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Chair: Peter Schiefke



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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 16 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the Standing Orders. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting to consider the request by members of the committee to continue the discussion on Driver Inc.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members.

First, please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those of you 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. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. Remember that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. I don't think there's anybody joining us online today.

The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

We begin debate today with Mr. Kelloway, followed by Mr. Lawrence and—

Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Clarke, CPC): I have a point of order. I was first.

Mike Kelloway (Sydney—Glace Bay, Lib.): No, you weren't.

Philip Lawrence: I challenge the chair.

The Chair: I saw Mr. Kelloway's hand go up while I was speaking.

Philip Lawrence: Yes, Mr. Chair. I was up first.

The Chair: I recognize Mr. Kelloway. If you'd like to challenge the chair, you can.

Philip Lawrence: I have. I just did.

The Chair: Okay.

The Clerk of the Committee (Philip den Ouden): Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?

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

Mike Kelloway: That's incredible, guys. The hand was up before yours. That's incredible.

The Chair: We're going to Mr. Lawrence followed by Mr. Kelloway.

Philip Lawrence: It's actually quite shocking to me that we're having this childish behaviour. Mr. Chair, could you please maintain order in here?

After cancelling two meetings because they don't want to hear from victims, now they're going to act as if they're victims. This is ridiculous and silly.

Mike Kelloway: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. This is absolutely ridiculous. We want a study to go ahead for recommendations. This is absolutely incredible. It is terrible—shameful.

The Chair: Colleagues, we're all going to have an opportunity to speak. Mr. Lawrence can begin the discussion.

The floor is yours, sir, followed by Mr. Kelloway.

Do we have any others who would like to be on the list?

Mr. Barsalou-Duval is third.

Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours.

Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): I was not, but now I want to be there.

Philip Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said, it's really quite remarkable that, after not wanting to hear from victims of serious accidents, sometimes fatal ones, they're over there playing the victim because they didn't get the right to go first. It is really beyond the pale. His moral sanctity is only matched by his silliness on this issue.

I want to get a couple of things on the record.

First, Conservatives did not consent to the cancellation of the meetings that were otherwise scheduled. This is extremely disappointing and not the way Parliament should be conducted.

As well, I want to put on the record that Conservatives will not and do not consent to any type of adjourning of the meeting prior to the full usage of all resources available. Conservatives are absolutely committed to hearing about victims who have suffered fatalities or significant injuries and from their families. Conservatives care, unlike the Prime Minister, who clearly does not, as well as those members who do not want to hear—again, that's the only conclusion—from the victims of serious accidents.

With that, I will pass the floor to Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval.

The Chair: I have Mr. Kelloway and then I have Mr. Barsalou-Duval. I'm just going to be clear: They did have their hands up first.

Mr. Kelloway.

Mike Kelloway: Thank you for respecting my hand going up.

I don't use 50-cent words to describe people or tear people down. The member opposite talked about silliness and used a variety of other words that are absolutely, categorically false. In fact, the motion on the table would have the survivors here.

What we're seeing right now is an example of how the Conservative Party of Canada, which used to be conservative, is now cynical and conspiratorial; its members are blending things together to suit their narrative. How dare the member opposite say that we don't care about survivors? That doesn't wash with Canadians. That doesn't wash with people from coast to coast. We have a plan on the table that we think is a pretty good motion, but we played a game today.

My hand was clearly up, and we played a game. That is the seriousness you have put into this. We have a motion on the table. You could have respected that. You could have talked it out. You could have had a very good conversation about it, but right at this moment today, on this side of the table, we have a lot to say. I hope that, as we listen to you folks—and you care about survivors.... To come out and say that is just greasy. It is bush league. It is out of the handbook that you guys have to say, in your PowerPoint presentations on committee work, "Own the Liberals."

That doesn't help anybody. What a shameful act we see today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

[*Translation*]

We'll now move on to Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

The floor is yours.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by saying that I'm pleased to see you again. To tell you the truth, I'm quite pleased that the committee is meeting this week, because we haven't met since November 6, and today is November 25. That's quite a long time. I think many people around this table were disappointed that the Committee did not meet last week. That is why we were forced to request a meeting in accordance with Standing Order 106(4).

First and foremost, I would like to ask the chair if she can explain why the committee was not convened for meetings last week.

The Chair: That question is addressed to me.

First of all, two weeks ago was a break week for Parliament, so we were not in Ottawa.

As for last Tuesday, there was a confidence vote. There were rumours about possible political manoeuvring that could have influenced the confidence vote to be held in the House of Commons. Since I didn't want committee members to miss that vote, I didn't call a meeting for Tuesday.

As for Thursday, while talking to several committee members, I heard that there might be a solution to the problem of systematic filibustering or our discussions that are clearly not leading to solutions. So, I decided to let people talk privately, so as not to waste the House of Commons' money. Unfortunately, that didn't work.

I wanted to call a committee meeting today, but I received a request for a meeting under Standing Order 106(4). So here we are.

The goal is to move forward and let people discuss as planned, without wasting too much taxpayer money, hopefully, in order to find a solution that will allow us to hear from the witnesses we all want to invite here. That's really what this is about.

• (1540)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under the circumstances, I move the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities resume its business where it left off with the debate on November 6, 2025.

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Dan Albas (Okanagan Lake West—South Kelowna, CPC): If we have a motion on deck, you should find that in order, and then I think you would take a speakers list from that point.

The Chair: I find it in order, and the first person on the speakers list is Mr. Lauzon.

Dan Albas: All right, if you want to play that.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What we're experiencing this afternoon is a bit shameful. My colleague raised his hand first, but people wanted to play at forming a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois from the outset. That's what just happened. I'm very surprised to see Mr. Barsalou-Duval playing this game, which involves lying to the committee by saying that it was actually a Conservative member who raised his hand before my Liberal colleague. Now—

[*English*]

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Lauzon, Mr. Albas has a point of order.

Mr. Albas, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: It's my understanding that a dilatory motion to resume debate happens immediately and goes to a vote. To have someone else speaking to it.... I don't think you're in order. Could you please rule again and consult first with the clerk, because it was a dilatory to resume debate on a motion? It should immediately go to a vote. We should not be having other speakers.

The Chair: We had a motion that was on the table.

Dan Albas: He made a motion to resume the debate. That's a dilatory motion, and therefore, it should be voted upon right away, without debate. If you can check with the clerk, please, I think this would save a lot of time and energy, and I'm sure Mr. Lauzon has a lot of breath that he could save for the actual debate, not the lead-up to the debate.

The Chair: My understanding is that Mr. Barsalou-Duval reintroduced his motion to discuss it.

Dan Albas: He actually said that he'd like to resume the debate that we were having, and he gave this specific date. That means it's a motion, and it should have been brought immediately to a vote. I'm just raising that at the earliest possible opportunity as a point of order. I'd ask you to consult with the clerk.

The Chair: Let's go to a recorded vote please.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

The Chair: I'll go to MPs Lauzon, Albas, Kelloway and Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Let's start with what happened today.

My colleagues were also very offended that survivors were spoken about that way. We are all keenly aware that we must act quickly on the issue of Drivers Inc. We have a lot of empathy for survivors and their families.

This week, the Bloc Québécois and Mr. Barsalou-Duval posted fake news on their website using survivors as an excuse to compel the production of tax documents, among other things. It's so shameful. They're using survivors just for political gain and not for the purpose of the study.

From the outset, the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois had the opportunity to invite families to testify. There was nothing stopping them from doing so, but they didn't. We never prevented them from inviting accident survivors to testify. It's dishonest to say things that aren't true, when I clearly said, in my last speech, that there would be options for survivors. It's not about having them appear publicly to play on people's emotions. We can easily invite them to come and testify in camera. I even recommended that they come separately and wait until we go in camera to meet with them. We never said that we didn't want to see survivors. What I said, and I'll say it again, is that I don't find it relevant. They are on the list,

so we will respect that, but I proposed alternatives, and they were not considered.

For the benefit of those listening to us, and for the record, I have to talk about what was published on the Bloc Québécois website. The last paragraph states that the Liberals have no compassion for families, and four inches below that, a request for donations is made. They chose to ask for money on a website just below a publication that talks about families bereaved by an accident. Why use people's grief, suffering and trauma for political gain? If this is not an attempt to score political points, I don't know what is.

I know it is customary for Conservatives to form a coalition with the Bloc Québécois, to take statements out of context and to create slogans. However, I am surprised to see my colleague entering the fray and asking for funding on his website. I am not sure his party leader and whip approve of everything he is doing today. I am not happy with that approach either, because we on this side are committed to solving the problem. We could solve it quickly by returning to his original motion and saying yes to it, with a view to making serious recommendations, about which I have said enough.

Let's put political games aside. I find it appalling to exploit people who have lost their lives to further one's political interests. I would never interfere in Quebec City's affairs by arguing that Highway 50, which I take to get home, is a deadly highway. When we talk about an issue, we talk about repairs and bringing things up to standard. I would never use the case of a family that has been in mourning for a month to bring the issue to the media or to hold a press conference to say that the government is at fault because the highway is poorly built.

● (1545)

This requires a modicum of common sense and empathy towards our fellow citizens. I will never, ever allow my name to be used on social media, in newsletters or in fake news that accuses me of lacking compassion for those who have lost a family member.

Our motion gives survivors of accidents the opportunity to come and testify with dignity. What I asked was that it be done in private. We tried to find solutions. We suggested that they wait outside the room until the committee moves in camera, so they could be extended a welcome befitting a parliamentary committee.

That's my introduction.

Now I'd like to speak to the original motion. We're now back where we left off the debate on the original motion. I'll go back to the original motion, or Mr. Albas is going to remind me that I have to speak directly to it. We have—

● (1550)

[*English*]

Dan Albas: Three and a half minutes....

Stéphane Lauzon: I will take the time I need.

Dan Albas: No, just come back to it every three and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: All right.

The motion calls for a massive number of documents, without any awareness of what that entails. Our side would like to reduce the number of years and the amount of information requested. What do people want to do with this information? What direct communications are they trying to obtain? We have never prevented the production of documents needed by the committee concerning a discussion involving a minister or a department. However, in this case, the request is to send the committee all correspondence from certain departments related to the subject. Let me explain what that entails.

Once again, the role of the Opposition and the Conservatives is to impede the government somewhat to prevent it from doing things properly. However, it boggles my mind that the Bloc Québécois is playing this game by forming a coalition with them. I asked Mr. Barsalou-Duval if we could just drop this so that we can quickly find solutions, work with the committee's analysts to produce a report with solid recommendations and bring this study to a close. We're all eager to achieve that. The sooner we get there, the sooner we can prevent another accident, save a life and spare a family from grieving.

The motion calls for the production of a massive volume of documents—which are also complex, making the search difficult. It becomes very cumbersome for the apparatus. We will have to search for all communications, including all emails, text messages, briefing notes and professional text messages. We rely on a number of communication tools today. We receive messages on all kinds of platforms, such as Teams, Zoom, Wire, etc. There are also all the ephemeral documents, drafts and discussions that took place between departments. We are talking about tens of thousands of communications items, and it is impossible to estimate how much it would cost to produce them. The departments can't even tell us.

In fact, the administrative costs would mainly be related to sorting. We have to sort it all out, and we shouldn't make everything public either. There are legal checks required, because there are contentious cases. We also have to protect sensitive information, because we don't want to cause trouble for people either. That's not to mention the hundreds of hours of work that public servants would have to devote to it. That usually suits the Conservatives. Keeping the government busy is the way to go, according to them.

By tabling this motion at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Mr. Barsalou-Duval is joining the Conservatives by demonstrating that he no longer wants a functional government. That surprises me. To respond to such a request, several departments and human resources departments must assign a certain number of employees to the production of documents, and the timelines are incalculable. It could easily take 8, 12, 14 or 20 weeks. We don't know how long it could take, but it's at least eight to 12 weeks for redaction, research and compliance verification.

• (1555)

Meantime, public service employees who perform these tasks cannot serve the public. On the one hand, people are saying that they want to put an end to this. On the other hand, they want to use public servants to search for documents instead of serving the public. This is being done simply to waste time and to be right. The Bloc Québécois member and the Conservatives have a majority on the committee, so anything can be done with the public service. It's immoral.

In addition, there is a risk with respect to personal information that may be very sensitive. They say they want to help families. They claim we are insensitive to families. However, does putting confidential information at risk by making lists of names public protect families? Does it protect honest companies and drivers who have nothing to do with the Driver Inc. scheme? Some people do follow the law.

It's as if, in this study, the problem stems solely from immigration. It's as if everyone is at fault except Quebecers. I have bad news: There are drivers who are pure French-Canadian Quebecers, who have an education and who drive badly. It's not just an immigration problem. Mr. Barsalou-Duval wants to publish clips to put everyone in the crosshairs. They want everybody to look bad and everybody to be the bad guys.

[*English*]

I only have one hour and a half left.

Dan Albas: No, it's every three and half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: When you run the risk of exposing—

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, give me a moment, please.

[*English*]

I'll just quickly remind everybody that when somebody has the floor, to let them speak.

Dan Albas: Oh, we are.

The Chair: I think he has actually done a good job of bringing it back. He just once again referenced the motion and everything else.

Dan Albas: I'm just trying to be helpful.

The Chair: Out of respect for each other, let's try to keep decorum. It's obviously a very touchy issue. We're talking about survivors. We're talking about doing right by them. Let's try to keep decorum in the room.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

How long do we have resources for?

The Chair: That's a great question.

We currently have resources until 5:30. The clerk is looking into whether we have additional resources. If not, we'll suspend.

Dan Albas: Excellent. Will it be until midnight?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, you may continue.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was talking about the risks related to confidential data. I don't think the right way to protect people is to use them for political advertising and fundraising. I invite the people listening to us to go to the Bloc Québécois website, click on the "News" section and go see the news about Xavier Barsalou-Duval. The article says that the Liberals aren't nice because they don't want to hear from victims. That's not true. Then look at the ad soliciting donations at the bottom of the page. There, you can donate \$10, \$20 or \$50 to the party to support its efforts. How charming.

I think the best way to protect citizens and vulnerable people is to finish this study and come up with solutions. While the entire public service is being mobilized to search for documents and check with legal services, it's not helping citizens. It's inconceivable. We need to finish this study as quickly as possible to serve Canadians as soon as possible.

Those listening to us can see that, on the Bloc Québécois website, the page featuring the article on that subject contains an ad soliciting funds. But let me tell you one thing. The committee's primary objective is to serve the public in relation to the Driver Inc. scheme. What is being proposed would snowball. That's a French expression. If such a request is made to the Department of Transport, it will impact all the other departments. It will affect public safety and human resources. The human resources department will have to assign employees to the task, and so on. There will be a mad dash within the various departments to figure out who will have to respond to the request. So it will have an impact.

I did a quick search and found that the request affects seven departments, including Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency, which is not surprising, since it also involves the T4A slip. So that would be the impact on the public service should this motion pass. I suppose some are pleased about that.

Imagine all the duplicate work required within the departments to verify and align all that. This is a logistical challenge that the government cannot undertake. It's not feasible. Certain elements of the motion are not even legal. Some of the information cannot be provided. Not to mention the effort for consistency among departments, which would have to consult each other about what they're going to present. That would result in an incredible overload of interdepartmental work.

I would have liked to estimate the cost of such a request. I tried to find figures, but it's not assessable. We can't quantify the cost of such a request to the machinery of government.

● (1600)

If every department received such a request, it would have a devastating effect on the proper management of our government. It would have a direct impact on service delivery. The best way to

help citizens is to provide them with services. Service delivery must not stop. We must continue to serve our citizens properly.

With regard to the Driver Inc. model, we must continue to assess international permit applications, assess everything related to federal jurisdiction, including interprovincial matters, and verify compliance. Compliance must be assessed by the federal government, which has certain obligations. This is a matter for the Department of Transportation. The Minister of Transport made that clear when he came here. The Department of Transportation handles all sorts of things.

The committee has studies pending. We're getting letters asking the committee to do a study on ports. We're told that it is important for us to do this study soon because things are happening now. There are other files that require the committee's attention. We heard from the Minister of Finance that extremely important issues arising from the budget will have to be examined by this committee. So, once again, we have to look at other extremely important issues.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say on the one hand that you want to conclude this study and on the other hand make grand speeches saying that you are shocked that there were no meetings last week, that citizens are paying for this and that the Liberals don't want to hear from witnesses. We have to start by telling the truth, we have to start by telling the real story—and then we will be able to finish this study. Today, the session began with a lie and a procedural game. I don't want to play that game. That's not the kind of politics I want to engage in. The opposition parties must begin by apologizing to the families and telling them the truth. They must tell them that the Liberals were willing to meet with them, but in private. It is wrong to tell them that the Liberals did not want to meet with them.

It is important to continue providing services to citizens. Therefore, we must not shut down the government apparatus or use it for other purposes. If we use it to search for documents or redact them, other accidents might occur in the meantime. Anything could happen. We don't want any more accidents involving drivers taking part in the "Driver Inc." scheme during our study because it's taking so long. There are solutions we want to bring forward. We can't fix everything overnight, but at least the committee can make recommendations with the help of our analysts. I am convinced that the analysts have enough material at this point to do their job.

Despite this, we agreed to hold two more meetings, but suddenly, they were no longer asking for just two meetings. They were potentially asking for three, or as many as there were witnesses. But it's easy to find as many witnesses as you want.

However, we accepted the proposed witnesses. All we asked was that we stick to the original motion. But they keep adding witnesses, and it's never enough. Even if we say yes to the original motion, they'll add more. If we go back to the basics and hold two meetings with the witnesses on the list, including families of victims of accidents involving drivers taking part in the Drivers Inc. scheme, we'll be able to finish this study and make recommendations. That's all we're asking.

● (1605)

It's important for the public and my colleagues across the way to know that we want the families to be able to come and testify in camera. It's a matter of dignity and respect.

Adopting the proposed motion could set a dangerous precedent for this committee and for other parliamentary committees. Imagine what would happen if the government received another such request from another committee. It would be forced to look for emails, exchanges and briefing notes for two committees, then three, then four, and so on. As a representative of the government, I'm telling you that is unacceptable.

If we let this pass and the committee receives documents that are mostly redacted, then it would seem as if the government has something to hide. However, it would simply be protecting the confidentiality of witnesses or vulnerable persons whose safety could be threatened if certain information were made public—but I suppose that doesn't matter to the opposition parties. Loss of life in an accident is serious. Everyone has said so. However, losing one's life or one's integrity publicly because of the disclosure of confidential documents is, I suppose, nothing serious for the opposition parties. It is serious for us. For us, the integrity of our citizens must remain absolute. There is no place for the disclosure of compromising documents that could put certain people at risk.

There is growing inconsistency regarding the urgency of addressing the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry. On the one hand, they say they want to finish the study, and on the other, they are asking for the impossible. Why? Because they don't want to finish it. Yet all they have to do is say yes today. All it takes is to accept the solution by proposing an amendment to hold two meetings and invite the witnesses on the list.

During my first meeting with Mr. Barsalou-Duval, we discussed the fact that one aspect had been overlooked. I told him that I, too, thought I had overlooked other aspects. Indeed, we did not discuss the medical aspect. Drivers are at risk. I brought this up with my family doctor. I had a good discussion with her. As a diabetic, I told her that I had a concern about the "Driver Inc." model, namely that some people might be less fit to drive. She replied that she had many patients who were truck drivers and that, when they were receiving proper treatment, were being monitored medically, and had good working conditions, with working hours that complied with standards, they could do their job very well without restrictions.

I was satisfied with my doctor's response. I did not mention it again to Mr. Barsalou-Duval. He had told me that it was not a bad idea to add witnesses to talk about diabetes, but he wondered where they could be added to the list of witnesses, given that we only had two meetings and the list was already getting long. He even told me that he was willing to remove a witness from the list so that we

could invite a witness, perhaps from Diabetes Canada, to talk to us about the medical situation for drivers. However, my doctor convinced me that this might not be necessary and that diabetics have the right to live their lives as they choose if they have the right treatment.

I'm talking about diabetes, but that's just one example. I could talk about hypertension or any other occupational disease. I just gave you the example of diabetes because I'm a little more familiar with that disease. All of this is related to discussions that Mr. Barsalou-Duval and I had about going back to two meetings.

● (1610)

If we go back to two meetings, we have to look at the witness list. I, for one, have dropped some names.

During my first discussion with Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval, he also told me that we had forgotten the towing companies. I took a step back and said that maybe we could invite them. However, as I told him, they arrive on the scene after the accident has occurred. They don't fall under any provincial or federal authority. Most of the time, they're called by the Sûreté du Québec, the provincial police or another police force, as the case may be. If necessary, we will hear from them, but personally, I don't see the point of inviting representatives of towing companies. I don't think these people will contribute anything further. I don't think the analysts will make recommendations that towing needs to be done better in situations involving Driver Inc. In light of all the aspects I've heard in the testimony, I don't think towing will have an impact. However, I respected Mr. Barsalou-Duval's request and agreed to hear what witnesses from the towing family had to say. All of a sudden, a towing company was added to the list of witnesses. As for the others, they go off on a tangent, they head in a different direction and they add even more to the list. All these additions increase the number of documents.

Let's stop accusing the Liberals of wanting to shut down this study. In fact, what we want is to achieve our purpose. This motion is too broad, as my colleagues very well know. They are very familiar with political games. There are experienced members around the table who know exactly what I'm talking about. A motion that is too broad can quickly violate the meaning of the study we are currently conducting. In doing so, you can veer off on any topic and head off in any direction. Why do those members want to do that? They just want to nitpick. They don't want to solve the Driver Inc. problem, they want to find something that could somewhat embarrass a department, a public servant, a deputy minister or a minister. Who knows? They hope to find some nugget they can use for political gain. They want to be able to put it on their Facebook page or Twitter account, or on the Bloc Québécois website and attach a nice dollar sign to it. That way, they can show people what they found and use the opportunity to ask for money. They are using the families of survivors and saying that the Liberals are mean in order to ask for donations.

That's not what we want as a committee. We want something better. We want parliamentary practice to be used to solve a problem or an issue. We want to understand the file, obtain clarification from the witnesses and verify non-compliance. We also want to check everything that is going on in the trucking industry.

What do towing companies have to do with that? I have no idea. Perhaps we'll find out when their representatives come and testify. I'll prepare some questions. I could ask them if they can explain what caused the accident involving the vehicle they towed. They can speculate as much as they want, but they won't be able to answer my question, because that's not what their job is. They have nothing to do with it. Think about it logically.

Despite everything, they'll go ahead and say yes to that. Why? Because they want more witnesses.

They're missing the point. This lacks seriousness. They're not taking the right approach to achieve our goal.

Survivors' families are part of that. Why don't we meet with them in private, at an in camera meeting? We could listen to their stories of grief and suffering.

• (1615)

Of course, if it takes place in camera, unfortunately you won't be able to select excerpts and post them on Facebook and then solicit donations of \$10, \$20 or \$50. You won't be able to do that if the meeting is held in camera.

If you really want these people to come and testify, they should do so in camera. That would be the most dignified way for a committee to hear from families who have lost a loved one.

There's nothing worse than misleading or lying to these families. Please stop looking these people in the eye and telling them that the nasty Liberals don't want them to appear before the committee.

• (1620)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I would like to know if there is a procedure to follow so that the people sitting at this table don't accuse others of lying—or if they do, if they have some obligation to prove what they're saying. We're hearing all kinds of accusations that are absolutely baseless and there is absolutely no way to respond to them. My integrity is under attack and I find that problematic, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. After we hear from Mr. Albas and Mr. Kelloway, you'll have an opportunity to respond to everything Mr. Lauzon just said.

Mr. Albas, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: Again, I don't want to make this bigger than it needs to be, but accusing anyone of a lie—an honourable member—whether it be in the House or even at committee, I would say, would fall under your scope. I would just ask you to call any member to utilize decorum. We are all honourable members here.

We make mistakes from time to time. Perhaps Mr. Lauzon has made a mistake, and he might want to mention that.

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

This is just a reminder to all members to be judicious with the wording that we use in this room.

With that, I'll turn the floor back over to Monsieur Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to quote a paragraph about 10 centimetres above the box that says, "Give to Quebec!" and suggests donations of \$5, \$10, \$15 or \$25: "Meanwhile, the Standing Committee on Transport is paralyzed by the Liberals, who are refusing to hand over the requested documents and hear testimony from victims."

[*English*]

Am I the liar?

[*Translation*]

It's on the website. It goes on to say, "This committee, which was meant to be a forum for listening and finding solutions, is completely hamstrung by the Liberals, who are even refusing to convene it." That's unbelievable.

I will now get back to my serious work.

I was saying that the government is co-operating, but within reasonable limits. The department has sent all the information we need. I think the clerk has worked extremely hard to meet the needs of all the witnesses who've appeared since the beginning of the study. We received testimony, reports, analyses, statistics, a detailed plan and a framework for action. We're willing to work with the analysts. I've already asked the analysts if they're keen to start drafting the report. I didn't ask for a response, but I raised it with them.

We also reinstated the requirement for the T4A slip. This is a major step forward. Even Xavier Barsalou-Duval acknowledged that.

I don't think our government has been closed to the idea of meeting all needs. What we want, in fact, is to work in a targeted way. We must not drain each of the departments of their capacity to provide services because we are tapping too many resources. We say yes to transparency, but no to administrative overload, which slows down action, costs taxpayers dearly and diverts public servants from their essential road safety work. Imagine what would happen if we delayed the work of that entire team. The work required to prepare these documents would come at the expense of road safety. It would be irresponsible for the committee and the government to accept that.

I'm now going to talk a bit about how the Bloc Québécois presented its 10 requests, because Mr. Barsalou-Duval may come back to them when he speaks.

At a press conference, the Bloc Québécois raised 10 points that should be addressed. These are 10 structural requests made in good faith by the Bloc Québécois. The goal is to impose reporting obligations on all companies in connection with the Drivers Inc. model. Those requests are legitimate in and of themselves, but they are not necessarily legitimate for the government. We responded that the government viewed the 10th request as legitimate—the one concerning the T4A slip. We agreed.

It must be said that many of these requests would require the federal government to encroach on areas of provincial jurisdiction. Such a request from the Bloc Québécois is quite something. I'm not sure the leader and whip of the Bloc Québécois would agree with that. I don't believe that those great defenders of Quebec's interests—who always say that what belongs to Quebec must remain in Quebec—would agree that the federal government should interfere in their areas of jurisdiction. I'm not sure it would suit my colleague's political party if the federal government were to tread on Quebec's toes in order to respond to these 10 online recommendations.

We're talking about roadside checks and everything outside federal services: the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, the police, registration, licences, training, the issuance of class 1 licences, administrative fines, tickets, vehicle inspections and so on. It's a lengthy list and I could go on.

● (1625)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Have you seen the list? That's not on the list.

Stéphane Lauzon: Any responsible MP looking at each of these recommendations would find that several of them are contradictory and encroach on provincial jurisdictions. It might also be worth

looking into whether they are legal. People always say that the federal government can't encroach on provincial jurisdictions, and nobody wants the feds to supplant Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec traffic officers. Everyone agrees that this issue is primarily a provincial responsibility.

Moreover, some of these 10 recommendations would undoubtedly be challenged in court. The Bloc Québécois can make any recommendation it wants, because it has no hope of ever being in power or in charge of the Canadian government. It is up to Conservatives and Liberals to not let anything the Bloc Québécois says go unchallenged. Government actions must be evidence-based, comply with administrative processes and respect fundamental rights. It has to follow the rules. Some people think it would be a good idea to denounce offenders, but the government can't just publish blacklists without establishing very rigorous criteria and an appeal mechanism. If it just went ahead with blacklists, it could easily make mistakes, cause problems for families, and embarrass companies acting in good faith. Some people seem to think that's no big deal and this needs to be done.

This is not the best way to help the trucking industry, which is grappling with a labour shortage and still recovering from the pandemic. We all remember everything that happened with customs, vaccines, and interprovincial and international borders. Businesses are facing skyrocketing maintenance costs, not to mention fuel costs. Many wonder if they would have to comply with new administrative requirements if the Bloc Québécois were to succeed in imposing all these restrictions. They definitely would, but it's not up to us to impose that on them. This is not the time to crack down hard on people who are already in the industry or to increase unnecessary red tape.

The government wants to prioritize targeted and effective measures. We want to make solid recommendations that won't be detrimental to businesses that follow the rules. Many witnesses came here to show us that they're acting responsibly and making sure their businesses are well managed. They provide training to their employees and pay attention to their health and safety. That's what we are focusing on now. To get the best of both worlds, all businesses should do likewise. They should support their employees, comply with the specifications and working hours, and co-operate with Quebec's Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, the CNESST, and equivalent entities in other provinces.

● (1630)

Yes, some of these things are within our jurisdiction. We're absolutely aware of what needs to be done on some of these issues. However, some of the things the Bloc Québécois is asking for are simply impossible to implement. We're talking about CRA and ES-DC resources. There are some things we can do and some that are more difficult.

Let's start with our first recommendation. We've already reinstated the T4A requirement, which is a good thing. Let's handle our end of this as quickly as possible.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval and the Conservatives will have an opportunity to include anything they want in the recommendations to move this file forward. If Mr. Barsalou-Duval wants to include some of the iffy recommendations he shared at the press conference, we can debate them here and, with help from the committee's analysts, we can come up with good recommendations to move the file forward.

We know that the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois want a punishment-centric approach. No one wants accidents to happen. No one wants to lose a family member. No one wants our roads to be unsafe. However, the Driver Inc. scheme, bad drivers and immigration are not the only factors. Can we do what needs to be done, once and for all?

Let me explain where we're coming from. It's important to know that some witnesses submitted analyses that were done by parties that collected data. It's our responsibility to resolve this issue, even if that means stepping on provincial toes. We can give them recommendations. Road safety is under provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government has a framework in place and has some responsibility for road safety. For example, some issues relating to the interprovincial border between Quebec and Ontario affect my riding and Mr. Barsalou-Duval's riding. There are also trucks that depart from a given province and cross an international border, such as the border between Canada and the United States. That is extraprovincial travel, which is under federal jurisdiction.

In this sector, labour standards and licences are up to date, and there are regulations. However, the witnesses told us that, although there is a licensing process, people can still get a licence in 24 hours, and certain recommendations should be implemented quickly to change that. This needs to be remedied quickly, but it falls under provincial jurisdiction. Can we send recommendations to the provinces so they can get to work on this?

During our discussions at recent meetings, I even considered recommending that we finish this study and start another one, where people could express any silly idea they wanted. That way, we could at least send some recommendations to the analysts so they could draft a report, get what we need to do done and address the needs expressed during this study. That would include the recommendations we heard from witnesses about hours of service.

• (1635)

I did things the old-fashioned way. I used to have a class 3 licence and, at the time, I wrote my driving time on paper, with a pencil, in a logbook. I went around the truck and did a full mechanical inspection. People use electronic logbooks now, and all they have to do is change a letter in their first name or last name to have two different logbooks and accumulate hours of work. I found out about that here at this committee. I could use the name "Stéphane L. Lauzon" and drive a truck for eight hours and then use the name "Stéphane Lauzon" to drive another truck for another eight hours. That practice puts everyone at risk. That really hit home for me. Recommending the creation of a national or interprovincial registry is urgent.

I have plenty of recommendations to make, so it bothers me that we can't table any today to get the job done. Some of them have to do with things like leave and protection against termination of employment. We've heard that some drivers are forced to travel from point A to point B, incorporate with only their current employer as a direct customer and drive a truck that isn't always inspected and maintained. Why? Because businesses want to be more competitive and reduce their expenses. I was horrified to hear that. I have recommendations regarding that too. All we need to do is give those recommendations to the analysts and the clerk so they can do their job. We need to move this forward.

That's why I won't stand for anyone telling us that we're not acting in good faith and that we want to freeze the entire machinery of government. The least we can do is set minimum standards for employees of federally regulated trucking companies. That is the least the federal government can do to address the Driver Inc. situation directly in areas under its jurisdiction. For anything else, people can recommend whatever they want.

We want to work with the provinces and the witnesses who came here. We've seen some great presentations from vehicle inspectors and safety officers who work on provincial highways. They came here to explain the problem with information exchange between provinces and territories and between countries. We need a more universal approach to enable these officials to do their work. They want to keep people safe. Their job is not just to check vehicle weights. That protects our roads, but it doesn't protect people's lives. Truckers are on the road transporting massive loads. It's time to wrap things up and make recommendations for more universal regulations.

Transport Canada sets standards for legal limits on driving hours, rest periods and logbooks, so we have a say. Last week, I spent a little free time poking around the Transport Canada website. I'm pretty sure you never stopped working either. You checked the website out, took note of everything that's under federal jurisdiction and thought about what could be improved. I started drafting some recommendations. I realized there was some room for improvement in the application of interprovincial and international trip rules, given what we've heard during all the meetings we've had. These rules are critical to road safety domestically and internationally.

● (1640)

We always talk about what's going on here at home, but let's not forget that drivers are leaving the country, and then we lose track of them. Then they come back on Canadian soil. They are the same drivers who deliver our goods, who support the Canadian economy and who make our businesses successful. Their services are essential not only to human survival, but to the survival of each and every business in your ridings that rely on transportation, whether trucking, rail or air. And the fact remains that trucking is the most cost-efficient, agile and efficient solution to support our businesses, ensure our well-being and put food on our plates.

Ensuring that rules are in place to regulate road safety at a national level is essential. In that regard, we have made the use of electronic log books mandatory. I have learned that there are technical standards. On the website, I also learned about the approval of devices that are recognized and can be used for work.

These devices, however, cannot detect frauds committed with the use of fake names. We have heard that the model nicknamed Driver Inc. uses all sorts of tactics. This didn't appear overnight. For years, people have developed schemes and strategies to circumvent the system and the rules to reduce costs, be more competitive, undermine competitors and have a larger share of the market.

Our government has a role to play when it comes to making recommendations. We can intervene in provincial jurisdictions by making recommendations to provinces and territories about fixing some of the problems.

I will now turn to another issue that we've talked about a lot, that impacts us and that we have a lot of control over: tax revenue.

On the one hand, there's an issue with income tax when people file incorrect returns. On the other hand, there are shortcomings with EI premiums. People who are unemployed for a certain period will claim EI benefits even if they haven't contributed the full value. Yes, we do have some say about that.

There's also the issue of premiums for the Canada pension plan on the federal side, or the Quebec pension plan in my and Mr. Barsalou-Duval's case, or any other provincial system.

We have an obligation to self-employed Canadians and a fiscal responsibility to properly respond to any legal matter regarding businesses. There's no issue with being a self-employed business owner. I was one myself as the owner of Gestion Lauzon. I was the sole employer, but I had several clients. It's when there's only a single employer and a single client that it becomes problematic. That's when we can intervene.

It was also up to us to restore the requirement regarding the T4A slip for Driver Inc. We quickly fixed that.

All that being said, we still kept a close eye on the fiscal management side of things, including everything that I just mentioned, audits, fake workers and self-employed people who have only a single employer. These are all elements that are within the purview of the Canada Revenue Agency.

● (1645)

I fully agree that we should present recommendations on this matter in order to move forward directly with things that fall under federal jurisdiction.

