ensure public benefit from data assets and investments, and protect our intellectual property, providing clear opportunities downstream for our talent in academics, industry or the public sector, the areas where we need focus. Diffusion and sharing require stronger collaboration between academic industry and public sector commercialization and valorization where industry investment is key to growth, but Canada must ensure that its IP and talent stay local as well as protect our data. The practical application of innovations will help streamline the transition from research to commercialization and can help solve real-world problems and marketable problems faster.

● (1105)

Your final question was on the protection of public assets. Public-private partnerships are critical and we need—

The Chair: Please wind up in the next 10 to 15 seconds.

Diane Gutiw: We need clear benefit-sharing rules to protect Canadian assets while attracting industry investment in Canada.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Now we will proceed to our second witness.

Ms. Adam, please go ahead. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Angela Adam (Senior Vice-President, Sales, Marketing and Government Relations, eStruxture Data Centers Inc.): Good morning, Chair and honourable members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear today. It's a privilege to contribute to this important study on the future of artificial intelligence in Canada.

My name is Angela Adam, and I serve as senior VP at eStruxture Data Centers. We're the largest Canadian-owned and operated data centre platform. Our facilities host some of the country's most critical digital workloads, including financial institutions, telecom providers, AI research institutes and hundreds of Canadian organizations that rely on secure, resilient and sustainable infrastructure to operate and innovate every day.

My comments today will focus on one central idea: digital infrastructure. This is my area of expertise.

Canada cannot lead in AI research, commercializations or responsible deployment unless our research institutes and universities have priority access to sovereign, high-performance and scalable digital infrastructure built and controlled here in Canada. This is a missing piece in our national AI architecture, and it is the foundation upon which every other ambition in this space must rest.

AI has advanced faster than any other previous technology cycle. Models that required modest computing power only a few years ago now demand clusters measured in tens and sometimes hundreds of megawatts. Research teams across Canada, from Mila to Vector to universities, all say the same thing: They cannot access enough high-performance compute to train and refine cutting-edge models in Canada.

We know this because some of them are our own customers, and the results are predictable. Our best researchers increasingly rely on foreign infrastructure; promising research is delayed, fragmented or simply cannot be attempted; and opportunities for commercialization drift southward or overseas. Canada has extraordinary talent, but without sovereign compute and digital infrastructure, talent cannot translate into scalable innovation.

Sovereign digital infrastructure means three things: control, where Canadian entities govern physical infrastructure, data flows, supply chains and security protocols; proximity, where researchers access high-performance compute without latency or export restrictions; and scalability, where infrastructure grows with demand, not behind it.

At eStruxture, we see first-hand how quickly this requirement is accelerating. We operate 14 facilities across the country with two others set to come online in the fall of 2026, which will be some of the largest AI-ready data centres in Canada. We're already working with leading researchers, private sector innovators and government stakeholders, who need secure and high-density environments that are sustainable and built in a way they can trust.

Building this capability is entirely feasible in Canada. We have the power, the land, the engineering talent and the climate advantages that other countries would envy. What we require is strategic alignment and predictable policy.

One of the most important considerations for the committee is that research institutes cannot compete with global cloud providers for capacity. When a global AI company wants 50 or 100 megawatts of power for its workloads, it can move markets instantly. Universities cannot and neither can our research institutes.

If we want Canadian research to stay competitive, we need to reserve a portion of sovereign AI-ready capacity for research, universities and public institutes. We need to ensure that this capacity is built on Canadian soil and governed under Canadian jurisdiction. We need to make it affordable and predictable over time, and we need to design procurement and partnership models that favour long-term national outcomes over short-term transactional decisions.

The alternative is simple. Canada will continue to produce world-class ideas that must be built, trained and commercialized elsewhere.

Data centres are the backbone of responsible, scalable AI, and Canada is well positioned to lead. A responsible AI ecosystem requires responsible physical infrastructure. As I said, in Canada, we have abundant power, and a significant amount is clean and carbon-neutral. We have strong privacy laws in an industry that is already regulated to the highest global standards of physical security and cybersecurity.

A sovereign data centre footprint would enable secure model training and storage under Canadian jurisdiction; controlled access for sensitive research; defence use cases; public sector AI; and infrastructure that can grow rapidly without compromising reliability. This is precisely the model that other nations, including the U.S., the U.K., France and Japan, are now scaling at speed. Canada must do the same.

In closing, we must forge a pathway forward through partnership, clarity and national coordination. The federal government has a critical role in setting direction, reducing fragmentation and ensuring that digital infrastructure investments align with Canada's long-term interests.

Three immediate opportunities stand out. Create a coordinated national strategy for sovereign digital infrastructure with clear targets, timelines and governance. Establish a dedicated, protected capacity for research institutes, enabling them to compete globally. Partner with Canadian-owned data centre operators, cloud providers and system integrators that can deliver this infrastructure quickly at scale and within our national regulatory and security frameworks.

● (1110)

We've already made this proposal to the Major Projects Office. This approach does not compete with private innovation; it accelerates it.

The Chair: If you can, please wind up in the next few seconds.

Angela Adam: Canada built one of the strongest AI research communities in the world. We now need to give that community the infrastructure required to continue leading. If we fail to invest in sovereign, scalable AI-rated digital infrastructure, we risk losing the next decade of innovation, not because of talent or ideas but simply because of infrastructure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Chair: Thank you to both our witnesses for their opening remarks.

Now we will start our first round of questioning. We will begin with MP Baldinelli for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to have you here. Thank you to the witnesses for being here this morning.

Ms. Gutiw, in your comments you talked about 30 years of experience, AI research and deep roots in Canada. It's almost similar to what we've learned in previous studies. We're funding research and we have the talent in Canada, yet we have some concerns with supporting the Canadian ecosystem to grow and flourish. Work needs to be done in that area.

Ms. Adam, you talked about that as well, specifically the notion of sovereignty, and you talked about the 14 facilities you have in Canada. Congratulations on that. That's a Canadian success story as we get into this field.

In December 2024, the federal government announced it was giving Cohere $240 million as part of the Canadian sovereign AI compute strategy. They, in fact, signed an MOU with them this August. What was your reaction when you found out that one of Cohere's strategic partners benefiting from Canadian taxpayers was an American company and not Canadian?

Angela Adam: Obviously, that MOU could have been executed with a data centre and compute provider from Canada, but that wasn't the case. Perhaps the government has learned from that and will continue to refine their approach to look at what is available in Canada, both in digital infrastructure and from a system integration perspective. Perhaps when they make this decision in support of AI development and research, they will look at the ecosystem as a whole and pick Canadian players that can bring more value to our nation.

● (1115)

Tony Baldinelli: We're talking about the Canadian sovereign AI compute strategy, yet the $240 million was granted to Cohere. Their first action or move was to hire an American company—I believe it's called CoreWeave—to work with it. I'm not saying that's wrong, but if we're using the Canadian sovereign strategy and funds, you would think they would look to companies like eStruxture, which has 14 facilities in Canada.

Has eStruxture received any funds from the Canadian sovereign AI compute strategy, and, if so, how much?

Angela Adam: No, not to date.

Tony Baldinelli: Have you been consulted by the federal government in the development of the AI policy?

Angela Adam: We have been consulted on several occasions. We've had the opportunity to sit down with ISED, Minister Solomon and Mark Schaan. I can't really say how much of our feedback and expertise have been included in developing the AI strategy, but we have had the chance to come to the table, yes.

Tony Baldinelli: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Gutiw, we talked earlier, before the hearing started. You're a member of the task force, and thank you for your participation in that. When I look at the information posted online, I believe that 11,000 people submitted briefs to the government or took part in the consultation program.

When you look at our population of 41 million people, do you think it's just an issue of Canadians not knowing that much about AI? Why was there a slow response, especially when the government talks about creating a task force and about sprinting to create a strategy? Only 11,000 people responded. Is it a literacy issue?

Diane Gutiw: I believe that AI literacy is critical. It's not just a misunderstanding of what AI is. It's also a misunderstanding of what it is not. I believe this was one of the highest public consultation responses, which speaks to Canadians feeding into the request for public consultations.

I think we need to increase our AI literacy so we have better trust and comfort in what the tools are able to do and so we level set that this is a tool designed to assist us. Having more of a voice in how, in our daily life and work lives, it's able to assist us as Canadians I think is really critical.

Tony Baldinelli: When we look at our previous studies, we see that we're great at funding and we're great at the talent here in the country, but it's about bringing the ecosystem to the next step of the commercialization aspect, like, for example, ChatGPT and OpenAI. It's like the private sector in the United States is moving forward in creating these systems and putting processes in place. How can we facilitate that here in Canada without always having to rely on the government to do it?

Diane Gutiw: That's an excellent question. Thank you very much.

I would suggest that this is exactly why we need collaboration among academic, private sector and public sector to advance it. Canada has a lot of thought leadership that has initiated a lot of the technologies and foundation for the technologies that these private sector hyperscaler organizations are advancing, and I think we're at the cusp of an excellent opportunity.

I don't think that being thoughtful in how we move forward has really set us behind. There are still a number of gaps in the AI ecosystem where Canada can thrive and become an absolute leader in everything from green AI to sustainable models to quantum computing, as well as really focusing on some niche or more—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but the time is up for MP Baldinelli.

We will now proceed to MP Jaczek for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for coming here today.

Dr. Gutiw, I recently visited AMII in Edmonton. In the presentation that was done, we moved from researcher to researcher to learn about their individual initiatives. I was somewhat struck that there doesn't seem to be any coordination among the various researchers on the bigger questions that needed to be answered and that perhaps were priorities for Canada.

As an example, there was a demonstration of an ultrasound wand that could be used in remote communities, not by physicians, necessarily, but by nurses and allied health professionals, thus avoiding potential transfer to a southern medical centre and therefore obviously saving some money.

What coordination is going on across Canada between all these individual researchers? How do you see them best being brought together? What role could the federal government play in that?

● (1120)

Diane Gutiw: Curiosity-based research remains a critical area. I believe that organizations like AMII, Mila, the Vector Institute and others foster the ability to bring in these new innovations. We need that curiosity-based research. Where we seem to have a gap is in taking the individual research and then progressing it to the tangible, the practical. The example you have is an excellent example of how there is a need as well as a problem that can be solved with research.

As we continue to incubate these solutions that come from research, we need to focus on what problem we're trying to solve. How can we bring in the best of the industry thought leaders across Canada from the data infrastructure and from the AI compute capacity, as well as creating tangible solutions that have a benefit to society and are marketable?

By bringing together clusters of industry thought leaders to move these things along, by streamlining a lot of our great funding programs—which are hard to access, hard to understand and unclear to researchers and start-ups—and by having a single pane of glass view, how can I take this idea quickly while it is still in innovation and move it to something that's a tangible benefit?

I believe that by having groups of sectors together—health, social sciences, manufacturing, robotics, oil and gas, energy, critical minerals—we'd be able to bring in thought leaders from across a spectrum who can take this curiosity-based research, move it forward and progress it into something that will benefit us in society and be a revenue-generating, marketable solution.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As a physician, I know that you have particular expertise in the medical information sector. Could you detail for us some of the most promising applications that you see for the use of AI to assist medical and health professionals?

Diane Gutiw: Health has been leveraging machine learning, AI and data for decades—my entire career—in public health solutions, not only looking at how we can use data to inform what may happen in the future in disease progression, in addiction and in the opioid crisis, but also looking at the data to see how we can get ahead of that to see how we can make a change early in a cycle of addiction or homelessness so that somebody can have a better life and we can target the problem and be able to provide a solution sooner.

Other areas where we really have moved the dial with artificial intelligence are in diagnostic imaging. Artificial intelligence is a fantastic tool to see things that are very hard to see with the human eye. We're already working with Helsinki University Hospital and others on being able to detect early brain bleeds, which are almost always fatal if they are not caught early, and on being able to reduce the screening ages for cancers because we can see minute changes earlier.

As I mentioned, there are things like digital triplets. I can have a conversation with a large amount of data that's very hard, complex and expensive to pull together. I now have the ability to bring that information together with agentic AI and multi-model AI and have a conversation with data to make better decisions and connect the dots and patterns.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have one minute and 20 seconds.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Again to you Dr. Gutiw, you mentioned public trust. With regard to the CRA, as an example—obviously a federal responsibility—recent reports have said that a number of pieces of advice given through the current system of call centres have actually been incorrect, and the CRA is looking to introduce AI.

Isn't there a bit of a problem of garbage in ending up as garbage out with the introduction of AI? What do you see as the best way of avoiding that issue?

● (1125)

Diane Gutiw: In the advancements in research, we've been focused on increasing reliability. By taking the AI tools you see now and using them as a service rather than as a search engine, how can we focus on knowledge retention, getting access to information very quickly and using agentic models to test the quality of answers before they're received?

We're at a perfect time in our history, when 25% to 40% of the population will be retiring in the next 10 years. These tools are a fantastic way of maintaining that knowledge and being able to serve us in service delivery so that the call centre people will have access to all of that knowledge that is retiring and will be able to get very quick answers to questions.

You're absolutely right, but more research and investment into quality solutions, reliability and transparency are going to help solve that over time so that it becomes more reliable.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

We will now proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to welcome the witnesses who are here today as part of this new study.

My first question is for Ms. Gutiw.

Quebec is world-renowned in the field of artificial intelligence, particularly thanks to Mila, as you mentioned a few times in your opening remarks. It's also world-renowned in the field of data science, thanks to its network of public, private and industrial centres. However, Canadian businesses have been slow to adopt artificial intelligence on a large scale.

How do you explain that paradox?

There's academic and industrial supremacy in Quebec. However, it's clear that the adoption of artificial intelligence in Canada is still limited.

[*English*]

Diane Gutiw: The question is related to the ability of the public sector to move forward quickly. This is where we really need to move away from a public sector culture of risk aversion.

A lot of the limitation comes from the need to go through the rigour. The public sector has an unprecedented responsibility to our citizens to protect our data and to ensure that our infrastructures and technology are supporting that protection. However, by being risk-averse, we are slowing down the ability to have efficiencies and to leverage and adopt the tools in such a way that they're providing meaningful efficiencies and changes. This is where I believe the AI strategy refresh will be able to provide better guidance so that we're able to move the dial forward, advance and take advantage of what the private sector is seeing as a huge efficiency gain in technology.

As well, I know there are a lot of pockets of the public sector where there are different innovations, pilots and proofs of concepts under way, but we've seen, through our own studies, that the ability to move those into production has been slow. We need the infrastructure, guidance and guardrails to be able to use these technologies and move them forward. A perfect role for the federal government is to provide the guidance that will let the provincial governments and different ministries know how they can use these technologies safely to get the same gains as the private sector.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: CGI is working on the real integration of artificial intelligence into operations, not just on research.

From your perspective, is Canada investing too much in university research and not enough in industrial integration, that is to say, experimental development and support for businesses, particularly small or medium-sized businesses?

[*English*]

Diane Gutiw: The question is related to whether or not we are investing more in research and not so much in industry and business being able to use this technology.

I believe we have a good investment and a plan for investments so that we have a more fair spread across industry, but the collaboration among public sector, private sector and academic is critical. It would be short-sighted not to work together to advance and accelerate ourselves as leaders, so having a more even and more aligned investment strategy....

For example, the supercluster funding is not available to the public sector. In the private sector, there is funding available that is very slow to move, and it's unclear how to get access to it. Conversations I had during the task force with small and medium businesses indicated that sometimes they were stumbling across funding opportunities, rather than having a clear path.

Aligning and streamlining access to funding based on marketable solutions that are going to advance us—the public and private sectors—to make Canada a real leader in this area is absolutely critical.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you for your answer, which was quite comprehensive.

My next question is about intellectual property.

Much of the research funded by the federal government generates intellectual property, among other things. However, too often, it unfortunately ends up being bought out by foreign actors.

What do you think the federal government should do to ensure that the intellectual property generated in Quebec and Canada stays here and won't be acquired by other countries or multinationals?

● (1130)

[*English*]

Diane Gutiw: The question related to intellectual property goes hand in hand with my statement on the need to clearly define what we mean by sovereignty.

Canada is not a large country. We need to be able to collaborate to accelerate. However, we need to do it thoughtfully, and we need to define, first of all, what we will absolutely protect—what remains in Canada and will not be shared. Intellectual property is on that list. Ideation and our investments in research through to marketable solutions need to be protected.

When we are working and collaborating with partners, we need to decide who we are willing to collaborate with and who makes the most sense. As we're working on these collaborative opportunities, we need to make it very clear that Canada will retain our intellectual property and will have opportunities for the talent we're bringing into the country, as well as our own talent of Canadians, making sure that it's a place where they want to work.

Canada is a very attractive place. People want to come here in their research capacity, and they want to stay. We're limiting the ability to stay through permanent residency, other opportunities or time-limited work permits. Our intellectual property is not just the tool; it's also the people.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Ms. Gutiw, you work with public, private and government clients.

Do you think Canada is too dependent on foreign cloud computing, particularly that of Amazon, Microsoft and Google?

Do you think this poses a real risk to digital sovereignty and data security?

[*English*]

Diane Gutiw: The question is related to our partnering with organizations that are not Canadian, such as Google, Microsoft and others.

Again, I don't think it's practical and it may be short-sighted to think that we can immediately 100% advance ourselves without having partnerships and collaboration with organizations that have advanced it.

However, we need to define what we're going to protect. We need to ensure, if we are working with Google and Microsoft in Canada, that they are hiring Canadian staff and are using the tools to enable and advance Canadian talent within those organizations. It becomes part of defining what we mean by sovereignty and who we are best willing to partner with that's going to preserve our culture, our intellectual property, our data and our talent.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, the first round comes to an end.

We will now start our second round, of five minutes and two and a half minutes, with MP DeRidder.

Please go ahead. You will have five minutes.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Thank you to everyone for coming today.

My question will be for you, Ms. Adam.

We constantly hear about massive U.S. players, such as CoreWeave, Microsoft and Amazon, receiving Canadian incentives or securing large blocks of Canadian power, while Canadian-owned providers compete for the same constrained grid.

In your dealings with federal programs, are Canadian-owned data centre operators getting equitable access to power, land and investment incentives compared with foreign hyperscalers? Are we effectively subsidizing our future competitors?

Angela Adam: The reality is that the hyperscalers and large buyers you mentioned are actually critical parts of our ecosystem, as you heard just a few seconds ago. They bring the scale, global standards and innovation velocity.

Are we being treated fairly by our government in our allocation and grants? I think the government is now starting to understand the scale of Canadian players as compared to international ones. I think so far we have been treated fairly. We just need, as an industry, to educate. We find that there's more and more need to educate our government and government agencies on what is possible and available in Canada. What type of digital infrastructure can be made available by Canadian players from data centres such as us, from cloud providers that compete with international cloud providers, from hardware providers and so on?

To answer your questions, we feel like we're treated fairly. It's just incumbent on us to create more visibility with our government, because our international counterparts have done so for much longer.

Kelly DeRidder: You say they're a critical part of our infrastructure. A lot of your customers are Canadian enterprises that have to comply with PIPEDA and other domestic laws. Our hyperscalers are foreign-owned facilities operating on Canadian soil, but they're subject to U.S. or other foreign jurisdiction laws, like the U.S. CLOUD Act. This is a real-world risk to protecting our health, financial and government data.

What concrete mechanisms should our government put in place to ensure that our data sovereignty is kept on Canadian soil and in our Canadian data centres so that there's no risk to our data, given, as you said, that these players are critical to our infrastructure?

● (1135)

Angela Adam: What this means is that we need to focus our sovereign ambitions on access boundaries. Who holds the encryption keys? Who decides where the data flows? Who can turn things off if needed? It means having Canadian-sided and power-credible infrastructure that can support those workloads here on our own terms.

We need to focus on establishing access boundaries. In practice, that could look like a hybrid model where domestic platforms like ours work hand in hand with hyperscalers on the frameworks that embed Canadian governance and cryptographic controls and that also create some local value.

Kelly DeRidder: Do you think there's a current comprehensive plan in place for AI sovereignty?

Angela Adam: I don't believe there's a full-fledged comprehensive plan. We are still trying to define it. We're still trying to define what “sovereign” means.

Kelly DeRidder: There's $900 million in this budget for large-scale sovereign public AI infrastructure. With that, there's no plan.

Angela Adam: We have faith that our government, after the 30-day task, will come out with a clear path forward and a framework that we can work with.

Kelly DeRidder: How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Kelly DeRidder: I'll just thank everybody for coming today.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will proceed to MP Rana for five minutes.

Please go ahead, MP Rana.

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses for being here with us on a Monday morning.

My question is for you, Dr. Gutiw.

In 2017, Canada became the first nation to introduce a country-wide strategy for artificial intelligence. The pan-Canadian AI strategy allocated $125 million in funding for the years 2021-22 through 2025-26 to support the growth of Canada's AI ecosystem.

Could you please tell the committee more about this AI ecosystem?

Diane Gutiw: As I noted, the pan-Canadian AI strategy you mentioned was what initiated these think tanks across Canada. That really has placed us as a leader at the front end, where research is the anchor to innovation. It initiated Mila, AMII, the Vector Institute and CIFAR, from which some of the most world-renowned research and ideas are coming out.

At the time this AI strategy was developed, generative AI and agentic AI had not been publicized. It was very early days. It wasn't accessible. At that point, the type of AI we were talking about was closer to machine learning. It was very focused on data. We moved the dial in Canada in advancing generative AI and some of the technology we have now that is really showing some great value.

The initial strategy launched us forward. I think we're now at an opportunity with the refresh strategy, which will be coming out very shortly, to look at it and say that since we're in a new world of AI, with much more accessible tools, with clear areas for growth for Canada and with areas where we clearly need to define what our Canadian guardrails are for safe use, we're at a new point in being able to develop it. It's a very different time in the evolution of AI since the first strategy was enabled.

Aslam Rana: Which Canadian industries, especially in health, agriculture and energy, are seeing the strongest AI adoption? Which is the weakest one?

Diane Gutiw: I can only answer that from my own perspective and my own bias. I believe health, for example, has shown some great advancements. It's an industry that was quite comfortable leveraging data for everything from epidemiology to clinical informatics to clinical decision support—expert systems that were all adopted in the late seventies and eighties. It's an area where it's not new. It was quite comfortable leveraging data. It leans very heavily on research best practices, which have principles-based approaches to how we protect data, how we ensure there's no bias and how we ensure transparency. That was able to launch it forward.

That's not to say there isn't excellent research happening in agriculture, manufacturing, robotics, quantum energy and quantum computing. Those are all areas where there are a lot of advancements as well. There's also the finance industry and looking at more precise predictions and models.

Again, I'm speaking from my own knowledge. However, I know that we have a very healthy ecosystem. Energy, oil, gas and critical minerals are all areas where we have invested and seen some great gains.