Some of our recommendations should also include the ability to investigate businesses, but to not necessarily make that information public like issuing a lack list of businesses, for instance. We could investigate businesses that use incorporated workers to lighten the tax burden. We always have to mind the legal aspect. I'm sure that some cases could end up before the courts. I believe that we can do part of the work. I have a great deal of confidence in the committee's analysts. I know that they will work diligently on recommendations and check the legal ramifications of the rules of conduct that we're going to implement.

Moreover, we need to reassess the tax status so that everyone pays their fair share and to eliminate tax havens. It's important that all companies pay their fair share of taxes by filing their tax returns properly. Our government absolutely must follow up on every file to develop a strategy that aims not to make the names of these companies public, but to bring them in line using fines or regulations already in place. The CRA, as per its regulations and obligations, already has the means to intervene when any wrongdoing is identified. People are used to it. No one wants to receive a letter from the CRA, because it's rarely good news. The CRA is doing its job, which is to crack down on wrongdoers who try to circumvent the system.

Our recommendations can include mechanisms to improve the CRA's response capabilities.

We can also request advice on how to impose fines in cases of wrongful tax returns. We've heard witnesses talk about fraudulent classification. Some drivers have a class 1 licence even if they speak neither French nor English. That's what we've heard, right? I'm not the only one who heard it. I've heard that some drivers got their class 1 licence in 24 hours. Some don't even know the traffic regulations. They might drive on the wrong side of the road because they don't know what the traffic signs mean.

What if we learned tomorrow that airline pilots who speak neither French nor English and can barely decipher the text for each button of the instrument panel could get their licence in 24 hours? It would be outrageous. It's outrageous too for truck drivers. It's just as dangerous on the roads as it is in the air.

I met people who work at a flying school last week. They explained to me in no uncertain terms what the requirements are to become a pilot. We're talking 1,500 hours of training, and that training is overseen by the Canadian government through Transport Canada. A lot of emphasis is put on practising with flight simulators and hands-on training. Why not give the same importance to the truck drivers' training? Yes, we can give recommendations in that regard, but it's not within our jurisdiction. Airline pilots are, but truck drivers who don't cross interprovincial or international borders aren't.

- (1650)

Can we make recommendations to provincial and territorial governments to advance verification and inspection to target any element of the process that falls within provincial jurisdiction?

The federal government can take action against companies that are extraprovincial and incorporated as joint-stock companies. Take, for example, a company called Canada Inc. Since it would fall under federal jurisdiction, we could intervene in how the company is managed and tell it that it cannot circumvent the law. In other words, it's not possible to use the company called Canada Inc. in its current form to circumvent the rules or compromise transport safety to the detriment of citizens of Quebec and Canada.

In our case, when it comes to international rules, we could place much more emphasis on trade corridors. It's important not to discourage companies that do things legally, that experience labour shortages and that are struggling to make ends meet. Because they do the right thing, they want to maintain good working conditions for their employees, but struggle to do so. These are conscientious people who want to provide adequate training to their employees so that they can work legally and legitimately, but are struggling to pay for it. These companies want to give their drivers the best so that they can remain the same companies they have always been. Some of the witnesses who appeared before us were representing a family business that had been passed down from father to children. They were proud to tell us about the family business they wanted to preserve. It's becoming increasingly difficult, but they're doing it because they were taught to do the right thing.

What the federal government wants is to make sure that every company and all the Canada Incs. of the world that puts their truck drivers on our roads act the same way.

However, what we certainly don't want to do is break the supply chain, which is vital to our constituents, the public in general and businesses.

Not only do we implement international standards, but we have agreements with other countries. We still have agreements in place with the U.S. and Mexico. Truckers are regulated through long-standing agreements. Our government is hard at work to reach good agreements elsewhere. Our government is determined to develop markets other than the U.S. We'll need truckers, drivers, people willing to participate, dependable companies that will not only offer safe and reliable services, but also support the Canadian supply chain. When it comes to transportation of goods, we're in a transition period.

I could also talk about the different licence classes. Sometimes licence classes are not complied with. As we've heard, some classes can include transportation of dangerous goods, which requires more training. What I heard from witnesses is worrying. All the time I spent working in that industry, I drove gas tanker trucks. When you're a welder by trade with 25 years of experience and you drive trucks filled with oxygen, acetylene, argon, carbon dioxide or other hazardous materials, you need the proper accreditation. Today, the situation with the transportation of dangerous goods worries me.

- (1655)

Could our recommendations also include the opportunity to talk about transportation, but also the ability to implement national rules regarding the logistics, alignment and safety aspects of transporting all these goods to ensure that our roads are safe? In the case of the accident that happened, we can only be thankful that the driver wasn't transporting oil or extremely harmful or toxic products. Remember what happened in Lac-Mégantic. We wouldn't want something similar to happen on our roads. We don't want to bring back painful memories. But let me tell you something: The risk is there. When road accidents involve dry materials, it's maybe not as bad. But we still have to prepare for the inevitable. Can we include this in our recommendations?

We're also not doing enough regarding labelling for transportation. Can the government make recommendations in that regard?

Since I had a bit of free time Tuesday and Thursday of last week during working hours, I did some research on the website. I was surprised by the list of products. I did some research. We haven't talked about this before, but it's another potential risk. A truck driver could have an accident. We've mostly spoken about transporting heavy loads, especially with witnesses. When a truck transporting a heavy load is involved in an accident, it's devastating. It's like a battering ram slamming into a concrete wall. It's extremely dangerous. And when the heavy load consists of dangerous materials, the risk is even higher. It's even more dangerous. And yet, we've never talked about this aspect and never had witnesses appear to talk about this. Nevertheless, I would be ready to formulate recommendations without inviting other witnesses to tell us about the transportation of dangerous goods in relation to the Driver Inc. model.

We also talked very little about specialized training. We talked about training and the driver's licence. We talked about diligent companies that offer training, or even provide that training themselves, on operations, routes and things of that nature. We also talked about truck driving lessons—which, by the way, are not mandatory. For a class 1 licence, the requirement is passing the written exam and the practical exam to drive a two-axle truck. That's worrying. Can we learn more about this? Can we recommend that the government be a bit more proactive on that front?

By the way, Quebec has already taken some measures. The provincial government announced its intention to implement recommendations regarding elements that are within its jurisdiction.

Can we follow in Quebec's footsteps and go even further? Can we add these recommendations and add them to our own? When the time comes to submit our recommendations, I will highlight what Quebec has done over the past weeks through the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec regarding the issuance of class 1 licences. It wants a more rigorous process to make this licence class harder to obtain and improve road safety.

As a government, we can work on national safety standards in the same vein. We can develop a national framework. We can also include road safety standards in our recommendations, in constant collaboration with the provinces and the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators.

● (1700)

We spoke a lot with the witnesses about labour relations. We asked them questions on the subject. I listened as my colleagues asked them what we could do to help them with their labour relations, always in relation to the federal government. It's obvious in the written transcripts we receive: The lines between jurisdictions are often blurred. It's okay, because witnesses are not experts. It's our job to set this straight. And even we, as elected representatives, sometimes get mixed up between provincial and federal jurisdictions—we can imagine what it's like for witnesses who come here and haven't been part of the proceedings since the beginning. It's normal for them to get things confused. It's up to us to sort through all that's been said, with help from our analysts, to keep what's relevant, draw up some recommendations with what relates to the federal government and leave out what doesn't.

Will having representatives from the towing industry appear as witnesses help us to learn more? I don't think so, but I'm keeping an open mind. They might bring up something that the analysts can add to our report. I hope so, because I wouldn't want all the energy that's been spent discussing these witnesses to be for nothing.

Can we talk about what's relevant to us, like protecting temporary foreign workers from exploitation, for instance?

I mentioned earlier the departments that we want to ask to submit their communications, but others are concerned, including the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. We must work with temporary foreign workers and ask the department in charge for every communication. Every exchange that took place must be checked for compliance. Doing all that is absolutely ludicrous, if our goal is

to draft recommendations with the committee's analysts to set standards.

Whether we like it or not, the Driver Inc. file has very little to do with the federal government. The government is responsible for work permits, temporary foreign workers and issuing hiring authorizations to employers. Transport Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada also conduct inspections. The government also revokes the work permits of wrongdoers who use the Driver Inc. stratagem. Businesses have lost their accreditation. We've seen the government step in when irregularities were identified.

It's unfortunate for some of my colleagues, but all of our potential recommendations involve asking the provinces and territories to do better. Can we try to remain serious in our work, stay focused on our objective and make recommendations along that line? The federal government is fulfilling its responsibilities. We've never hidden. My colleagues and I want to fulfill our federal responsibilities in terms of taxation or interprovincial transportation safety. We want to be there. We're perfectly aware of the situation. We want to talk about federal labour standards. I'm willing to talk about audits and the T4A slip. Even if we've started to make the issuance of T4A slips mandatory, I'm willing to talk about potential improvements. All that being said, accident investigations, training, licences and compensation are all things that Quebec and the other provinces have jurisdiction over, and so is protection. My Bloc Québécois colleague is well aware of that. He's a smart and decent man, most of the time.

● (1705)

I'm surprised that Mr. Barsalou-Duval would take this position and willingly leave reality behind for this show of political theatre. I can't believe it.

Let me go back to the news article published on the Bloc Québécois' website that I quoted an entire paragraph from earlier, which included a quote from my colleague. I'll choose my words carefully, but I invite everyone to go read that paragraph. Unfortunately, some of my colleagues will need a translation because it's in French only, which is to be expected since it's from the Bloc's website and they don't translate their publications. I'll read it in French and let the interpreters translate it.

First, it says that “Ottawa has access to many levers.” Indeed, I listed a whole bunch. Right at the top are the analysts, who eagerly await our recommendations. We have the power, in this committee, to respond and submit recommendations as quickly as possible. We’re saying yes to the list of witnesses that was sent, we agree to have them appear over two meetings and we’re dropping all other ideas about other witnesses that we could invite in the interest of moving forward. Nevertheless, the article continues: “Ottawa has access to many levers to break the laissez-faire system that benefits bad actors who flout the law.” I agree with my colleague, 100%. It’s crazy how we’re rowing in the same direction. I would be totally okay with it being published on the Liberal Party’s website.

The article continues: “The government has to understand that only a series of coordinated measures will guarantee the safety of road users.” Up to that part, the article is perfectly agreeable, because our committee’s analysts will draft a report according to our recommendations, and I can’t wait for everyone to understand that the only course of action is for us to coordinate a series of recommendations.

Back to quoting the article: “A clear message must be sent to non-compliant businesses to put an end to this dangerous phenomenon...”. That is what “the Bloc Québécois transport critic added”, according to the article. That’s what we’ve all been saying from the get-go. You’re simply repeating what we’ve been saying, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. We’re all in agreement. What we want is to be clear and to tell non-compliant businesses to put an end to this.

Have you ever heard me, either today or at any other time, that we were opposed to reprimanding businesses that are found at fault? Have you ever heard me say that I don’t want them to pay their fair share of taxes? Have you ever heard me say, in any question that we asked witnesses, that we’re supportive of any illegal practice whatsoever?

In my very first intervention, I said that it was an excellent subject for a study, I thanked you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, for proposing it on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and I noted that we took that issue very seriously. I congratulated you, because it was well deserved. It’s disheartening to watch you sabotage this study right at the end.

The article continues: “Meanwhile, the Standing Committee on Transport is paralyzed by the Liberals, who refuse to table requested documents...”. I gave a very clear explanation about the documents earlier today. I spoke about it for 20 minutes. I think it’s obvious to everybody that it’s the beginning of the end. I’m very surprised that Mr. Barsalou-Duval formed a coalition and got mixed up in this kind of stuff. You know what? The Conservatives split their time with the Bloc Québécois so that Mr. Barsalou-Duval could move this motion. It’s important for people to know. If this isn’t a coalition or an alliance of sorts, I don’t know what is.

• (1710)

Let me repeat this quote from the article: “Meanwhile, the Standing Committee on Transport is paralyzed by the Liberals, who refuse to table requested documents and hear victims’ testimonies.” And I’m being told that I’m not allowed to say that it’s not true? I’m sorry, but victims have the right to know that the Liberals truly empathize with them and what they’ve gone through. Losing a loved one hurts. In that context, it’s even worse. There’s no good way to

lose a loved one. However, when I see these families being used for political purposes, let me tell you that it’s not right. What’s more, four inches under the article—I’ll use inches if you don’t understand what 10 centimetres means—there’s a request for donations of \$10, \$15 or \$25. What do my colleagues think is more moral: that request for donations or me denouncing it? I’m sorry, but that’s immoral in my book. And I don’t need to be lectured on that either.

I’ll conclude with this—just to clarify, it’s my colleague’s quote that I’m concluding, not my speech: “That committee, which should be a space for listening and [support], is completely blocked by the Liberals...”. No mention of the Conservatives of course, God forbid. It’s only the Liberals’ fault. Conservatives aren’t blocking anything. It doesn’t say that it’s the Liberals and the Conservatives, of course not. The sentence seems to be missing a small part that should mention that it’s because of the coalition between the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives. That part is missing.

I’ll quote it word for word: “That committee, which should be a space for listening and finding solutions, is completely blocked by the Liberals, who even refuse to call meetings. That attitude only benefits wrongdoers and is indicative of a worrying disconnect and, most importantly, a blatant [lack of] compassion toward the families...”. It wasn’t enough to mention it earlier in the article. It wasn’t enough to use a separate paragraph to highlight how the dirty Liberals refuse to hear the victims’ testimonies. It’s written not only in the second-to-last paragraph, but also in the very last one that it’s a blatant lack of compassion. I’m portrayed as the bad guy and I’m not even allowed to say that it’s all a bunch of lies, that the Liberals are being attacked for political gain, but they’re allowed to declare that we have a blatant lack of compassion toward the families. I’m sorry, but I have to reiterate that our hearts go out to the families and that we want them to testify. What I said was that I wanted to have them testify separately and in camera. I maintain that position. We want these families to be respected and we want to keep politics out of this. For crying out loud, could we please not connect requests for funding to the testimonies of people who lost a loved one?

For the life of me, I can’t understand how the leader of the Bloc Québécois and everybody else are fine with that. If I were that party’s whip, I wouldn’t be happy. At the end of the day, a grieving family is still a grieving family. In this case, a tragedy where families lost loved ones is being taken advantage of and displayed on a website that has a window pop up to ask for donations to become a party member. I find that utterly disgusting. The Bloc Québécois should probably remove the solicitation of funds from that page of their website. They can do whatever they want elsewhere, but I have a problem with seeing a request for funding associated with a publication like that one.

• (1715)

I want to return to what I told you earlier when I mentioned where we started and where we want to go.

It's true that the list of witnesses was long. As for adding the list of witnesses included in the motion before us, when I met with Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval, we talked about inviting representatives of towing companies, and I agreed. And then we had witnesses proposed by the coalition. Some were from the Conservatives, but they were all mixed together. Again, we acted in good faith. We agreed to that in good faith. We said yes, and not only because we're a minority government. It has nothing to do with that. It's just common sense. We know very well what role we have to play as a government. My colleagues and I explained multiple times that it's important not to paralyze the municipal machine.

We also understand the issue with the list of witnesses, which was built over a period of time. There's a question we need to ask ourselves, however: if it was so important to invite the family to testify, it would have been mentioned during the first meeting. How many meetings have we had exactly since the beginning of this session? About 10 or 12, something like that?

• (1720)

The Chair: We're now in the 16th meeting of the committee, Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: We're in the 16th meeting. For the first 15 meetings, no one proposed that witness. For 15 meetings, that wasn't important. But now, all of a sudden, it comes up, and we say yes. We agree to add witnesses.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point or order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, please hold on for a moment. Mr. Barsalou-Duval has a point of order.

You have the floor, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I just want the clerk and you, Mr. Chair, to confirm that this is the 16th meeting of the committee, but that only six of them were about the Driver Inc. issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Stéphane Lauzon: There was plenty of time over the course of 15 meetings to move a motion and propose witnesses. Mr. Barsalou-Duval just noted that we've held six meetings on the subjects to date, and I thank him for the clarification. I knew we hadn't spent 15 meetings on this, that it was more like 10-ish. Still, why wait until the last of the six meetings on the subject to bring this up? Why not do it at some point during the first four meetings? It just occurred to someone that this situation could be exploited for political purposes, and they decided to go all-in. Sure, let's bring the victims' families in, but let's do it with dignity, have them appear separately and not with other witnesses so that they don't have to face representatives from trucking companies that are potentially at fault, which could be upsetting.

Then Mr. Barsalou-Duval said that we should call a half-meeting or a separate meeting to keep the list of witnesses as is. I didn't react. Why not two and a half meetings? We could have two meetings to have all the witnesses on the opposition parties' list, and then we could cave once again and agree to hold a half-meeting to hear

from the victims' families, but in camera. That would prevent those who would be tempted to take advantage of people's emotions and put that on social media from doing so. Is that too much to ask to protect the families' dignity?

They could make important recommendations to add to our report to move things forward. Can we do that in a proper and dignified manner? That's all we're asking.

Saying that we don't want them as witnesses is false. I'll repeat it to be crystal clear: It's false. It's a complete distortion of what we told the committee. Maybe it's an attempt at disturbing the committee so that we don't have to face reality. And the reality is that we've been saying the same thing ever since the beginning: We want to fix this issue and find solutions that fall within our jurisdiction. We even want to go further than that.

I agree with you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, that we should step on Quebec's toes for once. Just acknowledge publicly that it's your intention. I don't mind at all—I'll help you. We want to offer recommendations to provinces and territories to address this. The only way to do that is to agree on the motion and add two meetings. If you drop the request for the production of documents and propose the addition of a half-meeting, we'll say yes. I haven't talked to my colleagues, but, just by looking at them, I'm sure that if you were to do that, we could move on to another topic.

There's no shortage of topics that the committee could study. We could talk about ports, for example. By the way, there is good news for Quebec and the port that's located between our ridings. Our next study will require a lot of work, and I believe we'll both have a lot to say on the matter, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. There's a lot of room for improvement in that area. The investments are unprecedented. Millions of dollars have been invested in the workforce. Can we finally move on to our next study?

• (1725)

If we could only pass this motion, we could move on to our study on ports. All we're asking is for this motion to be passed, to remove the part about producing documents, to have a conversation and move to our next motion about ports. It's a matter that is not only of interest to Quebec. Your respective ridings all have ports. There are ports everywhere in Canada. Maybe not all of your ridings have them, but there are ports in Conservative ridings. There are some all across Canada.

It's a study we need to be serious about. Regardless of that study that we want to get under way, we must remember the speech that the Minister of Finance made in the House of Commons in which he said that committees had better get ready because business is about to pick up.

[English]

Be prepared. We'll be there for you.

[Translation]

He clearly said that recommendations would be made to committees about areas of study, including some that fall within the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities' portfolio. Sounds great to me.

Now, we won't include that in the resolution or in the motion. All we want is to talk about these two mandatory meetings. I haven't spoken with my colleagues about it, but I'm sure that our colleague will agree with adding a half-meeting.

You wouldn't mind adding a half-meeting to hear from the grieving family, would you? I knew it.

I'm sure Mr. Baker agrees with us. That way, we could meet our objective. Oh come on, it's not hard—

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, sorry for interrupting. Before your turn ends, we need to switch interpreters.

I'll suspend the meeting until the new interpreters are ready to begin.

[English]

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

• (1725)

(Pause)

• (1810)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

[Translation]

You have the floor, Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, let me congratulate the interpreters on their work. I thank them for taking over today. We're very grateful. You know, it's an onerous task when nothing's written down and the person speaks at a rapid pace for an hour and 45 minutes. It's not easy for the interpreters, so hats off to them.

Let's now turn to the Driver Inc. issue. It's an issue that we all take very seriously and that is of great concern to us all here at the transport committee.

I mentioned some of the important aspects that were raised over the course of this study, specifically around road safety. We also mentioned tax fairness, worker protection and fair competition between businesses that have to find ways to turn a profit, offer appropriate services to their employees, ensure safety, give the proper training and so on. The first part of the meeting mostly covered these topics.

I also highlighted what was released publicly about the grieving family affected by the accident linked to the Driver Inc. phenomenon. In this time of labour shortage, truck drivers are impacted. They provide an essential service, but it's not all. We often think of the truck drivers and the companies, but there are also countless people and small businesses who support these companies with

maintenance, highway traffic control, repairs, dispatch, etc. and who do amazing work. We did the comparison earlier with the aviation sector. Highway traffic controllers are not like air traffic controllers, but their work is crucial for road safety. I did some research and can confirm that. They have to determine which vehicle needs maintenance and what the situation is regarding permits and routes. Routes are very important. Plotting a course through a different highway can make the trip longer, which can have safety implications. Many risk factors are related to what we've been talking about since the beginning of this study.

As the saying goes, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. What we believe is important and what we want to see is a level playing field. We want the rules to not only be the same for everyone, but properly and consistently implemented. In short, we want everyone to play by the same rules to put an end to the Driver Inc. phenomenon. We want to do it properly and consistently all across Canada. The way we want to proceed as a government is to come up with recommendations as quickly as possible. We all agree on that.

We know all that there's some cleaning up to do, whether it's illegal drivers, temporary foreign workers or self-employed workers. Some of them are put under pressure by their employer, and that's what we've heard in numerous testimonies.

This practice has extremely serious consequences. We want to fix the problem. We want to prevent any more consequences. How can we do that? We have to come up with recommendations quickly in collaboration with our analysts and our clerk so that we can move on to something else.

Of course, there's the whole issue of duress. That has to do with payroll taxes, and it's up to us to do something about it.

• (1815)

Then there is the famous loss of tax revenue. This represents a loss of income for our government. In other words, there is a shortfall on the tax side. It is essential that we collect our share in order to make up for this shortfall.

We are also witnessing the erosion of fair competition. We have heard from representatives of companies that have decided to follow the straight and narrow path. They are committed to their work. They are listening to us today and asking us whether the committee can achieve these goals. I am sure that the guests who have come to testify before the committee as part of this study want only one thing: to see the solutions they have proposed included in our recommendations. Are we going to fix everything? No. Can we make changes quickly? I believe so. We can make recommendations to the provinces and territories to improve the situation.

Then we sensed that workers were becoming more vulnerable. They are at risk of injury or misconduct due to the influence of companies, which exert a certain amount of pressure on them. It's exhausting. We can easily recommend working with the provinces to find possible solutions with the aim of giving these workers jobs that are worthy of their skills and worthy of a supply chain that we greatly need. According to my research, 25% of drivers could make improvements. They are paid according to different models. In some regions, mainly in Quebec and Ontario, this is a concern. This practice is used elsewhere in Canada, but in Quebec and Ontario, it has developed more rapidly with the help of schemes like the ones we've heard about when it comes to obtaining licences.

Above all, this boils down to fair competition. Companies play by the rules and pay their fair share. They are proud to do so because they are part of a society and a state where there are rights and regulations that must be strictly followed. However, this comes with responsibilities. We have heard that some companies are going to lower their costs considerably. By cutting corners, they can reduce cost by 30% or 40%. In the interest of fairness and fair competition, it is essential to have a mechanism in place to reprimand offending companies. They must be caught and brought to justice, but the provinces have to do their part.

Then there is the issue surrounding the provinces, which have an important role to play. In our recommendations, I am eager for us to mention the example of Quebec. The first thing it had to do was transition from overly easy-to-obtain licences, while complying with the existing rules. First, complying with the existing rules is a step in the right direction. Let's start with the T4A form and the rules for obtaining a driver's licence. In the province of Quebec, we have francization. Licences can be obtained in either of the official languages, English or French. Interpretation services are available during the process to ensure compliance with standards and rules.

● (1820)

What's more, we always take worker protection seriously. People always forget that. We always talk about citizens and road safety, but worker protection is also a public safety issue. Workers have told us that they are afraid to drive on the roads. They're not afraid of the people who follow the rules. They are afraid of those who don't. If a worker sitting in a large truck carrying a huge load is afraid of his colleagues on the road, then we all have cause for concern. Protecting the workers is very important to the committee. Let's achieve our goals and make recommendations to restore confidence to these workers, these drivers.

Many companies are also experiencing labour shortages. They are looking for workers because there is an exodus of drivers who want to do something else. According to witnesses, one of the reasons they want to do something else is that they no longer feel comfortable with this model. This model is broken, and this practice must be stopped as soon as possible. The best way to break this cycle of misconduct perpetrated by the "Driver Inc." model is to go through the committee, which will make recommendations, and agree to hear further testimony at two meetings. We could have another half-meeting. We are in complete agreement on this. We could have an in camera meeting with the bereaved family in order to ask them our questions and show them our empathy. This would enable us to find helpful solutions for the future of this issue.

We could add a future study that focuses on ports.

Furthermore, removing all the requested documents requires tremendous work on the part of the entire government administration, which makes no sense. There is a way to do this: reach a resolution to that effect and move forward.

Next week or weekend, I would like to meet with the bereaved family and explain the Liberals' true position. I want to explain exactly what work we have done. I would never exploit the conversation I will have with them in private, if I have one. I would never exploit a conversation about someone who lost their life because of the "Driver Inc." model by posting it on my social media or mentioning it in a publication. I won't do it, regardless of the type of publication.

I would like to come back to the economic pressure on businesses.

Beyond comments about illegal drivers, there is new pressure on drivers that did not exist before the pandemic. I know the pandemic has had a huge impact, and I'm tired of talking about it. However, it has led to increased costs and workforce destabilization. What is more, some people changed jobs, while others went back to school. There has been an upheaval in the trades. Transportation is one of the sectors that has been hit hard, for a variety of reasons, including the vaccine. I won't go over that again because we've talked enough about the pandemic.

The fact remains that some drivers work beyond the legal limits. Today, companies are facing difficulties due to skyrocketing costs, particularly for fuel and vehicle maintenance. Purchasing a vehicle has changed significantly. Keep in mind that each delivery requires the allocation of expenses, which include benefits, salary, operating costs and the purchase cost.

● (1825)

Companies have come to us to show that profits are declining from generation to generation. There are generations that have earned a good living, while today's generations are struggling to make ends meet. Not only are they under pressure because of illegal drivers, but they also face daily pressure from operating costs. Can we, at least as a committee, give all these companies a little help? Can we support them by making recommendations so that we can at least resolve the portion of the problem that falls under federal jurisdiction and then, in collaboration with the provinces, resolve the issue of the "Driver Inc." scheme?

The more risks there are on the roads, the more vulnerable we are. There are several factors to consider. Some roads are in poor condition. There are ambitious infrastructure investment projects to improve user safety. However, there are more and more trucks on the roads as the population grows and, as a result, the number of services to meet the needs of the population also increases. However, infrastructure is not being improved. We need to do more for infrastructure, including maintenance. Before investing heavily in infrastructure, we must first maintain what we already have.

• (1830)

Let's talk about business operating costs. These businesses should expect this committee to make recommendations as quickly as possible in order to fulfill its mandate, which is to ensure that all companies operate on a level playing field. We can't do this alone. We can do it together, with all parties involved.

I agree with allowing the committee's recommendations to slightly encroach on provincial jurisdictions, because they are still only recommendations from the committee. We have seen this in other committees. We can work with the provinces and territories and collaborate with them to find appropriate solutions to improve a situation that falls under provincial and federal jurisdiction. The subject of our study is a good example of this, because some aspects of it depend on both levels of government. The primary federal responsibility is intergovernmental co-operation. I believe that this committee can be given a lot of weight and that it can play a key role in finding a solution.

As I keep saying, this is a shared jurisdiction between the provinces and the federal government. We need to act very quickly on the tax front to make this more profitable, and we need to strengthen tax enforcement. We also have an opportunity to work with the provinces to harmonize all of this and to put standards and inspection mechanisms in place.

I had the opportunity to talk at length with an employee from Quebec's ministry of transportation and sustainable mobility. This is not my area of expertise, but I can tell you one thing: I learned a lot. He feels a little stuck with the limited information available in Quebec. Can we streamline communications, provide the tools needed for better collaboration between provinces, harmonize standards, and find inspection mechanisms?

I will go further than that. Mr. Barsalou-Duval may call me to order, saying that I am talking about a subject that falls under provincial jurisdiction. However, I am an instructor by trade. I taught for 21 years, including at the trucking school. I worked in metallurgy, at a vocational training centre. Training is close to my heart. For me, training is the foundation of knowledge. I would not want our new pipeline to be welded by welders who have not been properly trained. There are requirements for welders. They are required to complete 1,800 hours of training and obtain high-pressure welding certificates. If they fail, they are fired.

• (1835)

[English]

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

[Translation]

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

Go ahead, Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: I am wondering about the relevance of pipelines. I was wondering if Mr. Greaves had some comments about pipelines and wanted to make some comments on them.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I don't believe that's a point of order, Mr. Lawrence. It is a point of order, but is it in order? No.

I will turn the floor back over to Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: It will be a double break. Thank you, Mr. Albas.

The Chair: We have a double point of order to allow Mr. Lauzon to take a drink.

There are 12 minutes left.

Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: As interesting as it would be to hear Mr. Greaves' thoughts on the pipeline to the Pacific coast, I want to reiterate that the point of order was on relevance. Unfortunately, Mr. Lauzon has strayed and is not coming back to the motion every three and a half minutes, like a pro. He's getting a little slow. I really want him to get back on his A-game.

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

I think Mr. Lauzon just spoke about the importance of proper training for drivers. He was making the link to [Inaudible—Editor], but I will still remind all members to bring it back to the subject matter at hand.

Mr. Lauzon, the floor is yours. You have 11 minutes left.

Stéphane Lauzon: I will bring it back in a few minutes. The relevance is there.

[Translation]

I was explaining that training is extremely important. In the various trades, requirements are so high. For a pipeline welder, every welded joint is X-rayed. If he misses three, he loses his qualification. That's what I'm trying to tell you.

This is a widespread model in Canada. When an X-ray of a welded joint shows that a welder missed something, not only does the welder have to redo the joint, but he also gets a ticket. After three failures, like demerit points for driving, he loses his licence.

In Quebec and Canada, there are point systems for licences. They just need to be organized and enforced. Road inspectors are asking us to do this. It could be among the committee's recommendations. Mr. Barsalou-Duval may say that such recommendations go too far, but I am somewhat tempted to go there. The main motion we're debating aims to find solutions and conclude this study, then make recommendations. I want to tell the provinces to get involved in training and to go straight to where it hurts, which is demerit points, as with welders. When you get a ticket, you lose the opportunity to do your job.

Driving is a privilege. I told my daughter so. My daughter got her first driver's licence and her first car. This is her first winter driving. The first thing I told her was that driving is a privilege. I told her she had to pay close attention to her lessons, pass her tests, follow the rules, deal with bad weather and, above all, deal with reckless drivers. I had to tell her that she would have to face incompetent big truck drivers because she would be driving on Highway 50 every day. So my daughter is learning to drive on Highway 50. You can't prevent a child from expressing themselves or growing up because you live in a rural area. So I have to live with the consequences of my daughter facing trucks every day. So if I don't care about bereaved families and this committee, I'm in the wrong place. I wouldn't want my daughter to be in that situation. I wouldn't want anyone's child to be in that situation. I wouldn't want responsible parents to have their child's death on their conscience because they gave them the opportunity to drive at 17 and they had an accident because of a driver involved in the Driver Inc. scheme. I want this to be resolved.

That's why I'm making the link with welding. I'm just as passionate about qualification certificates to work on pipelines. I taught high-pressure welding for pipeline work for 21 years. I always told my students that welding certification was a privilege. The same goes for drivers, like the ones we heard from during this study. Those drivers made the effort to get good training, gain experience and learn how to drive well. They work for responsible companies and don't deserve unfair competition from other drivers. It could affect a family member. Now, in connection with the federal government's broader objectives, we must work together to fight the Driver Inc. model and protect workers' fundamental rights.

● (1840)

Very little has been said about Quebec's Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail and its equivalent occupational health and safety bodies in other provinces. This truly is an occupational health and safety issue. We must consider drivers' health, including their mental health. We must also consider their families. When a spouse drives a truck longer than the allowed maximum number of hours, their family is worried. It's holding the drivers hostage. They don't talk about it, because they're under pressure.

We can resolve this together. We can achieve our goals. We can ensure healthy and fair competition if we want to. We can also improve road safety indirectly. Road traffic controllers and provincial government representatives are asking for collaboration, standardized rules and information sharing. It's not just a matter of making lists and publishing them. What they want, and what the majority of the population wants, is for everyone to work together to come up with a solution to the Driver Inc. problem.

You know, Driver Inc. is not a fringe phenomenon. I must tell you that it's a real threat. I rarely talk about my concerns and my family, but every time I see Jade leaving on Highway 50, I feel a knot in my stomach that I shouldn't have, for many reasons. We can go back to the design of the highway. We could say it's a trucking route or it's because of reflection. If we went way back, we could say that it was because the Quebec government ran out of money, so it settled on fewer lanes and built a single road with adjacent lanes running in both directions. These days, they're improvising

with temporary barriers and trying to put markers down the middle of the road. Every day, cars collide with the dividing markers. I have all kinds of reasons to be concerned. However, I wanted to convey to you today how important it is for me to resolve this matter, and to make it clear that I am not speaking lightly.

Thousands of trucks a year use our highways. I often mention Highway 50, but you all have a highway used by trucks in your riding. Wherever there are trucks, whether at ports or in large cities where truckers have to operate in very limited spaces to make deliveries, people are at risk. We need skilled drivers, with proper training, who receive fair and equitable wages from companies.

Please, it would be much better if these issues were not exploited for political and partisan purposes through the feelings of a bereaved family. Today, we have an opportunity to correct a significant flaw. I know there's not much time left, but I want to say one more thing before I leave. If we absolutely want to come back to work together and settle this matter, I ask you, if possible, to accept the following solution. I propose that we hold two and a half meetings, two of which are related to the list of witnesses we have. Then I propose that we hold a half meeting to hear from the bereaved family, and each of us in turn can offer them our condolences. We will have the opportunity to talk to them, to look them in the eye and to offer them our condolences. We will have the opportunity to tell them that we are working on the issue. I will never tell them that it is the Bloc Québécois' fault for telling lies, and so on. This is not the time to play politics. It's time to grieve with the families, but it must be done in camera.

● (1845)

It's also important to remove the request for disclosure of communications concerning the trucking sector. No such request should be made to the government.

Now, we absolutely must adopt this motion in earnest and address the study on ports, which would be of great benefit to us. Together, we have a chance to achieve a strong "win-win-win" outcome for the Port of Montreal and Contrecoeur projects. They represent hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs. There are thousands of jobs in your community, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. It is a viable and profitable project. It is for the good of the organizations, the community, and the businesses in your community, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. It would be extremely profitable to move forward and address this study so that we can look at—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

It's now 6:47. I'm going to suspend until the next meeting. Then we'll continue the discussion.

[English]

This meeting is suspended until the next meeting.

[The meeting was suspended at 6:47 p.m., Tuesday, November 25]

[The meeting resumed at 15:32 p.m., Tuesday, December 2]

The Chair: We will now resume meeting number 16 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the Standing Orders.

I'd like to take a few moments to make some comments for the benefit of members. First, please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, please 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 for interpretation of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

As members will recall, the committee suspended its meeting on Tuesday, November 25, 2025, while debate on the motion was ongoing. Therefore, we are resuming this meeting. The following motion is still on the floor.

For the benefit of members, the motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities request that the Departments of Transport, Revenue, and Employment forward to the committee clerk, within 30 days of the adoption of this motion, all correspondence, reports, emails, and documents relating to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry since January 1, 2018; and

That the committee add two additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation, and in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, and Canada Post.