● (1140)

Aslam Rana: Being a civil engineer, I want to know how AI will change civil engineering departments, especially in design. Can you please elaborate on this?

Diane Gutiw: The best advantage of AI, if we look at it very practically, is the ability to do more with less and the ability to bring data and information into the hands of decision-makers quicker. All industries are going to benefit from that. If we look at civil engineering or any engineering, it's about the ability to make decisions so that we have less downtime. It's about predictive maintenance models so that we have less downtime of assets. It's about having more precise resource allocations and more personalized services to the public. Those are all advancements that will affect that industry and others.

We're also at a time when cross-sector, cross-industry collaboration is critical. I'm already seeing that the work we've done for decades in health care is helping in oil and gas and utilities. The models need to be shared. I believe that in Canada, as we advance forward, we'll be able to do this so that we have reusable, effective models that provide value and have been tested.

Aslam Rana: Thank you.

Ms. Adam, the “Canada Strong” 2025 budget introduced new initiatives aimed at strengthening the country's AI capabilities. The budget will invest $925.6 million over the next five years, beginning in 2025-26, to build a large-scale—

The Chair: Mr. Rana, your time is up. Maybe you can complete the question.

If you don't get the opportunity to reply, you can send in the answer in writing.

Aslam Rana: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Sovereign public AI infrastructure is designed to expand domestic computing capacity for both public and private sector researchers. Given the budget, what kind of government policies and incentives would most accelerate the build-out of AI-ready data centres in Canada?

The Chair: Thank you. If you don't get an opportunity to ask the question in the next round, the witness can respond in writing, if they want.

We will now proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Adam, during our work, we learned that approximately 80% of Canada's digital data was stored in infrastructure controlled by American companies. The CLOUD Act enables U.S. authorities to legally require access to that data, even when it's physically located in Montreal or Toronto, for example.

Do you think that dependence compromises Canada's digital sovereignty?

How can Canadian suppliers such as eStruxture offer a real alternative to protect our data, our innovation and our intellectual property?

[*English*]

Angela Adam: You're asking if data being hosted currently in large hyperscalers such as AWS compromises the sovereignty of our data, given that the CLOUD Act can require or subpoena the cloud provider to retrieve data that is within their cloud. The answer is yes. However, there are frameworks that can be put in place by our government to make sure we have the key. When that subpoena comes through, we need to be able to decide whether we should release the data or not. The decision has to sit on the Canadian side.

There are different ways to do this. Obviously, as a data centre provider, we host the infrastructure of our customers. We don't own the server infrastructure. It is our customer, be it a Canadian customer or an international customer, bringing their own servers and hosting them within our facilities. We provide the very basic ground level—meaning the sovereign facility built on Canadian soil. These are the very basics of it.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Ms. Adam, Quebec has clean, stable, abundant and predictable energy, which is essential for data centre operations and artificial intelligence. Back in Rimouski, the Canadian company Telus has created a data centre.

In your opinion, could the best place in the country for hosting essential and necessary infrastructure—as Telus did, for example—for artificial intelligence and data growth be a place where energy is renewable and abundant, such as Quebec?

[*English*]

Angela Adam: One hundred per cent. You're definitely looking in the right direction. AI models are power hungry and they're becoming more power hungry as technology advances.

We used to talk about racks that consume five kilowatts as high-density racks. By the end of 2027, we're supposed to see server racks that consume up to 600 kilowatts. We need clean, renewable power to be able to power these intensive workloads. There's no better power than renewable hydro power.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up for MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I'd like to ask Ms. Adam something.

[*English*]

The Chair: You can do so in the second round.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I'm out of time, Madam Chair. I would just like to ask Ms. Adam to send us a written response if she has anything else to add.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will be coming back to you in the second round.

Now we will proceed to MP Ho for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): My first round of questions is for Ms. Adam.

Earlier this year, the federal government announced its support for the AI industry through the AI compute access fund. For the very first cheque, the government decided to write a $240 million grant to Cohere, which is a Canada-based AI company. There's nothing wrong with supporting a Canada-headquartered business, but all of that $240 million of taxpayer money was given to CoreWeave, which is a U.S.-based company, to help build out its compute.

Do you see an issue with that when there are Canadian data centre operators that are ready for the challenge?

Angela Adam: Thank you for the question. I think it was asked a bit differently earlier.

Do I see an issue with it? As I mentioned before, that was the first iteration and the first grant that was provided. I think there's a lot to learn from that.

I don't know how much visibility we had at that point as to what the build-out looked like between CoreWeave and Cohere. If we saw down the line where the funds were going....

Is there a better alternative? Of course. There are many Canadian data centre operators that can build the same level of digital infrastructure as CoreWeave or any other global player, or a better level. We just need to be informed.

Vincent Ho: That's very troubling. What's even more troubling is that we found out later that there were no strings attached to the $240 million that was effectively shipped out to a U.S. company. At a time when the federal government is going on with this buy Canadian rhetoric, it doesn't seem to be living up to its standards.

Nvidia, which is a large U.S. firm, has backed Cohere, a Canadian AI company, in more than one round of funding—in its financing rounds. Ironically, as we talked about earlier, Cohere is a customer of CoreWeave, which is a U.S.-based company. CoreWeave, which is also backed by Nvidia, buys chips from Nvidia, and then Cohere, which is also backed by Nvidia, purchases compute from CoreWeave. It seems like the money is just moving around if you follow the paper trail. All the roads seem to lead back to Nvidia, a U.S.-based company.

Do you see an issue with that? Is there a bubble brewing?

Angela Adam: I don't think I am able to comment on that question, but I think these types of structured deals are very prevalent in the AI industry. I cannot comment on your question regarding a bubble.

● (1150)

Vincent Ho: My next questions are for Ms. Gutiw.

You're a member of the AI strategy task force. Given that the government has announced over $1 billion in funding in the 2025 budget and hasn't even defined the term “sovereignty” adequately, are there any guardrails to that $1 billion to make sure that it doesn't go to multinational companies or end up being shipped out to subsidiaries of Nvidia that are just moving it around between companies?

Diane Gutiw: I believe that would probably be a question for the minister rather than for me. However, I know that there are recommendations, as we've discussed here today, on exactly why we need to define what we mean by sovereignty. If we're going to collaborate, we need to define what the benefit is to Canada. That should be part of how we build out our ecosystem.

In order to accelerate very quickly, there is a need to partner. There is no question that we need to collaborate, but we need to do it to our benefit, and as you said, we need to do it with guardrails.

Vincent Ho: As a member of the task force, do you agree that there should be some guardrails, that guardrails are important and that the Liberal government has to learn from its failures?

Diane Gutiw: I can't comment on the past actions of the Liberal government. As I said, that would be a question for the minister.

However, I know that there have been conversations as part of the consultation of the task force about clearly defining what we mean by sovereignty, clearly protecting what needs to be protected and making sure, as we define who we collaborate with, that we understand what the benefit is to Canada in doing that.

Vincent Ho: Thank you. That is all.

The Chair: We will now proceed to MP Jaczek for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Adam, I would like to understand a bit more about eStruxture Data Centers—for which you are senior vice-president—particularly your business model.

I understand that you're a Canadian-owned data centre provider. You have facilities in many centres across Canada. You serve nearly 1,000 clients, with a focus on enabling enterprise applications and supporting the digital economy.

Can you describe in any way why individuals, these clients, come to you as opposed to going perhaps to a college that might have an applied research focus, or a university? Have these people perhaps exhausted other options, so they come to you?

Angela Adam: Let me clarify our business model.

We are a co-location data centre provider, which means we build facilities and rent out space, power and cooling. This means the customers who already have their gear, their network appliances and their servers come and install them in our data centres. We do not touch their infrastructure. We don't own it. We don't have the right to see what is on it.

Generally, our customers own their infrastructure, and they're choosing between hosting it on site on their own premises and bringing it to a co-location data centre, such as ours, where we can guarantee uptime and security 24-7 so they don't have to worry about losing power and then losing the data on their servers or about not having their IT manager in the office when something happens. We take care of all of it, making sure that we give these companies 100% uptime.

Our customers would not generally be tapping into resources from a research institute or university because they own their own compute, and their workload would sit on their own gear.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: You don't vet these clients in any way on what their research focus is. You simply provide the premises. Is that correct?

Angela Adam: That is correct.

Obviously we have an established “know your customer” process where we don't really allow everybody and anybody to enter our facilities—we need to understand their business—but at the same time, no, we don't look too far into the type of technology they are working on or researching.

● (1155)

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you.

Dr. Gutiw, you've had an opportunity to express your opinion around sovereignty on a number of occasions. If you could give your best advice, what would sovereignty for AI look like from your perspective?

Diane Gutiw: What we need is clarity. The lack of definition for or clarity on what we mean by “sovereign” is causing confusion, as we've seen here in the conversations today. It's critical that we define it.

In my mind, there are things we must protect as Canadians—our culture, our data and our IP. If we're investing in research, how does that come to fruition and become a marketable solution that needs to be protected and retained as Canadian IP?

The same goes for talent. There are lots of very high salaries being offered outside Canada; however, people want to stay in Canada for the culture. We need to make sure we set up an ecosystem that allows us to retain our talent and allows people to stay in Canada and not be lured by larger salaries elsewhere. We don't want it to leave Canada.

To answer your question related to sovereignty, I think we need to very clearly define what we need to protect, and that can probably be settled fairly easily. If we are going to collaborate for the things we don't have and that we need assistance with, or if we want to leverage the best outside Canada to advance ourselves, we need to set that up in a way that makes the framework very clear so we understand what the benefit is to ourselves and that there's a benefit for the partner investing in Canada.

We've seen some fantastic investments that have grown Canadian talent within Canada with the assistance of industry from outside of Canada. I believe we need to focus on how we can attract people to do business in Canada and how we can attract our own talent to stay in Canada and move into this high-tech industry. Then it's about understanding how our jobs are going to look in the future. Where do we have gaps, and where can we attract people from elsewhere?

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

With that, I want to thank both of the witnesses for their important testimony on this new study we started today.

If there were any questions you were not able to respond to, you can always send in written answers. We will circulate them to members so we take them into consideration while drafting the report.

With that, this panel has come to an end.

We will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so we can have the witnesses for the second panel join us.

The meeting is suspended.

● (1155)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1205)

● (1210)

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

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

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you're not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel: floor, English or French. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For the second panel, I would like to welcome our three witnesses.

Today, we are joined by Eric Kolaczyk, professor, Computational and Data Systems Institute, McGill University. He is joining us by video conference.

We are also joined by Mr. Françoys Labonté, chief executive officer of the Computer Research Institute of Montreal. He's here in person.

Our third witness for today is Mr. Hugo Larochelle, scientific director, representing Mila, the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute. He joins us by video conference.

I would like to welcome all three witnesses. Each of you will have five minutes for your opening remarks, and then we will proceed to the rounds of questioning.

We will start with Professor Eric Kolaczyk.

Please go ahead. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Eric Kolaczyk (Director, Computational and Data Systems Institute, McGill University, As an Individual): Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

My name is Eric Kolaczyk. I'm a professor of mathematics and statistics at McGill University, and I'm the founding director of McGill's Computational and Data Systems Institute, known as CDSI. I was previously the director of a similar institute in the U.S.

In building and maintaining these institutes, I have come to believe strongly in their important role in connecting, complementing and amplifying the investments that universities and governments make in research and education around artificial intelligence. University-based institutes continue to foster and enable an agile ecosystem for Canadian AI by supporting cross-disciplinary research collaboration and a talent pipeline that today is very much in transition.

Conventional academic structures have evolved into disciplinary silos that often unintentionally inhibit interdisciplinary collaboration. Data-driven research, such as AI, has crosscutting implications that ignore these artificial partitions. Institutes like CDSI address the challenge of communicating across disciplines by intentionally and strategically breaking down silos and bridging divides.

Within the university, they create space for developing shared understandings for fundamental questions and applications while providing seed funding to actively develop solutions. Externally, they provide a clear point of contact for industry partners, government bodies and community organizations seeking to engage academic expertise and the robust university talent pipeline. Canada's investments in university-based institutes are vital for them to continue promoting interdisciplinary collaboration within academic institutions and with external partners.

There is a growing need for tools and training that support responsible engagement, necessitating that researchers and subject matter experts from outside conventional AI-related disciplines engage fruitfully with those within. Currently, Canada's ability to develop such socially responsible and context-aware solutions is limited. Institutes bridge this gap by providing training programs and by facilitating partnerships that make data, computing and systems accessible to students and researchers, regardless of discipline. Investing in such programs is essential for democratizing AI research and resources, which will then lead to equitable outcomes in AI adoption in broader society.

Additionally, translating fundamental research into real-world context is an ongoing challenge at the research policy interface. Decision-making requires clear, credible insights from academia to inform everyday questions around AI adoption, yet even when exceptional research occurs, it often remains confined within its academic boundaries.

Institutes serve as translators between multiple sectors by supporting university research alignment with national priorities and industry demands, all while helping policy-makers identify and then navigate complex applications. Institutes establish and maintain channels for regular dialogue that reinforces knowledge exchange between Canada's AI expertise across sectors.

Finally, Canadian researchers make important advancements that are dependent on increased visibility to provide a broader impact. Across Canada, researchers produce exceptional work, but the limited infrastructure available to support knowledge translation and mobilization can impede its adoption into decision-making processes.

Institutes amplify and champion the university's voice by representing Canadian scholarship on local, national and global stages. They make sure that Canada's investments in AI are producing cutting-edge technology while contributing to thoughtful, inclusive dialogue about the role of AI in society. Sustained support for institutes is essential for ensuring that publicly funded research is informed by and contributes to public dialogue and policy development.

Empowering institutes like CDSI that bridge disciplines, that lower barriers to access and that amplify research results for greater impact is fundamental to Canada's position at the cutting edge of AI. It is imperative that Canada's robust AI research community remain a trusted partner to maintain the country's position as a global leader in responsible and open artificial intelligence.

Thank you for your time.

● (1215)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to Mr. Labonté.

Please go ahead. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

Françoys Labonté (Chief Executive Officer, Computer Research Institute of Montréal): Madam Chair, members of the committee, my name is Françoys Labonté, and I'm appearing before you today on behalf of the Computer Research Institute of Montréal, or CRIM.

Let me begin my remarks by talking about the recent report from the Council of Canadian Academies, published on November 18, 2025, which notes that Canada's performance in innovation has steadily declined to the point where the maintenance of our quality of life has been called into question. Rapid and accelerated adoption of artificial intelligence by our businesses is seen as a promising avenue for turning things around. We're referring to innovation here as the conversion of scientific and technological advances into socio-economic value. Innovation isn't synonymous with “new” or “unprecedented”. It represents the culmination of a rigorous and systematic industrialization process through which the performance, reliability and viability of a potential new product or process are validated in real-world contexts. This industrialization aspect is poorly understood in Canada, and its critical importance is underestimated. Industrialization is a profession in its own right, and it requires distinct approaches, skills and resources.

CRIM is a non-profit organization that has been making a significant contribution to Quebec's research and innovation ecosystem for 40 years. Since its inception, CRIM has distinguished itself with its expertise in artificial intelligence. CRIM arose from university and industry players identifying the need to create a neutral player to bridge their two worlds, a player dedicated to industrialization.

Industrialization relies primarily on experimental development activities, that is, systematic work that draws on the knowledge acquired through research and practical experience and that produces additional knowledge intended to create new products or processes or improve existing ones. CRIM is a research and technology organization, or RTO. This category of players is very common in Europe and other industrialized countries, where a large part of activities are devoted to industrialization through experimental development.

A recent study by the European Association of RTOs, or EARTO, found that the most innovative countries in the world devote a much higher proportion of their public investments to research, development, innovation and experimental development.

If Canadian businesses are going to adopt artificial intelligence, or AI, in an accelerated and widespread way, they need to significantly enhance their experimental development activities. Our tax system, which aims to support experimental development, and which is one of the most generous in the world, simply isn't meeting that objective, particularly because of its complexity, restrictive criteria and unpredictability.

It's important to better support and enhance the activities of players such as CRIM, artificial intelligence practitioners who are made available to businesses to contribute to their artificial intelligence projects and transfer the knowledge and practical experience that has accumulated over time so that businesses can accelerate their adoption of artificial intelligence. As a player on the ground that works with a large number of businesses, CRIM is well aware of the diverse and evolving needs of businesses, particularly SMEs.

I can give you very concrete examples during the question period.

Industrialization activities are generally well managed by large businesses, but they're much less accessible for the majority of Canadian businesses, most of which are SMEs. The government needs to provide more than just financial support for this phase. It needs to support a critical mass of players in this profession. That has to become a priority for all governments, including Canada's, if we want to ensure that our businesses will succeed. In its report, the Council of Canadian Academies called for action by suggesting radical changes to the strategies that have been implemented in the past.

We propose promoting down-to-earth, pragmatic measures that address the proven needs of businesses and that focus on wealth creation. Canada needs to implement consistent government action that aligns with what the world's best are doing when it comes to innovation. RTO players, such as CRIM, are ideally suited to support businesses in their AI adoption process. To be fully effective, RTOs also need to rely on the support of their government. Canada already has many driving forces in place, and we have all the tools we need to succeed. It's a matter of properly coordinating the various players' activities and giving them the means to carry out the missions that have been entrusted to them. This is an essential pivot.

● (1220)

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Labonté.

Now we will proceed to Mr. Larochelle.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

[*Translation*]

Hugo Larochelle (Scientific Director, Mila - Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute): Thank you.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for your invitation to appear before you today as part of this important study.

[*English*]

My name is Hugo Larochelle, and I am the new scientific director of Mila, the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, headquartered in Montreal. Mila is the world's largest academic deep learning research centre—a community of over 1,500-strong researchers—bringing together researchers and experts dedicated to scientific excellence and the responsible development of AI.

Before I begin my remarks, I want to mention that I'm appearing virtually today, as I'm in beautiful Banff, Alberta, speaking at a CIFAR workshop. It's part of the program that was set up by Dr. Geoffrey Hinton over 20 years ago and that supported Canada's critical AI research early on. It's fitting for me to make these remarks right here as we continue to discuss how to continue to ensure our ecosystem is thriving.

I want to offer a bit of context about my background and how it aligns with Mila's broader perspective. At my core, I'm a professor and researcher, driven by the pursuit of new frontiers and discoveries in AI. At the same time, I maintain a deep interest in industry and the real-world adoption of AI technologies.

Before joining Mila, my company, Whetlab, was acquired by Twitter, and I later went on to lead Google DeepMind's Montreal lab. These experiences have given me a unique vantage point on the direct path from scientific breakthroughs to industry impact, and on what it takes for research institutes to continually strengthen this pipeline. Thank you for creating this opportunity to contribute.

[*Translation*]

I want to start by recognizing the leadership that the federal government has shown so far. Mila welcomes the Government of Canada's continued investments within budget 2025 to strengthen Canada's leadership in artificial intelligence, with a strong focus on research excellence, talent development and computing infrastructure, all of which are foundational pillars of Canada's artificial intelligence ecosystem.

We particularly welcome the $1-billion investment in the accelerated research chairs initiative, which has the potential to attract transformative talent to various fields in Canada. We are pleased that the government recognizes the gaps in funding for start-ups, which continue to be a major issue for artificial intelligence start-ups and innovation in general. Those investments demonstrate that this government understands that artificial intelligence is not an isolated sector but a fast-emerging foundation for our future prosperity and security.

However, I'm here to discuss what is needed to transform those investments into sustainable artificial intelligence sovereignty. The global context has changed dramatically. We're no longer simply developing our capabilities; we're in a global race that's extremely competitive.

[*English*]

To maintain our position and to ensure that Canadian discoveries benefit Canada, we must act quickly on two main fronts. First, we must secure our talent immediately. Canada's early global lead in AI was built on the Canada CIFAR AI chairs program. It allowed us to repatriate top minds and retain rising stars, but that advantage is currently at risk. We are witnessing an unprecedented global war for talent. Tech giants are offering recruitment packages valued in the hundreds of millions. Nations like the U.S., France and the U.A.E. are aggressively deploying sovereign funds to poach our best minds.

The current funding cycle for the specific AI chairs program sunsets in 2026. In the academic world, recruitment and retention decisions are made nine to 12 months in advance. That means our top researchers are deciding right now whether their future is in Montreal, Edmonton, San Francisco or Paris. While the government seems dedicated to renewing these chairs, time is of the essence. We therefore strongly urge the government to commit to the long-term renewal and expansion of the AI chairs program as soon as possible. We need to send a signal to the world that Canada is a permanent home for top AI talent.

Second, we need to evolve how we fund research for increased strategic impact. While the chairs program supports individual brilliance, we must introduce a complementary layer of funding: directed research funding for labs and teams, separate from individual chairs. Currently, our funding models favour individual curiosity-driven research. This is vital, but it's not enough to solve massive, complex problems. We need the agility to mobilize directed teams: groups of researchers focused on specific mission-oriented goals.

Establishing this funding mechanism for directed teams would allow us to achieve two critical objectives simultaneously. First is creating conditions to work on root node breakthroughs. We need to mobilize teams towards foundational challenges whose resolution generates cascading effects across entire domains. An example of that would be DeepMind's AlphaFold, which has led to the unlocking of a lot of opportunities for the pharmaceutical discovery. Second, we need to align research with national priorities. Crucially, such a mechanism would allow the government to direct research power towards Canadian challenges.

● (1225)

Canada has laid the foundation. We built the ecosystem the rest of the world is still trying to copy, but the window to maintain and capitalize on that advantage is quickly closing. By renewing our commitment to talent, introducing directed funding for mission-oriented research teams and fixing the early-stage commercialization gap, we can ensure that we do not just produce breakthrough research but convert it into industry and societal benefits.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thanks to all the witnesses for their opening remarks.

Now we will start our first round of questioning with MP DeRidder.

Please go ahead. You will have six minutes.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you.

Thank you, everybody, for coming today.

My question is for you, Hugo.

Today we've heard over and over that we don't even have a definition in this current government of what Canadian sovereignty means for AI innovation. We have no definition of what to protect and no definition of what we want to retain, with both our innovation and our talent, but the money seems to be flowing. There are already hundreds of millions of dollars being spent. It seems to me that this government is running with their eyes closed.

Do you believe there are guardrails or plans in place to ensure that the almost $1.3 billion in innovation funding goes to tech companies in Kitchener, for example, for us to retain our innovation and talent instead of leaving it to foreign entities that are taking our innovation and talent?

Hugo Larochelle: I'm not aware of the exact the plan for how that money will be spent. I think a lot of general ideas would probably be recognized, one of them being compute infrastructure that we more fully control for certain areas.

I mentioned the importance of talent. I think this is where everything starts. It is one way we play a big role in having a strategy for our sovereignty. That's about making sure we are training the future workers of our digital economy here, which will be highly based on AI.