We left off with Mr. Lauzon having the floor, followed by Mr. Albas and Mr. Barsalou-Duval. Members, if you would like to add your names to the list, by all means say so, and I will add your name.

[Translation]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes.

Dan Albas: I thought we had something about the tow trucks association of Quebec. Did I miss that?

The Chair: I don't believe I read that in there, but—

Dan Albas: It was part of the original motion.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to verify whether it should be in here, and if it should, Mr. Albas, I'll fix that and confirm with you.

[Translation]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for setting the stage.

We'll start with some good news. We're going to let you speak today. We'll listen to you. We may have a solution to offer you. We have decided today to kick the ball back your way and put an end to this study. I will be tabling an amendment shortly. It is a significant amendment. It will be a very good compromise. I believe this amendment will allow us to achieve our goals together.

I'm glad to see a Conservative member and a Bloc Québécois member among the next people on the speaking list. They'll be able to vote on this amendment.

After tabling my amendment, I will put my name back on the list and we will decide whether we want to end the debate and vote on this amendment. Also, it will allow us to settle certain things that were said or done during committee meetings. I'm prepared to make a correction, if the clerk reminds us that we left out a Quebec towing company. It will be a good compromise with Mr. Barsalou-Duval and the Conservatives, who wanted to hear from a series of proposed witnesses. The chair disclosed that today.

This is a truly sincere attempt on my part. From the beginning, I have maintained the same position, and that is still the case. Even if I don't find it relevant, I agree that the committee should receive, with dignity, survivors of truck-related accidents involving companies that use the Driver Inc. model. They will be able to come and testify here, but we will have to give them at least the choice to do so in camera. That will be up to them. It will be up to the committee members to decide whether they want to offer these survivors dignity.

I think that's the best compromise we can make among ourselves. I'm not talking about requiring an in camera meeting, but about offering grieving families, or families affected by the events, the opportunity to testify in camera so as to avoid turning grief into a political weapon. That weapon can be just as harmful for politics as for families.

It will also prevent Mr. Barsalou-Duval and the Bloc Québécois from using bereaved families as leverage to force the disclosure of information, such as private tax information, which could affect tens of thousands of Canadians.

Then, as a guarantee, we would be ready to vote, to make it easier today. It's not because I don't want to speak. Rather, I think we could get to where we want to go fairly quickly. I think the main purpose of this study is to adopt a report and then force the government to make it official. That's what our analysts have been waiting for all along. I've repeated it often enough.

If we continue at this pace, we won't achieve that result. Witnesses have travelled from all over the country. These people made sacrifices to prepare. For us, speaking for five minutes is nothing, but for other people, it can be more difficult. They did it to help us move forward.

What we are doing as a committee demonstrates a lack of respect for the witnesses. It's also important that we begin other studies.

I am thinking in particular of the port study, which we all care about and which closely or directly affects our ridings. That topic specifically concerns Mr. Barsalou-Duval and me, particularly what is happening in Montreal.

We are talking about the original motions, which were tabled at the beginning. If we really wanted to invite accident survivors to testify before the committee, why did we not do so at the outset? Why did we not have that intention? It is because, as we were working on that file, the choice of witnesses was guided by the aims and the political agenda of some members, in order to potentially influence public policy. That should not be mixed in with decisions made at a committee. Instead of doing what we did, my colleagues waited and are now using survivors as pawns for a totally different purpose.

Here is what really bothered me. In the week I was researching the subject, I wanted to see the article. By clicking on it, a new window opened. It was a funding request. In other words, people are asked to make a donation of \$5, \$10, \$15 or \$25. I am talking about the article that says the Liberals do not want bereaved families or accident victims to testify before the committee. This is disinformation.

In addition, there is coordination between the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois on the fact that we have included in our motion the request for documents that have been drafted since 2018.

We all have a distinct role to play on this committee. However, our common role is to make recommendations as quickly as possible. We know that this is mostly a provincial issue, and the federal government has a lot of work to do. The Government of Quebec has already started taking steps, and so have we.

We started with a measure targeting the T4A slip. In addition, we have made investments and our budget provides for massive investments totalling \$77 million over four years to continue working on the file.

We know that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives have joined forces. This afternoon, I think the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals could join forces and vote in favour of the amendment I am going to propose. The ball is in your court. This afternoon, I propose that you vote in favour of my amendment so that we can move on. We are all going to have a wonderful holiday season, and the analysts are going to have a lot of work to do. Then we can move on to another study. We are going to work to find good recommendations and move the file forward. It is important for the public to know that we are all here for the same reason: to get things done.

This shows a lack of respect not only for the public and the witnesses, but especially for all those who support the committee, in-

cluding the interpreters and all the staff. I will not name them all now, but I could do so later. In addition, it shows a lack of respect for witnesses by preventing them from sharing their remarks. Their comments are extremely important and serve to find a solution. We have to get this done. They have all stepped up to the plate. They came to tell us exactly what they thought.

I was elected to do that work, not to filibuster. I was not elected to waste your time, my time and the time of all these wonderful people who support us. I was elected so that I could stand by my beliefs and get things done.

The Bloc Québécois is calling for the disclosure of personal tax information. These are potentially the documents of tens of thousands of Canadians and businesses, which would be targeted without their consent. In so doing, we are playing games with them. That would be putting businesses at risk, and that is not what we want.

We do not want to mobilize the public service. However, we need it to mobilize people to resolve the "Driver Inc." issue. We need it as a pillar for communicating with our provincial and territorial partners so that we can move forward on this issue. It is not our job to mobilize it to do anything other than its work. If we really want to solve the "Driver Inc." issue, we have the will and the opportunity to do so this morning. We have already started by lifting the T4A moratorium. However, this is only one step.

The Bloc Québécois tells us that it has 10 recommendations, one of which has been addressed. That is exactly the purpose of this committee: to propose recommendations and work with our analysts to get to the end of the study. It is the right way to make recommendations, as long as they are not unconstitutional, they do not encroach on provincial jurisdiction and there is no risk of getting into legal proceedings. We do not adopt recommendations by holding press conferences, but rather by proposing them to the committee, putting them on the table and finding solutions to the "Driver Inc." issue.

You know I could go on and on. However, my objective today is to let you speak if you propose recommendations. I really set the stage to give you a chance to spend happy holidays, wrap up this study and move on to something else.

Please do not use witnesses in the wrong way. That is why, on Monday, after thinking about my business over the weekend, I tabled a notice of motion that will be admissible tomorrow around 3 p.m. I still want to read this motion to you for the record of this committee: “That the committee report to the House on its firm condemnation of the use of grieving families, victims and survivors to fundraise for a political party.” It is not too much to ask not to combine a page on the victims with a funding request, or to use it elsewhere. If you click on the link that I provided to you, that I provided to the public and to everyone, the first thing that jumps out at you when reading the article about people in mourning is a request for donations of \$5, \$10, \$15, and \$25. We should not use it like that.

I am getting to my amendment. It is simple. I will read the amended motion in its entirety for the clerk, and I will take this opportunity to ask the staff behind to send it to the clerk in both official languages so that he can distribute both versions at the same time, without taking a 15-minute break. I think you understand that.

That the committee add two additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks in camera, if witnesses would prefer, and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation, and in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, Ontario Trucking Association, BC Trucking Association, and Canada Post.

That drafting instructions to enable the development of a comprehensive report to the House of Commons be provided by the committee immediately after this testimony.

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

Mr. Chair, given that this is my first chance for weeks.... Hi. I'm glad to see you again.

The Chair: It's good to see you as well, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: It's good to be back in this chamber.

My point of order is that the amendment—the so-called amendment that the member opposite has placed—substantially changes the original motion, so much so that it supplants the entire motion. I would like for you to rule it out of order because it substantially changes the intent of the original motion by Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

I don't believe it does. I feel that this is an attempt by Mr. Lauzon to try to find common ground on this issue, which has had the committee seized for quite some time. I think it merits discussion to see whether there is a path forward here.

I see Mr. Barsalou-Duval's hand is up, so I'd like to give him an opportunity to speak to it as well.

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

These things could have been ironed out beforehand if there was any effort on the Liberal side to have dialogue with us. However, this is clearly out of order, and I challenge the chair.

The Chair: Okay, there's a challenge to the chair. I'll turn it over to our clerk.

The Clerk: Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?

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

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon.

Ms. Nguyen, do you want your name on as well?

Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I believe that he had his motion; it was put down, and now I'm putting my hand up to speak to the original motion. I think you had me down to speak after Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: No, I'm still on it. You just asked for a point of order.

Dan Albas: No, you just finished.

Can you rule on that, Mr. Chair?

An hon. member: He's still speaking. He still has the floor.

The Chair: He is still speaking. He would still like to speak to the motion.

Dan Albas: No, he did his motion.

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

I challenge the chair's decision that Mr. Lauzon has the floor, and as part of that, Mr. Albas should have the....

The Chair: He's next on the speakers list.

Mike Kelloway: Can I put a point of order in?

The Chair: There's no debate; it's a dilatory motion.

Mike Kelloway: Wow. Okay.

The Clerk: Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?

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

The Chair: Okay.

Just for future reference, if a member has the floor, can other parties vote to remove that member's ability to speak, Mr. Clerk?

Colleagues, the clerk is looking up something quite important. We're going to suspend for two minutes while he does that.

This meeting is suspended until the call of the chair.

• (1555) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1555)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Albas. Next I have Mr. Barsalou-Duval, followed by Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours, sir.

Dan Albas: Again, Mr. Chair, thank you for handing me the opportunity to speak, because I think it's something that has not been fairly shared. Over the past few weeks, we've seen a Liberal filibuster presented mainly by Mr. Lauzon. Today, he gave more reasons for this.

Mr. Chair, quite honestly, in my mind, I don't know whether the first two meetings of his filibuster felt longer than the last 10-minute intervention, but I digress, and I'm going to digress here, Mr. Chair. There are a few things.

First, the tactics the Liberal Party members have been using are obstructionist. It's also been very unfair to Mr. Lauzon that he has shouldered all of this. My suggestion is that they might want to examine having a fair share by having the load spread out more fairly.

Beyond that, Mr. Chair, it's undemocratic for us not to have regular meetings while Parliament is sitting. I believe this is an issue that you must profoundly contemplate, because you have a key role that has been given to you by this committee, not by any one member or any staff member, but by Parliament itself. I think the obligation runs such that we need to have regular meetings.

Now, to be fair, the last few meetings have not been productive, but that is not the business of the chair. That is the business of the committee and how it decides to spend its time. I understand it when there are legitimate concerns about the direction. It's very clear to me, though, and I think anyone from the public who came in or watched it on TV would clearly see that the majority of the committee members support continuing this study into the issues that are happening in the trucking industry and that the majority wants to hear directly from victims.

I am going to take a point of contention against Mr. Lauzon, who has said that this is politicking. Mr. Lauzon can choose any reason he wants not to support Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval's motion. He can pick any reason. The one reason he has presented that I take issue with is that somehow we are forcing victims into a position in which they compromise their pain for political gain.

I would say that it is their pain, sir. It is their pain, and it's up to them to decide whether they wish to share it publicly in a way that might benefit this committee.

Also, I think it's remarkable that we've spent so much time talking about what is on political websites. I will tell you what's on a political website: a donate button. There might be other information Canadians will go to a political website for, and they will see that in addition to a donate button, individual members of Parliament from all parties will sometimes present a press release that—guess what—other members of Parliament will disagree with.

I for one want to see victims who freely choose to share their pain—it's for them to decide how they're going to deal with it—and if they are willing to come forward and give us their views and recommendations to consider as part of a study, exempting them from it would somehow lessen our report.

I will also say this: We heard earlier from the analysts here that if we have closed-door sessions, we're not going to be able to use their testimony. If someone's coming here freely to speak about

their issues or their family members' issues, I say that this is what Parliament is for.

I'm just going to recap. It is obstructionist, what the government members have been doing. It's undemocratic that we have not had meetings. Also, I support the right of people to come forward and to share their experiences in the way they so choose.

Mr. Chair, I often say that I want a government who thinks of me, not for me, and I certainly want a committee and a committee chair who thinks of us, not for us.

I am going to finish my time on this floor by simply asking for a friendly amendment to Mr. Barsalou-Duval's motion to include the Association des Professionnels du Dépannage du Québec, the tow trucking association of Quebec, which seems to have fallen by the wayside.

I hope that it will be seen as a friendly amendment and that Mr. Barsalou-Duval will include them, because they are a key witness. In my original thinking.... In October we expressed that we wanted to invite them. I think they probably want to come and talk to us about the woes they're having, with millions of dollars of unpaid tow trucking fees. They should be able to share their experiences with this committee as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Albas. Is that an official amendment you're putting forward, sir?

Dan Albas: It's a friendly amendment. If it's adopted by Mr. Barsalou-Duval, I think it's fine.

The Chair: All amendments put on the table have to be voted on by members. A new speaking order would have to begin to discuss that amendment. I guess you'll have your hand up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you will be the first to speak to Mr. Albas's amendment.

[*English*]

Do I have any others on the speaking order for Mr. Albas's amendment to add one more witness to the list?

Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do not know how to explain the fact that the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec is not mentioned in the motion. That may be a mistake on my part. It seems to me that it was part of the discussions we had previously had in committee and that it was also part.... We remember what Mr. Lauzon said. I must admit that it was difficult to listen to him for three hours at the last meeting. He alluded to it himself when he spoke.

I imagine that he never mentioned that he would be against that, especially since it was part of the discussion at the beginning. I assume that everyone will agree on adding the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec to the list of additional witnesses who must appear before the committee.

Having said that, I think we also have an opportunity to talk about the overall context of the topic we are discussing right now. I think it is important to talk about it because we did not really have the opportunity to do so at the last meeting, given that the speaking time was monopolized by a single person for almost three hours—

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I think we need consensus to confirm the presence of at least one other witness. You're next on the speaking list.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Great.

So I will be able to continue my comments once—

The Chair: That is correct. I will turn it over to you.

Okay? Perfect.

[*English*]

There's no one else on the speakers list, colleagues, so we can go to a vote on this.

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We'll go back to the main motion. For that, I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I would like to comment on the way we decide whether or not to call a meeting of the committee, which has been rather random for the past few weeks. I am one of the people who find this problematic. I have always believed that, according to normal procedure, the committee was convened on a mandatory basis, but I understand that is not the case. For our part, we therefore believe that our operating rules should be revised so that, in the future, the committee is properly convened when Parliament is sitting. Otherwise, it becomes another tactic to prevent the committee from doing its work. I think all Quebeckers, and probably Canadians as well, expect committees to do their work. They pay taxes for a reason. So it is very disappointing to see this kind of tactic, but we learn something new every day. We will have to find a way to correct that.

Now, I have to say that the arguments from the other side of the table at the last meeting were quite far-fetched. I would even go so far as to say that this is virtually unheard of. I think they are inventing a parallel reality. I do not intend to go through the arguments one by one, because there have been so many. It is quite unpleasant, because if you do not know the overall context, you could be tempted to believe the comments made by a single person who monopolizes the speaking time. So I find this way of doing things problematic.

This same individual, Mr. Lauzon, suggested in his opening remarks, in a tone that I very much appreciated, that we find a way to work together. I think that is positive, but with what we heard at the last meeting, the contrast is a bit striking, especially when the person who prevented the committee from operating during the entire meeting lectures us about respect for taxpayers, the staff who work here and everyone around the table. We have seen this in other meetings. In any case, let me say that I find this way of speaking quite particular.

That said, I am still among those who hope that the committee will find a solution, because I think we want to have a committee that works, not a committee where members talk to each other all day. So I promise that I will not be speaking for the entire meeting today, Mr. Chair. However, I am still going to go back to some comments, particularly those calling me a liar who manipulated the victims.

Anyone who consults the “blues” or views the recording of the November 6 meeting will see very clearly that the member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation did not want to hear about the victims. Has he changed his mind in the meantime? If that is the case, so much the better, we will eventually be able to hear from the victims. I would also like to take this opportunity to point out that, when the motion proposing to invite victims to testify was originally moved, two or three meetings before the November 6 meeting, the government members filibustered. This shows that it was not just the requests for documents that bothered them, but also the idea of inviting victims to come and testify.

Were they opposed to the victims testifying or to us continuing to work on this in committee? It is up to them to explain it to us, but Mr. Lauzon's comments on November 6 very clearly showed that he had little consideration for victims and that he was not interested in their presence at the table. If he has changed his mind on the subject, I will be very happy, and I think the victims will be too. Society will come out ahead. In his own words, it is a duty of humanity. I am not talking about being a Liberal. I am talking about people who have had accidents, who have lost loved ones or who have nearly lost their lives. It seems to me that the least we can do is allow this committee to hear what they have to say.

As for Mr. Lauzon's comments about funding, they are so ridiculous that I do not even know if it is worth talking about, but I have to do it to get it on the record. I did not even know what he was referring to when he talked about it, because I obviously do not manage our party's website, Mr. Chair. There are staff who take care of that. My colleague apparently discovered, to his great surprise, that there was a press release on the Bloc Québécois website in which I raised the issue of the Driver Inc. model and that, on the same website, our party was asking for money. I am surprised by his surprise, since all parties solicit donations on their websites, whether it is the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the NDP, the Green Party or the Marxist-Leninist Party.

So it is completely ridiculous. It is clear that the member opposite was looking for an excuse to get all worked up, and that day he found one. He tried to put on a dog and pony show and, unfortunately for him, no one believed him, but he still caused us to waste a lot of time.

In short, we have seen a sad spectacle in the past month. That is not how we should be working here. I am sure that, even on the government side, there are members who are not happy to work that way. When you work for your fellow citizens, it seems to me that you want to come home on the weekend and tell them why you fought that week. I do not think they want to hear that we sat at the table to listen to a colleague block the committee's work. They want to hear that we are concerned about the real problems they are experiencing and that we have tried to find solutions.

Despite everything, I found the Liberals' argument about the scope of the documents requested in this motion interesting. I have not had a clear indication of that, but I understand that it could be a significant burden, a significant amount of time and a significant cost to society. I would therefore be prepared to accept amendments to send the request to ministers' offices only, first of all, rather than to all departments.

Why would we not start by sending our request for documents to the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Jobs and the Minister of National Revenue? Sending the request to their respective departments is not something that should necessarily be excluded, but by limiting it to the offices of these three ministers, first of all, will make it possible to request fewer documents. In addition, it will allow us to see whether there is real political will on the part of the government to act on this issue, or whether the government would have been able to make decisions and to move the file forward. Perhaps there are solutions that the committee has not yet thought of that have been proposed by people with whom the ministers have had discussions. These are very interesting and relevant things for the committee.

I am therefore making a very open and constructive proposal, even though we have not seen a lot of constructive action on the other side, apart from the fact that they have taken a slightly less frivolous tone today.

With that, I am willing to turn it over to others who have things to say. I hope we will find a solution today.

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

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

They say they want the committee to work well, but we have just received evidence, once again, that this is not the case. From the outset, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois formed a coalition to overturn a decision from the chair, something they would not have been able to do otherwise. The Conservatives even defended the Bloc Québécois when it came to the icon that people can click on their website to make a donation. This is the first time I have seen that. They also joined forces by sharing their speaking time to move the original motion and amendments.

Now, as for the consequences of speaking for three hours, as Mr. Barsalou-Duval said, that is nothing compared to mobilizing the entire public service to provide documents. Whether it is public servants or ministers' offices who contact the departments, the request for documents would need to be dealt with. The train goes in one direction, but it has to come back. So the amendment my colleague is proposing today changes nothing. He is not acting in good faith. The amendment I proposed, which was directly related to the

Bloc Québécois' original motion, would have enabled us to achieve our objectives for this meeting. In addition, we agreed to add a witness who had been forgotten. We did not have a problem with that, although I wonder where that appearance will fit into our schedule.

It was publicly stated that I did not want victims to come and testify, whereas in fact, we never voted on that. We have just had discussions. I had an honest conversation with Mr. Barsalou-Duval behind the scenes, and I told him that I would agree to these witnesses appearing before the committee as long as their testimonies are heard in camera to keep their identity confidential. I would like him to admit it, for the record of the committee. A few minutes later, I heard people say publicly that I did not want victims to testify.

Once again, today, I made concessions in good faith. What I recommended in my amendment is that these witnesses come, but on their own accord. If they want the meeting to be held in camera to preserve their dignity, they should have that option. It would be in the interest of this committee. If they want to come and testify publicly, they can do so. That is what we said, and if that is not a way to put some water in our wine, I do not know what is.

Then, the two two-hour meetings are exactly—

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lawrence has a point of order.

Philip Lawrence: My point of order is relevance.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval has put forward a very reasonable compromise here. Can we just get rid of the obstructionism? If we have a deal, then let's get a deal.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mr. Lawrence, but I appreciate the comment.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: The amendment I tabled contains exactly the same elements as your motion, Mr. Barsalou-Duval, including the two two-hour meetings and the list of witnesses. We even subsequently agreed to add the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec. We voted for that proposal. My amendment proposes that, immediately after hearing the last witness, the committee issue instructions to make recommendations and move forward.

Today, my colleagues are saying that I am filibustering, but they challenged the chair's decision by saying that my amendment exceeds the scope of the motion, when in fact, I used the wording of the motion to ensure that it is directly aligned with the committee's needs. I removed the part about document production, which would be a lot of work for the government machinery, as you admitted, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. I spoke for 20 minutes about the administrative burden this could create. Today, I am going to prove to you that our public servants are working hard to solve the problem related to the Driver Inc. scheme and that they should not be assigned to other tasks. Whether it comes from public servants or ministers' offices, producing these documents will require incredible communication and effort, when we already have a lot of material. More than 40 witnesses came to share their views with us.

Lastly, about the link on the Bloc Québécois website to make donations to the party, the worst excuse I have heard is that they are not responsible for the website. Just tell the webmaster not to put pop-up windows asking for donations on a page where testimonies are published from people who lost family members in an accident. I know it is in the Conservatives' wheelhouse, since they even supported the Bloc Québécois' initiative by saying that it was normal to click on a button to make a donation, but you can choose where to place the button, and I will not back down on that. I did not over-dramatize it. It is shocking to hear the truth, and I can tell you that the people who contacted me after visiting this website found it appalling. If you think this is a waste of time, think again. There are people who are offended by that.

Mr. Chair, it is unfortunate that we are at this point this morning, when there was a proposal on the table. They did not even want to discuss it. I came here with good intentions. I wanted to speak as little as possible. I proposed a reasonable amendment that is directly related to today's topic, but we cannot even get to the subject, because the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois have formed a coalition to use a standing order that requires the signature of a majority of members.

I know it is shocking when people say that it is collusion, that it is a lie, that it is a false truth or that it distorts reality by using a small part of a sentence for political purposes, but we need only read the comments on the Bloc Québécois website to see that they are not false allegations.

The Driver Inc. file is extremely important to us. I am therefore incredibly disappointed today, because I would have liked us to get ready to resume the committee's work on Thursday. We could move forward on our files. I would like to talk about ports, among other things. The Minister of Finance, who gave a speech in the House, prepared all the committees for what is coming. There are some extremely important elements in the budget, including \$77 million to settle the Driver Inc. file, which the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois opposed when they voted against the budget. We have already started a first phase by assigning public servants to the T4A slip file, but we want to go even further and resolve the whole issue.

Ontario took the lead on driver training a long time ago, but it is now Quebec's turn to take care of it. In recent days, the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, the SAAQ, published on its website the new standards for obtaining a class 1 licence, which

will come into force on December 15. This will ensure that drivers receive a minimum level of training. That is how you move the issue forward. These are the kinds of recommendations we want to ask the analysts to draft. The longer we delay the process, the less we will be able to make recommendations to improve road safety and help the road transport community and businesses.

Could we not give these businesses some breathing room, since they are facing a tax injustice that has existed since 2011? We have heard from so many witnesses that this needs to be addressed as quickly as possible, and I agree with that. I know that the other witnesses will tell us the same thing. To correct this injustice, investments have to be made and human resources have to be allocated to the right place. There is a way to do it together. It was as simple as that this morning. We could have moved forward. You would have had ample opportunity to undermine the process in other studies. You can do all kinds of things to hurt us, because you have the majority. As long as this nice coalition of yours is maintained, there will be no problem. You can decide everything. You can overturn the chair's decisions, as you just did. You can do anything.

No, we are not going to let you do that. We will stand our ground, for all the reasons I have given you, on behalf of public servants, committee employees, stakeholders and witnesses that we heard and who want us to make recommendations. The integrity of the trucking industry has been affected by the Driver Inc. scheme for too long, and we had the opportunity to solve a lot of things at once by supporting the proposal that was made this afternoon.

It is important to respect the provinces' and territories' jurisdictions, especially when it comes to information sharing. We are already a model, but we have to do better. So I would like to see that in the recommendations.

The committee must be an advocate for the Drive Inc. file. We have to show that we are serious and make recommendations that will help. We have to stop using accident victims. That is primarily a provincial responsibility, not a federal one, as well as licensing, penalties, inspections and roadside testing. We have a role to play and we can have an impact on the overall picture, particularly on international and interprovincial trade, but we must use victims as guinea pigs during our study. We really need to listen to them and pay attention. We have to hear them in camera and offer them the opportunity to testify publicly if they want.

In freight transportation, an extremely important economic pillar is being affected as we speak. We heard from trucking companies that have been around for generations and that are now in bad trouble. As members of Parliament, we can really react and tell these companies that we are there for them and that we will support them. Today, we have the opportunity to send them a message. We have an opportunity to make recommendations to the government and to act in good faith by adopting the amendment I proposed at the beginning of the meeting.

Seventy per cent of goods are transported by truck. Drivers are the backbone of the economy. These are people to whom we should be grateful, because they have a certain responsibility to the Canadian economy. They are indispensable for the economy, for the supply chain and for food, as well. If you can eat today, it is thanks to them, because they bring the food to markets. They also transport materials and medications. It is a critical workforce.

I have always protected the trades workforce, including drivers and operators, such as crane operators. I have been a big advocate for trades workers all my life. I have been around drivers all my life, and I can tell you how important it is to have good drivers and workers who deserve to be recognized in the labour market.

There is also the issue of the labour shortage. We are not doing anything to help these people by not moving forward. It is a good thing that we had this study and that we started off on the right foot with a good list of witnesses. It is good that we listened to the witnesses and asked them the right questions. Until then, things were going well. However, not wanting to put an end to it is something else. We have a responsibility to finish the study, and we had a very good opportunity to do so today, at the beginning of the meeting.

The trucking model is broken. It is shocking to hear that if you want to be competitive, you have to cheat. That means that companies that are honest and do things right are penalized. That should not be the case.

The pressure of competition is intense. That is what we felt during testimonies. The companies charge per kilometre, but they have the same costs. We have heard from witnesses about the vehicle operating and maintenance costs, which are all on the rise. Parts are getting more and more expensive. However, there are people on the road who are less well trained and with trucks in poorer condition that have been subject to fewer inspections. Some drivers got their licences in 48 hours. It is like they found it in a Cracker Jack box. That is what we heard. It is inconceivable that this situation would be allowed to continue.

The Government of Quebec has taken action, and that could have been done a long time ago. However, once again, this is not a federal jurisdiction. We should not interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction. In short, Quebec has taken a big step by improving training. The SAAQ changed course. As of December 15, which is 14 days from now, all drivers will be required to take mandatory training. They will not be allowed to learn on the job anymore. They will no longer learn French by reading signs. They will learn how to drive a truck at a recognized Quebec school or through other training. The hours are going to be mandatory.

So we are going to give drivers the professional role they should have. When health care professionals coming from other countries want to work in Canada, they have to retake almost all the exams they have taken during their schooling because they have to be certified. However, when a driver arrives from abroad and shows that he has a driver's licence, he is allowed to start driving right away. From now on, training will be required. The requirements will be more comprehensive. That should be one of the recommendations we will include in our report with the help of the analysts. Improving training will, I hope, have an impact on the number of accidents. Accidents involving trucks are serious accidents, because

trucks are heavy vehicles that often carry extremely heavy loads. It is extremely dangerous.

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: It appears as though the Liberal obstruction is going to continue.

I would ask the following questions: Can the Chair confirm how many resources are left today, and can the Chair confirm that there's a meeting scheduled for our regular appointed time?

The Chair: Just addressing the first point, Mr. Lauzon is speaking to the subject matter at hand. He's expressing his point of view on this. He's obviously not in agreement with the motion put forward. I'm going to allow him to speak further.

With regard to the additional time that was requested, I can confirm to the committee that we have until 6:50 p.m. I will use this opportunity as well to remind committee members that we have an opportunity this evening to try to wrap this up and find some form of consensus. We have supplementary estimates, and we would typically invite the minister. It's something that is appreciated by all members. I think we would all like to do that. I hope all members will find some common ground that we can work from and be able to get that done.

I'd also like to remind members that we have many potential studies we can embark on. I've received messages from multiple stakeholders, ranging from ports to the aviation sector, who hope that we can move forward with the study to address some of their needs, and I hope we'll be able to do that.

I will turn the floor back over to Mr. Lauzon.

Philip Lawrence: Sorry, the second question I asked in my point of order wasn't answered. Can you confirm that there will be a meeting called for Thursday?

The Chair: I can't confirm when the next meeting will be called. It is at the discretion of the chair to call meetings, but I hope we will find a solution to rectify the situation.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let us be clear. Today, we agreed that the committee should hear from all the proposed witnesses. We agreed to pass the motion as it is, except for the production of documents. That is the only thing we want to remove. I think that is a good arrangement. Now, we have to stop this and come to an agreement so that we can move on to all the topics you mentioned, Mr. Chair. I think we can move forward in a reasonable way after removing the document production requirement from the motion. We even failed to propose, through an amendment, that the committee conduct a study on ports. I had already mentioned that I intended to move that the committee consider this issue for its next study. This is an extremely important topic. However, I think we have shown our good faith. We agreed that the committee should hear from all the proposed witnesses, in addition to the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec. We need to get this over with in order to make recommendations and draft a report with the help of the analysts.

With regard to the Driver Inc. model, it was felt, during the testimony, that drivers had been pressured to set up a corporation. There were companies that had other companies set up that had only one driver. They are fake self-employed workers. This scheme was created for a number of reasons. One of them is the elimination of payroll taxes. You do not need to pay employment insurance, to contribute to a pension fund, to pay insurance premiums to the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail in Quebec, or to its equivalent elsewhere in Canada. So a company is created and pressure is put on its driver, who is responsible for maintaining his daily report card, which includes his driving hours. That has a direct impact. This results in major financial losses. Above all, this is unfair competition.

These are unprotected workers. That is what we heard. This afternoon, we have the opportunity to tell these unprotected workers that we are there for them and that we will support them. The committee has an opportunity today to table all testimonies with the analysts and to start making recommendations. Of course, we are not going to solve everything overnight. The economic pressure on businesses is not going to evaporate overnight. We are not going to instantly get rid of the legal grey areas regarding this issue. However, we can make good progress in order to improve equity between self-employed workers, employees and employers.

Nor is the lack of coordination between the provinces and territories going to be resolved overnight. However, we have to be able to tell those provinces that we are ready to collaborate and that we have recommendations to make. We need to table recommendations in the House so that we can say, "This is the work that the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has done on the problem of the Driver Inc. scheme. We are here for you." This is a clear message that we need to send to drivers, businesses and everyone who worked extremely hard to prevent companies from setting up fictitious small businesses. A driver of a small business that has only one client is in fact an employee.

We also have to talk about the direct consequences of this scheme on workers. They say there is a labour shortage, but we do not know what is going to happen. Drivers who take part in the Driver Inc. scheme are not entitled to employment insurance. Maybe one day they will need it. In addition, we talk a lot about the risk of accidents, but there are also diseases. Mental health is also

growing concern. Employees are being abused. They are under pressure because a company has been created that does not really exist, and certain conditions are imposed that other drivers do not have, such as a list of responsibilities and mileage requirements. We have even heard testimony to the effect that drivers keep two daily cards at the same time so they can work more hours. The safety and health of these drivers are therefore at stake. They are certainly at risk of becoming ill, and if they do, they have no recourse, since they work for their own company.

That is not what we want. We want these drivers to have access to an insurance plan, such as that of the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail in Quebec or that of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in Ontario. We want to give them dignity so that they have the right to be sick and have the same rights as other drivers.

No compensation can be paid if the business ceases to exist. So what do they do? It is very simple: They close the business and open another one. They do it again until they get caught or until things go wrong. Some people change companies. At the moment, it is extremely difficult to find a driver who has shut down one company and started another under another name. That has a direct impact on businesses and workers.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, Mr. Albas has a point of order.

[English]

Dan Albas: This is on relevance. We are debating Monsieur Barsalou-Duval's amendment, and the good ship Lauzon keeps tooting a different horn.

The Chair: I believe Mr. Lauzon is speaking to why he's encouraging Mr. Barsalou-Duval to change his mind and perhaps make changes to the amendment so that he can gain the support of the Liberal members. He's explaining how important this is. I think it is relevant.

Therefore, I'll turn the floor back over to Mr. Lauzon to continue.

[Translation]

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Albas, thank you for your point of order, which gave me a break and allowed me to drink some water. It is very much appreciated.

Everything I am saying is directly related to the topic at hand, the motion and the amendment deemed out of order that we moved today. This amendment was directly related to Mr. Barsalou-Duval's motion. It would put an end to the precarious financial situation of drivers, which I was talking about before Mr. Albas raised his point of order.

I will pick up where I left off, on the excessive working hours.

We have been told that by changing a letter in their first name or last name, the driver can reset the truck hours to zero. As a result, the driver becomes increasingly vulnerable. We have clear evidence that drivers are working excessive hours thanks to this scheme. How do we counter that? I am going to be honest with you. We have heard a lot about the problem, but I am very much looking forward to finding solutions. Despite all the reading and research I have done since the beginning of this study, as well as the testimonies of the witnesses we have heard, I do not yet know what recommendations we can make to remedy certain problems.

I am thinking in particular of the problem of people cheating. They are using technology fraudulently. They modify an electronic document in order to work longer hours. By doing so, it is more profitable for them and they can compete favourably with good companies.

As a result, these drivers have less time to do professional training and, sometimes, to properly maintain their truck. Imagine, we set aside truck maintenance in order to be more competitive. According to the reports we have heard, a truck lost a tire while it was on the road, and it was proven that the inspection of the truck was not done properly. All of that has a direct impact on the driver and the companies.

In addition, it has a direct impact on the economy for our government. There are federal tax losses, as far as the Canada Pension Plan is concerned, and provincial tax losses, as far as the Quebec pension plan is concerned. We can also think of the losses related to employment insurance and income tax. Based on what we have heard, the difference in revenue a company can have as a result of these taxes not being paid is in the order of 20% to 30%.

There are also tax losses for the provinces. They affect us indirectly, because they are the same taxpayers. There is a loss of money for transportation companies, whether it be the SAAQ or any other. There is also less money for occupational health and safety across Canada, for Revenu Québec and for the implementation of Canadian labour standards.

● (18450)

The impact on competition really plays a major role, because companies with integrity and honesty pay the price. Honest companies are being penalized. We could address this impact by proposing recommendations, such as focusing more on the recognition of existing transportation companies in order to reduce the number of companies that use the Driver Inc. model.

What we have been hearing from the start is that performance levels have been lowered for a number of years. It is a race to the bottom. We require as little as possible to obtain a driver's licence. We want to do as much transportation as possible by conducting as little maintenance as possible and providing as little training as possible. The goal is as much competition as possible, even if that means lowering quality.

Some things are the responsibility of the Government of Canada, not the provinces. I really agree with making good recommendations, such as federal tax measures. We need recommendations to prevent tax evasion and tax avoidance. Whether it be for the

Canada pension plan, employment insurance or unpaid taxes, we need to avoid tax loopholes.

Targeted audits of Driver Inc. are needed. We really need to keep a record of the drivers involved in this scheme. I am convinced that it will be one of our recommendations to do so. What we have heard is that we are losing track of drivers who do interprovincial transportation or who travel to other countries, because they do not talk to each other. It is as if we were starting from scratch. Information is not shared.

There has been a lot of blame placed on temporary foreign workers, but there are also Quebeckers, Ontarians and British Columbians, among others, who are suffering harm caused by the Driver Inc. scheme. People from all countries are being manipulated and suffering the same harm.

What steps can the Government of Canada take to address this scheme? I think he took the right path by lifting the moratorium on penalties for T4A slips. Since 2011, this moratorium, put in place by the Conservatives, was a loophole. For 10 years, we thought we wanted to give businesses the right to manage their affairs as they saw fit. However, the government has often been blamed for that and accused of doing too much for businesses. We want businesses to be independent, but look at what happened this time.

As a result of this moratorium, cases of abuse have skyrocketed. They have accumulated over the years. We will not be able to resolve all this overnight, especially since transportation is mainly a provincial jurisdiction.

It is important to say today that we have the opportunity, if we keep our good faith, to use the original motion, remove the production of documents part and invite the witnesses whose names were on the list—including the victims—to appear and have the opportunity to testify in camera, out of respect for their dignity.

Now, what falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, such as Quebec—this problem started mainly in Ontario and then exploded in Quebec—is everything related to road safety. Do we want to put forward recommendations? I think so. Do we want to move forward and say that we want to work with the provinces to be able to set national standards, especially when it comes to information sharing? I would venture to say yes.

● (18455)

In fact, that is what the Government of Quebec did this month by harmonizing its tax rules. It was a recommendation from the federal government, which had been implemented previously and was used as a model for Ontario.

I mentioned Ontario, but I could also name several other provinces. I think eight provinces have regulations similar to the one that Quebec just passed in terms of mandatory training for a class 1 driver's licence.

Everything related to these famous accidents falls under provincial jurisdiction. In Quebec, there is the SQ and the municipal police, while the other provinces have a provincial police service. Garages mandated to do mechanical inspections fall under provincial jurisdiction. This is also the case for mechanical checks, roadside checks, road construction and maintenance, as well as workers' status. We have a national labour code, but in Quebec, workers are governed by the Quebec Labour Code. For example, the classification of salaried or self-employed employees falls under provincial jurisdiction. In addition, companies have occupational health and safety obligations. In Quebec, these obligations are administered by the CNESST, the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail. Elsewhere, they also have obligations to similar organizations. In addition, everything to do with victim compensation falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Can we provide recommendations on a better way? Yes, we can. However, the SAAQ is already dealing with this issue in Quebec. Have cases already been brought before the provincial courts? Possibly. The Civil Code of Quebec would apply.

We are talking about people's lives, safety and vulnerable people who could be in danger. We are talking about the danger not only to those who drive a truck, but also to those who are on the road. Personally, I drive on Quebec highways quite often. I have driven outside Quebec, but I mostly drive in Quebec. My experience tells me that there are more and more drivers and more accidents. Those rates are still going up. As for roads and infrastructure, there is a very significant deficit in Quebec. The quality of roads is deteriorating.

If there is one thing we can do, it is to support the provinces, at least when it comes to truck drivers, so that those on our roads are responsible. We want to avoid an increase in accidents and problems with illegal drivers or drivers using the Driver Inc. scheme.

Could we recommend professional evaluations of how they get their driver's licence and how they drive on the road? I am not sure we can go that far. Could we set Canadian standards? I think so, yes. We cannot assess the drivers and those who inspect the trucks, but we can create Canadian safety standards. We can also share the best practices among provinces in order to consolidate information. The idea is to see how to amalgamate all the information across the provinces and territories so that each province can coordinate the Driver Inc. model.

• (18500)

The Bloc Québécois always tells us that it is the great defender of jurisdictions. This study was proposed by the Bloc Québécois, which is fine. When we make our recommendations, we will soon realize that a number of Bloc Québécois recommendations deal with matters related to Quebec's jurisdiction. Let us give ourselves the chance to adopt this motion. Let us work with the committee's analysts and present recommendations that may promote all the recommendations put in place by the Bloc Québécois. We will at least shine a light on what can be done and what cannot be done. We are not here to undermine the legal system and well-established companies in the labour market, nor to increase the labour shortage that already exists on the market, but we are here to find solutions.

Using victims for political gain should have no place here, Mr. Chair. We should listen to the victims, ask our questions, make our recommendations, but then we should not use—

• (18505)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon, but Mr. Albas has a point of order.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: You're speaking to an amendment to the main motion. I know the member has many concerns about the motion, because we've heard from him for the past three meetings, but I believe the debate should be limited to the amendment—

The Chair: We're now speaking to the main motion, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: —or else there's no distinction between....

Did we pass Xavier Barsalou-Duval's changes?

The Chair: Correct me if I'm wrong, but there was no clear moving of an amendment by Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Dan Albas: Oh, okay. In that case, I apologize and I will resign at some point. Thank you.

The Chair: No apologies are necessary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor again.

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Barsalou-Duval made it clear that he didn't want the recommendation we put on the table about moving forward without the production of documents.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval simply said to take out a part. He would be prepared to take out the part about documents concerning the public service as a whole and keep only documents from cabinet. Those documents go back and forth. It's about activating the public service backward instead of forward.

All we wanted was to put forward a very reasonable amendment. We proposed that the committee hold two meetings with all the witnesses on the list. We also proposed that witnesses be given the choice to appear in camera or in public. That's all we wanted. We let a lot of other things go.

As such, this is directly related to our discussion.

What we didn't want was to mobilize the public service in some way, to exploit victims, to play political games at the expense of bereaved families by exploiting personal tragedies. That's all.

People are exerting artificial pressure on Canada. This coalition is a political stunt that is completely at odds with our objective. People are striving for political visibility. They want to make Liberals look like bad guys who don't want to produce documents and don't want witnesses to speak.

Just listen to what people have been saying since the start. It was extremely clear again today. We very simply and reasonably recommended meeting with victims and respecting their dignity by giving them a choice.

Some witnesses were clear, however. They talked to us about respect. They gave us the straight goods on everything that has been said and the whole Driver Inc. issue. They talked to us about driver's licences and inspections.

That even gave me an opportunity to go and see what a truck inspection is all about. I don't have my class 3 now, but I used to have it. From what I remember, it's the same responsibility whether it's class 3 or class 1. Every driver has to go over their truck, inspect, test the brakes, check the tires, do a visual. That takes time.

The witnesses told us that all of that was being ignored and that people were hitting the road in uninspected trucks. There is proof that training is sorely lacking.

The examples I just gave you all fall under provincial jurisdiction.

We can adopt recommendations that will enable us to work with the provinces, but what we need to do today is focus on our own jurisdiction and consider the amendment I proposed earlier.

What the federal government can do is provide better support for self-employed workers and strengthen oversight over money owing and tax evasion.

• (18510)

We can harmonize interprovincial rules. We have a role to play. Our Prime Minister is very active on interprovincial and territorial trade as well as international trade. Why not include a recommendation about harmonization, starting with provincial regulations, so everyone can be on the same page?

The regulations can cover licences or defective trucks from another province. Just because your truck leaves one province and goes to another doesn't mean it's fixed. The inspection doesn't follow the truck. It stays in the records of the province where it was done. Failure to comply in one province cannot be recognized as failure to comply in another.

That would suit me. I'm happy to work with my colleagues to make recommendations. The important thing is to improve interprovincial inspections. We can really make a difference on that.

We can ramp up Canada Revenue Agency audits. We've already started. Money has already been invested, and we've allocated millions more in the budget. I don't know if my colleagues have taken a peek at the budget, but we should consider what the minister said about how there might be some good issues to bring to the table. We invested money in addressing Driver Inc. The problem had to be solved at the Canada Revenue Agency, so public service employees have been tasked with solving the problem. They haven't

been tasked with drafting documents; they've been tasked with rooting out tax evasion in connection with Driver Inc.

[English]

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

[Translation]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon, but Mr. Lawrence has a point of order.

[English]

Philip Lawrence: I assume that we're going to be here until 10 to seven and that we are forcing our staff to stay here until 10 to seven. My motion is to allow them to eat the bountiful food that is back there, if they should be hungry.

The Chair: I think that is greatly appreciated by the staff members who are supporting us during this meeting.

I will say, however, just in the interest of members, that I encourage members to please go and make sure that you're fed, at which point I think we should leave it to support staff to go eat as well.

Does that sound good to all members?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. It looks as though that is unanimously adopted, Mr. Lawrence.

[Translation]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor again.

Stéphane Lauzon: First and foremost, I would like to thank Mr. Lawrence for that great idea.

The support we get is important, as I've often said. I've often mentioned the committee's analysts, the clerk, the technicians and all the people associated with the committee. In addition, we all have staffers here who have to put up with this, so what I'm about to say may be for those employees.

At the beginning of today's meeting, we all had a chance to wrap things up and let those employees devote their energy to helping their MPs get ready to advocate in other studies. That could be a good thing for their riding.

That's why a motion was amended to remove the production of documents. That's all. I didn't even add anything to it, other than to protect the witnesses' dignity by allowing them to appear in camera or in person.

Thank you for offering a meal to all those employees, but it would be much easier if they could all have their meals with their families. The same goes for staffers who are participating in this committee meeting. We could adopt the recommendation I made at the beginning of my speech and agree to remove the documents.

I talked about the structural solution the committee could adopt to get this over with. We could improve the regulations governing subcontractors in the trucking industry, because there are always going to be subcontractors.

I met a truck driver who owns his own truck, who is incorporated and who gives his name to one, two or three companies. He may work for the same company for six months, but, if he feels exploited, he is free to terminate the agreement. There is room for legitimate independent companies. I can tell you that I know this person. His truck isn't new, but he keeps it in good repair. He doesn't just wash it. He always takes really good care of it.

I can tell you one thing: Being an independent incorporated driver is a good business.

That's why we have to be careful about how we regulate the subcontracting of independent companies. Not all of them are bad companies and not all of them are bad apples. There are good drivers doing this work. I'm sure that some of these companies are not acting in bad faith. Toward the end of the month, they do what the others do. They let drivers go and hire Driver Inc. drivers and give them more responsibilities so they can make it to the end of the month. Companies that decide to be above board, act with integrity and keep their employees pay the price. It's extremely important to ensure the system is fair and protects workers and victims. That is where we come in. The importance of provincial-federal collaboration—

● (18515)

When people's lives are at stake, there is no room for grandstanding and exaggeration. We have an opportunity to move forward and make recommendations so that we have a responsibility to act. We have a right and an obligation to do our job, but also to do the right thing. We absolutely have to work together to put recommendations forward as quickly as possible.

When this study began quite some time ago, on October 7, Stephen Laskowski of the Canadian Trucking Alliance broke the ice. I remember him because his name is similar to mine. He and his colleagues told us that they have been sounding the alarm since 2018. In their testimony, they explained that the Driver Inc. model emerged in 2011 under the Conservatives following the introduction of a moratorium on T4As. They're the ones who gave us the figure I used today and in my previous speeches to convey how much this scheme saves businesses every year: between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per driver. Imagine what that means for businesses that have 20 incorporated drivers. These are substantial amounts that are not used to pay fees, contributions and taxes, or dues to the CNESST in Quebec and equivalent organizations elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Laskowski was accompanied by Geoffrey Wood and Jonathan Blackham, who shared their findings with us. They said this is a major crisis that has to be resolved quickly and that we have to help the Canadian Trucking Alliance, which represents a lot of businesses. Without solutions, they said, serious accidents are happening and Canada's social services network is being cheated of billions of dollars every year. Can we respond to that testimony from one of the largest associations? The Canadian Trucking Alliance is made up of seven provincial associations and represents over 5,000 carriers and suppliers. Can we listen to them? I think they're pretty important. The industry employs over 250,000 Canadians.

So we have a problem and we want to solve it. We wanted to know how it started, and I think we found out. As the Canadian Trucking Alliance and others have said, this scheme emerged in 2011, when the T4A moratorium was introduced. We know that now, because we've heard it over and over. These people have been alerting the government since 2018, and we're taking responsibility. We want to move forward and fix this. For that to happen, people have to act in good faith and accept the proposed amendment instead of blocking it. People are refusing to talk about it because it's too reasonable.

● (18520)

The purpose of this amendment is to address the alliance's concerns, find potential solutions and make recommendations, but some people are refusing to consider it. The Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois both challenged the chair's ruling today to prevent the amendment from being moved.

Canadian Trucking Alliance representatives told us that the situation has become a compliance crisis that enables companies with the best strategies to get around the system and be more profitable. The federal government and the provinces are working in isolation and don't talk to each other very much. Regulations differ among provinces, and there's a lot of red tape involved. Companies take advantage of all that to get around the entire system, and that compromises road safety. CTA representatives told us that these companies have figured out how to game the system to commit tax and social fraud. There may even be human trafficking involved. I was stunned when I heard that. In some cases, drivers are being used, under threat, to transport illicit substances from other countries. That's a violation of labour rights. I take these witnesses extremely seriously.

I was astounded to hear what's going on in the trucking industry with contraband and illegal cross-border shipments, among other things. This is a border issue too. Imagine how many studies we could do in the future, maybe not at this committee, but at others, like the Standing Committee on Public Safety. As such, can we get going with this one and make recommendations so we can look at these issues?

This mechanism is detrimental to the trucking system. It's what I call a scam mechanism. I may be making that name up, but I was struck by what Stephen Laskowski told us. We were told that companies are forcing drivers to incorporate even though they don't meet the criteria for independent operators. That puts their families at risk, puts their health at risk, puts their financial security at risk and puts the entire system at risk. I'm talking about the trucking ecosystem that brings us all the products and food that I talked to you about off the top, the goods that supply our businesses and that we depend on today.

This practice has consequences ranging from people being denied their rights under the Canada Labour Code to tax evasion in connection with T4As and the revenue losses associated with that. I was really struck by the CTA representatives' testimony about how much money companies that circumvent the system save: from \$20,000 to \$30,000 per driver per year.

● (18525)

Even once the committee has made its recommendations with the help of the analysts, it's not like the problem will be solved from one day to the next. It's not like Driver Inc. drivers will cease to exist and companies will no longer save \$20,000 to \$30,000 per driver. There's going to be a transition, but it has to start here. We need to make targeted recommendations.

One of the solutions recommended by the Canadian Trucking Alliance was to end the T4A moratorium for the trucking industry immediately. That's what we did. We've already taken action. There's also money in the budget waiting for approval. Canada Revenue Agency needs to implement measures to catch wrongdoers. There's also the biggest file, which mainly falls under provincial jurisdiction, as I've said repeatedly. However, the Canadian Trucking Alliance is asking for federal-provincial coordination on a misclassification blitz.

We can make some headway with that. All relevant organizations must work together, from municipal police services to Canada Revenue Agency, the RCMP and Employment and Social Development Canada.

We also need to improve roadside inspection points. Can the federal government help with that? We don't know how far we can go in making recommendations to help with roadside inspection in the provinces. To what extent can the federal government get involved? Just financial support? Can the federal government support the provinces' efforts by creating a Canadian code? I'm sure we can move on setting up a national database to monitor truck fleets for safety purposes, at the very least. In addition, we should find a way to accelerate the information exchange among the provinces and between the federal government and the provinces.

In short, we can work on many of the Canadian Trucking Alliance's recommendations. The CTA's representatives appeared here on October 7, which was quite a while ago. They were the ones who got the ball rolling. I was really impressed by what they had to say. I was looking forward to the day when we could make recommendations. Given that we all had some time to think things over and didn't have any meetings, and given the meeting requested under Standing Order 106(4), I was so sure that I could make a very simple request in good faith today.

The requirement to undertake a study on ports was removed. The wording of the motion was kept in its entirety. The Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec was added to the list of organizations invited to appear. Accident witnesses and grieving families were given the opportunity to testify, but in camera. It's not complicated. This is perfectly in line with our mission and what the three CTA representatives asked us for.

This is not an intractable problem. The only thing lacking is political will. These people have been sounding the alarm since 2018. We now have the opportunity to take action. The T4A moratorium has ended for the trucking industry. The number of roadside inspections is increasing. Penalties are set. Enough talk. We have the political will to protect truckers and restore equity.

● (18530)

It went on after that. Angela Splinter appeared here shortly thereafter. She told us about the CEOs at Trucking HR Canada.

We also spoke to Canadian Trucking Alliance representatives, who gave us an overview of the big picture. The CTA represents seven different associations. It's the organization that works with drivers and has an impact on employee protection, recruitment and Canadian priorities. That gave me a different perspective. They told us that their role is to represent the entire human resources sector. It's actually a national workforce development council for the transportation and logistics sector.

To better understand what all this means, that is, what leads drivers to all the logistics related to their trade, it's important to know that this organization engages more than 10,000 stakeholders and provides labour market data. Trucking HR Canada told us, again, that the trucking sector is critical to the supply chain. Both witnesses made the same observations. For both of them, the starting point is that this service is essential to the supply chain. That was clear during the pandemic. Everything was shut down except for trucking, wasn't it? People needed food. There were lines drawn on the floor in stores. Grocery stores didn't even allow four people in at the same time. People had to follow lines on the floor. People didn't go to the back of the store, but truck after truck backed in to supply the stores. We needed truckers; they were important then.

Truckers are also important to our supply chain now. That's what Trucking HR Canada told us. They said truckers' work is critical not only to the supply chain, but also to Canada's economic growth. Trucking HR Canada also talked to us about economic growth. They told us that more than 340,000 truckers are active in Canada. Trucking HR Canada condemns the blatant violation of tax and labour regulations.

Ms. Splinter from Trucking HR Canada talked about protecting jobs, which is the organization's main role. She told us about the tax implications, of course. She also told us about how her organization helps protect employees from major repercussions. This is detrimental to workers' stability. Why? Because it impacts retirement readiness, paid leave and work-life balance. Those are all things that impact people. It impacts people's lives. It impacts people's ability to be a good mom or dad who has to be at home at reasonable hours. It impacts social security. It erodes employment standards and Canada's social safety net. It affects everyone. It affects families. According to Trucking HR Canada, no fewer than 340,000 drivers could be impacted by this phenomenon.

According to Trucking HR Canada, the entire sector's reputation is in bad shape and needs help. We have to do better.

I think the industry will have trouble attracting workers. It has a dilemma because the work is not attractive.

● (18535)

People want job security more than ever. They want a good, well-paid job, and they want to be there for their families. They don't choose to be MPs in Ottawa and be away from their families. They choose to be truck drivers because they want to be with their families. We made a choice; they make a choice. We have to respect their choice.

Because of those choices, companies will have a hard time not only attracting workers, but also retaining them. If we don't take steps to address illegal practices and prevent businesses from continuing to do these things, that's detrimental to compliant carriers. I'm very confident. Witnesses have told us that, generation after generation, they want to follow the rules. They want the employees who drive their trucks to be trained, to be well paid, and to have good working conditions. We think it's extremely important to move forward in the right direction. That said, there is good news.

However, the uneven playing field is affecting human resources. Imagine that. They represent employees, and they can tell there's an uneven playing field. They say that compliant carriers are at a disadvantage. Two witnesses pointed that out. We may hear about this from 43 other witnesses. Two witnesses just gave us the same conclusion: There is a threat to the viability of the industry, to the entire ecosystem and infrastructure in which drivers operate. It's not just about labour relations. It's also about ethics, fairness and national integrity. We need to put an end to this practice once and for all.

Sometimes, you're right: It's not easy to be in politics and achieve what we want to achieve. However, this is about fairness to the witnesses who came here. This is about national integrity and about why our government must put an end to the Driver Inc. model to protect truckers' rights and ensure fairness and competition in this sector.

I wasn't sure what would happen when the HR representatives came here. I didn't know how we would deal with this. However, the woman who spoke so earnestly from the heart convinced me. The sooner we can get what we need to do done, the better. After her, we heard from another woman, Johanne Couture. Ms. Couture is the executive director of the Women's Trucking Federation of Canada, and we asked her a lot of questions. She came with other members of the federation. In other words, we weren't talking to just anyone. As I've told you, I have a lot of experience in entrepreneurship and teaching, but only 21 years' worth. She's been in her industry for 31 years. She has 31 years of experience as a professional driver. She described how the Driver Inc. model denies drivers protection and endangers public safety. She told us that it's a threat to public safety.

● (18540)

Imagine the context and the overall situation when she came to tell us that. She was the owner-operator of a business for 27 years. She knows truck driving, but she also knows entrepreneurship and

how to do things right. She's also an expert on cross-border transportation. She also told us that she had a permit to transport dangerous goods. I talked to you about that last week. Dangerous goods transportation is an important public safety issue as it is, but the witnesses made me realize that it is even more important considering the risk of motor vehicle accidents related to Driver Inc. drivers. I already compared that to the rail accident in Lac-Mégantic. We must take dangerous goods transportation very seriously. Imagine an untrained Driver Inc. driver behind the wheel of a truck transporting dangerous goods. I can't even imagine how risky that would be, Mr. Chair.

These people came to testify on behalf of thousands of professionals, including drivers, owner-operators and instructors, but they did a good job of representing the owners of small trucking companies that transport specific goods. This particular witness doesn't transport bulk commodities; she transports dangerous goods.

As I see it, the problem was presented to us as a form of exploitation disguised as a practice that offers flexibility because pretty much anything goes. I'm not talking about innovation; I'm talking about finding ways to get around the system to be more competitive. That includes misclassifying drivers as self-employed workers. This practice deprives them of the protections and benefits to which they are entitled, as the two previous witnesses told us. That's three witnesses who talked to us about it. I'm repeating myself, but we have to respond.

I can't speak for my colleagues, but I, personally, sensed the distress that small and medium-sized businesses are experiencing as a result of the economic consequences. They're feeling this pressure on top of rates that are too low to cover ever-increasing operating costs. This compromises public safety and increases the number of fatigue-related motor vehicle accidents.

Now, think about how the increase in fatigue-related accidents and other risks will affect insurance premiums. We haven't talked about that very much, but it's a factor we need to consider. These trucks cost tens of thousands of dollars, and repairs are expensive. We can't put a price on people's lives and safety, though.

We have an opportunity to restore the image of truck driving as a profession. It's a pillar of the Canadian economy. We can make it a safe job and make drivers feel confident. How can we show them that we respect them and want to give the next generation some hope?

● (18545)

The industry has an aging fleet and has just gone through a labour shortage. Now we have an opportunity to fill schools that train future drivers and gain recognition for the truck driver profession as a viable, safe and socially equitable occupation.

The witnesses who came to talk to us gave us recommendations. I'm not saying we shouldn't take them into account, but it's also important to coordinate our efforts with the provinces to find solutions. One of my takeaways from the witnesses, who went even further, is that they want us to enforce laws consistently across all jurisdictions. That's a strong message. Those were not their exact words, but I'm paraphrasing. A sole proprietor told us to talk our problems over together, find solutions and talk to each other.

They want laws to be enforced consistently across all jurisdictions, including the SAAQ, municipalities, provinces and the federal government. They want good conditions. They want us to talk to each other. They want a fair and equitable system, safe roads and consistent inspections across the country. They want people to be proud to do this job. That's basically what they're telling us. They want us to protect workers, provide more support for compliant carriers and restore integrity to the sector. That was their message to us.

This is clearly not a labour issue at all any more. It's about public safety and the integrity of the trucking industry. Equity and safety are not optional. Every trucker deserves to have their rights respected, and every citizen deserves safe roads. Ending the Driver Inc. scheme will protect workers, the integrity of the industry and the safety of our children when they're on the highway, whether in Quebec or the other provinces. Our children need to feel safe on our roads. I get that my Conservative colleagues might find this funny, but I wouldn't want a truck driver who's not playing by the rules to crash head-on into my daughter's Kia one day. That's the last thing anyone wants.

I took the time to listen to every witness. We asked them good questions, and they all impressed me, but we could not ask for a better witness than the one I just mentioned, who has 30 years of experience as a professional truck driver. Now is the time to implement initiatives to address issues related to security, equity and the fight against human trafficking. That alone will solve a lot of things. We can work on the immigration and temporary foreign worker issue, but, again, we have to keep in mind that there are some Quebec drivers who are incorporated and cut corners. This phenomenon is not only to do with immigration; it's to do with the entire trucking industry.

• (18550)

The witnesses raised some important points. They pointed out that driver classification is misleading. People fell for it, then realized that there are ways around everything in the system. Not only can people register, but they can get around the licensing rules and a lot of other things. There are many things our government has to act on, and I'm actually very proud that the Government of Quebec recently took action. As of December 15, new standards will reinstate the requirement for training prior to obtaining a class 1 licence.

Essentially, what we heard is that the risks are being transferred to workers, and these companies are not prepared to do that. Many businesses are telling us that they will be no further ahead. Some businesses aren't making a profit; they're sick of it. They want to work with the committee and all the authorities. As we've been

told, all levels of government, not just certain ones, need to work together.

Another consideration is that only 4.3% of truck drivers are women. If we want to attract more women to this sector, we need to give this profession the dignity it deserves and recognize the benefits of being a truck driver. Never once did any of my three daughters tell me they wanted to be a truck driver. If one of them had, I would have been surprised and told her that we should take some time to talk about it, because it's a non-traditional occupation for women. I'm a very open person, so I would have listened. I would have told her that it might not be a good choice as things stand now, but that it might be a good choice in the future. This is the future. We have a chance to solve a problem now, not later. That's what we heard from the witness who came to see us, a trucker with 31 years of experience, and she was very credible.

On that topic, to add to the examples I gave earlier, I would note that, if a driver incorporates, that means she's not recognized as an employee by her employer and must have her own business and support herself. It also means she isn't eligible for parental leave. If she gets pregnant, she'll have to stop driving, so she won't have any work until she gives birth. She has no rights. That's not fair.

We have a chance to fix this and help women enter the workforce. Losing maternity leave can have devastating consequences for a family. It's also important to have a stable schedule. Some of these women are forced to work 60 hours a week or lose their jobs. That's a threat they face. There have to be accommodation measures for both women and men. This also impedes diversity. We want to increase the number of women in non-traditional occupations, so why not in trucking? Back when I was teaching, all the trades that wanted to attract more women were heavily promoted.

• (18555)

Truck driving schools promoted that as well. There were even internal competitions to encourage women to enter non-traditional occupations. At the time, there was a contest called "*Chapeau, les filles!*" for higher education and recognition of women.

[English]

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

The Chair: There's a lot of chatter, everybody.

We have a point of order from Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Grant came here and had to listen to Mr. Lauzon for two hours. He deserves to say something. Can he?

• (18600)

Dan Albas: I think we just applaud him for having done it.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Stéphane Lauzon: Thanks for your support.

Wade Grant (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): I did pour one glass of water for him.

Stéphane Lauzon: Two glasses of water.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone.

I will say for the record, that wasn't a point of order, but I think it was important to note.

I will now pass the floor once again back over to our colleague, Mr. Stéphane Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: You know how important it is to the government to recognize women. In my previous career, there were incentives.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon.

Good afternoon, Mr. Garon. Welcome to our committee. It's a pleasure to have you here.

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lauzon knows how much I admire him, because we talk of ten. I would like to take this opportunity to pay my respects.

Forgive me if I sound a bit uninformed. As you know, I'm replacing Mr. Barsalou-Duval, and I don't think I have the right motion. Would it be possible to get the French version of the motion?

I'm trying to connect what Mr. Lauzon is saying with the motion, but I think I have the wrong motion. I don't have the motion on gender equality in the trucking industry. Would it be possible to get a copy of the motion in French, please?

The Chair: Yes. I'll make sure we send the motion to you and other members who are replacing committee members.

Jean-Denis Garon: You're an experienced parliamentarian, so you can tell me if Mr. Lauzon is off topic, but I don't think that's his style. That said, I think I have the wrong motion.

The Chair: I just want to make sure you have a copy of the motion that was moved by Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Jean-Denis Garon: That's good, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'll send it to you.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It's unacceptable that you haven't received this motion, so I'll send it to you right now.

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask the following question: Are we talking about a motion on the study of gender equality in the trucking industry?

The Chair: No. I think Mr. Lauzon was talking about what the witnesses said. Unfortunately, you weren't here at the time. That's okay, you're not a regular member of the committee.

Jean-Denis Garon: I apologize for that.

Stéphane Lauzon: I was talking about the testimony.

Jean-Denis Garon: Oh, it was testimony.

The Chair: He was talking about the many hours during which witnesses have testified.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, is it possible that we could invite Mr. Lauzon to come as a witness so that some of his testimony can be included in the report?

The Chair: Colleagues, I'm addressing the point of order, which I think we just did.

Now I'll turn the floor back over to our colleague, Mr. Lauzon, who is speaking to—

Philip Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I didn't appreciate the way you were dismissive of Mr. Jean-Denis Garon. He is a member of Parliament, and when someone steps into committee, they are a member of our committee. It might be for a long time; it might be for a short time. His points of order are just as valid as those of one of the standing members of the committee.

The Chair: That's 100% right, Mr. Lawrence, which is why I immediately, without hesitation, asked the clerk to send him—which was not a joke—a copy of the motion in case Mr. Barsalou-Duval did not leave him with one. That was very important to me.

As you know, I take this job very seriously, and I want to ensure that all diligence is there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for giving me a chance to take three bites of my cookie and drink some water. I really appreciate it, and I'm sure you did it on purpose. You are so very kind.

We have had opportunities to speak regularly. We're good friends with the Bloc, and I want to remind my friend, Mr. Garon, that this motion is indeed closely related to a woman's testimony. She really made an impression on us during her testimony here. She talked about her 31 years of experience and the unfair competition in this sector. She also told us a bit about the challenge of working as a female truck driver. What more is there to say? Trucking is a great occupation. It's supposed to be profitable. A female trucker isn't supposed to lose money. In addition to her work, she has to handle other things, such as taking care of her family, her children, and so on. It's very difficult for a woman to be in such an unstable situation, given the compromises involved in working as a truck driver.

We talked about road safety, which is included. I was talking about that when there was a point of order. The witness in question told us that she was very concerned about this issue. People are still calling that out. The third witness told us there is less truck maintenance being done and less training for those who do truck maintenance. People are cutting corners. That's essentially what she told us. She said there's been a considerable increase in accidents attributable to mechanical failures. We don't have specific numbers on that. She referred primarily to the accident we saw in a news report, when a truck lost a wheel and flipped over or on its side.

Based on the discussions we've had and the questions we've asked, we need to create a national truck driver certification program. We talked about many aspects, including accidents related to inadequate training. For example, people don't know how to secure loads on trucks, or they don't know how to drive loaded trucks correctly, so as to avoid accidents.

A little earlier, we talked about heavy goods and dangerous goods. Now I'd like to talk to you about cargo securement. The witness in question raised an issue that we weren't aware of and hadn't discussed.

I actually remember seeing a truck carrying a load of steel at a standstill on Highway 15. Its cargo was on the ground, on the highway, because the tie-downs holding the goods had been cut. During securement, edge protection should have been placed to protect the tie-downs from the steel and prevent them from being cut. That wasn't done because the person responsible didn't even know they had to do it. I was one of the first to get stuck in the traffic jam. People realized how dangerous that could have been. The load could have fallen on a car and killed somebody. Fortunately, nobody was hurt or killed, but it could have happened. People reacted quickly. We were able to prevent an accident. It could have happened to me because it happened a few hundred feet from where I was.

During our discussion, the witness recommended not only creating a national program but also restoring integrity. I had talked about that a little earlier with the second witness. We really have a lot of homework to do. Not only do we need to make recommendations, but also, as a government, we need to restore the integrity of the truck driving profession and protect vulnerable workers. If we had a guide containing higher Canadian professional standards for truck drivers, that could definitely influence the provinces and territories.

• (18605)

The time for consultation is over. We're looking for solutions, and we have made concessions. We know from the conversations with the witnesses that they have asked the committee to move forward quickly. We're prepared to add two meetings to hear from the witnesses on the list that was proposed this afternoon. We're also prepared to hear from bereaved families. Since the beginning, we have always said that we wanted to meet with them in camera. Today, we're proposing to give them a choice. If they want to testify publicly, we will hear from them in a public meeting. If they want to testify in camera, we will hear from them in camera. That's what we're asking for to protect the dignity of bereaved families who have been through the ordeal of a road accident. It wasn't necessari-

ly an accident related to the Driver Inc. phenomenon. It could be, but we don't know yet.

There's no place for the current exploitation of truck drivers. We really have to find a solution so that trucking remains a profession built on respect and professionalism. It really has to be recognized in the same way as any other profession. When I was working in my profession, if I made three mistakes, I would lose my qualification certificate. When I was teaching welding on pipelines, I had three chances. After three strikes, I would lose the right to weld. That's more or less the kind of solution we should be proposing. We have to tell truck drivers that they have the opportunity to do well, but that they have to avoid losing their qualifications. We have to remind them that we're keeping an eye on them. We have to tell them that we want to give them the tools they need to be good drivers but that we also want them to do their part. In short, in the discussions we had with the witness I just mentioned, we heard that exploitation has no place in our supply chain and that we have to act. We heard that putting an end to the Driver Inc. phenomenon means protecting vulnerable workers, restoring fairness and making trucking an occupation built on responsibility and pride. I think that's the best we can do as a committee.

I have just summarized the testimony of the first panel of witnesses from the meeting on October 7, 2025. Given the richness of that testimony, I thought I had heard everything there was on the topic, but I hadn't. The story was just getting started. On October 7, as part of the testimony of the second panel of witnesses, we met Steve Bourgeois. I remember it like it was yesterday. He's a licensed consultant and trainer, and he testified as an individual. He didn't represent an organization, so he was somewhat free to say what he wanted.

Earlier, I told you about the testimony of a woman with 31 years of experience. Mr. Bourgeois told us that he had 34 years of experience. He also told us that there had been a 35% increase in accidents. Think about that and see how concerning it is that the number of accidents, often fatal, increased exponentially in 2023-24.

I'll summarize the discussions that we had with him. The questions were excellent on both sides. The Bloc and the Conservatives asked excellent questions. The witness told us about his experience in Canada and the United States. He told us about the extreme conditions and explained how difficult things were. In a way, he presented himself as the spokesperson for a group of about 15,000 signatories of a petition. He said that this movement, which he had started, advocates for road safety, the dignity of truck drivers and the legitimacy of their profession. It's funny that this fourth witness was able to summarize in a single sentence everything the other witnesses had been calling for before him.

• (18610)

They aren't asking for the moon. It was a legitimate petition. It simply advocates for road safety, the dignity of truckers and the recognition of the legitimacy of their profession, not only for women, as I have mentioned, but for drivers in general. It was started by someone with 34 years of experience in the field who has taught drivers. The issues he shared with us are somewhat similar to what we heard from the other witnesses, but he added some nuances.