Those two seem like important components, but I'm sure—this ecosystem is rich—there are a number of perspectives that might inform exactly what we mean by this. Those would be two key ones that I would advocate for.

Kelly DeRidder: In your experience, how much infrastructure do we currently control?

Hugo Larochelle: I can speak largely to the research being done within the walls of Mila by our professors and students. We have a good amount of infrastructure that is locally based. Some of it is based at Université Laval in Quebec City. Some of it we have in Montreal. Also, sometimes our researchers and students will use some of the cloud providers for their compute. It depends a lot on their needs and what they're trying to achieve.

Generally speaking, this makes sense to me. Depending on the specific needs of what you're trying to achieve and its context, sometimes you want something local, and sometimes something in the cloud will be sufficient. It depends a lot on that.

● (1230)

Kelly DeRidder: I've noticed, too, that we have amazing talent coming out of Kitchener Centre. The thing is, we educate very well where I'm from, but everybody seems to be leaving and going to Silicon Valley.

What can the government put in place to ensure we retain our talent, especially in tech centres like Kitchener Centre?

Hugo Larochelle: It's a great question. I think about it a lot. I think a lot about it specifically from the point of view of the students we're training. It's about making sure they have opportunities at the level of their talent.

If they're looking for an academic career as a professor, I think this is where the CIFAR chair program is one key element. That is why I emphasized it in my remarks. It's about making sure that as academics, as scientists, we really make sure to provide them the opportunity at the level of their expertise.

For those who might be more interested in applying AI and building tools that are used by people, it means making sure that we're equipping them with the tools to start their own company, for instance. This is something at Mila that we're thinking a lot about these days. We have this idea of a venture scientist program that we're currently building. As the scientific director, my hope is that this program will make sure of this for our students.

Some of them might decide to go to universities and such, but some of them might be interested in potentially building something from scratch and building a company. I just want this program to ensure that for those who decide not to build a start-up, it's not because they didn't feel equipped enough to understand how to do this kind of work and to approach this kind of challenge. I would double down on that as well.

Kelly DeRidder: I agree with supporting start-ups. Again, we do a very good job at incubating in Kitchener Centre, but commercialization doesn't happen here in Canada. We don't have an environment where venture capitalists want to invest. We have too high a tax burden and the regulatory burdens are too high.

Although I agree with incubating these start-ups, what can this government do better to make sure that they can also commercialize, stay here in Canada and not leave?

Hugo Larochelle: I'll speak from, perhaps, some of the conversations I've had, including with local investors. I think one thing I've heard a number of times is that access to pre-seed and seed funding is potentially lacking. This is not something I've experienced myself, but I've heard it in our community. I know there's some of that in the budget, which I think is a good step.

Kelly DeRidder: I think there's money for pre-seed and seed, but it's when you get into B and C funding that venture capitalists are too risk-averse here in Canada.

Again, what do you think the government could do to make it a better environment for when start-ups go to commercialization—which is B and C funding—so that capitalists want to actually invest here in Canada?

Hugo Larochelle: I could maybe speculate, but because I'm not a venture capitalist, I can't speak directly to that experience. I'm familiar with Radical Ventures in Toronto, for instance, which has a lot of success. I feel like I don't have a fully informed perspective on that.

The Chair: The time is up for MP DeRidder.

Now we will proceed to MP McKelvie for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Jennifer McKelvie (Ajax, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question is for Professor Kolaczyk. I think it was you who mentioned that you had come from the U.S. Is that correct? Okay.

In our budget, we have funding for the recruitment of top international researchers. I'm wondering what we should be looking for. What might be the challenges we face as we try to do this in the AI space? Are there gaps we want to be attracting for AI, for example?

The Chair: It was six minutes. I'm sorry. I said five minutes.

Eric Kolaczyk: Yes, I come from the United States. My wife is from Quebec. It's been a pleasure that we moved three years ago to Montreal, but I spent 30 years of my career prior in the U.S., much of it in the Boston area.

The U.S. is a highly competitive ecosystem in and of itself, but I think we have a few advantages from the Canadian perspective. I find that the interaction, the collaboration, here is much greater than it is in the United States. I think it's much more “dog eat dog” in the U.S., and it's been a delight to come here and find that, for the most part, when you roll up your sleeves, you have people next to you with their sleeves rolled up as well.

In the academic environment, particularly in the last six months, things have become rather fraught, rather tense. There's a lot of uncertainty. There's a lot of concern, particularly when you're talking about concepts like EDI. A lot of where the AI and society interface is now working is at that forefront of responsible AI.

There is really a moment of opportunity for recruitment to flow much more to Canada's advantage than it may have even, say, six months ago. I know certainly efforts are being made at the university level. I think the more that governments at both provincial and federal levels can help accentuate and support that, the better we will do in attracting AI talent.

● (1235)

Jennifer McKelvie: Thank you.

My next question is for you, Dr. Larochelle, and it's fitting that you're at a CIFAR meeting right now. CIFAR connects the best Canadian minds with the best minds internationally.

What do you see as our potential for attracting great minds in AI? Are there particular gaps we should be looking to fill?

Hugo Larochelle: It's a great idea to try to leverage that network, indeed. Once we go through funding like that and these specialized chairs, we can easily leverage the fact that we have personal connections with academics who are stellar and recognized around the world and can make them comfortable in understanding that we have a really collaborative ecosystem, as Eric mentioned. I think this really stands out, generally speaking, when we speak of our ecosystem of research.

I would add that CIFAR has been involved through the ICFAR chair, which has meant having some of our professors training Ph.D. students, some of whom might have left. I think going through our network of alumni is also a potential win, which we might be able to attract....

Maybe this relates less to CIFAR, but I was working at Google before. I decided that I wanted to take that experience and work for a Canadian organization, Mila, which I felt was the foundation of everything we're attempting to do and are doing in AI, certainly in Quebec and as a contribution to Canada.

There might be other American companies that have researchers who might be interested in contributing in this way, potentially joining academia as well, so I think there are a few sources we could try to leverage.

Jennifer McKelvie: When you go back to that room, maybe you can make that top of mind for all the great minds you are meeting with.

I worked at CIFAR in 2017. I helped with some of the scientific editing of the pan-Canadian proposal.

My next question for you is, what's next? We've had a successful eight years. The government is engaging right now on what the next steps should be. In your mind, as a top AI researcher and part of the CIFAR program, what are some things we should be looking to bring to the forefront as we move into the next stage of this work?

Hugo Larochelle: I would say to confirm the CIFAR chair program is continuing. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, it is quite top of mind. If we can take action quickly, then we're on more solid ground in being able to approach other academics. Knowing how many other CIFAR chairs we might have in order to attract more people, in addition to these specialized chairs, would be very valuable.

That's what's top of mind for me today.

Jennifer McKelvie: The programs I managed were not for AI projects. I was on quantum. Actually, we organized a seminar probably very similar to yours in Banff.

How are you engaging with the quantum group? Can we use some of the learning we had around AI with the pan-Canadian strategy? Should we be trying to move forward with more of a deliberate pan-Canadian quantum strategy that could also foster collaboration between your groups?

Hugo Larochelle: That's a great question. Quantum is less in my area, so I can't speak to it in the informed way I speak to AI.

I will say that at Mila, we have a number of researchers who have collaborations with people with expertise in quantum. There is potentially an intersection here that's quite unique given our ecosystem. This is something that I think AI institutes can help out with a lot.

The way we structure our members, our professors—

● (1240)

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up for MP McKelvie. Maybe you can come back to that in the second round.

Hugo Larochelle: Sure.

The Chair: We will now proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to welcome the witnesses who are with us today for this second hour of study.

My first question is for you, Mr. Labonté. The “State of Science, Technology and Innovation in Canada 2025” report commissioned by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada clearly states that Canada partly funds university research, but fails to convert that research into innovation, commercialize it and accrue economic benefits.

In your opinion, does the structural imbalance, meaning support for research that yields very few experimental developments, explain why Canada often recognizes good ideas but hardly ever turns them into products, Canadian intellectual property or actual benefits for our businesses?

Françoys Labonté: That is pretty much the theme of my presentation.

In Europe, where there are research and technology organizations, or RTOs, innovation and performance ecosystems are often considered three-pronged ecosystems instead of two-pronged. There is academia and industry, but there are also the RTOs, organizations that connect science with industrial needs. These organizations receive public funding because many promising scientific advances are still too risky and there is still too much uncertainty. That is the purpose of the RTOs.

People often misunderstand, but we always tend to say that the challenge in developing a viable product is commercialization, meaning that we might not know how to sell it. However, the real challenge is aligning a product to market needs, which is very different. We often tend to support technological advances and think that the market needs every invention, when market needs are often quite different from what we might think.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I will seize on the fact that you talked about international comparisons. Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea and the United States strongly support intermediary industrial research centres. Even the Council of Canadian Academies report, which I mentioned earlier, states that the continuum is essential to productivity.

Why do you think Canada has never set up a network like that?

For 40 years, Quebec has had successful models such as the Centre de recherche informatique de Montréal and the National Optics Institute. We also have the CCTTs, the college centres for technology transfer.

Why do you think that has never been implemented in Canada?

Françoys Labonté: In Quebec, there are stakeholders like the Centre de recherche informatique de Montréal, or CRIM, the National Optics Institute that works on photonic and quantum optics, Corem that works on critical minerals, and FP Innovation. These stakeholders have been around for 30 or 40 years and are doing their jobs.

However, for them to be recognized as a class of stakeholders and for their role to be recognized, it is up to me and other stakeholders to launch a crusade to make their key role understood. These are existing stakeholders, but if the terms and conditions and programs were adjusted to their reality, they could have a much greater impact.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: The same report points out that the hallmark of federal policies is to spread resources too thinly, rather than to provide strategic support for the best-performing clusters.

You talked about stakeholders in Quebec. I would like to name one that is trying to fill the crucial space between academia and industry, which is Axelys. They were here at committee a couple of weeks ago. I commend and congratulate them for their work. They told us with great pride that they had a transfer rate of nearly 90%. It is incredible to see how these people can work and achieve such results.

I'd like to hear your point of view. Are initiatives like Axelys the essential link that is still missing elsewhere in Canada?

Françoys Labonté: By happenstance, before I was at CRIM, I spent five years at the McGill University tech transfer office, so I understand the tech transfer business well. It's a critical link, but I would say it's also one of the riskiest paths to commercialization, because all the product, reliability, robustness and business model risks still exist at that stage.

Transferring for its own sake is one thing, but to have inventions that will go through the whole cycle, from developing a good idea in academia to making it a profitable and viable product that generates royalties, there are many other factors to consider.

● (1245)

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Speaking of profitability and economic outcomes, what you're doing works. The report commissioned by the Council of Canadian Academies points out that Canada is struggling to convert its research into economic benefits.

You have created 36 businesses, you have carried out more than 7,000 projects and you have generated economic spinoffs 9 to 12 times greater than the initial investment.

How do you explain that this model, which produces such significant results in Quebec, doesn't receive more support from the federal government?

Françoys Labonté: I don't have an answer to your question.

However, you have to understand a fairly important part of the model, which is that we are organizations that require a self-financing rate of at least 50%. It's more a question of the labour pool. Half of our revenue has to come from industrial contracts or other stakeholders, so we're close to market needs. Naturally, we can't anticipate and conduct as much exploratory research as academia does, but this connection means that, with the help of our expertise and our understanding of the problems, we bring about industrial successes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

With that, we will start our second round of questioning. We will begin with MP Mahal.