First, he told us about ghost drivers, who are illegal drivers without a licence, insurance and training, on whom we have no information until they're caught. It has gone that far. It's scary. They get behind the wheel of trucks that carry extremely heavy, dangerous or poorly secured loads, when they have no theoretical or practical knowledge. It really isn't right to break the law in so many ways, and it puts the lives of family members at risk.

When he told us about this practice, I almost fell off my chair. He showed us not only that this problem was real, but also that it was growing. I thought there had been a reduction in the number of people who drive impaired, what with awareness campaigns. I thought it was hard to get a driver's licence these days. However, I have learned that you can get one in 24 or 48 hours, that there are drivers who drive illegally and exploit the system at every turn, and that these practices are on the rise. The entire ecosystem I have been talking to you about has been weakened by companies using the Driver Inc. scheme to circumvent safety standards.

This has serious consequences. As we heard from the witness, fatal accidents have increased by 35%, and that data is from 2023-24. There's also the exploitation of immigrants in precarious situations, who are afraid of being sent back to their countries. They have a job, and, for them, that's already better than what would await them in their countries. My riding has hundreds of foreign workers on farms, in lawn care companies and in various industries. I meet with these workers every year, and I know that they're extremely proud to come and work in Canada. For them, it's a privilege. The last thing they want to do is upset their employer or not meet the standard that's in place when they arrive. They don't know any other standards. That standard is to take their truck and get a licence, since they had one elsewhere.

Personally, I'm not even able to transfer my licence in a number of fields. A francophone doctor can't even leave France to come and work in a hospital in Quebec if they don't have a licence to practise in Canada and Quebec. There's an agreement, but there are exams to pass and a justification to provide. For drivers arriving from abroad, their licences aren't verifiable. That's what the witnesses said. When it comes to doctors, we can check all the training they have received and their specialties and adapt them to the Canadian and Quebec systems. However, when it comes to drivers, they're taken as they are, they're given a little piece of paper, they're made to take a driving test for the class 1 licence, and they take to the road, even though they have trouble reading the signs in French and English. Imagine the serious consequences that can have.

• (18615)

This witness, who has 34 years of experience, has shown us that this practice represents unfair competition for compliant companies. Each of the four witnesses talked about this unfair competi-

tion. We have a chance to respond, talk about it and work with our analysts to come up with recommendations. The Bloc Québécois already has a list of recommendations, and I'm sure the Conservatives also have a list of good recommendations, so we could work as a team and talk about it together. I'm not sure that all of the Bloc's recommendations meet our standards, according to our analysts, who may feel that some of them could lead to court challenges because they encroach on provincial jurisdictions. However, we could deal with them one at a time, consult our experts, ask our clerks to do some research and work with our analysts to come up with recommendations.

Today, the best opportunity we had to move forward was to adopt the amendment that we wanted to propose for the Bloc Québécois motion. It repeated the motion in its entirety. Its sole purpose was to remove the request to produce all the departments' correspondence on this matter. However, I wasn't even able to propose it, because the Conservatives and the Bloc, once again, formed a coalition and challenged the chair's ruling to prevent me from doing so. We then gave them the opportunity to take the floor to move the amendment themselves. All they had to do was put forward the amendment and take credit for it. I don't even want them to use it in the same way as the Liberals; I just want us to finish this study.

• (18620)

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: What's your point of order, Mr. Albas?

Dan Albas: I thought you said there was no amendment on the floor.

The Chair: Yes. He's referring—

Dan Albas: Now I find out, from listening to him, that there is.

The Chair: He's referring, I believe—

Stéphane Lauzon: Yes.

The Chair: —to the amendment he put forward that was defeated.

Stéphane Lauzon: It's the amendment that I'd tried.

Dan Albas: Ah. It's the one that actually doesn't exist, that we've settled and that he just continually talks about.

Stéphane Lauzon: Yes. This is the reality.

The Chair: He's now talking about the importance of re-evaluating this in the hope that we can find a solution, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I think if he were to bring back a motion on that, Mr. Chair, you would find it out of order because we've already disposed of that.

The Chair: I hope that Mr. Lauzon is able to convince all members to re-evaluate our positions on these issues.

Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Lauzon. I can't put words in your mouth, sir.

Stéphane Lauzon: On your point of order, if you tell me that I can bring it back the same way it was before, and the Bloc says the same thing, I will bring it back.

Dan Albas: We've already disposed of it.

I just don't see why the member continues to refer to business that cannot be brought back.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, I would encourage you to speak to the motion at hand, sir.

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: Are you getting tired of being his crutch, or...?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: No, not at all. This is why I'm here. This is why I ran for office 10 years ago, in fact.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Before going back to Mr. Lauzon, I have to give the floor to Mr. Garon, who has a point of order.

Jean-Denis Garon: I may not be up to date on the rules, but I'm not sure that the last two points of order were actually points of order. Is that the case?

The Chair: They asked Mr. Lauzon to talk about the matter at hand, the motion moved by Mr. Barsalou-Duval. As I said to Mr. Lauzon, I would ask all members who take the floor to speak to the motion. Thank you.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

[*English*]

Again, guys, thanks for the break. I appreciate it. I had a bit of water and took a little breather.

Dan Albas: You can cede the floor and take a break, if you want.

Stéphane Lauzon: That's okay. I'm good.

Dan Albas: No, you're not, but that's okay.

Stéphane Lauzon: No, no. I'm not good. I'm ready.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I understand that people are tired, but it makes the interpreters' job more difficult when people talk on both sides. I'm mentioning that for their hearing safety as well.

The Chair: You're absolutely right. I would like to remind our colleagues to avoid having discussions when they don't have the floor. Thank you very much.

Mr. Albas, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: I want to apologize to the interpreters for that. I will try to wait my turn before speaking.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Albas. I'm sure the interpreters appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

The witness I was talking about, who has 34 years of experience, once again, told us about a number of problems, but why don't we now talk about the solutions we could put in place, because there are some. He told us that there should be more oversight on the ground to conduct audits. For that to happen, the number of staff has to increase. Can we work with the provinces and territories to increase the number of staff? Can we increase our own staff to more effectively detect all the tax frauds that are going on and affecting various departments, particularly when it comes to the Canada pension plan?

We also spoke with this witness about the importance of having clear sanctions. Crackdowns work. For example, at the beginning of the school year, in September, police officers are sent to school areas to monitor traffic, and it works. We all know someone who has been caught driving faster than the speed limit in a school zone. Could we increase crackdowns? That's what the witness said. Could we establish clear sanctions to crack down on businesses that hire people illegally? I don't know what power we have in that regard, but we could at least make recommendations and implement solutions.

The second witness then talked to us about insurance. As I said earlier, insurance premiums are getting more and more expensive. He talked about establishing a national database based on an American model that would enable all provinces to have access to insurance information. This isn't to make the information public, to answer the Bloc Québécois member's question, but to work with the provinces to catch the culprits. Just because an illegal driver crosses the border from one province to another doesn't mean they're legal. The left hand should speak with the right hand. Information should be shared across Canada.

Another proposal was to strengthen checks, and for that to happen, there's work to be done regarding work permits, visas and temporary foreign workers. Could we make that a recommendation? Earlier, I said that the Department of Public Safety could be involved, but could the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship also be involved? A number of departments have influenced our recommendations. We have worked with provincial public safety officials and highway inspectors, but we can also work with federal departments to resolve the issues related to the Driver Inc. model.

We also spoke with this witness about national awareness campaigns. I talked about the importance of attracting more women to vocational schools and occupations that aren't traditionally held by women, and that comes down to awareness campaigns. For example, at the beginning of the school year, there are municipalities that encourage drivers to slow down by putting a big banner on a school bus that says, "Caution, the school year starts this week." That's a great image. When I was responsible for public safety in Gatineau as a municipal councillor between 2009 and 2011, we did the same thing. The City of Gatineau continues to do so, to this day, to raise drivers' awareness of the importance of slowing down in school zones.

• (18625)

I believe that a national awareness campaign would make it possible to educate people on this situation and respond to the needs arising from the Driver Inc. file. It would also be good to harmonize all the safety standards and establish a training model. Since 2017, Ontario has had a model that makes training mandatory, and the Quebec government is now following suit. Starting on December 15, training will be mandatory to get a class 1 licence in Quebec. What I heard from the witness, in fact, was that compliance with the rules shouldn't be optional. It's a condition for trust, and today we're calling for solidarity, vigilance and action. We should move forward and successfully complete this study by tabling recommendations.

• (18630)

The Chair: One moment, please, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I was originally going to say there are about 20 minutes of resources left. Can you just confirm that, because I understand that the justice committee—

The Chair: We do have additional resources left. We're just trying to figure out exactly until what time we have them.

Dan Albas: I hear it was around seven hours.

Is that correct?

The Chair: There are many more hours, but I'm trying to figure out exactly how many because the emails are still coming in.

Dan Albas: I'm just encouraging Mr. Lauzon to pace himself.

Stéphane Lauzon: I have no problem with that.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What we said when we spoke with the witness was that safety is a shared responsibility. We have an important role to play in that as a government. We have to work with the provinces and territories and all the police forces. All parties involved have to work together for the good of the trucking industry. We can easily put an end to the Driver Inc. scheme and illegal practices to ensure the safety of everyone on our roads. We have to do so not only for truckers and victims, but also for our families, our friends and everyone who

drives to work. That's sort of what this witness told us, and he isn't just anyone. When we welcome people with decades of experience, we should listen to them. We all have experience in our own fields, but when someone with a specific experience like that comes to talk to us, we have to take advantage of it.

We have heard other things. You know that training is important to me. I had the opportunity to meet Ken Adams, the president of the Truck Training School Association of Ontario. He's a former police officer who worked with Mr. Blair, a Liberal MP and former Toronto police chief. He's speaking out against forged documents. When a former police officer says that, it's important to take that into consideration and react. We don't want fake diplomas, fake certificates or fake licences in society. It's important for investigators to be able to find those forged documents.

We heard another witness say that changing just one letter in your first or last name was enough to reset the clock. Now, a former Toronto police officer has come forward to denounce forged documents. I thought I had heard it all, but Ken Adams told me some impressive things on the matter. That former traffic police officer owns a trucking school and represents an association of 40 independent regulated schools that has been around for over 30 years. Is it possible to find anyone better in the transportation field, other than a flight school owner who's also a former F-18 pilot?

• (18635)

Mr. Adams testified about the declining quality of training and, above all, the consequences of poor training that can be seen on the ground in Canada. The problem isn't that complicated, actually. He said pretty much the same thing about training as the other witnesses did: The problem is the misclassification of drivers. It starts in the classroom, during exams. A transportation company that influences schools to speed up training isn't a good sign. It's important to clean up the licensing process, but it's also important to clean up the organizations that issue the licences. That accreditation, which contributes to the Driver Inc. phenomenon, can be extremely harmful to the trucking ecosystem. I think it's possible to solve the problem by raising awareness, improving coordination among the provinces and territories, and making recommendations that give Canada a role to play.

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Lawrence, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Philip Lawrence: I was wondering what time we're going to break.

The Chair: We have to break from 6:50 until 7:20 to ensure we can transition from those interpreters who are doing it virtually to interpreters who are going to be joining us in person.

Philip Lawrence: I just want to put this on the record, too, from the great band Inmotion:

[*Translation*]

And whatever happens
Yes, I'll pay the price for you to come back

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm not exactly sure the interpreters picked that up. I'm sure they'll do their best, as they always do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor for 11 minutes, after which we'll have to take a break.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to go back to the testimony of the former police officer who represents an association of 40 regulated independent schools that has been around for over 30 years. It's always difficult to hear about misclassification and corruption, especially when it's a matter of forged documents and bribed examiners. Imagine where that could lead us. Unqualified graduates get fake licences to drive heavy trucks. At the same time, it's a form of student exploitation. That's quite a mess to clean up. This has been dragging on for a very long time, and all of it directly contributes to the increase in the number of fatal accidents.

It's in our best interest for reputable schools not to close their doors, which could be very harmful to the ecosystem. It's also important to avoid losing qualified instructors, who want the system to work well and who must be protected. That's not to mention the underpaid newcomers who are deprived of their rights and benefits.

Still, some potential solutions can be drawn from this witness's devastating statements. First, there has to be more transparency when it comes to the connections between schools and motor carriers. That means it's important to monitor what goes on in the schools and ensure that it's being disclosed, so it can be properly regulated.

Two weeks ago, I met with representatives of a flight school in my riding. We had an excellent meeting. They're conscientious, they meet the required number of training hours, they have a code of ethics, and they ensure that every student follows the protocols in place. This training is essentially the federal government's responsibility, and it's also regulated for federal exams. On that note, having visited the school, I can assure you that corners aren't being cut. This training can cost up to \$120,000 or \$130,000 per student.

Flying a plane is an extremely important job, but driving a truck is just as important. The former Toronto police officer raised some issues. Of course, transparency and the disclosure of connections between schools and motor carriers is important, but unannounced provincial audits of program and equipment quality are just as important. It's also important to remember the sharing of vehicle in-

formation, which I mentioned earlier. If a vehicle is defective, no matter what province it's in, it's still defective.

● (18640)

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: The member is becoming repetitious. I don't think it's actually allowed that he continue to reference things he previously said. I'd like you to rule that if he is going to filibuster, it should be regarding original content.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, I'd like to remind you and all other members not to repeat the same thing over and over again.

You have the floor again.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I'm saying is directly related to the comments by the former Toronto police officer who testified that day. He told us that better co-operation was needed and that a national credential could be created. We could include that in our recommendations. He also proposed creating a harmonized curriculum with a module on combatting human trafficking.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Again, he's not speaking to the motion, Mr. Chair. I have complete respect for people who can filibuster, but they actually have to filibuster on the motion with original material. Maybe the member is getting tired. In that case, maybe he should allow some of his other members to be heard.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Albas.

I believe that Mr. Lauzon is speaking to the motion, so I'll let him continue.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Chair, it's relevant to talk about creating a national credential. What's important to mention is that we have the opportunity to finish with this motion now. Earlier, we had the opportunity to accept a very reasonable amendment that enabled us to make recommendations and invite grieving families to appear before the committee, giving them the choice to do so in person or virtually, and in public or in camera, so that we treated them with dignity.

However, that amendment to the Bloc Québécois motion was refused today, which is what led me to talk about the former Toronto police officer who represents an association of training schools that has existed for 30 years. He recommends that we create a federal-provincial body that brings together all the actors involved. That can be part of our recommendations. We can think of Transport Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency, training schools—

[*English*]

Connie Cody: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Cody.

Connie Cody (Cambridge, CPC): There seems to be a problem with interpretation.

The Chair: We may have lost interpretation.

If that's the case, do we want to suspend, figure it out and see what's going on with interpretation? Do you want to confirm that?

[*Translation*]

I'll speak in French to see if the interpretation is working.

I'm told it's working.

You may continue, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Ms. Cody.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

Ken Adams recommended that we set up a federal-provincial body that brings together all the actors involved, including Transport Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency and various partners, to pool data on repeat offenders. Once again, this recommendation comes from a former police officer who is used to crackdowns. We could easily find ways, among ourselves, to crack down on offenders in that area. The more that get caught, and the more compliance is improved, the more trucking companies will want to stay on the right track and become reputable businesses again.

We have a rare opportunity to catch up, and we can't address the causes of the Driver Inc. phenomenon without finding good recommendations. We want to implement measures to ensure that we have safe and reliable roads and to solve the issues that have been raised to us in committee.

Trucker training falls under provincial jurisdiction, but I'm prepared to get involved, and I'm convinced that this suits the Bloc Québécois, since some of its recommendations also fall under provincial jurisdiction. Trucker training is a provincial responsibility, but public safety is a federal responsibility, and I believe in that very strongly. Working together, the provinces, the federal government and the trucking industry can harmonize standards, support schools and ensure that every trucker on our roads is well trained. That's my takeaway from Ken Adams' testimony. He's a man of integrity who worked for the Toronto Police Service and came here to sound the alarm. He deserves to be heard by this committee and have it ask its analysts to make the necessary recommendations to complete this study.

We also welcomed Mark Seymour, who is the chief executive officer of the Kriska Transportation Group. I like to hear from independent businesses that have integrity. He gave us an alarming statistic that over 50% of candidates want to work only as contractors. At first, it may seem more appealing to work as a contractor, since, even if the costs may be a little higher, it ultimately costs less. First, you don't have to pay all the fees, and you're independent. You can drive however many kilometres you want. The driver is responsible, not the company. If drivers cut corners when inspecting their vehicles, they're the ones responsible. Often, the truck doesn't even belong to them. This has an impact on the profitability of companies, and Mark Seymour tells us that candidates are the ones asking to work as contractors. That's concerning.

We have heard women and police officers talk about their experience, but Mr. Seymour has 40 years of experience in the sector. He runs a family-owned trucking business that was founded 47 years ago. It went from three trucks to 800 trucks, and it did so within the rules. He knows what he's talking about, then, and he told us outright that the Driver Inc. model weakens the system. The result is a hidden economy that shouldn't be there. It creates unfair competition for companies that are compliant.

• (18645)

All the witnesses we have heard from have said the same thing, including the representative of an independent company, passed down from one generation to the next, which he has continued to manage. The Driver Inc. model has direct impacts on his company. In three years, he has voluntarily reduced its activities by 25%, for reasons we all know. Recruitment is a problem. We were talking earlier about the labour shortage. It's less and less prevalent in many fields, but it persists among truck drivers. He told us that he's limited in terms of the workforce he can hire, which is causing difficulties on the recruitment side. There are also limitations on investments in equipment renewal. Yes, maintenance costs are higher. Truck prices have skyrocketed. I'm thinking in particular of the full purchase of a truck.

• (18650)

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, I have to stop you there, because it's 6:50 p.m.

[*English*]

I'm going to suspend.

After we resume it'll be your turn.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: The meeting is suspended.

[*The meeting was suspended at 6:50 p.m., Tuesday, December 2*]

[*The meeting resumed at 8:17 a.m., Thursday, December 4*]

• (22415)

The Chair: We will now resume meeting number 16 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members. First, 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 are not speaking.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

The committee suspended its meeting on Tuesday, December 2, while debate on a motion was ongoing. Therefore, we are resuming this meeting and debate on the motion, as amended, of Xavier Barsalou-Duval, moved on Tuesday, November 6, 2025.

The motion, as amended, reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities request that the Departments of Transport, Revenue, and Employment forward to the committee clerk, within 30 days of the adoption of this motion, all correspondence, reports, emails, and documents relating to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry since January 1, 2018; and

That the committee add two additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation, and in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express—

This has no relation to Mr. Albas.

—Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec, and Canada Post.

Mr. Lauzon had the floor, followed by Mr. Albas and Mr. Keloway.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me get straight to the point. I have good news: This morning, I'm going to propose an amendment to the original motion. I'd like to explain how we got to this point in this study.

We have taken a constructive approach. We even accepted a friendly amendment. As the chair just said, we added the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec as a witness. We're prepared to go all the way to make recommendations. We all agree on the same goal, which is to enable the clerk and the analysts to finish their work and produce a serious report with real recommendations.

The heart of the problem is really in the last part of the motion. We tried to move an amendment, which was defeated at the last meeting. As the chair just told us, this motion requires the committee and asks the transport, revenue and employment departments to provide, within 30 days—which I think is impossible—all correspondence, reports, emails and documents related to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking sector. It's an unrealistic request.

At the last meeting, we may have missed the opportunity to propose a motion for a number of reasons, including the fact that we didn't have the cost estimates. I still don't have them this morning, nor do I know the number of departments. I did a bit of research, and I believe it may be around six or seven departments, because there are regular exchanges between departments.

We can see that there really is a coalition between the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party, which are maintaining their position on the documents requested as evidence. After all the meetings we have had, we can now clearly see the political strategy

behind this. It isn't complicated: They want to block the work. We have clearly seen that both parties have agreed to the same goal, which is to undermine the end of this study. They're even going so far as to share their speaking time to achieve the same goal.

I think that them politically promoting each other in that way made it possible to justify a fundraising campaign by the Conservative Party on the Bloc Québécois site. Imagine how they could coordinate that between themselves. We can see from our records that the Conservatives are really protecting the Bloc Québécois when it comes to how it's raising funds through a website.

This morning, I think the Bloc Québécois is becoming the victim of this whole thing. It's normal for the Conservatives to stick to their habits and turn snippets of news into false information. We're used to hearing the same slogans repeated over and over again to avoid the truth. That said, the coalition is making coordinated attacks against the chair. That's where we're at. In recent meetings, we have seen them go so far as to challenge the chair by inventing an excuse that there was speaking priority. The Bloc Québécois was dragged into that lie to prevent the Liberals from getting the floor.

• (22420)

The Bloc Québécois isn't in the habit of colluding with the Conservatives. However, we can now see that they are in fact doing so. Their tactic amounts to a direct attack on the functioning of the committee and on the chair.

On its website, the Bloc Québécois published an article claiming that the Liberals are refusing to hear from the victims, which is false. On the same page, the Bloc solicits political donations—they even admitted it—on the backs of bereaved families. We talked about this at the last meeting. It's simple: We have a culprit, but we're blaming someone else, someone who manages the site. However, if you go to the Bloc Québécois website today and click on the article, the first pop-up that appears is a request for donations of \$5, \$15, \$20 or \$25. This is still being done online. I wouldn't be here today talking about funding request pop-ups if they weren't there anymore. If the situation had been corrected, we'd be somewhere else.

The coalition prevented our proposed amendment from being moved, even though it was consistent with the terms of the original motion. I took the exact wording from the original motion. We made some concessions, but the Conservatives once again challenged the chair to rule the amendment out of order, which is completely false. Once again, the Bloc Québécois played along. It's as if it were now dependent on the Conservatives, as if the coalition were leading it to address the Conservatives' needs. No serious administration would agree to produce all these reports, all these emails, all existing documents related to non-compliance in the trucking sector. We would never endorse such an extreme request.

We're up against a complete lack of will to complete the study. The Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party have no intention of finishing this study. The issue isn't the two meetings, because in all of our discussions, it has always been a matter of holding two meetings. We even proposed to meet with the witnesses from the bereaved families in camera, and the opposition deemed that out of order. It's as if there's no solution.

Are we going to have three, four meetings? Are we going to expand the list of witnesses and add amendments so that we can extend this study? We don't know the future, but one thing we do know is the goal. The goal isn't to restore road safety, but to block the end of this study.

A motion as broad as the one before us may violate the parliamentary principle of proportionality. According to parliamentary practice, a motion has to be proportional to the purpose. I'll explain it here. We're trying to understand a non-compliance problem in the trucking sector. That's what we want. We want to find out why drivers aren't complying with the rules, but we want to get a hold of all communications. We don't know why. It isn't even relevant. The committee is demanding non-targeted documents. This lack of targeting leads to unreasonable costs. We're talking about millions of dollars. It also becomes a tool for political obstruction or, quite simply, a tool for accountability.

We're in favour of transparency, but we oppose administrative overload that slows down action, costs taxpayers a lot of money and distracts the public service from the essential work it has to do to keep our roads safe.

● (22425)

This morning, we share the same goal: Achieve our objectives and draft a report. We want to make recommendations to help businesses, the other levels of government and the people in our ridings who testified about a serious issue that has been going on for quite some time.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to move an amendment.

I have to move it for me, for the good of Canadians and for the good of Canadian financial management. Before doing so, I believe it's necessary, even imperative, to clearly explain why this amendment is necessary today. It has to be said: If we want to respect this committee's mandate and prevent certain people from diverting our work from its true purpose, this amendment is essential. We can't leave room for the slightest doubt about the importance of returning to a serious, responsible process that's in line with what Canadians expect of us.

For that reason, I'm going to explain the reasons behind this amendment. I will keep my turn to speak immediately after moving the amendment so that I can tell you about it in more detail. I'd still like to justify my proposed amendment. My amendment seeks to amend the motion by replacing "since January 1, 2018", after the word "industry", with the following:

and that the Departments of Transport, Revenue, and Employment provide to the committee the total cost and time required to prepare and present these materials

I think it's very important to talk about the magnitude of the costs required for sound financial management. I would like to take a few minutes to send you this amendment in both official languages. I

obviously worked on it in French, but I'd like to send it to you in English as well.

I would ask for two or three minutes so that we can get the document to everybody.

● (22430)

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: We're going to suspend for two minutes to get that translated, and then we'll get to your point of order, Mr. Albas.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

● (0830)

(Pause)

● (0835)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I have a point of order from Mr. Albas. Before that, I just want to confirm that everybody has the translated version of the amendment proposed by Mr. Lauzon.

[Translation]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval is letting me know that that's the case.

[English]

Mr. Albas, go ahead on your point of order, sir.

Dan Albas: I've looked at the motion, and again, it expands the motion in a direction that is not part of the original intent. The original intent is to get documentation from the government for the study. I don't believe our study is going to feature how much the study costs the government. Quite honestly, you can't put a price tag on democracy.

Our job is to hold the government accountable, not to let the government hold us accountable.

I have faith in our public servants, Mr. Chair. I would ask that you rule this as out of order because it drastically changes the intent of the motion, with the eye of the motion then focused on the work of the committee rather than the work of the government.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

My ruling is, I don't feel that it does. In my opinion, we typically attach timelines, dates or specific information to be as transparent as possible. In this particular instance, they're asking to add in what the cost would be of moving forward with this motion, so I would rule it in order.

Go ahead, Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, I have a number of issues with this, including that there's no definition of how cost would be determined. Most of the folks who would be doing this work are getting paid anyway, so I don't believe that, on its face, it's even interpretable. For this reason and for the reasons of my colleague, I'll have to challenge your ruling on this, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lawrence.

I'll turn it over to the clerk.

The Clerk: The question is, shall the decision of the chair be sustained?

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

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The chair was overruled, so the amendment no longer stands.

I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: I have a brief point of order, Mr. Chair.

This is why, when we called for the point of order earlier, the point of order should have been recognized before going to translation. I say this not to belabour the point but for future discussions. If, in fact, someone brings a motion, and a point of order is called for, it should be heard prior to the suspension for the translation, as we've wasted committee time.

Thank you.

The Chair: I appreciate that, Mr. Lawrence, I truly do. You know that I have goodwill on this.

My intent, colleagues.... Speaking as a Quebecker who represents a riding that is 50% French and 50% English, and having heard from Bloc members on multiple occasions that we typically brush aside translation as secondary, I will always get to a point of order.

If translation would allow members to better understand the issue at hand, I will always err on moving forward with the translation and then on ensuring that I can move to hearing whatever the members have to say. That's my default position on translation within the House. I just wanted to put that out there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank all the staff. As you know, we mainly work in French. However, in such a short time, the employees were able to translate an amendment to send it to the committee. That shows how dedicated they are, which makes our job easier.

You will understand that, since this amendment was defeated by the reversal of the chair's decision, there will be no vote. Obviously, I won't ask for a vote on a motion that doesn't exist. However, I still want to explain to you why I came to the conclusion that it was necessary to analyze the cost of preparing the requested documents.

I heard Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Albas say that there's no cost to democracy. However, there's a cost to politics. In fact, when this committee wants to go out into the field or hear from witnesses, it has to approve the costs first. Witnesses come from all over Canada. However, it seems that what's good for the goose isn't necessarily good for the gander. We're simply asking for sound management. The motion calls for a number of departments to mobilize. I think that asking them to provide us with the cost associated with this request was the right thing to do to ensure sound and responsible management. That would have enabled the committee to make a decision. Perhaps the committee could have asked for fewer

documents, for example, or targeted a specific request to minimize costs.

People are saying that employees are working anyway and are paid anyway. However, they aren't paid to do research, create documents, make PowerPoints, prepare themselves and speak with other departments to find documents. They're paid to serve our citizens. I would have liked to know how many hours of overtime would be needed to do what's requested in the motion within 30 days. It may be impossible.

Not only could we have the figures, but—

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, we have a point of order from Mr. Albas.

Mr. Albas, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: First there is relevance, and then there is repetition, for the reason that the member keeps referring to a motion that has been dealt with conclusively by the committee. He may not like the fact. He is constantly going back to the same material.

Mr. Chair, a filibuster, as honourable as a filibuster can be, has certain conditions. I expect you, as chair, to make sure he is being relevant to the motion that is on deck and is speaking with new material.

If the member can't find new material, perhaps he can speak to his hard-working staff—we have them on both sides—and they can provide him with new material.

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

[*Translation*]

I would like to remind Mr. Lauzon that he has to speak to the motion at hand.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to make a connection with the motion at hand. We're talking about the part of the motion that seeks to mobilize a number of departments. We're no longer talking about the amendment I proposed. We're talking about the part of the motion that's directly related to my amendment and that asks a number of departments to do research to provide the committee with internal and external emails, briefing notes, professional text messages, messages sent on the Teams application, transitory documents, drafts that had been exchanged and other communications between employees at various levels of the organizations. This is a considerably expensive request. The administrative cost of such a request comes mainly from sorting and checking. There are also legal checks to do, because it's important to be careful about what can be disclosed. Personal and sensitive information has to be protected.

This request represents millions of dollars. I know the Conservatives don't like it when I repeat the reasons why they challenged the chair to prevent my amendment from being moved. However, the part of the motion that calls on the government to provide documents to the committee goes beyond the committee's mandate. If this request is adopted, hundreds of public servants will be mobilized. That's thousands of staff-hours. During that time, those employees won't be doing their usual work. We have to implement programs and respond to Canadians. Mobilizing a single department in this way will hinder the entire supply chain of service delivery for Canadians. I was parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services, and I had the opportunity to tour across Canada. I can tell you that the employees are dedicated—

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, there's a point of order.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I would like to know if it's possible to vote on part of the motion then finish the debate, if that's the will of the committee. Perhaps the clerk could advise us on that.

The Chair: That's a good question. You can't do that. However, it's possible to withdraw the motion then propose two new ones.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Can we move to split a motion?

The Chair: It's possible to do so, provided that the committee gives unanimous consent.

If the committee members want to discuss this, I can suspend the meeting for two minutes. If that can help the committee, I think it's worth it.

[*English*]

Colleagues, maybe I'll suspend for two minutes. Perhaps we have a way forward. Maybe we don't, but it is the holiday season and I'm hopeful.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

● (0850) _____ (Pause) _____

● (0910)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: After some lengthy discussions, I think we have an agreement, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to ask for the committee's unanimous consent so that Xavier Barsalou-Duval, of the Bloc Québécois, can amend his own motion with an amendment.

[*English*]

An hon. member: No.

Stéphane Lauzon: Why not?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I think that—

Stéphane Lauzon: That's for the clerk and the chair, first of all. We have to ask for unanimous consent. We have to follow the rules first.

The Chair: I'm going to check the proper procedure. I think the motion currently under debate should be withdrawn first.

Stéphane Lauzon: I think we can keep the motion currently being debated and ask for unanimous consent so that Mr. Barsalou-Duval can amend his own motion.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: No.

The Chair: Technically, colleagues, the way forward would be unanimous consent to withdraw the motion that's on the table; we would then have to reintroduce two separate motions. Regardless, we see very clearly that we do not have the unanimous consent of the Conservatives to pass this motion.

Unfortunately, we do not have unanimous consent to do so, Monsieur Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: There was an attempt. I now have to decide whether I have to move the amendment so that we can move forward. I don't think that's a bad idea. I have always said that we need to move forward and meet with the witnesses and the bereaved families.

Mr. Chair, given that, according to procedure, a member can't move an amendment to their own motion, I'd like to move an amendment.

I propose to divide the motion into two parts. The part of the motion asking the government to provide documents to the committee can stay as it is so that we can return to it later.

I propose to amend the other part of the motion so that it reads as follows:

That the committee add two additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks in camera, if witnesses would prefer, and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation, and in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, Ontario Trucking Association, BC Trucking Association, the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec, and Canada Post; and that drafting instructions to enable the development of a comprehensive report to the House of Commons be provided by the committee immediately after this testimony.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I have a point of order. This is totally out of scope. Not only is it out of scope, such that it should be ruled out of order, but this is dealing with previous changes that they've already proposed and that the committee has dealt with conclusively.

Mr. Chair, on both the addition of a port study and the fact that they're continually raising.... There are two very good reasons you should rule this as out of order.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

I'm just going to confer with the clerk to see whether these items have been previously introduced.

● (0915) _____ (Pause) _____

● (0915)

The Chair: Colleagues, I've just conferred with the clerk. I'm going to rule that those are not in order, because either they've been previously introduced or they're outside the scope of the committee—what we're looking at right now.

Monsieur Lauzon, I'll let you continue, but based on my ruling, those are not within the scope.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We tried. We tried to conclude this study by two means. First, we tried to obtain unanimous consent to give the Bloc Québécois member the right to amend his own motion through an amendment. The Conservatives refused. I then tried to move an amendment myself. That was refused.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon. There's a point of order from Mr. Albas.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: We've already dealt with this business, Mr. Chair. He has to start speaking to the motion with new material, so I would suggest that you, Mr. Chair, enforce the rules of this place.

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

I believe he is speaking to it, but I will remind all members to try to make reference, as much as possible, to the motion at hand that we're discussing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: That was just an introduction, a preamble. Before the Bloc Québécois member came up with his wonderful idea of moving forward and hearing from witnesses, we were discussing the other part of the motion and the high costs for various departments should we adopt the motion. Before being interrupted, I was talking about the costs of sorting out the requested documents and verifying the information to protect the sensitive or confidential information they may contain. I was saying that it's hard to estimate how much this work would cost, but that it would be in the millions of dollars and take public servants hundreds of hours to accomplish.

If the motion is adopted, every document will have to be located, verified, analyzed and, in many cases, redacted. This means a decision will have to be made as to which documents can be disclosed publicly and which ones must remain confidential. However, opposition leaders often say they can't read and interpret the documents provided because they're redacted. We see this time and time again, but documents are redacted to protect those concerned, to protect their personal assets, their family or their business.

In short, a lot of energy would go into this request. Hundreds of public servants would have to be mobilized for this request, working thousands of man-hours and several weeks, making them unavailable for other tasks.

As I said earlier, I've worked as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services. This allowed me to see what frontline public servants do for the public. I participated in a Canada-wide study to improve Service Canada's citizen services. I held consultations across the country to produce a report and, today, I can speak for public servants when I say that the vast majority of them are very dedicated to their work, that they are conscientious, and that they already have a full work week. They have a lot to do to meet our needs and ensure road safety in all departments.

We know that it's not just a matter of public safety. This request will affect many departments. Apparently, this falls under the purview of provinces, but the federal government still has an important role to play when it comes to tax policy, administration and regulation. This means that if the motion is adopted, employees won't be able to do their regular tasks, and they're working on compliance programs. They are also working on implementing new measures announced in the budget, which the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois rejected. In all, \$77 million has been invested in relation to the "Driver Inc." file. Officials are trying to update safety standards and establish new rules to catch the offenders cheating the system.

At the same time, highly sensitive personal and commercial information could be exposed, so you have to be very careful. We're talking about business non-compliance information. I am against this request, not because I want to protect non-compliant businesses, but because such disclosure could compromise investigations and be harmful to those being caught. Besides these workers' personal information, there's also the personal information of good workers who are not at fault and who work for good companies.

We don't know what the investigation strategy is. No one on this committee is an expert in this field. However, I'm convinced that disclosure of the requested information can compromise the investigations to find the offenders in the "Driver Inc." file.