MP Mahal, please go ahead. You have five minutes.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to start with Professor Kolaczyk.

This is the second round of questioning. In our first round of questioning, two witnesses talked extensively about the need for infrastructure ecosystem sovereignty in AI research and retention in Canada. It's not that we are in political instability. We have a government that's been in power for the last 10 years. They're now heading into their 11th year. They are spending millions and millions of dollars when it comes to bureaucracy and when it comes to funding under the name of AI. We just heard from a previous witness that they gave over $250 million and signed an MOU with a U.S.-based firm. The purpose of that funding was to enhance SMEs in Canada.

In your testimony, you talked about how the collaboration in Canada is higher as compared with the U.S. and other models. What is lacking, in your opinion? If we have higher collaboration levels as compared with other jurisdictions, why are we not able to commercialize on AI or IP despite those higher levels?

Eric Kolaczyk: That's a great question. Thank you very much for it.

That question covers a lot of ground and a lot of time. I've only been here for three years; I don't go back 10 years, so I'm going to try to comment where I feel I have some experience.

The collaborations I was referring to were particularly at the academic level. The inclination to collaborate across institutions, both within the city of Montreal, for example, and across the country, is built into many of the funding calls I've seen here in a way that I feel is certainly not unheard of in the U.S. but is less common. That was the collaboration I was referring to.

On the challenges regarding the flow of funds that you were talking about earlier, I'm on the edge of where I can comment with any expertise, but it does seem to me that a catch-up game may need to be played here, in the sense that the U.S. has been developing their infrastructure and their relationships. Although Canada has been involved for 10 years, as you said, it may be that with the shifting landscapes, one needs to rethink how those flow, yet at the same time, these things can't be spun on a dime. The amount of infrastructure that the Googles, the AWSs and whatever else have is fairly substantial.

I think the important thing is to be talking about it, which we're doing here, obviously, and to begin thinking about how it might be actioned.

● (1250)

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Professor Larochelle, you said that you worked with Google and other MNCs, and now you've chosen to come back to Canada and work locally to promote the sovereignty we were talking about in the past session and this hour. The commercialization of breakthrough research and its conversion into industrialization are obviously lacking in Canada right now, so talent is moving to other jurisdictions. How can we do better on that? How can we make sure that all the Canadian wealth that is spent on research is actually converted into commercialization in Canada and stays in Canada?

Hugo Larochelle: Maybe I'll clarify that I have been in Montreal for the past eight years. When I was at Google, it was to open a team and lab here, something I thought was really important for creating opportunities for Canadians here. However, recently I became scientific director at Mila, three months ago.

My answer is similar to the one I gave before. This is related to making sure, broadly speaking, that we offer opportunities at the level of the talent and capability of the researchers who are based here.

Where I think we can seize more opportunities is in the area of start-ups. This is why more available funding would help those who are motivated to use their research to build new tools and products and create opportunities to put more intelligence into our society, putting this technology into the hands of various parts or spheres of our society.

I think there's something here. While we do that, we should make sure that we continue producing local talent. That is something we need to maintain, and then make sure that beyond university research or academic research—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but time is up for MP Mahal.

With that, we will go to MP Noormohamed for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

I'm going to start with Professor Kolaczyk.

I think one of the things we've been trying to emphasize over the course of the last little while about the urgency of support for the AI sector and the quantum sector in Canada is to make sure there is support for an ecosystem, support for researchers and support for the ability to work in partnership.

I'm going to go to Monsieur Larochelle on this, because I think it's important to get the Mila perspective.

This budget contains hundreds of millions of dollars for AI. It contains over $1 billion to ensure there is a capital ecosystem that will work to support this sector. There are all kinds of incentives to keep Canadian innovators in this country to do work in the sectors that you represent.

I want to point out that all the Conservatives in this room voted against the budget, which in fact gave support to every single one of these initiatives, every single one of the supports the industry needs in order to grow and thrive and stay in Canada.

What would be the consequences if the resources being put in to support the AI sector were not available to Canadian researchers and not available to Canadian companies?

Perhaps you can start, Professor Kolaczyk, and then we'll go to Monsieur Larochelle.

Eric Kolaczyk: In terms of the consequences, we're witnessing a moment now where what we mean by AI research has become extremely and necessarily broad. We spent well over a decade on the most recent iterations of what we have now in deep learning—ChatGPT and all of that—but it's where AI and society meet that so much of the research has to happen.

This is why at our institute, for example, we have what we call the McGill Collaborative for AI and Society. We are specifically focusing on nurturing that interface. This means that it is about not only the technical people, but the lawyers and the people studying farming, governance and policy.

I think it's important when we think about the flow of funds, as you're talking about, to realize that it is a highly networked ecosystem with multiple layers, and it's important that those different layers get nourished in ways that allow them to interact so we get a “whole is greater than the sum of the parts” reaction. I think, ultimately, what we're looking for is very much getting a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts.

● (1255)

Taleeb Noormohamed: Indeed, then, it was quite irresponsible for the Conservatives to vote against those very permissions.

Perhaps I can now turn to Monsieur Larochelle.

Hugo Larochelle: The way I would approach my answer is to specifically think about the CIFAR AI chairs program and what I think could happen if it wasn't renewed and we didn't continue investing in our talent.

It is quite clear to me that we are at risk of seeing some of our best talent move away, even more than what might be our concern today. That means researchers, and certainly graduate Ph.D. students who perhaps wouldn't end up in academia but would end up in industry. This is the future of our workforce, not just in technology but in many other spheres of our society, because as Eric mentioned, we'll see AI in many different parts of our economy or the way we function given the solutions we provide generally in our society.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I will continue with you.

Our colleagues opposite noted that perhaps it was either irresponsible or not appropriate for government to allocate these funds without having an AI strategy in place first. Can you talk about the urgency of why putting those resources into supporting the ecosystem was so important and why having a 30-day sprint to get a strategy done with thought leaders in this space, knowing the commitments the government was prepared to make, was important? Could you share your thoughts on that?

Hugo Larochelle: The main reason to move quickly is that, as we're getting to the end of the current phase of the CIFAR AI chairs program, we need a sense of what is coming after so we can work on recruiting some of the next professors. As I mentioned, that process takes some time, so having some certainty.... The current chair awardees are wondering whether they'll still have a research chair in four or five years. That's why it is quite important.

I think these chairs, generally speaking, are a pretty robust program. It's proved itself for a long time, so I don't think there's a lot of risk in approving it right now. It's there to fund individuals we can already trust, because the current chairs have a track record of innovation. That's why I think we can move quickly.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

We will now end this panel with two and a half minutes for MP Blanchette-Joncas.

Please go ahead. You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would simply like to notify you that I would like to move the following motion, which has been handed out to my colleagues, as well as to you:

> Given the mandate of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, that the Committee invite the Minister of Industry, Mélanie Joly, and the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, Evan Salomon, to appear for at least two (2) hours each to discuss their mandate and other related matters; that these meetings take place no later than December 11, 2025; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House following the meeting.

The reason I am moving this motion is that on November 18—

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

You have moved a motion. I want to make it clear that, in order to have a debate on it, we need 48 hours of notice, because this motion is not related directly to the study of the topic today and to the notice of meeting that was issued in regard to MP Baldinelli's motion on AI, which was passed unanimously by the committee. I am saying this because the motion involves discussing the mandate and other related matters of both the Minister of Industry and the Minister for Artificial Intelligence, and it is asking for a separate report to be tabled in the House of Commons.

That is my ruling. We need 48 hours' notice, as this motion is not directly related to the study of the motion right now.

Go ahead, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I am obviously interested in finding alternatives with my colleagues. We could amend the motion.

Otherwise, you will understand that I will have to challenge your decision and then ask my committee colleagues for a vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have given my ruling. You can challenge it and we can have a vote.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

We will vote on whether the ruling of the chair is sustained.

(Ruling of the chair overturned: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: We are on debate of the motion.

Go ahead, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would now like to talk about my reasons for tabling this motion.

On November 18, the Council of Canadian Academies, or CCA, tabled its report entitled “The State of Science, Technology and Innovation in Canada 2025” and, of course, of artificial intelligence. The report confirms that the country is experiencing a crisis of innovation, productivity and technological adoption.

Our committee is also conducting a study on artificial intelligence and preparing recommendations for submission to the House of Commons. In my opinion, we would absolutely need to hear from the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, but also the Minister of Industry. These appearances would take place before December 11, the end of parliamentary business and the last meeting of the committee, so that the House can, among other things, be given a serious, complete report.

I would therefore ask my colleagues to adopt this motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

[*Translation*]

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, the minister's name is spelled wrong in the motion. His name is “Solomon”, S-O-L-O-M-O-N. We should correct the mistake.

Second, on the Liberal side, we would be willing to pass this motion, but there are two things to consider first.

First of all, we already know that the Minister of Artificial Intelligence will be appearing before us on December 3. Then, we could welcome the Minister of Industry, but we mustn't forget that the G7 meeting is taking place in the last week of the House's proceedings. I believe it starts on December 8. We obviously have to choose a date together that works for the committee, but also for the minister.

[*English*]

Third of all, we'd be happy to support the motion, but it's unclear why there should be a report back to the House on the basis of the questioning of ministers on mandate, which is outside of practice. If I could understand the logic there, it would be super helpful.

As I said, we are willing to work to get a date for Minister Joly. She's obviously with the G7, so it's going to be important for her to be there. We already have a date with Mr. Solomon, so it's kind of moot.

The Chair: Thank you.

Actually, toward the end I had wanted to inform everybody that the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation is available to appear on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, for one hour, along with Associate Deputy Minister Mark Schaan, who would then stay for the second hour. This was the response we received, so everyone is okay to schedule the meeting.

Go ahead, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to address some of my colleague's concerns.

First, I would like to tell him that I spoke in person with Minister Joly. I told her that I wanted to get answers to questions about the budget and the strategic directions. My team sent an initial email on November 12 to Minister Joly's team. She had since become the Minister of Industry. In fact, the word “science” is no longer part of her title, and we really wonder why, because we never got an explanation or even an opportunity to ask her about it.

Of course, we know that the minister is a very busy person. However, last week, we followed up with her team to ask if it was possible to hold the meeting. We haven't even received a read confirmation for our emails. Technology is a good thing; it allows us to know whether or not people are reading our emails. As a result, we have two pieces of evidence that, even for a fellow MP, it is impossible to get information from the minister's office.

As a parliamentarian, and as a member and vice-chair of this committee, I am concerned about the situation. I think it's relevant to want to shed light on the strategic directions, investments or “non-investments” contained in the last budget, but also on the issue of artificial intelligence, which I think is a very legitimate issue, since that's what we're studying today.

Madam Chair, you explained that Minister Solomon would appear, and that's true, but only for one hour. The motion proposes that he appear for two hours.

That's all the background for why I want my colleagues to support the motion. I would like us to be able to get answers to our concerns, inquiries and questions, but also those of the people following us online through their cell phones or computers.

● (1305)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

Before we get into further debate, I really want to thank the witnesses who are here for this panel. We will continue this meeting and will deal with this motion, so you can leave if you desire. Thanks for your appearance before the committee.

In regard to your question about the minister's appearance for one hour, we sent in the request for two hours, but the response I received is what I told everybody. We can always make a request, and it is up to the ministers to let us know.

We have MP Jaczek on the list, and then we will come to MP Baldinelli.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Madam Chair, the part of Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas's motion that I find extremely puzzling is the last phrase: “and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House following the meeting.” I don't understand how that's relevant. Surely, reports from this committee to the House relate to studies that we are doing.

I would move, at the very least, to suggest that we strike that piece of the recommendation.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Jaczek.

Can you please reread the amendment you have proposed? Now we have amendment on the floor, and the clerk was not able to get the last part of it.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I would simply strike the last phrase and would end the motion, as a preliminary amendment, with "no later than December 11, 2025".

The Chair: Now we have an amendment on the floor, as proposed by MP Jaczek, and we will deal with the amendment first. The amendment is to end the motion after "December 11, 2025" and delete "and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House following the meeting."

We are now dealing with the amendment.

Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I obviously support my colleague's amendment. I would only note that I have an amendment forthcoming, which would also deal with the December 11 date. The challenge is that Minister Joly is with the G7 until December 10.

The Chair: Now we are on the amendment.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm just pointing out that there are a couple of ways we could deal with it. One is to have one larger amendment, or we could deal with it, anyway.

The Chair: Okay.

Is there any discussion on the amendment proposed by MP Jaczek?

We have MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, is it possible to suspend the committee for a minute? We would like to validate the information.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

The meeting is suspended.

● (1305)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1315)

The Chair: I call the meeting to order. I'll request that all members take their seats.

We suspended the meeting. Before that, we were on the amendment proposed by MP Jaczek.

Is there any debate on it?

Go ahead, MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleagues.

Quickly, on removing the entire line that's been proposed by my colleague, it's not so much about having recommendations in there, but I would still suggest that, following our meeting with the ministers, the committee report its findings back to the House. I think that should still be included—not so much recommendations, but that based on testimony and what we hear, we make a report and then present it in the House.

The Chair: We'll go to MP Blanchette-Joncas and then to MP McKelvie.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to explain why we made that clarification in the motion I tabled. Obviously, in the case of Minister Solomon, the objective is to invite him as part of the study, but in the case of Minister Joly, we would like to make sure that our questions and the things we want explained are presented to the House.

We don't necessarily want to do a complete study on the subject, but I think it's important that what is communicated here, in committee, be then reported to the House, as happens most of the time, so that the government can respond.

That's our goal.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

MP McKelvie, go ahead.

Jennifer McKelvie: I'm very confused. MP Baldinelli just...and maybe I can ask him.

Madam Chair, are we allowed to ask questions?

The Chair: We are debating the amendment. He gave his comments on the amendment, so please go ahead.

Jennifer McKelvie: Is this within the AI study or is this separate?

Tony Baldinelli: It's separate, if you read the motion.

The Chair: All the comments should be addressed through the chair and not directly.

Jennifer McKelvie: With the comment you just made about recommendations and the testimony you're hearing, it sounded like it was more part of the AI study. Minister Solomon will be—

● (1320)

Tony Baldinelli: It's those two witnesses.

Jennifer McKelvie: Minister Solomon is reporting back through the AI study and will be here, so I would think all of that would be combined into what comes out of this study.

The Chair: Just to clarify, before we get into further debate, right now we are debating the motion that has been proposed by MP Blanchette-Joncas, which asks for a separate committee report with findings and recommendations for the House following this particular meeting. This is what the motion is asking for.

MP Jaczek proposed an amendment to delete this line, but as the motion is, it is asking for a report separate from the AI report.

Tony Baldinelli: The meeting will be separate. It will be to discuss their mandates as well.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm confused about a couple of things.

One is that I understand Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas wanted to discuss more than just mandates. Can we get clarity on that?

The other thing is this: Is the intention to propose one report for each of the ministers or one report for both of the ministers? I'm wondering what the intention of that report is, because ordinarily—and I stand to be corrected—whenever there's been the opportunity to question ministers on mandate, there hasn't been a report that goes back to the House on the Q and A for that. I'm trying to figure that piece of it out.

The Chair: This motion asks for, as it says, a discussion about their mandate and other related matters.

MP Jaczek, go ahead.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: It sounds like this is a proposal for a whole new study on ministers' mandates and other related matters, whatever that is. Is it a completely separate study? Surely it's only reports of the committee on studies that get reported to the House.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to reassure my colleagues. As the motion states, the word “study” does not appear. I don't know why we're currently trying to say that a new study would be done, because the word “study” isn't in the motion. I understand that we may be trying other kinds of strategies, but I think my colleagues will have to reread the motion carefully. If they have any questions, I'm happy to answer them. Again, our goal is simply to be able to invite the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister Joly as part of this study. The information gathered from their testimony can be included in this study's report and in another report.

Every time we conduct studies here or witnesses appear, reports are prepared and presented to the House. Take, for instance, Canada's chief science advisor, who will be testifying here this week. The motion states that a report will also be presented to the House. I find it hard to understand today why we don't want to do what we usually do. It's important for us to be able to present the work of our committee to the House and to our colleagues, and for the government to be able to act on it as well.

In my opinion, it's also a matter of accountability on the part of all our colleagues. The government must also be able to follow up on our work in committee and respond to the reports we present to the House. That's how it usually works.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

Just to clarify, you asked for the government to respond, and as this motion stands, it is not asking the government to respond. I just wanted to let you know that.

Also, just to clarify again, I think there is a bit of unclarity based on this motion. I would like you to clarify whether this will be a separate report, because this motion asks for a separate report. It is not saying that these ministers' testimonies be included in the study of artificial intelligence. It is not asking that.

This motion is asking for a separate report, and this motion is asking for two hours each. That means two meetings: one with the Minister of Industry and one with the Minister of AI. I just want to clarify, for the information of all the members, what this motion means.

I have MP Noormohamed and then MP McKelvie.

● (1325)

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

I feel that it raises a couple of questions.

First, I heard my colleague say that he wanted Mr. Solomon to appear before the committee to discuss his mandate in the context of the study. If that's true, of course we can include it in the report to the House.

[*English*]

I don't really see any issue with that. If the ministers are appearing in the context of this study, of course that would appear in the context of the report we prepare. What I'm having difficulty understanding is, if we are inviting Minister Joly to come and want to do a separate piece on her piece, but we also want Minister Solomon to appear on things outside of this study on his mandate, are we now saying we want the appearance we have plus a separate appearance for him to come, and then to talk about different things alongside Madame Joly? There are a lot of different things going on here, so I think we need to understand a few things.

One is that I think everybody here, from all parties, wants Minister Solomon to appear. He's been keen to appear, and I'm sure he will enjoy being here with us to talk about work he is incredibly passionate about. He is getting ready for the G7. He's already given us a date for when he intends to appear and wishes to be here with us, so I think we have that squared away. I would imagine his testimony, if it is in the context of this study, which is what Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas initially suggested, will fall within the bounds of what we are trying to do in this study.

If we are now talking about a motion that is entirely separate from that, which also includes Minister Joly, I guess we would need a clear understanding, as a committee, of what we are trying to accomplish in that regard and how we see a report from ministers appearing on mandates—which I don't believe is generally done—being part of this conversation.

Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas brought up the chief science adviser, who is coming on Wednesday. The mandate and work of the chief science adviser is clearly in the context that was laid out in the motion, which required a response. The ways in which the question was asked and the appearance was posited to this committee contemplated exactly that: It contemplated a response from this committee that would then go to the House. That's what we all understood. If we are going to start getting into the business of having ministers appear on mandate and then start saying we need a response to the mandate, are we having a response in respect of the content of the mandate? Are we having a response in respect of the response a minister has to their mandate? Are we just giving our opinions as to whether or not we agree with the mandate itself?

This is a committee that, in my view, thus far has done incredibly rigorous work. We've managed to work on some fairly complicated things, in the main, without playing a whole lot of “silly bugger” and get some good work done. However, I'm trying to understand what the intention would be. If it is simply, as I think we all understand, the idea that Minister Solomon appear in the context of this study to do his work, that's great; let's do that. If it's a separate appearance in respect of other things outside of the scope of this study, that's great; let's talk about it in that context.

Minister Joly's appearance is clearly outside the context of this study, as Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas has noted. It has nothing to do with AI—or does it? I don't know. If it has nothing to do with it, then clearly it's separate and unrelated to all of this. If that is the case, are we having Minister Solomon appear in the context of his mandate within the context of this study, or outside of the context of this study but in the context of his mandate? I think we need to be clear about what we are asking people to do.

To go back to the point about the national science adviser, I just want to make sure we're abundantly clear. The idea that we would ask questions of the national science adviser and then posit a response on the basis of that makes perfect sense. If not, let's get some clarity as a group. If we're going to figure out how we keep doing things together, which I think we certainly can, let's be clear about what we're trying to get done through these motions.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Noormohamed.

I have a good list of speakers. We'll go next to MP McKelvie, and then to Mr. Ho, MP DeRidder and MP Jaczek.

MP McKelvie, go ahead.

Jennifer McKelvie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I share the concerns that my colleague has raised. We have Minister Solomon coming soon within the context of the AI study. There will be a report that will synthesize what we're hearing from witnesses.

We have lots of witnesses we want to hear from between now and the end of the study. This study, I think, was proposed by the Conservatives as one of their key objectives. I don't think we want to take away time from the witnesses we have coming in. I think we have to be respectful of their time—give them lots of time to get here.

I also think we have to be respectful of the international commitments that the ministers have with other countries. That falls very much in line with what we want to accomplish with science in this country, that is, to show Canada's leadership on the international stage, much like the witnesses here today, who are collaborating internationally. It requires travel on their part for us to get others to come between now and the end of December.

Given that we only have, I think, five meetings left, it's not a proper use of our time. We need to think through very deliberately how we can convene an intentional meeting with Minister Joly that answers questions of importance on Canadian science and research, which is our mandate.

It would be great to hear from her after she's been at the G7 so we can hear what others are doing internationally. We're giving a lot of thought to the next questions we should study at this committee, so the information brought back from the G7 could be useful in that regard.

Likewise, it would be good for us to have time to assemble meaningful questions for Minister Joly. I think we need to continue outreach with the scientific community so we can identify the complex problems we want to solve and which scientists we want to bring to the table to identify what the next pan-Canadian strategy is, for example.

We've been very successful on AI. I look forward to hearing from those researchers. What is the next study for that? Is it quantum? Is it synthetic biology, which is something I'm very interested in hearing about? I would love to ask the minister her thoughts on that. Is it molecular biology and personalized medicine? Is it in the social sciences? Is it around well-being? How do we define well-being, and what are the societal impacts of loneliness—

● (1330)

Kelly DeRidder: I have a point of order on relevance.

The Chair: She's just talking about the amendment and the debate.

MP McKelvie, please continue.

Jennifer McKelvie: It's about Minister Joly's appearance in general, and what we want to hear her talk about. I'm giving examples of why it's important—

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Jennifer McKelvie: —for us to have time to pull that information together—

The Chair: Hold on one second. We have a point of order.

Go ahead, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, as far as I know, we are debating the amendment to withdraw the text concerning the report. My colleague is talking about something else right now, and I would like the debate to once again focus on the amendment that her colleague Helena Jaczek moved.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have an amendment on the floor, so if you can be....

Jennifer McKelvie: Well, the amendment was about deleting the requirement for a report, and my point is that I don't know what's in that report.

If people want to know what happened in this meeting, we have transcripts. You can go to YouTube and can watch the minister's appearances. What I'm speaking to is the relevance of this report and what this report should look like.

I think we need to be more intentional when we're going out there. Let's get what the minister says, but let's pair that with what the scientific community is saying and report back in an intentional way, as we are with the AI study, as opposed to just randomly pulling in a minister.

I don't know what that report would say. That's my point. What would you say in that report? How would we make recommendations?