Without going in too much detail, there may also have been discussions with provinces and territories, so details on the work of traffic controllers may have been shared. We heard from a Quebec traffic controller, an extremely nice man, who invited me to one of his checkpoints. He even gave me a traffic controller badge as a souvenir. I learned a lot from him. I don't want to interfere with his work, obviously, but he told us that the federal and provincial governments would need to co-operate to improve the information-sharing process. We don't want to compromise the system or cause any harm to road traffic controllers, but the proposed request for information could affect communications between the federal, provincial and territorial governments, and undermine the current system.

You can either mobilize the staff for a bureaucratic exercise or mobilize them to ensure road safety. For us, the choice is simple. We choose road safety. We choose not to undermine the public service and to let public servants do their job instead of mobilizing them for an unnecessary bureaucratic exercise. Furthermore, I talked about the risk associated with disclosure for clients, but there's also a risk for the staff because of commercially sensitive information. The targeted communications involve people who have also had communications about Canada's ambitious plan to further develop its economy. However, the motion targets all correspondence, and that includes exchanges related to Canada's strategic plan for economic development and the plan for a better Canada. Therefore, asking for all existing documents can be harmful, given the details they may contain about how organizations operate.

During my Canada-wide tour, I realized that each department has specialized staff at many levels. Depending on their level, some public servants have a lot of responsibilities, as they make decisions concerning frontline workers. This motion would mean mobilizing these specialized employees to do some serious redaction to protect the integrity of the trucking ecosystem. However, we're not just talking about trucking, since we're asking for every document and correspondence since 2018. This means we'd be asking these specialists to put their regular work aside and protect the integrity of the system by redacting documents.

There's a risk of being sued if you ask for that. Disclosing information to the committee could be harmful to honest companies. These companies already feel a lot of pressure. They've said so. They already have to deal with the pressure associated with the Driver Inc. situation, which adds to the pressure brought on by other factors in the trucking ecosystem since 2011. Administration costs, for example, are increasing. Imagine, then, if a company had its information disclosed. It could hurt them, and that's not what the committee wants to do. If an honest company contacted public servants to give them examples of good behaviour, we wouldn't want their information to be made public. We don't want the names of collaborating companies to be made public.

Those who came before the committee did so to help us, so asking for all the information and correspondence since 2018 is unacceptable. We're asking for trade secrets. During my cross-country visits, I had the chance to listen to conversations between frontline workers. Obviously, I can't repeat what was said or divulge names or any specific information as it is very sensitive, but I heard some horror stories. We're talking about frontline workers. Imagine if

correspondence containing confidential information were published, and I'm only talking about frontline workers. We're also asking for correspondence between departments, which could have a snowball effect on other departments.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Until what time does the committee have staff available to help today?

The Chair: We suspended the meeting for half an hour, so I think we'll have people available until 10:45.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Is it possible to ask for more resources to continue past that time?

The Chair: We have people available until noon.

Taking into account the 30 minutes we suspended the meeting for, that brings us to 10:45 a.m., but we can extend the meeting. Hopefully we can come up with a solution.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: We all hope so.

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

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Chair, I was talking about the potential snowball effect this request for information could have on other departments, because departments had to deal with other departments. This motion is too broad. It doesn't just impact one department. Every reference to another department in an email will force that department to do a parallel search.

Let me explain how this works. Many departments have frontline workers. When a department receives a request for information, it has to analyze it. Every department's frontline workers receive a lot of training, depending on—

[*English*]

Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, the interpretation isn't working.

The Chair: Okay.

It looks like we have the thumbs up.

[*Translation*]

I'm being told that the English interpretation is working properly.

You may continue, Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you.

Every department that has to search for that information must work with other departments to do so. Let me explain how I saw this during my cross-country tour as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizens' Services. Once again, hats off to all the dedicated public servants who represent us on the ground. We need them to serve the public, not to redact documents. I'm all for the democratic right to request information, but we're not talking about specific information here. We're asking departments to share every document related to this issue since 2018.

When we ask public servants why they can't solve the issue, they say it's all about training. Every public servant receives training to vary their portfolio or to specialize in a field. In many departments, some receive training on the Driver Inc. file. Frontline workers must have access to all the training they need to handle inquiries. I'm thinking, for example, of someone working at a Service Canada counter answering a driver's question regarding employment insurance, the Canada Pension Plan or a lost social insurance card.

Public servants must meet the needs of citizens, but they must also receive ongoing training during working hours. Often, this training is given online by their superiors or an outside company. It allows us to have good employees with as much knowledge as possible. What we want to avoid is not being able to answer a driver, whether incorporated or not, because no one's available, or because the employee handling the request doesn't have enough experience.

When a public servant is unable to handle an inquiry, they have to escalate it, as we say in the public service, which simply means the inquiry is put back into the system so a more experienced employee can handle it. The more we escalate, the longer it takes, and it increases the administrative burden. If these more experienced employees aren't available because they're writing reports, doing research or working with legal services on the legality of something, then we find ourselves with our backs against the wall unable to meet the public's needs.

When I say that it might affect multiple departments, I'm also thinking of duplicate documents, since many departments may have the same information. These documents would have to be sorted out to avoid duplicates. Departments will have to talk to each other. Time management will be a huge task. Hundreds of employees will have to be mobilized. We know that a change in time management undermines an organization's operations. Any MP who's been in business before knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Let me give you an example. If you are supposed to receive a steel order at 10 a.m., but you get a call to tell you the delivery is delayed because a driver is unavailable, it changes your whole order receiving process. The dynamics change, employees get reassigned to other tasks, which leads to a waste of time. Every minute counts for a private company. I understand the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois don't care about this, but we, in government, do. We want to be proactive, provide as much detail as possible and meet the new witnesses, the grieving families, and do so with dignity, giving them the choice of appearing in public or in camera.

We especially want to avoid mobilizing the entire public service with a document production request. All these teams will have to be reassigned to tasks they're not used to doing. It'll be difficult to process all the trucking companies compliance audit requests. More-

over, provinces and municipalities will have to wait longer to get support for their road projects, and improvements to inspection standards for public safety will have to be set aside, which will undermine how the temporary foreign worker program is managed, which is also a hot topic.

The committee has created this diversion, but citizens and businesses are the ones paying the price. There are needs to be met, and we have to make recommendations to meet our goal. Given the urgency of the Driver Inc. file, asking for documents dating back to 2018 doesn't make sense. We think it's unacceptable, and that's not going to change. We're more than willing to co-operate to find solutions.

The last thing we want to do is delay implementation of the compliance measures announced earlier. Quebec followed Ontario's lead and announced that two mandatory training courses will be needed to get a class 1 licence. This new requirement, based on the Canada Safety Code, and we are proud of that, will come into effect in 11 days. We don't want to stand in the way of improving programs we provide to provinces. We want to increase our co-operation with provinces. Ontario took action a long time ago, but other provinces have adopted some fairly advanced measures in this area. Quebec was a lagging a little behind, but recently took steps to change that.

Furthermore, if the motion is too broad, it could prevent us from reaching our common objective, which is to make recommendations. The Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals need to renew their co-operation, to a certain extent. Together, we chose the witnesses we wanted to hear from. We even unanimously decided to add the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec to the list.

We're in a waiting pattern. We're all eager to work with the analysts, who are doing an exceptional job, to produce a report. We've seen it in other studies. We've seen the work being accomplished very quickly on some projects proposed by the analysts. We want to include in our report the striking statistics we received. I gave a few examples this week, and I can give you more later. What struck me the most was hearing that businesses that stay on the straight and narrow are seeing their profit drop by 20% to 30% every year. It's still very difficult to understand why.

We also put a lot of emphasis on the return of the T4A slip. Even Mr. Barsalou-Duval recognizes this is a major step forward. We can already agree on that. The government is not close-minded. We simply want to co-operate in a targeted way, rather than emptying departmental servers. Let's not misuse the public service. We do need to promote transparency, but we shouldn't create an administrative burden that would cause delays, cost taxpayers a lot of money, and take the public service away from the essential work it does to keep our roads safe. That's basically what we're saying this morning.

I really care about this issue for the many reasons you already know. However, there are many aspects of road safety that affect us and that we must consider. Witnesses have also shared some frightening statistics with us. Today, we also received figures from other witnesses, and I'd like to share a few of them with you.

First, I want to talk about Quebec. In Quebec, the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, or SAAQ, is a reference. However, neither the SAAQ nor Transport Canada keeps statistics by driver category. We looked at those figures, but nothing stood out, and none of the witnesses gave us any statistics on discount drivers or drivers who take part in the "Driver Inc." scheme.

Every witness recommended we improve information sharing, but we didn't have all the information to start with. There are several categories of drivers, such as discount drivers, drivers who take part in the "Drivers Inc." model, drivers who obey the law, self-employed drivers, or drivers who own a business, but work with several companies, and therefore comply with the law. I could talk later on about the various driver statuses, but the database I'm talking about has data on the types of vehicles. It could be heavy trucks or tractor-trailers. However, the data does not include driver status, discount drivers or illegal drivers. The data on the number of accidents and fatalities does not include the employment status of the drivers involved. There are only general statistics. Moreover, some 2025 statistics have yet to be compiled. In short, we have no issue documenting collisions involving heavy trucks, but the official data doesn't allow us to determine exactly how many accidents involve discount drivers. Some witnesses may have said a few things, but there's no official data on that. Therefore, one of the committee's recommendations should be that such data be compiled.

To solve the "Driver Inc." issue, we need the capacity to catch the offenders. Provinces, territories and the federal government need to share information so authorities can more easily target these offenders and reprimand them. I believe in cracking down. As the former chair of the Gatineau Public Safety Commission, I can tell you that repression works. At the time, Gatineau was the first Canadian city to use photo radar. We installed them in sectors where we had complaints. I can tell you that every time they were set up, speeding tickets declined, because people were slowing down. Also, there has been a lot of progress in urban planning with sidewalk development and road realignment to give drivers the impression the road is narrower. They slow down, and the number of tickets goes down. However, there's nothing to slow trucks down on the highways. You can't impose road bans. You can't put speed bumps on a highway, or modify the highway to slow heavy trucks down. Therefore, to crack down on this issue, provinces and territories

must have the necessary tools to improve statistics and co-operation.

Let's start by taking action as members of the committee and making recommendations directly to the provinces as quickly as possible to improve the lot of drivers working under the Driver Inc. model.

In 2024, there were 379 deaths on the roads in Quebec, all types of users and vehicles combined. I have to consider the statistics as a whole for accidents involving heavy vehicles, such as heavy trucks, school buses, buses and tool vehicles, because there are no statistics devoted to heavy trucks with a trailer, including loads and an illegal driver, a temporary foreign worker or someone who doesn't have the skills. There are no specific statistics, but there were 100 deaths in 2024 in accidents involving heavy vehicles, including school buses, buses and tool vehicles, compared to 74 deaths in 2023. That's an increase of 35.1%, the highest count in the past 15 years. It's a significant increase in the number of motor vehicle casualties on our roads. We're here today to talk about it and to get things done. Producing documents will not change those statistics. Of those 100 fatalities, 77 were caused by collisions with a heavy truck or road tractor, up from 57 in 2023. That's the data we need to retain.

I'll put it in simple political language to make sure I'm clear: The number of deaths involving heavy vehicle collisions shot up by 35% between 2023 and 2024. My colleagues can use that data on social media. The number of deaths in accidents involving a heavy vehicle went from 74 to 100, and 77 of them were caused by collisions involving a heavy truck or road tractor. Is that enough for this committee to make recommendations and move forward?

We're talking about deaths. Many accidents have taken a severe toll and involve collateral damage, because the deaths involve fathers, mothers and even children. Families are grieving and they are directly affected by these deaths. The number of people who got into an accident involving a heavy vehicle rose to 2,514. Imagine the amount of financial compensation provided by the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, or SAAQ, the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail or private insurance. Imagine the consequences that that number of mild or serious injuries and that number of deaths is having on the economy, on drivers and on businesses. The driver who didn't deliver the steel order to a company at 10 a.m. may have been in an accident, or they or their children were too sick for them to come to work. Those waiting on the order don't know why it hasn't arrived, but they hope that driver wasn't one of the 2,514 people who were in an accident, were slightly or seriously injured, or died in 2024. Those 2,514 people represent about 9% of all people injured on Quebec roads in 2024. In 2023, 2,788 people were involved in an accident.

In 2024, 1,870 drivers and passengers in heavy vehicles got into an accident, compared to 2,005 in 2023.

The SAAQ also calculates the number of deaths from crashes involving people in collisions with heavy trucks or road tractors, for every 1,000 heavy trucks and road tractors in circulation. In 2024, it was 0.4. The overall accident rate for people involved in a collision with a heavy truck or a road tractor is 10.3 people in an accident for every 1,000 heavy trucks in circulation.

This is serious. These statistics are frightening.

As I said in my introduction, initial partial data for 2025 only includes statistics from January to August, since the data has not yet been compiled for the months following. However, according to interim data, 235 people have died on our roads in Quebec this year alone. Some of those deaths occurred on the highway I drive every day. Again this month, there were two major accidents on Highway 50. During the same period, fatal collisions fell from 227 in 2024 to 235 in 2025.

Also from January to August, since we don't have the statistics for the subsequent months, eight heavy truck or road tractor occupants died. That's eight too many. During the same period in 2024, there were 10, so that's fewer than last year. That's an average of five deaths per year. I don't want to trivialize that number, but five families are directly affected by those deaths. Every death is one too many.

We have to consider all the people involved in accidents, including heavy truck or road tractor occupants, as well as the severity of the accidents. From January to August 2025, 323 people were involved in accidents, compared to 291 in 2024. That's a significant increase. From 2020 to 2024, the average number of people who were involved in an accident and injured as a result of heavy truck or road tractor occupants was 319. While the January-to-August period saw a slight decrease in fatalities among heavy truck occupants compared to 2024, the total number of heavy truck drivers and passengers involved in accidents is on the rise.

I'm more familiar with the Quebec data, but there is Canada-wide data. The Canada-wide data is released in a national dashboard by

Transport Canada within 18 months, because it's pretty heavy data to compile. I'm sure my colleagues have gone to the Transport Canada site and seen the impact it had on our preparations for this committee. Before we hear from the witnesses, I looked at some statistics. The last complete dashboard available, which I'd like to talk about, is from 2023. There are no official statistics yet for 2024 and 2025, because public servants are delaying service to our constituents, working on various programs and compiling programs. Imagine another requirement to produce documents being added to that 18-month wait time. It's the same people and the same departments, but if the wait time to get all documents and all communications from all departments is added on, that brings the 18-month wait time up to maybe 36 months. However, we want data so we can base ourselves on facts, and we want to see the reviews so we can make better decisions.

The 2024 and 2025 statistics for the entire country are not yet available, but I can speak to the 2023 statistics. At the federal level, fatal collisions involving commercial vehicles are calculated based on another definition. They are called commercial vehicles. In 2023, there were 399 deaths in commercial vehicle collisions. This category of vehicle includes heavy trucks, buses, and so on. Of the 1,964 fatalities on the road, 20% were caused by collisions with commercial vehicles. In addition, 29 heavy truck occupants died. That's 29 too many heavy truck occupants—those trucks weigh over 4,530 kilograms, approximately. We're talking about the carriers who feed the supply chain across Canada.

Heavy truck or road tractor occupants have been in 29 fatal collisions, so 58 heavy truck drivers or passengers are involved, because they use a team driving strategy, a two-person travel strategy for heavy trucks. The passenger is not necessarily responsible for the accident, but they are affected. Therefore, in 2023, more than 58 heavy truck drivers or passengers died in commercial vehicle collisions. These collisions have been on the rise since the pandemic. There were 336 fatalities in 2020, 362 fatalities in 2021, 376 fatalities in 2022 and 399 fatalities in 2023. The number was going down, but then it started going up again. To date this year, according to the latest statistics, there have been about 400 fatalities in collisions involving commercial vehicles.

In this context, how can Driver Inc. drivers, truck drivers using the Driver Inc. model, be targeted? I'm talking about actual statistics released by Transport Canada. As committee members, how can we target Driver Inc. drivers, truck drivers using the Driver Inc. model?

Our goal today is to issue recommendations to solve the Driver Inc. problem. This point deviates from the statistics. We'd like to have a database and official documents like those the SAAQ provides in Quebec and those produced by the Canadian government through Transport Canada. Can we keep a record of truck driver irregularities on our roads? Can we work with data to establish recommendations through the analysts, and contribute to the sharing of information founded on data that truly relates to the Driver Inc. matter? Can we work with the departments?

A total of \$77 million has been invested for that purpose. The Conservatives and the Bloc voted against that \$77 million in the budget, when those funds can be used to improve the situation related to Driver Inc. We're blocking this committee so we won't make any progress drafting the report, but we're ready to hear from witnesses and from the grieving families with respect and dignity, by giving them the option to testify in camera or in public. We're ready for that. All we want is not to undermine the public service and not ask that thousands of documents be written for political purposes, requiring thousands of hours of work by public servants.

We want data, because it's impossible to find the exact reason Driver Inc. is causing accidents based on the official data I just told you about. We can blame it on immigration or we can blame it on incompetent companies that cut corners to save money by doing fewer inspections or by hiring somebody after giving them their permit within 24 hours. We can blame whoever we want, but if we don't stop Driver Inc. drivers and move forward, the problem won't go away.

The provinces have realized that and have started to step up to the plate to support us. In 11 days from now, Quebec is going to start requiring that future truck drivers take two courses, one of which will lead to a diploma of vocational studies, or DEP. The second training is a program involving a form of vocational training other than that of the DEP to obtain adequate equivalent training so drivers can get behind the wheel.

According to a Journal de Montréal article, between December 20, 2024, and March 22, 2025, 142 collisions or incidents involving Driver Inc. drivers were recorded. I don't know where the data comes from, but the article from a Quebec media outlet says there were 142 incidents or collisions involving drivers at fault, Driver Inc. drivers. We have the law enforcement response site and roadside police checkpoints. That's not a SAAQ statistic. Although it's neither a statistic, a journalistic compilation of reports or a science-based article, road traffic controllers in Quebec really did tell me there's been a significant increase in the number of Driver Inc. drivers and reminded me in particular of the 35% increase in the number of deaths related to heavy trucks between 2023 and 2024.

Frankly, this official database doesn't distinguish between drivers on salary and Driver Inc. drivers, the drivers who are incorporated. Canadians driving our trucks who are in good standing, who have gone through the training and who have experience, are sometimes involved in an accident. It's called "an accident".

Mr. Lawrence, you've been in the insurance business for quite some time. You have represented people involved in accidents. So you know very well that people of good faith who have received the training and who drive well can still be involved in an accident.

That's why they get insurance. Good people have suffered accidents, so they shouldn't be included in what we're studying today. As a committee—

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, I would remind you to address your comments to the chair, not to other members of the committee, even if it's to say something positive.

Thank you.

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Chair, I apologize. I'm addressing you to say that, as a lawyer, Mr. Lawrence knows a great deal about this because he's worked for insurance companies. I can tell you that, for me, talking—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Lawrence, go ahead on a point of order.

[English]

Philip Lawrence: On a point of order, while the chair is 100% correct, I'm more than willing to indulge this informality. If Mr. Lauzon wants to address me directly, I'm fine with that.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

[English]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thanks, Mr. Lawrence.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, I apologize for my misconduct. I think it's important to talk about the people who have been singled out undeservedly throughout this study.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, go ahead on a point of order.

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order on relevance. He hasn't mentioned the motion. A good filibusterer will make sure that they refer to the motion at least every three and a half minutes. I really want Mr. Lauzon to be his best self.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Albas. It's duly noted.

I'll remind all colleagues, once again, that when you're speaking to the motion, you should address the motion and bring your remarks back to the motion as much as possible for relevance.

Monsieur Lauzon.

[Translation]

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Chair, I'm happy to explain where I'm going with this. The main motion really talks about the victims. This goes back to the first part of the motion, and it talks about finding solutions to the problem.

The testimony heard indicates not only that 35% of collisions involve fatalities, but also that there are concerns for compliant drivers. All testimony included a heartfelt plea from companies that came to see us to ask if they could continue to be compliant, to pay their fees, to make revenue and to be financially healthy while remaining compliant. That was the plea we heard.

If we want to get that done, we really need to know the situation of those companies and drivers who drive for them. I mentioned Quebec because I have a bit more experience with it, and I mentioned Transport Canada because it's directly related to the drivers we're studying and it's the Canadian government's responsibility.

Unfortunately, things are no better in Ontario. In 2023, according to the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, there were 106 fatalities in collisions involving large trucks. The definition has changed again, because here they call them "big trucks". Accidents involving big trucks account for 17.2% of all traffic fatalities in Ontario. A lot of roads in Ontario are built for road transport and big trucks. In 2022, the Ontario Provincial Police recorded 9,110 accidents involving heavy trucks, the highest number in over a decade, with 71 fatalities. As I told committee members earlier, the main cause is speeding, unfortunately. That's why I spoke earlier about the best way to reduce the number of accidents, which is to crack down on speeding.

The leading causes of accidents are excessive speed and dangerous lane changes. That's what I experience on Highway 50. On a number of occasions since 2015, I've seen vehicles go outside their lane on my way home. It's often trucks. I have no idea what the drivers are doing in their truck, but two wheels of the truck are in my lane. On Highway 50, somebody who is daydreaming is liable to get into a head-on collision. If I were not careful on Highway 50, my children would be fatherless, and my wife would have no husband, because trucks put two wheels in my lane on my way home. Dangerous lane changes are the second most frequent cause of accidents.

In addition, people think it's easy to make a truck come to a stop. Vehicles cut off and squeeze trucks on the road. Drivers don't understand how trucks behave. Truck drivers have said that they're increasingly afraid of one another. They're afraid of other truck drivers. Truck drivers have come to tell us that they're afraid of their colleagues at other companies, because they're at risk of having an accident due to the incompetent drivers on the road.

Who better than a truck driver on the road for hundreds of hours a year to testify that truck drivers are extremely dangerous on the road? Experts from Ontario have said that an inadequate space cushion between vehicles is the third leading cause of death involving heavy trucks.

I'd like to end this point with some very interesting statistics that say the number of deaths involving heavy vehicles in Quebec in 2024 increased by 35% compared to 2023. There were 74 fatalities in 2023, versus 100 in 2024. We need to retain that data. My colleagues can use it on social media to say that this committee is here to make a difference in people's lives and find a way to solve the Driver Inc. problem. That's the highest number of heavy-vehicle fatalities in the past 15 years. Transport Canada has stated that there's been a steady increase in fatalities involving commercial vehicles.

In 2020, there were 343 fatalities; in 2021, there were 381 fatalities; in 2022, there were 390 fatalities; and in 2023, there were 399 fatalities. I urge all my colleagues to remember that, and to read Transport Canada's 2023 motor vehicle collision statistics and its statistics for 2012 to 2021 on collisions involving commercial vehicles in Canada, as well as visit the websites of the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. In Quebec alone, 100 people lost their lives in 2024 in collisions involving a heavy vehicle, and 77 of them were in accidents involving heavy trucks or road tractors. I'm very interested in the 35% increase over 2023, even before distinguishing the portion of this data that falls under the Driver Inc. model.

That's why, today, through our recommendations, it's important that we give the provincial governments and all stakeholders the tools they need to find the solution. Therefore, we have to work with the analysts and the clerk to achieve our ends, because road safety is extremely important. Governments invest millions of dollars in back-to-school advertising. They run commercials about speeding on highways like the 417. The commercials say that cellular phones are deadly and that people shouldn't text while driving. In Quebec, they show photos of people similar to the ones intended to show the risk of cancer on cigarette packs. There are posters in Quebec showing what happens when someone gets into an accident because they drive too fast. We're very concerned about road safety, and we have the opportunity to improve one aspect of the study directly related to the Bloc Québécois motion.

I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois once again for introducing this motion. This issue is very close to my heart, and everyone agrees with the first part of the motion. We could so easily pass this motion and complete the study by agreeing to exactly what we're asking for to preserve the dignity of the families of witnesses who are victims of accidents, which is to give them the option to come and testify in private at an in camera meeting, or in public.

Our goal is social justice and tax fairness. We've talked a lot about finance, so let's talk more about social justice and tax fairness for truckers.

The witnesses, the truckers who have come to this room are affected by the measures put in place in the 2025 budget, by provisions of the Canada Labour Code, and by political commitments to ensure social justice and tax fairness for them. We are in a political context at a parliamentary committee. Through its investments, the federal government has committed to protecting workers' rights and ensuring tax fairness in the trucking sector. Everyone stands to gain if the government invests wisely. We can therefore achieve tax fairness through recommendations. We can give the departments the tools and funding they need to hire the right people, the experts, to recover money from illegal drivers.

The Driver Inc. scheme is founded on misclassifying drivers as self-employed when they shouldn't be. It's not true, drivers can't define themselves as a supplier for a single company. They can do it their first week thinking that, as a company, they are going to drive for other companies, but today we know that's not how it goes. The company gives the driver a truck, dictates their routes and tells them that they won't look into the safety and maintenance of the vehicle. The company is going to cut corners and want the driver to drive as much as possible so that it's profitable. It says that the driver is going to be self-employed. We've even had witnesses tell us that some drivers ask to be self-employed. It pays off at the time, when they're healthy, when they haven't had any accidents, when they're willing to commit fraud and have two logbooks. It pays until drivers make a blunder and find they don't have employment insurance, protection from the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail or health care. After they get into an accident or are no longer employed for whatever reason, it's very difficult for drivers to justify that incorporation was profitable.

The Driver Inc. scheme is founded on self-employed workers. We need to find ways to stop it and issue recommendations. Essentially, the goal is to put an end to abusive practices and ensure a level playing field.

From the beginning, I've always said the same thing. I've often asked witnesses how the government could better level the playing field. I have always been in favour of compliance with standards and proper driver's licences, and of fairness for families, workers and companies that want to have a business with sound financial conditions.

Now, the key measures in budget 2025 are not complicated.

First, it talks about lifting the moratorium on T4A slips. We've done that, and officials are working on it. That will have a direct impact on the trucking industry.

Then, we need to provide the tools to help the departments talk to each other and find the wrongdoers to recover money. Funding of \$77 million over four years is earmarked for that. With the passage of the budget, we now have \$19.2 million per year on the ground for compliance inspection.

There's also a legislative amendment to strengthen enforcement of the Canada Labour Code and information sharing between the Canada Revenue Agency and Employment and Social Development Canada.

That's the key to the recommendations we should make, because we really need to recommend a set of measures to give our government the necessary tools not only from a tax standpoint, but also from a moral standpoint and a business management standpoint. We need to make recommendations to the Government of Quebec and the other provinces to work together to improve the lot of businesses in the heavy truck driving sector that want to do the right thing.

Social justice and tax fairness are linked by the fact that they both guarantee truckers access to the minimum protections provided under the law, under the Canada Labour Code. The Canada Labour Code already contains pre-established standards and has certain rules around paid leave.

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, what does the current topic about minimum wage and the Labour Code have to do with this particular motion? I know that many of us are probably passively doing other duties, etc., but his job is to actually be relevant, and your job is to make sure he's on point.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Lauzon, I would once again remind you to speak to the motion at hand.

[English]

Colleagues, I think this is a good opportunity for us to suspend for five minutes and take a health break.

When we reconvene, Monsieur Lauzon will have the floor.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1025)

(Pause)

• (1035)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order, and I turn the floor back over to Mr. Lauzon.

[Translation]

You have the floor, Mr. Lauzon.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When I spoke to the motion, I talked a lot about the workers affected by the Driver Inc. phenomenon. I explained the nuance between social justice and tax fairness, because, in the budget, we have a solution to improve things and meet the needs of those who work in this field. I outlined a number of measures in the budget, including the T4A slip measure, the \$77-million investment, and how to share that amount between social justice and tax fairness. It's really about ensuring access to the minimum protections under the Canada Labour Code, so it's directly related to the needs of drivers and it's a very good avenue to at least give some recommendations to the analysts.

When we were hearing testimony, I often said that the rules have to be the same for everyone, both little and big players. I believe every driver has to be in good standing. The minister, Mr. MacKinnon, made that clear in his testimony. He advocated for a collaborative approach with industry. I also liked when he told us that it was a matter of putting an end to fraud. The minister wants to fix the problem and says that his priorities are safety, fairness and competitiveness in the transportation sector, so I think his comments are directly related to the needs of this committee and those of the Minister of Jobs and Families.

I named those two ministers, but we also heard from the secretary of state. We heard from a number of witnesses. The Minister of Jobs and Families has clearly expressed her support for strengthening inspections and penalties to protect workers. Those two measures go hand in hand. The ministers came together to talk about solutions. I think it's important to focus on employer responsibility and fighting precariousness. Companies that are sounding the alarm must also be given certain responsibilities. We've heard heartfelt pleas from businesses on the right track that must comply with standards and meet the needs of their businesses and their drivers.

In our recommendations, we must therefore include responsibilities for businesses. What's important are the companies that promote the infamous Driver Inc. model. Companies that circumvent the system in one way or another will be subject to audits and penalties. That's what I'd like us to recommend, and I'm willing to work to recommend audits and penalties for wrongdoers. The solutions we've heard will ensure not only tax justice, but also social justice.

Companies that play by the rules shouldn't be penalized. On the contrary, they even need to be recognized. Why not set up a registry of companies recognized for their good behaviour, as suggested by witnesses and the Bloc Québécois? The Bloc Québécois has already recommended that certain registries be kept.

Can we work on this? Can we achieve our ends so that the analysts can tell us whether unveiling the names is in order, in line with the rules, and if we can do it? The ideal place to make such requests is in all the recommendations made through the analysts and the clerk.

Yes, it can be about messages. I agree again. I'm often agreeing with Mr. Barsalou-Duval today. I think we're on the verge of grabbing a bite together. I can tell Mr. Barsalou-Duval that our strategic message is to get to where we want to go and finish this study by issuing recommendations similar to those in his press release to move forward. We can examine them with members of this committee, the analysts and the clerk before tabling them in the House, but we have to get to that stage. We have to hear from the witnesses on the list, but we also have to respect the families' choice to testify with dignity and give them the option to testify in camera or in public.

The Chair: Just a moment, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

Mr. Albas, on a point of order, the floor is yours, sir.

Dan Albas: He already spoke about the dignity of victims—

Stéphane Lauzon: It is a very important point.

Dan Albas: —on the first day of his filibuster.

Mr. Chair, if he's being repetitive, you can actually stop him and simply say, "You no longer have the floor." Then maybe we can have a discussion.

Let's hear from Mr. Kelloway.

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

I do not have the memory of Mr. Albas, but I'm going to take him at his word that perhaps you did already discuss this, Monsieur Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, I want to remind you once again that we must discuss the motion at hand.

The floor is yours.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know how important the families' dignity is to me. They need to have the opportunity to come and testify in camera. It's so important to me that I have no regrets about focusing on a strategic point.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: This is becoming vexatious. He's repeating the same thing over and over despite your asking him not to be repetitive in his arguments.

Mr. Chair, you can allow this and Mr. Lauzon's making a farce of himself as much as he wants, but you cannot allow this committee to become a farce of its own. Please enforce our rules. If he's using the same arguments over and over—contrary to your ruling—you should simply take the floor from him.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Albas. That's duly noted.

I will once again remind all members to speak to the motion at hand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Today, we have strategic messages to pass on. My colleagues know where I stand. Now, today, we are taking action to protect truckers and ensure tax fairness. The federal government has an opportunity to close loopholes and improve safety on our roads. As committee members, we have the opportunity to make recommendations.

We have a strong, impressive industry. I'm thinking of the witnesses' data on the number of drivers and the huge quantity of goods they are responsible for providing to us. Moreover, it is a strong industry based on fair rules, which should be followed by everyone. We've learned at this committee that some of the rules are easily circumvented. That bothers us, and me in particular. People who are not on the straight and narrow bother me. Together with our partners, our goal is to build a fair and sustainable strategic transportation sector. We really need to find the solution to improve the ecosystem and put an end to the Driver Inc. model.

Let's remember the former police officer who came to talk to us. The last time, I ended my remarks by talking about his great testimony and his years of experience. I can say that I was pleasantly surprised to welcome Ken Adams. On October 7, 2025, he came to talk to us about his experience. He represents 40 independent schools and has 30 years of experience. The witness told us about the deterioration in the quality of training. I take training to heart. I won't repeat my training experience, but hearing about corruption and falsifying documents bothers me.

At the same time as this witness, we heard from Mark Seymour, representing Kriska Transportation Group. To refer to what I said earlier, he said that 50% of applicants request Driver Inc. status. That bothers me a great deal, because not only is it immediately profitable, but it is also a way to get around the laws, both for drivers and businesses. Mark Seymour runs a 47-year-old family business. When he joined the company, his father had three employees. Now they have 800 trucks and obey the rules. Imagine the burden of compliance by these companies for each truck. We've heard the figures: people can save \$20,000 to \$30,000 by bending the rules. That amount, multiplied by 800 trucks, is a huge amount of money that can have a huge impact on the company. He made the same comment as all the other witnesses, that he's just asking for fair competition. Fair competition must be applied not only to help this company, but also to help all companies in order to achieve a more balanced market and ecosystem. It starts with us.

My message is that if we don't act quickly on this issue, it could get confusing and lead us off course. Compliant companies like the one he represents are going to be increasingly difficult to run.

Competition must be fair and without shortcuts, because shortcuts jeopardize public safety on the road. Companies that follow the rules are more careful, inspections are better and drivers are better trained, but there is a cost. If we want to preserve businesses that play by the rules and quality jobs, we must ensure fair competition and act now to put an end to the Driver Inc. model and restore a level playing ground in the industry. We have to respect the testimony of the owner of a company that has come so far in 30 years.

On October 9, we heard from Chris McKee, executive director of the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association, which represents 340 businesses. We heard from a police officer, a representative of 40 schools and a representative of 340 businesses employing tens of thousands of Canadians in the Atlantic provinces. I always focus more on Quebec and Ontario, because they are side by side and I know more about them. I've visited places and businesses in Quebec, so it's easier for me. Hearing this witness who represents the Atlantic provinces really struck me, because now I know that there is also misclassification there. As independent contractors, drivers meet the definition of employees under the Canada Labour Code. As I mentioned earlier, the Canada Labour Code lists certain rules that we must comply with. We work with the provinces and territories, but we are not on the lookout for tax fraud, social fraud, unpaid premiums and rule-breaking drivers, even in the Atlantic provinces.

We've heard a lot about under-the-table work. The topic has not been addressed by all the witnesses, but being paid off the books, as they say, meaning working under the table, is often synonymous with an underground economy. The underground economy was en-

couraged by the moratorium on the T4A slip introduced in 2011 by the Conservatives. The moratorium allows businesses to have only one company that works for a company while always driving the same truck from the same company. On paper, it's easy to get around. The government remedied that today.

[English]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

[Translation]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

I have a point of order from Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: It's on relevance to the motion. The member keeps talking about an issue, but he's not talking about the motion, which is clearly about having witness testimony and a production order. Unless he takes issue with one or the other, he is far out of the bounds of speaking to the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas. I believe Monsieur Lauzon is directly quoting testimony from the witnesses to make his point.

Stéphane Lauzon: That's correct.

The Chair: I'll turn the floor back over to Monsieur Lauzon.