In fact, I want us to get one of our reports through. We've been here talking since September, and I'm really questioning what we are doing here. What does a report that comes out of science committee look like? On research excellence, okay, great, we heard from lots of witnesses, but what does that report look like? What does that report recommend, and how do we turn it into action?

I'm a great example of that right now—I'm doing a lot of talking—but the point is, where are we going with this? It's not clear where we're going with the research excellence study, but we had incredible people come in and speak. It's not clear where we're going with our antimicrobial resistance study when we had—

● (1335)

The Chair: The summary of evidence will be coming up soon for the two studies, and then we will be going into reports. I just want to clarify that.

Jennifer McKelvie: That's perfect.

The Chair: Right now, let's keep the discussion on the amendment for this motion, please.

Jennifer McKelvie: Absolutely. That's my point: What are we going to put into this report?

When we listen to somebody for two hours, is it a transcript? You can get a transcript online. Is it a YouTube video? Well, you can get the YouTube video online. I'm really struggling with the concept of a report. I mean, you could write a report on what I'm saying right now. It wouldn't say very much.

What is the point of this motion? That's what I'm coming back to. That's what I don't understand. I don't understand what this report could entail. I think honourable member Jaczek is quite right that it really doesn't address anything. There's no problem to solve that has been identified through this motion.

The other thing is that the dates are highly problematic. I think we want to ensure we're respecting our—

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Wait one second; there is a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: My colleague is still talking about the date. However, the amendment doesn't mention a date. It just mentions removing a sentence about the report that is presented to the House of Commons.

Is it possible to clarify that for my colleague?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Jennifer McKelvie: The motion does talk about a deadline for the minister to appear that we know is not achievable, because she's with the G7 identifying what the next report should be to this committee.

I'm really struggling to figure out where this fits in. I think it's a good example of where, as a committee, we need to have some really good intentional meetings in camera to discuss how we want to work together to advance science in our country.

We've just heard from two different researchers, one from Mila and one from McGill University, about the importance of Canadian collaboration. Maybe we can learn something from that.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: There's a point of order.

Yes, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I would like you to clarify for my colleague that we are talking about the amendment to remove the following sentence:

> That the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House following the meeting.

Watching my colleague, I have to say we're not stupid. We can see that she's trying to stall for time. I find that unfortunate for taxpayers and for the public listening to us today. I think it very clearly shows the government's transparency and the level of trust it inspires.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, MP McKelvie.

Jennifer McKelvie: I think all of my comments were leading to this question of what the report would say. What is the intention of the report?

With that, I will pass it off to our other colleague, Ms. Jaczek, who may have the same questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have MP Ho next in line.

Please go ahead.

Vincent Ho: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Liberal members are clearly filibustering and trying to hide the minister from accountability to—

Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I'm sorry. There is a point of order.

Taleeb Noormohamed: While I'm sure the clip factory on the opposite side would like to be able to capture—

The Chair: This is not a point of order.

Vincent Ho: That's not a point of order.

Taleeb Noormohamed: My point of order here is that noting the intent or an assumption of what our members are doing is inappropriate.

The Chair: That is not a point of order.

We will close with MP Ho.

Vincent Ho: Thank you.

I'm going to resume the debate on this motion.

I propose that we move to vote on the amendment of this motion and then, following that, to a vote on the motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: That cannot be done. We cannot go to the vote until the debate collapses. We have people on the list.

Go ahead, MP DeRidder.

Kelly DeRidder: I propose that we collapse debate, vote on the amendment and then vote on the motion.

The Chair: We cannot do that until we exhaust the list of speakers.

Go ahead, MP Jaczek.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much.

To get back to my amendment, which was to strike the last phrase in Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas's motion, deleting the reference to reporting to the House, my colleagues have spoken extensively to this matter.

I was first elected six years ago and have been on a number of committees since then, and quite honestly, I find it a very strange request that testimony given by ministers presumably in relation to an ongoing study, which would therefore be part of the conclusions and recommendations of that study, be separated out in some way and made a report to the House in and of itself.

I'm wondering if there's any precedent for this or any other example of where it has been done. Certainly, I have not heard anything like this reported to the House. I feel that it's completely unnecessary and a waste of the House's time given what is apparently readily available in transcripts, as my colleague MP McKelvie said. My colleague MP Noormohamed made very clear his opinion on the subject.

We continue to find this a very problematic piece to the motion. I certainly would anticipate that we continue to talk about it until we get some sort of clarity as to what on earth the value of reporting to the House might possibly be.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

● (1340)

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let's talk about the amendment that Madam Jaczek has proposed. I think it is an appropriate amendment in the context of what we are trying to do here.

Let's go back for a moment to this study. We had this study, and everyone said they wanted Minister Solomon to appear. That's great. Let's do it. Let's get him to come to this study. He can appear. It will be in the context of this study, because that's the work we're doing.

Now there's a motion that says we want Minister Solomon to appear and Minister Joly to appear, and we want to issue a report on that appearance. Let's remind ourselves of why committee reports are presented to the House. There are procedural circumstances. Sometimes you make a formal decision to report on something. There are certain types of things that may or must be reported. When a committee has completed a study, that is the most common occurrence for when a report is presented to the House. You present a report when you have finished studying something—a bill, an issue, an estimate—and have adopted some kind of report to convey the conclusions or recommendations.

For example, there could be a study on housing affordability, a study on national security or, I don't know, a study on AI, which we are currently in the process of, or a committee could report on a bill, which maybe we'll get to do at some point in our lifetime in this committee. Who's to say? Standing committees often review bills after second reading. They report back to the House. I appreciate that this may not be common knowledge for folks, but I think it's important for us to understand when that actually happens. It can be adopted with amendment or without amendment. You report back and say what you've done.

When a committee reports on estimates, you approve or you reduce, and you say this or that. A committee could want the House to take action. Let's be very specific: In what context does that work? We could be dealing with a procedural issue or a privilege issue. We're not dealing with that. A committee might deal with a membership change. Let's say, by some small mercy, somebody decides to move me to a different committee. Who's to say?

That's for everybody else here, not for me.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Taleeb Noormohamed: I know; that's for all of you, not for me.

There would be a report to the House. The bottom line is that there is no circumstance I can find—I would love to be told differently—in which we have ministers appear on mandate and questions are asked, and then we report back to the House on how well we did asking questions. I know we all do a great job of asking questions. My goodness, look at anyone's social media. We do a great job of showing the world how great we are at asking questions, trying desperately for a gotcha moment and maybe getting a clip here, there and everywhere.

The simple fact is that if you actually looked at what we are sent here to do, what the rules say and what the procedures of the House say, you would be very hard pressed to find a circumstance in which a committee gets to decide on its own, or decide on its own with some kind of precedent, that it's going to have ministers appear and then it will opine on that appearance in the form of a report.

If we can get past that.... I am certain that rational minds will prevail, because, look, I think we all want the ministers to appear. I think we all want the ministers to come. We all want to ask them questions. I know that Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas would like to know why he never got an email back from Madame Joly. That's a wonderful line of questioning that he could take up, if he would like to. I would certainly like to ask Minister Joly about some of the investments that are going to be made in the industrial heartland of this country.

I'd like us to get serious for just a moment about what we're trying to do. What are we arguing about here? Are we arguing about whether or not we're going to send a report to the House on how we thought a minister performed during their questions? Is that what we're here to do, guys? I'm fairly certain that's not what my colleagues opposite want. I would assume that's not what my colleagues want. They have lots of opportunity to do that. There are videos on social media day in and day out on how well or how poorly our ministers have done. It's not like a committee appearance is required to do that, or a report.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Taleeb Noormohamed: I actually—

● (1345)

The Chair: One person at a time. MP Noormohamed has the floor.

Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a lot of feelings about this, as you can tell. I think we are in the business in this committee of doing really good work. If we get ourselves trapped in what we have seen in other committees in previous parliaments, where people decide they want to go on a procedural merry-go-round for no reason, we're going to get nowhere.

I think we all agree we want the ministers to appear. I think we all have said we need Minister Solomon to appear and we'd like Minister Joly to appear, no question about it. I think we're all reasonable people. We have a date for Minister Solomon. We've all, I think in principle, agreed that we want to get Minister Joly here as early as possible, hence the amendment I intend to propose.

The only thing that remains for us as a group to come to common ground on.... I would submit that if we put partisanship aside for just a moment, our goal is for all of us to have ministers appear. In that regard, then, the idea that we would remove, on the basis of MP Jaczek's amendment, a line that frankly serves no purpose to the work of this committee should be quite easy to see.

As we sit here and reflect on our life choices, I would say there is probably a substantial amount of value in us agreeing that perhaps we should get to having ministers appear here and get to asking the difficult questions we want to ask. Everyone can use the clips however they want for their social media. That's probably better than any report that nobody is ever going to read. Isn't that right? I think that's what we all would like. We'd like to get difficult questions and complex questions answered by ministers who hold profound responsibility around AI and industry. I am certain my colleagues across are going to have some interesting questions to ask them. I may not agree with all those questions, but I certainly want to hear them.

We're not going to get to that point if we continue to have a conversation about whether a report from that so-called appearance or performance, whatever it's going to be, should go to the House. We are not in the business, in my opinion, in this place of setting precedent for something that serves no purpose.

We've outlined the conditions under which, invariably, committees present a report back to the House. We are not in this context adopting a report on a study unless we are talking about Minister Solomon's appearance in the context of this study. We're certainly not responding to a bill. We're certainly not responding to a spending item. We're certainly not responding to procedural items, though I'm sure at some point we could go down that road if we so chose. It's certainly not an administration issue.

I want to understand on what basis we would even justify our action to the House. I have to admit that I have looked, and I have not been able to find it. I am sure that others would look and would not be able to find the answer. I look forward to being proven wrong when I am done speaking.

I want quite sincerely for us to get past this particular question, because we have the chief science adviser, in theory, coming to the next meeting.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: I have a point of order.

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

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: With due respect to all members, there should be a limit on the amount of time a person can speak.

The Chair: There is no limit. He has the floor. That's not a point of order.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: It is indeed, ma'am. This is a waste of taxpayers' money.

The Chair: That's not a point of order; I'm sorry.

MP Noormohamed has the floor.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I want to thank my honourable colleague for his intervention. I assure him that I would rather be doing other things right now as well, but we are having an important conversation. If he's concerned about what is happening right now, I would introduce him to the member of Parliament for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who has spent many hours sharing some very important thoughts.

The Chair: Keep your remarks to the amendment we have on the floor.

● (1350)

Taleeb Noormohamed: That's just as relevant as the intervention we just heard.

If I could go back to what I was saying, we were talking about the conditions under which a committee reports back. We were talking about the urgency of the appearance of these ministers. We have, as I understand it, a commitment from the Minister of Industry to appear as soon as reasonably possible but before the end of January, which I think we should take her up on. I think that's an important thing for us to do, because we all want her to appear.

We have, in theory, five meetings left. We have the—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, MP Noormohamed. You have the floor.

I want to let all members know they have to get to question period. The time is approaching fast, so I will have to suspend this meeting. I will have to ask the clerk to cancel the notice of meeting for the chief science adviser's appearance this coming Wednesday so we can continue this meeting, because I have a speakers list, which we will have to continue on Wednesday.

With that, I have to suspend this meeting now so we can continue this discussion on Wednesday, and we will have to cancel the meeting with the chief science adviser.

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, can we move a motion to adjourn? That way we're not losing the Wednesday meeting.

The Chair: Yes.

Tony Baldinelli: I move that we adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.