[Translation]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I'm saying is, in fact, directly related to the motion. Real witnesses came to give recommendations to the analysts so that we could get to work and complete a report as quickly as possible. Therefore, it is directly related to the motion under consideration. We really want to make this happen so we can hear from more witnesses and get this report done.

I was saying that this has a direct impact on compliant businesses. One company said that the current solution was to reduce fleets, freeze the economy, lay people off and make employees lose their jobs because of too many irregularities related to the Driver Inc. model. Imagine having to tell an employee that we are following the rules, but that they have to lose their job because we have to reduce our staff, because the activity is no longer profitable and we no longer get contracts. Who are the contracts awarded to? They go to the bad actors who can charge less, who can cut corners and skip inspections. The witness told us that he is not able to rival the competition. Imagine how difficult it is for an employer to testify today that he is losing people and laying people off because he has a compliant company and wants to remain compliant. Is it possible to stay compliant? That's the question he's asking.

Can we give the analysts recommendations and the tools to make this happen and complete the study? In terms of the inability to compete, the witness talked about a loss of contracts to illegal carriers. This is reminiscent of the 1990s, not today. Back in 1990, compliant companies were starting to face this issue. These are companies that are passed down from generation to generation.

Since 2011, the government has put oil on the fire and wood in the stove. Through the T4A slip measures, the government added the possibility of a moratorium on the management of incorporated businesses working for the same company, which broke the camel's back. Since then, an illegal practice has built up over the years to get us to where we are today, which is that a witness came to us to ask if he could remain compliant, if he could do things properly without circumventing the system, while remaining competitive. There is no shortage of contracts. Trucking is a growing industry, except that the same companies are getting the contracts: the bad actors who charge less, do not comply with road safety standards and do not comply with standards related to working conditions. They're circumventing the system through fraud. Of course, we want to recommend continuing in the same vein as lifting the moratorium on the T4A slip.

The witness is not managing the Canadian budget that was just tabled, but he is already planning to ask for more resources for the Canada Revenue Agency and Employment and Social Development Canada to strengthen audits, fill the gap and solve the problem.

He also asked for information sharing. Can we encourage information sharing among departments? Mr. Barsalou-Duval is recommending some form of information and document sharing. Can we send that recommendation to the analysts for discussion, to make this happen and complete the study?

The witness also asked the government to fast-track the creation of a national carrier database for transparency purposes.

The database needs to be set up. We have the power and authority to work with the provinces and territories to set up a national carrier database so that information on guilty parties can be shared among the provinces and territories to make our roads safer and ensure balance in the trucking market.

That said, our system depends on following the rules. As a government, we have a legal and moral responsibility to guarantee a fair and safe market, and that's why we want to lift the moratorium on penalties related to T4A slips. Let's strengthen inspections and enforce the Canada Labour Code to solve the Driver Inc. problem and protect truckers.

That sums up our discussions with this witness. Chris McKee answered questions from the Conservatives, the Bloc and the Liberals with very good information. His message was clear: Reverse tax and social fraud and the moratorium on T4A penalties. The same thing keeps coming up from one witness to the next.

Sometimes I have to repeat myself because the same witness repeated the same thing to highlight it. Saying something five times does not require it to be enforced, but when five witnesses say the same thing and exert a lot of pressure by reminding us that the

same challenge comes up, we really have to take it into consideration.

Mark Bylsma, the president of the Ontario Trucking Association, met with us on October 9 for this study. We did not hear from incompetent people. Mr. Bylsma has 30 years of business experience in a small, 40-truck, family-run business in Ontario. I take into consideration what a representative of a 40-truck company says as much as what a representative of a 300- or 400-truck company says. I want to point out that I'm talking about his testimony before I propose anything else to you because it was alarming. He said that there won't be a second generation in his business. It hurts to hear that, because it means that when he stops working, his business will stop operating as well. Why? It's because he threw in the towel and thinks there's no future in the trucking industry in Canada. It hurts to hear that.

Can we save at least some companies that are brave enough to want to stay in business? Can we fix the problem? It hurts to hear a witness like Mark Bylsma, who has so much experience, say that he threw in the towel mainly because of the illegal model based on tax and social fraud known as Driver Inc. I felt like asking him to hang on a bit to see if we can give him hope in another way.

We're working on recommendations. Can this committee make recommendations to Canadians before Christmas? Can we make our recommendations a Christmas present? Today, we have to say no. We're not acting in good faith, but we really have to find a solution to address this problem.

The witness mentioned a small statistic that bothered me. We've often talked about data. For example, an illegal driver costs \$20,000 to \$30,000 less.

When I say "illegal", that's semantics, but I mean a Driver Inc. or incorporated driver. I put it all in the same basket. Either way, Mr. Bylsma mentioned a figure and talked to us about tariffs. It's the people on the ground who talk to us about tariffs. He compared a rate of \$650 per delivery, which he would have to charge, to an artificially low rate of \$585. There is a substantial shortfall for each delivery, for each driver and for each company transaction, which erodes margins and makes compliant carriers lose contracts. I understand why he wants to throw in the towel and says that this is a real threat to law-abiding businesses in good standing. He risks bankruptcy. He dared to say the word "bankruptcy". We're talking about the collapse of safety and training standards, a worsening driver labour shortage and worsening working conditions.

Mr. Bylsma reminded us that while Driver Inc. drivers are playing them, they're also playing us. They result in lost tax revenue for governments, so we're losing money. Still, the witness was brave enough to ask us to suggest potential solutions. During question period, we asked Mr. Bylsma how to improve things. The answer was simple: We just have to make sure that companies are law-abiding and in good standing.

What tool can we use to ensure that companies are in good standing? First, we have laws in place, so we have to enforce them, strengthen them and equip ourselves to ensure compliance. We started with the T4A slip measure, but we can do a number of other things to help the system.

Second, how do we protect the rights of employees and ensure fair competition? We have to find ways to protect the rights of employees and ensure that fair competition. Mr. Bylsma suggested that we follow the recommendations of the Canadian Trucking Alliance, because the associations talk to each other and try to find solutions. However, they need the help of our committee and the provincial parliamentary committees. They need the political will to follow recommendations.

What I take from the message, from Mr. Bylsma's heartfelt cry that companies will simply throw in the towel, is that compliance with the rules should not be optional. Our government has a responsibility to implement them. That is why we are lifting the moratorium on the T4A slip, we are going to strengthen inspections and we are going to enforce the Canada Labour Code to restore fairness and ensure a future for the trucking industry in Canada. To do that, we have to vote in favour of the budget, because \$77 million is waiting for us.

I've obviously talked a lot about Quebec, but I'd still like to come back to the testimony of Véronique Gagnon, vice-president of Transport St-Pamphile Inc., a third-generation company. In the past, I have talked about businesses passed down from generation to generation at a time when there are fewer and fewer takers. Now some businesses are at risk of shutting down.

In her remarks, Ms. Gagnon, co-owner of the company, which has been around since 1948, talked a lot about unfair competition.

She also told us about unqualified drivers, but she added another layer by telling us about uninsured drivers. I don't know her source, but she testified about the fact that drivers aren't insured, so I took it very seriously. Insuring the trucks and drivers is another cost that the compliant companies have to bear. Earlier, we talked about the skyrocketing cost of insurance across Canada. The same is true in Quebec. Vehicles need to be properly insured. You can't take out just any street-corner vehicle insurance, because it comes with responsibilities. Some companies transport hazardous materials, others have specific insurance and some have fairly long insurance records due to accidents or claims, so costs have increased. It's not just the overall cost but also the cost of the insured person and the insured truck.

These practices therefore lead to unfair competition. The witness told us that carriers have operating costs. She didn't compare the \$500 rate to the \$600 rate we talked about earlier, but she told us about ridiculously low rates that don't cover actual operating

costs, which means that the companies that use these practices can bid and get contracts.

Intermediaries, which are the clients, have a role to play, because they have a certain amount of goods to deliver. The more they save on transportation and the more they save on costs, the more profitable the goods are. Intermediaries, the clients, shop around. The companies use a Canadian system, which is tendering. They issue calls for tenders. Through the calls for tenders, the law-breaking companies can already predict in the long term the number of drivers who do not necessarily meet today's standards, who make it possible to have lower costs than the competition in order to get contracts. This is alarming. This witness came to give us a heartfelt plea from a company that has been operating for several generations, since 1948.

How do we get there?

We have the means to resolve this problem today. We can decide to hear from the newly requested witnesses and the grieving families, but we also have to make recommendations. All we're asking for is to invite the families and give them the choice of testifying in camera or in public, in person or remotely.

What matters is answering this witness. She gave us some alarming examples, through which I learned that some drivers aren't even insured. To save on costs, companies take a risk and send uninsured drivers out on the road. They know that the information on bad driver profiles shared between provinces and different countries is hard to track, because drivers can leave Mexico and come to Canada. I have a lot of alarming examples. Some drivers are unable to conduct basic inspections. We've heard that from witnesses.

I used to have my trucker's licence, and I learned how to inspect trucks. Yes, in my trade, I drove heavy trucks. I got my class 3 licence, which is equivalent to class 1, except that I didn't do my exam on a truck over two axles and 45 feet. I did my exam on a five-ton truck, so I got my class 3 licence.

Having a class 3 licence involves doing an inspection. I had the same training as people who do a test for a class 1 licence. You have to learn a few basic mechanics. The skill of inspecting vehicles comes from training. I was self-taught. Today, in Quebec, two courses are required that are directly related to what we are experiencing. We want competent drivers who know how to inspect vehicles.

Ms. Gagnon told us about unfair competition. She was discouraged, because some drivers didn't even know how to inspect their own vehicles. Just so committee members understand, there's a well-known checklist that has to be followed. You have to check the pneumatic or hydraulic brakes, depending on the system, the tires, the fluids, the general condition of the truck, the tail lights, the headlights, the signals, the windshield wipers and the level of windshield wiper fluid, to see if everything is okay. I won't recite them all, but there is a list of all the checks that need to be done. However, Ms. Gagnon told us that truck drivers aren't even able to complete the checklist. How can compliant companies compete with that? This is incompetence. We have to stop this and find the bad actors so that drivers are legally qualified to drive trucks on the road.

The witness mainly talked to us about the increased financial pressure on compliant companies. All the witnesses have told us about the much-talked-about increased pressure. Ms. Gagnon's company could get by, because this is the third or fourth generation of a company that has been in business since 1948. In the past, the company made a profit. Ms. Gagnon didn't say this, but I assume that her company is living on its savings. They're trying to keep their head above water and breathe in order to stay in business because they believe in what they know best, which is trucking.

That's a wake-up call. Like the last witness who represents several hundred truck drivers, she warned us of the risk of traditional carriers disappearing, meaning that the trucking standard will become the Driver Inc. model. If we don't deal with this, if we don't make recommendations, if we don't move forward and if we don't work with the provinces, Driver Inc. is in danger of winning the battle and becoming the norm. Is that what we want, as members of Parliament? Can we make this happen and give our analysts and the clerk the choice to complete the study so that they can be proud to say that Driver Inc. hasn't won?

Our committee has some really good recommendations to put in place. Let's roll up our sleeves and give officials, provinces and territories the tools to work together. Let's bring all the police forces together and do roadside monitoring together. Let's share the information. That is Ms. Gagnon's heartfelt plea.

Despite all the examples I've given you, to remain within our federal jurisdiction, our solutions must be to strengthen monitoring. We want to verify the drivers' skills. After Ms. Gagnon's testimony, I necessarily want to add that we need to put in place a way to monitor insurance. The comments made by the highway controller that they have little or no way of knowing whether the vehicle is insured made my blood boil. Controllers don't necessarily have the reflex to call insurance companies to check whether the vehicle is insured, especially if it comes from another province. Vehicles arrive in Quebec, but controllers are not authorized to search their information. It's scary.

The message we are sending to bad actors, which was brought up by the witness we heard from, is that not insuring costs less and they won't get caught. Can the committee put in place better monitoring for insurance? Can plates be checked?

I had my vehicle inspected recently when I sold it. When I went to the SAAQ to register the plate change, they asked for a vehicle

inspection. I had it inspected, and the result was that my vehicle was compliant. When I went back to the SAAQ with the customer to sell my vehicle, I gave them my vehicle's certificate of compliance, my licences and my registration. We put all of that on the table. I was then asked for proof of insurance. I had to show proof of insurance for my vehicle. Before leaving the yard, my buyer also had to show that the vehicle was insured with an insurance company. There are requirements for small private vehicles that truck drivers don't even have.

From what we've heard, there's no real way to verify that the trucks are insured. I'm focusing on this topic because few witnesses have talked about it. I was very struck by that, so I would like to have some research done on insurance. I'll come back to that later, because I have a number of points to address regarding the witness who talked about vehicle insurance, but I don't want to lose the thread of the testimony by Ms. Gagnon from Transport St-Pamphile Inc.

Ultimately, what we take from Ms. Gagnon's testimony is that law-abiding carriers are being pushed straight into the wall. That's one more witness telling us that. The witness made a heartfelt plea, saying that this situation must stop, not in six months, because the carriers don't know if they're going to make it that far. It has to stop now.

We need to act now, and our government understands that. We lifted the moratorium on the T4A slip, and we invested \$77 million. Now, it is up to the committee to work on compliance with the rules, on a legal obligation for public safety and on a national responsibility. Why is our government acting? We started by lifting the moratorium on the T4A slip, but we need to strengthen inspections and enforce the Canada Labour Code to end the Driver Inc. model and protect compliant carriers. Our government is taking action to meet the needs of Ms. Gagnon, who testified here on October 9.

However, Ms. Gagnon was not the only one to make a heartfelt plea. On October 9, she was here alongside other witnesses. We've all heard the message loud and clear. Thanks to the witnesses, it was an extremely important day and I learned a lot. We thought we could sleep on it. I thought I had enough material to present to the analysts, but we knew that other good witnesses were expected. We've talked a lot about road safety. We wanted to know more about the economic impact.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I see that Mr. Lauzon is rehashing the testimony of all the witnesses we've heard at the committee. However, not all the testimony in committee was related to the motion we are debating at the moment.

Do you intend to make sure that Mr. Lauzon's comments are related to the motion instead of summarizing all the testimony that was heard?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

I think that Mr. Lauzon is using what the witnesses have said to back up his point. I think it respects the way we can talk here at the committee. I will therefore let Mr. Lauzon continue speaking.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: I can understand why people don't want to talk about the motion and why they don't want the motion to solve the problem, along with our analysts and the clerk, for political reasons. However, what I'm explaining is directly related to the first and second parts of the motion. The motion mentions witnesses who have given us tools to find solutions and meet their needs, as did Harman Bhangu, who appeared before the committee on October 21.

We respect people who enter politics. He's an MLA from British Columbia, the critic for jobs and economic development. We had better listen to him, especially since he is an MLA from British Columbia. He told us about his experience in trucking and gravel, and the exploitation of temporary foreign workers. During his testimony, we realized that the issue was more political, but we still had very good discussions with him. Those discussions with a fellow member gave us a better understanding of what goes on in the provinces, especially since it's not my province.

It also taught me more about how the system works elsewhere. The member specifically told us about the risks to drivers in the province of British Columbia. He told us that Driver Inc. is becoming a standard, a business model. It's concerning when a member, like us, knows the file and says that the model is becoming a business model. In reality, it's also a legal loophole. Companies have studied ways to circumvent the system in order to become more competitive and avoid their tax and social obligations. In addition to knowing the subject, the member explained to us how the model works in his province.

Therefore, I have bad news, which is that it's the same concept as in the other provinces. The concept is that the driver sets up a company and is paid as a supplier, not as an employee. This is directly related to the concept of Driver Inc. in Ontario, Quebec and other provinces.

There are consequences to the lack of deductions at source. They don't pay EI and they don't pay for their pension plan, which is the Canada pension plan in that province. There's a loss of millions of dollars in tax revenue. We had a member of Parliament responsible for taxation come in and tell us that millions of dollars in tax revenue are lost because of the unfair competitive advantage of fraudsters. At first, he told us about circumventing the system, but later in his testimony, he talked more about fraudsters. It's pretty much the same language.

The effect on drivers in British Columbia is no different from anywhere else. They are deluded into thinking they have a better hourly rate when it's a false hourly rate.

The companies cut corners and tamper with the protection afforded to leave, overtime and insurance. The witness talked about accident insurance. Drivers are willing to take the risk, but not always. They often face pressure from these companies. They not only

ly have a well-paid job that fails to comply with the legislation, but they can't see beyond the end of their nose. They think that, if something happens to them, they won't be protected. That's more or less what this witness said. These companies are prepared to take greater risks for temporary foreign workers. The member told us that they're often forced to incorporate. We thought that this happened only in Quebec and Ontario. However, this witness comes from British Columbia.

We invited some truly insightful witnesses who showed us that incorporation affects Canada as a whole. The issue has been spreading since 2011, so we must really take it seriously. They clearly showed us that the issue has spread across the country. A provincial member came to inform us of the situation, possibly as a result of information that he received through certain committees, his portfolio or his officials. This is a major issue for the industry and the companies. The erosion of safety standards was demonstrated by the lack of training, maintenance and respect for hours. The witness focused on unfair competition and the efforts to undermine compliant companies. He told us that the more companies remain compliant, the less they succeed in business. That's more or less what he said. Non-compliant companies are now becoming the norm, which is unacceptable. This witness kept referring to the threat to public safety and he focused a great deal on public safety.

We can draw conclusions from our discussions with this witness from another province, who does the same job as we do. He's a provincial member and he's responsible for this matter. Together, we could draw a clear line. If a driver is hired by a compliant company, we must support the driver. However, if the driver is incorporated, we must keep an eye on the driver, implement the T4A slip and ensure compliance with the rules. Everyone must pay their fair share of taxes and have access to tax returns.

We also share certain similarities, because we both want to strengthen the legislation. We want to strengthen not only the legislation, but also its enforcement. We can use some of the legislation already in place. The T4A slip is a good start. We can work with the provinces and territories to ensure that we have an even stronger tool in the form of deterrents. I mentioned a crackdown earlier. I'm a strong proponent of crackdowns. From school zones to highways to truck drivers, I'm a strong proponent of crackdowns. The witness talked about using deterrents to discourage drivers from committing offences, but they must be caught.

The witness also told us to protect vulnerable workers, who aren't necessarily all committing offences. Vulnerable workers are people who want to earn a good living to support their families and cover the costs of daily life.

However, they may be exploited by a contractor who leaves them no choice or else they lose their job. This means that vulnerable workers are illegal when they don't necessarily want to be. They fall into the category of irregularities through companies that make illegal drivers the norm.

We talked about immigration with an expert on foreign workers. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of foreign workers who arrive in Canada on foreign worker visas and who are promised a job with a transportation company, because they worked in this field back home. There are transportation companies everywhere, including in India and Mexico. The foreign workers come to Canada and find a prosperous country where they plan to settle with their family, raise their children and have Canadian children. They come here and place all their trust in a company. They're ushered into an office to sign papers and they're told that they'll have a truck. What recourse is available to temporary foreign workers within the four walls of an office of a company that will give them a job? They look at the salary, which is tempting compared to what they earned in their home country. In their home country, they worked for maybe \$50 a week. When they come here, they're presented with a tempting amount of money. However, a number of conditions haven't been met. Yet they can't advocate for themselves and they face language barriers.

The company puts them behind the wheel of a truck and has them pass their driving test in 24 or 48 hours. The company then puts them on the road and entrusts them with 16,000 pounds of goods. They don't even know which road to take and they have trouble reading the signs. How can we expect these temporary foreign workers to know how to inspect their vehicles according to Canadian standards, when back home, maybe carriers pick up tires from all over the place and put them on the truck, because the truck must run? However, in Canada and in the provinces, standards must be met. The witness who spoke about temporary foreign workers asked us how we think that the workers can speak out against their exploitation in the trucking industry. The witness made a heartfelt plea for us to restore fairness for compliant transportation companies and to close the loophole that the Driver Inc. model is based on. This must be done.

This witness is a colleague, a member from British Columbia, who represents a department and who serves as a spokesperson for employment and economic development. His job is to gather as much information as possible and to champion an issue. The opposition's job is to take a critical look at every issue. All my colleagues do their homework. This witness did his homework on the transportation issue. He came to talk about the exploitation of foreign workers in the trucking industry.

We aren't experts on the topic, and we won't be. However, I think that we can make a difference starting today by mandating the analysts and the clerk to achieve our goals and to complete the report with recommendations to prevent the exploitation of temporary foreign workers.

We've heard all kinds of stories about foreign workers. There are several hundred foreign workers in my constituency. They aren't necessarily in the trucking industry. Some are, since I'm in a fairly agricultural area. I never miss an opportunity to get out and about in my constituency in order to meet with foreign workers and have good discussions with business owners. I often can't speak to the foreign workers in English or French, but they're hard-working people who take their jobs seriously.

They make it possible for us to harvest our grapes and blueberries. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't even be able to bring in our harvests and we would lose our crops.

The same applies to drivers. These drivers include foreign workers who are entitled to training and a legal status. They have the right to receive wages in line with Quebec and Canadian standards. They have the right to the dignity of the transportation profession and the right to remain free from exploitation by companies that want to cut corners.

We spoke about this issue with the Canada Truck Operator Association's policy adviser. Arjun Vishwanth has taken a controversial position. He advocates for voluntary incorporation. Unfortunately, the moratorium on T4A slips implemented in 2011 has been removed. This means that the drivers who want to voluntarily incorporate must do so by the book. This witness believes that the position of a Driver Inc. driver isn't a legal status and that it doesn't exist under any legislation, regulations or court rulings. According to this witness, a void remains.

We want to fill this void and focus on the fact that the driver must remain compliant in order to hit the road. That's the bottom line. The work will be done in advance.

The witness's comments made my ears perk up a bit, especially the fact that small and medium-sized businesses would face disproportionate audits. I have nothing against auditing a company. If a company has nothing to hide, it can show its accounts.

The committee wants audit reports, penalties and tickets passed on to all its members in order to include these items in its recommendations for improvement, without encroaching on provincial jurisdictions. All matters relating to licences, fines and penalties fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Can we use these things to make progress? Yes.

We talked about breaking down myths. I think that we've heard from enough witnesses to know that these weren't myths. We hear that they're myths and made-up stories. However, the Canada Revenue Agency is losing out on millions of dollars, so we must act quickly.

This witness spoke about false data, saying that we can easily talk about several million dollars. Even though I can't quantify the impact, since we haven't completed the study, this amounts to a great deal of money lost.

With the committee's analysts, we didn't focus on certain actions either. However, this witness said that we were basing our study on a flawed model. A witness told us that our study couldn't be based on flawed data or testimony. That said, many quality witnesses, both administrative players and people involved in the business activities, made a heartfelt plea. They told us that they need a helping hand and support in order to continue, because they're in danger of going bankrupt and closing their doors. To call all this data bogus implies that the data from the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Transport Canada and other testimonies are false. The data are conclusive.

My takeaway from this witness's comments is that the incorporation remains legal and voluntary and that it's necessary to say yes to companies that want to have incorporated drivers in order to cut corners.

The major transportation companies themselves rely on incorporated drivers under the owner-operator model in Ontario or in other parts of Canada, which constitutes a double standard. The major transportation companies often work with intermediaries. They don't know how these intermediaries manage their companies. They have a supply chain built this way and they have no control over the subcontractor. It's a world of subcontractors and transportation companies. The individual who provides the work or the manufacturer isn't necessarily mandated to regulate the driver subcontracted by a company to deliver the goods.

This witness told us that the major transportation companies themselves use drivers. It's true. We'll be hearing from a Canada Post official. Some Canada Post carriers do business with other companies. I'm anxious to hear the testimonies so that we can move forward. Can we meet with these other companies? Can we find out more about this issue? This is the norm. All agencies, companies and businesses use subcontractors to control transportation through bids. The bid doesn't require a company that employs legally recognized drivers. It requires a company that will transport the goods from point A to point B in compliance with the standards. Confidence is placed in the network. The provinces must issue the correct licences. The drivers must be insured and must have compliant trucks. There are inspection centres and monitoring stations for truck weights, along with highway inspectors and police officers trained to carry out these checks. However, the bids don't specify the secondary role of inspecting the truck for compliance. Contracts are awarded to companies that made bids and that won the competition. That's how the supply chain works.

The witness talked about highway safety. There's no correlation between highway safety and driver status, which is already governed by the National Safety Code. The code contains 16 standards. We hear about the lack of correlation between highway safety and the status of the driver, because the driver's status is already covered by regulations. I personally think that every province should work with us to identify illegal drivers. In my opinion, highway inspections should be a collaborative effort. We must work with the provinces to carry out audits of both offences and taxes.

We have things to check with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and with the court about licensing and prosecution jurisdictions. That said, we're still a long way from there. It won't be tomorrow morning. According to the witness, there isn't much to do. However, we have a great deal to do.

Of course, even if we start the process tomorrow, we won't resolve everything in a short amount of time. We must get the ball rolling as quickly as possible to find solutions. We need to take one step at a time. Let's start with highway safety. We need to work with the provinces. We also have the tax issue. Let's start there. Let the provinces issue the licences. Even if the witness had some contradictions, I still said that we could follow some of the recommendations and ideas that he put forward. Can we incorporate the notion of will into the rules? No.

We can't ask people to follow the rules on a voluntary basis. To me, a rule is a rule. When we have standards, rules or regulations, we must adhere to them. This committee is governed by certain rules. I'm very familiar with one rule, Standing Order 106(4). We can indeed follow the rules to establish a committee.

We need to understand today that the rules are already in place.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I'm really glad I can give Mr. Lauzon just a moment there. I would like to offer a particular olive branch to the Liberal Party. Perhaps we should amend the production order—

The Chair: I don't think this is a point of order, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: —just to include irony and self-awareness from the Liberal Party of Canada—

The Chair: It's not a point of order. Thank you very much, Mr. Albas.

I'll turn the floor back over to Mr. Lauzon. Very clearly, he has a lot to say on this issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, the floor is yours.

Stéphane Lauzon: Aside from Standing Order 106(4), which just came up, we could recommend compliance with the rules. We already have rules in place. Our best recommendation to this witness would be to start by following the current rules. Let's start by complying with the Canada Transportation Act, then begin by complying with provincial legislation for obtaining all the necessary licences and by making sure that the vehicles are insured and suitable for competition and efficiency purposes. That alone is a big step forward.

We took this matter a step further. Mr. Lawrence, you know how much I respect lawyers, so let's talk about lawyers. I'll talk about one lawyer, my employee, Timmy Jutras, who followed your example. He has completed law school and he's taking his bar exams as we speak. I released him from his contract. I would like to congratulate Timmy Jutras, who left my team.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon. Mr. Albas raised another point of order.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: I'm just wondering if you can enforce any sense of relevance, unless it's relevant that he's going through his Christmas card list.

An hon. member: It is.

Dan Albas: We're at his staffer; we're at Mr. Lawrence—two people who I believe deserve Christmas cards from Mr. Lauzon. However, I think that has zero to do with the motion at hand. Could you ask him to maybe get back on track?

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

Philip Lawrence: On that point of order, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: I'm just going to dispense with this one first. I remind all members that we need to speak.... We are joking around about certain things, but let's try to bring it back to the subject matter at hand so that we can avoid points of order asking for relevance.

Yes, Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: It was actually on that point of order. I believe lawyers are always relevant.

The Chair: On that note, thank you, Mr. Lawrence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lauzon, the floor is yours.

Stéphane Lauzon: It was to introduce the concept of lawyers.

We had a legal and technological analysis. On October 21, Ritesh Kotak came to share this perspective. We needed this analysis of a more legal nature. We were really looking at the ground level, with drivers, companies and business owners. We took the study a bit further into the political arena when the member critical of Driver Inc. came to speak to us. Now we're dealing more with the legal aspect.

He used words that we need to pay attention to, because this is really about legality. It's about trucking companies misclassifying drivers as independent contractors rather than employees. These words come from a legal expert. He studied the issue closely and told us that it's a misclassification. This model, which classifies drivers as independent contractors rather than employees, is damaging the ecosystem.

I spoke about some of the self-contracted drivers whom I had the chance to talk to. They told me that they weren't bad drivers because they belonged to Driver Inc. I replied that we never said that. Drivers can be self-employed. They can have their own truck, incorporate, do their accounting in the evenings and wash and maintain their truck on weekends. They can maintain their truck in the same way as companies, but work for different companies or for the same company for contracts of six to eight consecutive months. They aren't required to become a worker paid directly by the company. They are like subcontractors who become independent of their company. They manage their own companies properly.

Now, in the same context, this truck driver tells us about companies that misclassify their drivers. Truck drivers are classified as drivers in a truck owned by the same company, but that doesn't belong to them. The company imposes certain conditions on the drivers, such as driving for the company and registering with Corporations Canada. It takes over, like a T4A slip that becomes illegal.

For the companies, the goal is to avoid the costs associated with employer obligations. The lawyer explained this to us. According

to him, the difference between an employee and an employer is the principle that I just explained to you. The lawyer told us that, under the employer's management, the methods, payroll, legal protection and imposed schedules don't exist. So, from an administrative perspective, all the paperwork, working conditions, insurance and responsibilities disappear. Everything is handed over to an inexperienced driver, who is often an independent contractor.

This is more or less the difference that the witness showed us while answering our questions. The lawyer was asked some excellent questions. He clearly showed us that independent contractors manage their own business, provide their own tools and take on the financial risks. There are no tax deductions or benefits. When a lawyer who knows the law comes to tell us this, we can measure the consequences. The consequences for these drivers are the loss of protection and everything that this entails, such as leave, insurance or safety. The risks are increased, because these drivers are more at risk than any other driver in the field.

The more that we make these drivers compliant, the more unfair the competition. We've had these discussions with an independent lawyer who knows the issue. The discrepancy between compliant companies and companies engaging in unfair competition is up to 30%.

If training and compliance are neglected, the risks are increased. We discussed this a bit with the witness. We discussed some aggravating factors. If I visit the website to incorporate in Canada, in a few clicks I can create a file and incorporate with Corporations Canada. Someone who has received training on the matter, who is comfortable with Canadian government software and who has the ability to register a person can enter the information to incorporate the future truck driver in a few clicks. The highly accessible process places pressure on the drivers. As soon as the information entered meets the requirements, the pressure is on the driver to accept incorporation. Some companies are experts in human resources when it comes to incorporating people. This shouldn't happen.

How do you find the people at fault? Let's make some recommendations in this area.

The lawyer believes that there's a blatant lack of legal education. We know that everything is vague. There's a lack of legal education, so drivers don't know their rights and obligations. Can we make sure that we recommend some form of education and training so that all drivers can have the same understanding of the risk of becoming a Driver Inc. driver and can know the benefits of working for a company? Can we give the provinces the tools needed to educate all the thousands of truck drivers?

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

After four hours of debate, I'm going to suspend for the day. We'll reconvene next week.

The meeting is suspended.

Thank you, everyone.

[The meeting was suspended at 12:00 p.m., Thursday, December 4]

[The meeting resumed at 3:31 p.m., Tuesday, December 9]

The Chair: I call the meeting to order.

We will resume meeting number 16 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of members.

First, 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. 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. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

The committee suspended its meeting on Thursday, December 4, 2025, while debate on the motion was ongoing. Therefore, we are resuming this meeting and the debate on the motion by Xavier Barsalou-Duval moved on Thursday, November 6, 2025, as amended.

The motion as amended reads:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities request that the Departments of Transport, Revenue, and Employment forward to the committee clerk, within 30 days of the adoption of this motion, all correspondence, reports, emails, and documents relating to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry since January 1, 2018; and

That the committee add two additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation, and in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec, and Canada Post.

Colleagues, the speaking list had Mr. Lauzon, who had the floor, followed by Mr. Albas and Mr. Kelloway.

[Translation]

I'm pleased to give you the floor today, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thanks.

Thanks to my colleagues from the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the people who are here to help us with this process.

We all care about the same issue. We may have come to an agreement to find a way forward.

With this in mind, I would now like to move an amendment proposing five changes to the motion before us.

The first change would be to add "as well as the Prime Minister's Office" after the word "Employment" and before the word "forward".

The second change would be to replace "30 days" with "60 days", in order to provide a reasonable amount of time to prepare the documents.

The third change would be to replace "2018" with "2022" and to add "and that Departments and Agencies tasked with producing the documents apply redactions as per legal obligations under the Privacy Act and Access to Information Act".

The fourth change would be to replace "two" with "three" in terms of the number of meetings. Given our witness list, we could fit this into three meetings.

The fifth change would be to add the following text after "Canada Post":

and the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec; and in the third meeting, testimony from representatives of BC Trucking Association, Ontario Trucking Association, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA), and the Alberta Motor Transportation Association; That, immediately following these meetings, the committee, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), undertake a five-meeting study on what is needed to support, diversify, and modernize Quebec and Canada's ports to find new markets to reduce reliance on the United States; that the committee report its findings to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

The clerk will distribute the amendment to the committee members.

Does anyone want to discuss these proposed changes?

[English]

Colleagues, I'm going to suspend for a couple of minutes to ensure that the clerk can focus on getting this out to members in both official languages.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

• (1535)

(Pause)

• (1555)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Mr. Albas has a point of order to get us started.

Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are still in the same meeting that we originally started in. Is that correct?

The Chair: Yes, meeting number 16, sir.

Dan Albas: Yes, and we have already voted on a port study and found it to be out of scope. Since we've already dealt with that particular piece of business, I ask you to rule that this is out of order, simply because the committee has already dealt with this business once.

This kind of vexatious behaviour, in which someone keeps raising the same amendment over and over flouts the will of the committee. I believe that if you check with the clerk—and I hope you do—you'll find that this piece of it is out of order. The rest of it, I believe, is worthy of discussion.

The Chair: Colleagues, in the interest of turning this over to all of you for discussion, I'm going to rule that it is in order, because I would like to bring this.... It looks like we may actually have some kind of consensus here—

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: I'm still speaking, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Could you ask the clerk, please? It is a valid point.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I'm the chair and I'm still speaking.

Stéphane Lauzon: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, I want to finish my thought first.

I am going to rule that it is in order, and if there are members who wish to object to my ruling, they can do so.

Seeing no objections, I can now go to the speakers list—

Dan Albas: If I could ask you to clarify through the clerk, though, because the clerk originally told us in this same meeting—

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I've made my ruling. I've explained to you that if you'd like to object, you can—

Dan Albas: If we're not consistent with how we run this committee, Mr. Chair, it will eventually come and catch up with people.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for your comments, Mr. Albas.

I'll now turn it over to the speakers list. Who would like to speak to the amendments put forward by Mr. Lauzon?

I have Mr. Lauzon on the speaking list.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Obviously, our proposed changes are all different, because they involve numbers and information that change, especially when it comes to days. We changed “30 days” to “60 days”. We changed the year “2018” to “2022”. There's nothing related to this.

If Mr. Albas is referring to the portion of the amendment after the word “Canada Post” that includes the point about breakdown professionals, obviously this concerns the witness list that we need to carry with us. However, in the second part of the amendment, we negotiated with Xavier Barsalou-Duval to include Quebec. So Quebec is in the motion.

A new component of the motion is the request “that, immediately following these meetings, the committee, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), undertake a five-meeting study on what is needed to support, diversify, and modernize Quebec and Canada's ports”. We included this new component because of the situation in Contre-

coeur, Quebec, which we really want to focus on. We feel very strongly about this issue. That's why we agreed to add this portion, which wasn't in the motion before. So it's different today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

I'll turn it over to Mr. Albas. Before we do that, I want to share something that was shared by the clerk, which is that we will most likely be voting for each of these individually. I just wanted to let you know that.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours, sir.

Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm still in shock that we've allowed this amendment to go. I'm again raising that in the latest and fourth edition of parliamentary practice, it says, on page 894, “Furthermore, motions moved in committee must not go beyond the committee's mandate or infringe upon the...prerogative of the Crown.” That is relating to the appropriation of public revenues. As well, it says, “A motion that is the same in substance as one already...decided in the same session is inadmissible; however, a member may move a motion which, although similar, is sufficiently different as to constitute a new question.” That's on page 894.

Mr. Chair, you've ruled previously that such motions are out of order. This member, the same member, has made an almost identical study before, and we disposed of it as a committee. I ask you to reconsider that, because this is about the rules of this place, and the fourth edition clearly backs that up.

The Chair: Would you be able to do me a favour, Mr. Albas, and read that last portion for the record?

Dan Albas: Yes: “however, a member may move a motion which, although similar, is sufficiently different as to constitute a new question.”

Mr. Chair, it's the same—

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I appreciate your rereading that—

Dan Albas: It's the same motion, essentially.

The Chair: My view is that it is not the same. There are other components that were added to it, thus creating something that is significantly different from what was proposed before.

I invite you once again, if you do not agree with me—I'm turning it over to you—to challenge the chair. These are things we can do in this committee, which you have done in the past.

If you would now like to do so—I see no other members on the speakers list—we'll go to a vote.

Dan Albas: No. In that case, I would put my hand up.

The Chair: There were no other members on the speakers list.

Dan Albas: Sir, I have my hand up, and the rules are that if a member raises their hand in order to speak.... I did say that I was going to place an order and that I would be speaking on the list after.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I had no other members on the list—

Dan Albas: Excuse me, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: —and I called the vote.

Dan Albas: —but I said earlier.... If you want to stop and take a look at it, I said I wanted to raise a point of order, and then I would speak to it.

The Chair: That wasn't a point of order. I turned the floor over to you. You made a statement—

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I would like to have my opportunity to speak.

The Chair: You spoke, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: No, I asked to be put on....

Clerk, did I not ask to be put on the order...?

The Chair: You did, and I turned it over to you. I said that you had the floor. That was not a point of order.

Dan Albas: Okay. I was making a point of order again, Mr. Chair. Now I would like to put my name forward to speak.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, the record will clearly indicate that I turned it over to you for—

Dan Albas: Sir, I would like to speak to it—

The Chair: Mr. Albas, first of all, do not talk when I am talking. I am speaking, and I am the chair.

I am saying to you, sir, that I turned it over to you for a point of order. You had your point of order. I invited you to challenge the chair, which you did not do.

Dan Albas: I—

The Chair: I then turned it over to Mr. Lauzon, who was on the speaking order—

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, out of—

The Chair: —and I then said, Mr. Albas, that it was your turn. You had the floor. It was not a point of order, Mr. Albas. Don't try to convince me that it was. You used your—

Dan Albas: I was trying to make a point of order again.

The Chair: No. You brought up the same thing you spoke to earlier but not on a point of order—

Dan Albas: Well, I would like to speak to the motion now.

The Chair: —and then I said there were no other members on the speakers list, and I called the vote—

Dan Albas: I put my hand up again.

The Chair: —so we are going to a vote—

Dan Albas: I put my hand up, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: —because when I call the vote, we go to a vote. Mr. Albas, I'm going to call you out of order—

Dan Albas: You can follow the rules of this place. You can let me have my say. You've been giving Mr. Lauzon the floor for the last six meetings. You can give me the floor so that I can make my representations on behalf of my position.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, you had the floor. There's nobody else—

Dan Albas: Can I please have my other members raise their hands?

The Chair: —and I called the vote.

Yes, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I'm hearing that the interpreters are struggling to do their job because a number of people are speaking at the same time.

[*English*]

The Chair: Another reason we shouldn't be speaking over the chair is for the protection of our interpreters.

Dan Albas: Let a member be heard.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to the vote as—

Dan Albas: No, I would like to speak now please.

The Chair: Mr. Albas—

Dan Albas: This is my right as a member of this committee, sir.

The Chair: —I clearly called the vote.

Dan Albas: I will be raising this with the Speaker. I would like other people to have their right to speak here, Mr. Chair.

Could you please show the decency and the impartiality of your position? I had my hand up with intent. This is not the time for you to be doing that. You should be giving members the opportunity to speak to a motion. I raised multiple points of order, which you dealt with. I accept those rulings now, but I would like to have the opportunity to say my piece on this, and I will keep talking, Mr. Chair, because I believe it is.... I'm going to take the floor, and I'm going to simply talk about the motion itself.

First of all, I talked earlier about the committee—

The Chair: Mr. Albas, you're out of order—

Dan Albas: —and I would like to start by talking—

The Chair: —and you do not have the floor. I did not give you the floor. I gave you the floor and—

Dan Albas: This is reprehensible for a chair.

The Chair: —your time was up. We are going to a vote.

I'm instructing the clerk to go to a vote.

Dan Albas: I'm protesting this, Mr. Chair. I would like to have the opportunity to speak.

The Chair: You can protest.

Dan Albas: This is the opposition, Mr. Chair. You need to be able to listen to it—

The Chair: Mr. Albas, the vote has been called. You may not agree with it, but the vote has been called.

Dan Albas: I said earlier, Mr. Chair, that I would be making my points of order, and then I would like to be on the list to speak.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, the vote has been called—

Dan Albas: The vote has not been called. I am continuing—

The Chair: —and if you continue to disrupt this meeting, I will ask that you be removed because you are—

Dan Albas: You can remove me then. Please remove me then, if that is the case. If this is the kind of chairmanship you represent, sir, where you're not going to let me—

The Chair: Mr. Albas—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Dan Albas: —speak directly to the motion, that is wrong, and that is intolerable—

Mike Kelloway: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I have been very—

Dan Albas: I have been a member of Parliament since 2011, sir, and this is an opportunity for me to speak. You are shutting things down.

The Chair: We're going to suspend until we can figure out how to regain control of this.

Mike Kelloway: I have a point of order.

The Chair: When we come back, we will be voting.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

• (1605) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1605)

The Chair: Colleagues, I call the meeting back to order, and once—

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I'd like to know what we're voting on. Are we voting on each section of the amendment, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We are going to be voting on each one, one at a time.

Dan Albas: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, please bring us through the votes, one after the other.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, we should have debate on each part of it. If we vote on the first part, then we should have a debate on the second part.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, the debate was done on this—

Dan Albas: No, it was not done because you didn't let me be heard.

The Chair: I did let you be heard.

Dan Albas: No, sir, I clearly made—

The Chair: Your remarks ended, Mr. Albas. I'm not going to let you railroad this committee—

Dan Albas: —two points of order, and this is now where I am raising—

The Chair: —and turn it over to...whatever you're putting on right now. I turned the floor over—

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, how long have you given Mr. Lauzon to filibuster? I raised my hand to be part of this.

The Chair: —to you, Mr. Albas. I then turned it over to the clerk for the vote.

I'm asking the clerk now to conduct the vote, as it was called.

Dan Albas: No, that is not the way it works, Mr. Chair. I'm going to continue talking.

Can someone put a...let a member be now heard?

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order. The interpretation still can't be provided at this time.

Perhaps I'll take this opportunity to raise a point of order—

[English]

The Chair: Okay. They're giving me the signal that there are too many people talking over each other. Colleagues, let's respect the interpreters.

Rulings have been made. I've turned it over to the clerk. It is now the clerk's job to conduct the vote.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair—

[Translation]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[English]

Dan Albas: Mr. Clerk, I think there has to be consensus for a vote to happen right now. A dilatory motion has not been made.

Mr. Chair, I put my hand up. You refuse to do it.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, once the chair has called the vote, the vote happens. I called the vote. There were no other people on the speakers list.

Dan Albas: I had my name down on it.

Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook—Brant North, CPC): I had my hand up.

The Chair: The vote has been called, colleagues.

[Translation]

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): He raised his hand first.

[English]

Dan Albas: I have the right to speak at this committee. I think you need to hear from us, Mr. Chair. We have rights as members. You need to hold those up.

I would like to speak to the motion.

It's quite simple. I'm in complete shock over this situation. We should be having a discussion over what is being debated, not the process itself. I would like to start speaking to the actual motion.

The motion itself, I believe, is flawed.

The Chair: Colleagues, we are going to a vote.

Mr. Clerk, please go to the roll call.

Dan Albas: No, Mr. Clerk. I have the floor right now and would like to continue speaking to this.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, you don't have the floor. You have not been speaking to the floor.

Dan Albas: I have been speaking to this, Mr. Chair. I have rights as a member and—

The Chair: You do have rights as a member, but—

Dan Albas: —I put my hand up.

The Chair: You put your hand up, and I gave you the floor.

Dan Albas: I asked to be put on the list, which I thought, in good faith, you would carry through on. If this is the way it's going to be, where you are ramrodding this process through and not allowing Conservative voices to be heard, it is a big mistake on your part.

The Chair: You were heard, and—

Dan Albas: No, I did a point of order.

The Chair: If you're unhappy with the way you used your time, that is not the issue of the chair, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I respect your point of order, but I want to speak to the motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Your name was on the list. I turned the floor over to you once again.

Dan Albas: Do you know what? This is about my rights as a member. I would like to be able to speak to the motion.

Mr. Lauzon put forward a motion after—

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

Dan Albas: —days and days of this.

Mr. Chair, this is something I'm insisting on: that I get a chance to speak to the motion.

The Chair: You do not have the floor, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: This is a mistake that I hope you will rectify, giving a member the ability to—

The Chair: It wasn't a mistake. I turned the floor over to you.

Dan Albas: No.

The Chair: You used your time to reiterate your objection to a decision made by the chair.

Dan Albas: No, Mr. Chair. I have arguments to speak to that, but—

The Chair: I then saw that no others were on the list—

Dan Albas: —if you are railroading this, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: —and called the vote.

I'm going to ask one more time, Mr. Clerk: Please call the vote.

Dan Albas: No, no, Mr. Chair. I asked that my name be put on there, and it looked to me like you simply nodded, as if you would give me the ability to speak. I raised two points of order, which you dealt with, but then I thought you would simply go back to the list and allow me to speak.

Mr. Chair, we can keep going around on this all day long. I would like the ability to speak to the motion, the same way every member here should have that opportunity, but you seem to be denying me today, sir.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk—

Dan Albas: No, I would like to continue talking, so I'll just start, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You do not have the floor, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, the issue here is that the courts—

The Chair: I'm going to suspend, because we've lost control of the meeting due to the comments made by Mr. Albas.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

• (1610) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1645)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Colleagues, I'm going to turn it over to the clerk to explain the voting procedure. We'll have the roll call. Then—just to clarify—after we are done with the vote, we are not completed, because we still have to debate the motion as amended, if it is indeed adopted.

Members, if you want to have your hand up, please make it very clear now, before we get into any chaos. If you would like to speak at that point or after we're done, please put your hand up at that point as well.

Mr. Clerk, I turn the floor over to you, sir.

Dan Albas: I have a point of order.

The Clerk: The vote will be on the amendment of Mr. Lauzon.

Dan Albas: Which one?

The Clerk: There's one single amendment, the amendment that was distributed to members.

The Chair: Thank you.

Yes, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I'm assuming we're doing amendment one. Is that correct?

The Chair: We are doing the amendment. All the changes that Mr. Lauzon had put forward are itemized. We're doing them all in one vote.

Dan Albas: No, Mr. Chair, it's very clear, and I'm using *Procedure and Practice*, fourth edition: "In most cases, there is no limit on the number of amendments that may be moved; however, only one amendment or subamendment may be considered at a committee at one time."

The Chair: Yes.

Dan Albas: Essentially, you have one amendment that you say we're going to vote on. Are we then going to have all five of the other ones at the same time? That makes no sense.

The Chair: Just to be clear to members—

Dan Albas: You can only have one amendment or subamendment at a time.

The Chair: —Mr. Lauzon put forward changes to the motion as put forward by Mr. Barsalou-Duval. In order to make it as simple as possible for members—

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: —he itemized them, and he mentioned the first part he was changing, the second part he was changing, the third part he was changing and the fourth part he was changing. What we're voting on is exactly what Mr. Lauzon spoke to in his remarks, which are all of those.

Jason Groleau: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Groleau.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me the floor.

I received the proposed amendments and they were all numbered and separated: amendment number 1, amendment number 2, amendment number 3, and so on.

As a member representing my region, I have no problem voting on each proposal, one at a time. However, we must have the right, for the people in our regions, to debate each motion before moving on to the next one.

I have here the proposals numbered 1 to 5. This means that I received five different motions. I can send them to you. That's how I received them.

I don't see how you can put them all in the same bundle when they're numbered. There's motion number 1, then motion number 2, then motion number 3, then motion number 4 and then motion number 5. These motions can't be together. I received them separately.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: If you're going to be—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Groleau.

[*English*]

Mr. Albas, I'm just going to speak to Mr. Groleau's point of order to ensure that we're following the rules.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Groleau, Mr. Lauzon submitted and proposed changes. In order to provide as much clarity as possible, especially in the current environment, he presented his first proposed change, the second change, the third change and the fourth change. He presented all these changes together, and this is the result.

We'll be voting on all these motions together.

[*English*]

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: The fact is that you have not allowed me to speak to the motion. If we're going to be pulling all five separate amendments that were circulated by the clerk, lumping them without unanimous consent and not allowing us to speak, that is not okay.

According to my rights as a member, you should be giving us the chance to speak to it. I'd ask you to reconsider this and allow us to speak to it. This is unfair in both process and our rights as members of Parliament.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

I appreciate that. I always want to ensure that you're given your rights as a member. I just want to reiterate for the record that—

Dan Albas: I raised my hand.

The Chair: —the floor was given to you, sir. You were done with your remarks, and the vote was called.

Dan Albas: It was a point of order.

The Chair: It was not on a point of order, and the video will clearly show that, sir.

Dan Albas: It was, sir. What member of Parliament quotes the fourth edition of *Procedure and Practice* unless it is a point of order?

The Chair: Okay.

Dan Albas: Come on. Let a man speak to the direct amendment.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to disagree on that Mr. Albas. I appreciate that.

Dan Albas: I would like to have that opportunity, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Good, then I'll start talking to it.

The Chair: No, Mr. Albas, I did not give you the floor.

Mr. Albas, you do not have the floor.

Dan Albas: In essence, Mr. Chair—

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

Please, I'm going to say this one time. Mr. Albas does not have the floor. I'm going to make that very clear. He has not been ceded the floor. Thank you very much.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, Mr. Muys also had his hand up and has been trying to get your attention, and you have not given it to him. He's been trying to get your attention this whole time, and you're ignoring him—

The Chair: I am not ignoring any member.

Dan Albas: When was the last time you were on this side of the room?

The Chair: I am not ignoring any member at all. I turned the floor over to you, Mr. Albas, when you had your hand up. You used the opportunity to speak to something else.

Dan Albas: What about Mr. Muys? He had his hand up.

The Chair: Mr. Muys did not have his hand up on the speakers list. I can tell you what the speakers list is. I jointly manage the speakers list with the clerk, Mr. Albas.

With that, I'll go to the vote.

Let's go, Mr. Clerk.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: The vote has been called, colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Jason Groleau: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Please proceed with the vote, Mr. Clerk. Thank you.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Please continue reading. The vote has been called, colleagues.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The amendments are adopted, and now we will go to the debate on the motion as amended. For that, I turn it over to you, Mr. Albas.

Just for clarity, before I turn the floor over to Mr. Albas, are there any other members on the speakers list?

Seeing none, Mr. Albas, the floor is yours.

Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let's talk about the motion that is currently put forward. First, I want to reiterate my objection to the process today. In fact, I believe we're going to be documenting this and raising it with the proper authorities. I want to thank the clerk for trying to be as impartial as possible. Unfortunately, it seems that a lot of pressure has been put on the clerk today.

Today I am going to speak about the fact that moving on to a new subject, such as ports.... Ports may be a process or a study that perhaps we want to involve ourselves in, but I would point out that the government and the government members have failed to come to the committee for our BC Ferries study.

Now, Mr. Chair, I believe you and the clerk offered the former minister of transportation, Chrystia Freeland, the opportunity to come to committee. So far, this has not happened. Now she's a sitting member in this place but no longer in the cabinet. Maybe I'll leave that there. I think she has a moral obligation, given the fact that her fingerprints are all over BC Ferries.

Again, for the people at home, the BC Ferries issue is about the Canada Infrastructure Bank giving \$1 billion of your taxpayer money to BC Ferries, which is now effectively outsourcing Canadian jobs to a hybrid shipyard in China. A hybrid shipyard means that both civilian and military vessels are created there.

When Chrystia Freeland was in the chamber, she said she had written to Mike Farnworth, the minister. She said she had issues with the procurement. In that letter, which we were eventually able to track down, she actually related her concerns about national security.

Now, I can't think of many things, Mr. Chair, that should trump almost everything else as national security does, even the business about not letting members of Parliament be heard. National security is fundamental. It's the reason for the state.

[*Translation*]

A government must protect its people, especially the country's sovereignty. Everyone is well aware of the challenges of working with a communist regime such as China's government. As a result, it's vital to reassure people of the government's willingness to take on all the challenges, especially when it comes to the security of the sensitive system that operates the boats.

[*English*]

She raised the issue of national security directly with Minister Farnworth. BC Ferries immediately came out and said that the sensitive systems that would be on these boats would be dealt with in another area.

Mr. Chair, I checked with some people in the industry, who said that, in their familiarity with a turnkey contract such as the one procured to the shipyard, it literally means everything is done on site. We had unions come and talk about their concerns about steel, about the way workers are treated and about the lack of environmental laws.

As a former vice-chair of the Canada-China relations committee in previous parliaments, I will note that many people have cited that not only is the technology China utilizes in a lot of its goods subsidized—where we'll be buying a billion dollars' worth of subsidized Chinese steel and aluminum, which undercuts labour—but China also has access to those systems and what goes in them. We've actually seen questioning in some European countries about whether that is a safe thing to do, particularly when it comes to electric vehicles.

Getting back to national security and Chrystia Freeland, she would be well aware of this as a former minister. When she wrote that letter to Mike Farnworth, Mike Farnworth and BC Ferries both responded. By the way, Mike Farnworth was very upset that the government was questioning the province of British Columbia, but again, many of our citizens would say the geopolitical risk.... The Prime Minister said himself that the biggest geopolitical risk to Canada—I believe “threat” is the word he used—is China, the Communist government in Beijing.

The fact is that we were asking about national security and wanting to bring her in because.... As a fun fact, Chrystia Freeland actually wrote to the Minister of Public Safety, outlining her concerns around national security. She actually criticized BC Ferries for not having a made-in-Canada policy; for the record, Mr. Chair, I find this absolutely hilarious. Marine Atlantic is a federal Crown corporation that was under Miss Freeland's portfolio. She neglected to mention that she did not have a buy Canadian procurement policy either.

How does all of this relate to the motion? That's really easy. It relates to the fact that there are outstanding concerns of national security that can only be answered by Chrystia Freeland in her capacity as a former minister who was there during this process and who wrote letters to both provincial and federal ministers.

Some Liberal members may be perfectly fine with allowing Ms. Freeland.... She's a former minister, so let's leave her off the hook because she has done enough for the country. To be fair, sometimes when you're just on the way out.... As we've heard, she has accepted a prestigious job at Oxford. I want to take a moment and say that I take issue with this. I don't believe that politicians should be telling the press what to write or what headlines to have, but I did see one saying that Chrystia Freeland was taking a prestigious position at Oxford. I said to myself, Mr. Chair, “Being a member of Parliament is pretty prestigious.” This is a point that needs to be made.

It's pretty prestigious because you speak up for, in some cases, 115,000 people in your constituency. It is sometimes a little bit more or a little bit less. To be overruled and told that you didn't have your hand up by some authority outside of yourself, denying your constituents the ability to make substantive arguments to motions.... I might be going into previous territory, Mr. Chair, and I do want to stay on the motion at hand, because as Mr. Lauzon knows, a pro knows that after every three and a half minutes, you need to return to the motion itself.

The Minister of Public Safety, as far as I understand it, is still in cabinet. Despite some major errors, such as having private conversations in which he disagreed publicly with government policy recorded by a tenant, he is still the minister. As the minister, he is supposed to be accountable to Parliament, yet we have this parliamentary committee that has been completely absorbed by the ongoing filibuster, at least until earlier today, by Mr. Lauzon. Thus, the minister hasn't had the opportunity to come.

This is where I will begin my intervention today by saying to the Minister of Public Safety, we need you. We need you to fulfill your end of the bargain. When you went up and swore an oath as a minister that you would not take private advantage of your office....

When you took that oath at Rideau Hall in front of everyone else, that was a commitment to being accountable and not to just simply think of your own comfort. I say again to the Minister of Public Safety, we need you here at this committee.

For us to start launching off.... As much as I know the Liberals want to switch the subject away from BC Ferries and the safety or lack of safety on Canadian routes and highways.... I could see why they'd want to talk about something that is more to their liking.

Mr. Chair, one of the great things about minority parliaments is that it's not just up to them. In fact, I've never questioned it when members begin to filibuster, as long as they can simply hold the room and continue every three and a half minutes to talk about the motion, like this one, in which we are actually trying to proceed with moving on a port study without finishing the previous study.

It's time Conservative voices were heard at this committee for once. It seems that we are constantly hearing from Liberal voices or being told that we can't speak. I don't think this is something we're going to tolerate today.

Moving on to the Minister of Public Safety, I'd like to ask the minister a number of questions. For example, Marine Atlantic has one of these vessels operating in its fleet, and I would like to know two things.

First, there is an important piece of legislation called the protecting child labour and.... No, it's the anti-protecting...the protecting children from forced labour.... I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. The name of the bill has escaped me, but it was actually a Liberal bill. Every entity that is covered, such as BC Ferries or Marine Atlantic, has to submit on a yearly basis a report in which it talks about whether its supply chains have been compromised by forced labour or child labour. Obviously, when we look at the situation with the government in Beijing, we see that it was very unhappy when Parliament voted that what was happening in China with the Uyghurs was intolerable. I just hope that everyone around this table would agree with me that it's intolerable. This is under the area of the Minister of Public Safety. I'd like to see if BC Ferries has submitted an updated form on this so that we can know that the minister has been looking into these components before we proceed on a port study, as was suggested in this motion.

Furthermore, I'd also like to know, Mr. Chair.... With regard to the Marine Atlantic vessel itself, the ownership is actually Swedish. I'm not sure if members know that, but it appears that the Swedish owners are leasing it on a five-year basis. I believe that there is an option to buy. Now, there are questions in my mind, because as we all know, you always pay more for a lease than when you purchase. However, I can see the national security implications. The great officials at Public Safety Canada would probably say, “Well, it's not a permanent addition to Canada. It's owned by a foreign company that is sailing under a limited lease. Therefore, we don't need to investigate potential technology that may be, perhaps, collecting information that we're unaware of.”

Mr. Chair, I think that the BC Ferries situation is quite different. Having the minister himself come here to answer these important questions when it comes to Marine Atlantic and the procurement of these vessels with Canadian taxpayer monies.... I think it's a fair thing to ask him to come.

Now, Liberals may be comfortable with simply moving on. Conservatives are concerned about this procurement. We're concerned that the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which is flowing this much money.... I know that the Bloc Québécois, in a previous Parliament, voted along with Conservatives to repeal the bank altogether. I think that many of my constituents would be very worried to see their tax dollars, instead of supporting Ontario steel, Quebec aluminum.... Let's be frank, Mr. Chair. There's a lot of steel and a lot of aluminum here.

There's one other thing I'd like to ask the minister when he comes. Did you know this, Mr. Chair? Did you know that the Minister of Public Safety is charged with remission orders? When a company wants to bring in a large ferry vessel—such as the procurement—it's actually the Minister of Public Safety who can provide a remission order to cabinet. It's his recommendation. I would like to hear from the Minister of Public Safety as to whether he will be giving a remission order, effectively bypassing tariffs.

I know that the Prime Minister made a huge deal when he went to Sault Ste. Marie to talk to the workers, saying that we are going to be clamping down on cheap Chinese steel. He made a big deal of it, saying that there would be 25% tariffs, in some cases, on certain other products, maybe even higher. He did this, he said, to protect Canadian workers.

Well, Mr. Chair, I don't think that he's doing such a great job of protecting Canadian workers because, first of all, as we can see, Algoma Steel has had tremendous pressure put on it by the unjustified tariffs by Donald Trump and his administration, and obviously we've seen a thousand layoffs there already. We've also seen \$500 million go to this company, and we don't know under what parameters.

Mike Kelloway: Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Albas. I have a point of order from Mr. Kelloway.

Mike Kelloway: I'm just wondering if we can get to a point of relevance. This doesn't seem to be relevant to what we are discussing today, but I'll yield the floor just to say that the relevant points don't seem to be emerging. We're going all over the place.

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

I'm just going to remind all members to try to bring it back, as I said multiple times to Mr. Lauzon, to the motion at hand.

Mr. Albas, I'll turn the floor back over to you, sir.

Dan Albas: I'll directly point it to the motion, Mr. Chair.

The Prime Minister said that he would be putting these high tariffs on Chinese steel in order to help groups like Algoma. He actually said this when he was in Sault Ste. Marie. I'm sure many of the workers were heartened by it. If we do not have the Minister of Public Safety come in here and tell us whether he will recommend, through a memorandum to cabinet, a remission order...essentially, if

it's his recommendation that these B.C. ferries come into this country essentially tariff-free, now that Canadian taxpayer dollars are going out of this country. In fact, the Chinese subsidized their steel and whatnot, then we're bringing it in, essentially undercutting the tariffs that the Prime Minister said were there to protect Canadians.

We need to have the Minister of Public Safety come to this committee and tell us where he is at on forced labour, on child labour, on the issue of compliance with that regime, in terms of what his thoughts are, and if he has thoughts, Maybe he hasn't thought of them yet, Mr. Chair.

I will say this: I've had ministers come to this committee. I remember when I asked Minister LeBlanc about whether he understood that Bill C-5 would give him tremendous powers—tremendous powers, Mr. Chair, that he has yet to use.

Will Greaves: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: One second, Mr. Albas. I see Mr. Greaves has his hand up.

Mr. Greaves.

Will Greaves: I'm far away, and I wish I were there to engage with the member on the other important matters the committee might take up, but I wonder whether we could dispense with the current motion, which the member doesn't seem to be speaking to. He seems eager to talk about the BC Ferries issue, which the committee could gladly return to, but it's not the matter under study, and it's not one of the five amendments that have been put forward at this time.

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

It's not a point of order, but I will once again just remind everyone to please speak to the motion at hand as best as possible.

Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I'm glad to hear there's one member who wants to talk about BC Ferries, so I invite Mr. Greaves to call up the Minister of Public Safety to have that conversation with him, and then we can bring him here; maybe after those requests are satisfied, we can move to new business as certain members of this committee want.

It's perfectly fair to say, Mr. Chair, that if we have a ledger of things we want to do, I'm okay with putting new things on the list, but I will say that we, as a committee, committed to hearing from both Chrystia Freeland and the Minister of Public Safety—something that was agreed to by all members. In fact, I remember Mr. Kelloway stressing that when Ms. Freeland would come to this committee, she would give us answers, and [*Inaudible—Editor*] she would give us answers that would satisfy us and maybe even make us shut up on this side.

Now—

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Lauzon, the floor is yours.

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Albas is once again off topic. Moreover, he isn't setting an example. There are two sets of rules, one for the committee and one for Mr. Albas. Mr. Albas has often interrupted my remarks to accuse me of being off topic or of not talking about points of order.

Mr. Albas is now completely ignoring the topic of the motion. I would like us to return to the motion at hand.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

Colleagues, so that we can avoid having all these points of order, try to speak to the motion as much as possible when the floor has been given to you. As Mr. Albas has pointed out in previous points of order, within a couple of minutes, circle back so that we can avoid other members calling for a point of order.

Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I really appreciate your guidance on this, Mr. Chair.

I'm just so thrilled to have the ability to actually speak to our... I was thrilled to have MP Greaves also speak in support of his interest in BC Ferries. As I said to him earlier, it would be very helpful for Conservatives to know that we are done with the issue of BC Ferries because we've had the ministers come in. They've answered questions. They've been accountable to Parliament.

Mr. Chair, I see that the bells are ringing.

The Chair: Colleagues, if we want to continue debate, we need unanimous consent to do so. If not, you will force me to suspend.

I see no unanimous consent. Colleagues, I will suspend the meeting.

Thank you all for your time. The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

[*The meeting was suspended at 5:17 p.m., Tuesday, December 9*]

[*The meeting resumed at 8:22 a.m., Thursday, December 11*]

The Chair: I call the meeting to order.

We'll now resume meeting number 16 of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of 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 mic, 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. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function.

The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

The committee suspended its meeting on Tuesday, December 9, while debate was ongoing on a motion. Therefore, we are resuming this meeting and the debate on the motion, as amended, of Xavier Barsalou-Duval, moved on Thursday, November 6, 2025.

Colleagues, the speaking list, as we had it at last meeting, had Mr. Albas, followed by Mr. Muys. Mr. Lauzon just requested to put his name on the list as well.

Before I turn it over to Mr. Albas, I want to make a special announcement. It was the birthday of our good friend and analyst, Alexandre. Happy birthday, sir.

On that note, it's a pleasure for me to turn the floor over to you, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Happy birthday to the committee's analyst.

This morning, we should start with a quick review of the motion.

[*English*]

The motion as amended reads:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities request that the Departments of Transport, Revenue, and Employment, as well as the Prime Minister's Office, forward to the committee clerk, within 60 days of the adoption of this motion, all correspondence, reports, emails, and documents relating to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry since January 1, 2022, and that Departments and Agencies tasked with producing the documents apply redactions as per legal obligations under the Privacy Act and Access to Information Act;

That the Committee add three additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, The Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation; in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, Canada Post, and the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec; and in the third meeting, testimony from representatives of BC Trucking Association, Ontario Trucking Association, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA), and the Alberta Motor Transportation Association;

That, immediately following these meetings, the committee, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), undertake a five-meeting study on what is needed to support, diversify, and modernize Quebec and Canada's ports to find new markets to reduce reliance on the United States; that the committee report its findings to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

I'm really glad that no one called me out on relevance for not speaking to the motion, because that is literally the motion on deck.

I wanted to point out that I am very upset that, unlike Quebec, there's no mention of B.C. B.C. has wonderful ports, and I think that this is overlooked. However, I know that my colleague from Quebec always puts Quebec close to his heart, so I don't blame him personally for that oversight. If I were from Quebec, I would probably do the same.

Now, if you cast your minds back to where I left off, I was saying that moving to a new study before we significantly addressed BC Ferries.... I believe this is still a very contentious issue, with \$1 billion being sent to a publicly owned corporation, BC Ferries, and being used to purchase ships from China.

There's also subsequent infrastructure that would be involved because these are hybrid ships that utilize batteries.

By the way, I'm just letting everyone know—this is the exciting part of the job—that this is the first application of a battery hybrid engine for ships of this size. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. They haven't been used to scale, so there's some question about whether these ferries will function as promised. I know that BC Ferries has used smaller ferries that have a hybrid engine in the interior of British Columbia, where they don't have the charging infrastructure.

The charging infrastructure that BC Ferries would be purchasing to charge these large vessels ends up charging its own batteries on diesel, which actually creates more greenhouse gas emissions than we'd usually have.

A portion of the \$1 billion will be going to Chinese companies to build the infrastructure. We heard from the unions that they were quite upset that they had no say in.... BC Ferries wouldn't even tell the BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union whether there's a made-in-Canada component to this or whether the infrastructure would actually be built by Canadian workers.

In my mind, it's not just outsourcing Canadian jobs in steel, aluminum and shipbuilding; it's actually pushed out to electrical components. It is not going to be Canadian steel, most likely, used to build this infrastructure. I should point out that the committee received a note, much of it redacted, from BC Hydro, citing large costs to build the infrastructure for this.

We still haven't produced a report on this. Why? Well, it is because we have not heard from the various ministers...to come and talk about this. Now, we could ask Minister MacKinnon to take some time away from the House leader's function, since he's probably spending 90% of his time keeping a minority government on the rails rather than making sure that our transportation system is efficient. If we brought him here, Mr. Chair, I would ask him, "Minister, on BC Ferries, what do you think about this BC Hydro connection? What do you think about all the electrical components coming from China and being put in place by Chinese workers?" He would just say, "Hey, it wasn't me. I had nothing to do with it...totally clean hands."

For a minister to say that is a gift. It's a gift because it is terrible decision-making. As I said, Minister Freeland wrote to the provincial minister outlining her concerns about national security and wanting to ensure that not one dollar in capital investment from the federal government would go towards the acquisition of this, Mr. Chair.

I've spoken to many accountants about this kind of thing. That is completely preposterous. If you give money to operations, accountants will say that it pays down the debt. For anyone trying to contend that not one federal dollar will go towards the purchase of these things from Transport Canada, that is not true.

Maybe Mr. MacKinnon would not have totally clean hands. Maybe I could press him on that point. Right now, we don't have any ministers coming. In effect, the minister had her hands in the muck, but when things got too hot, she decided she was out, Mr. Chair. Maybe she couldn't live with the conflict.

Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I appreciate what Mr. Albas is doing in terms of setting up the argument, but there are a couple of instances in which Mr. Albas is seemingly Kreskin or Reveen, for those in Atlantic Canada—someone who can get inside the minds of people as to why they leave politics.

I'd ask him to stay on task, please.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Kelloway. I appreciate the pre-Christmas promotion to Speaker, but I am a lowly chair.

Mike Kelloway: I did correct myself.

The Chair: Even so, I do have the ability to ask members to try and stay on topic as much as possible. I would ask Mr. Albas and all members to do that in this case.

Mike Kelloway: Thank you.

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

Dan Albas: I appreciate the intervention. I know that Mr. Lauzon loved it when I intervened because it gave a moment to consider, but I'm really talking about the motion here. How can we move forward with the port study if there are still unanswered questions on BC Ferries, Mr. Chair? That is a direct link. If I end up talking for more than three and a half minutes about a subject without looping back to the motion, I expect Mr. Lauzon to do me the courtesy of letting me know.

We have a situation, Mr. Chair, with which I'm not satisfied. I know that the public isn't satisfied. If you were to ask them if they think that right now we should be giving a billion of their tax dollars through an unaccountable bank, through a government that seems to want to be unaccountable for the decision of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which is under their direct purview.... They fund the bank. If we had had the minister here for estimates—we had a filibuster by Liberal members for who knows how long, raising all sorts of interesting questions—maybe we would have been able to ask him those questions or perhaps summon my fellow colleague from British Columbia, Minister Gregor Robertson.

That is an aside. The Liberal filibuster seems to have ended, and right now, before proceeding on anything further, I think it's important that Conservatives get their points across about why BC Ferries is still an ongoing issue that has not been addressed, as I will point out, not just by the members of the government but by members of this committee. I have not heard any Liberals say they want to hear more. I asked the parliamentary secretary—or the parliamentary secretary assured me that Chrystia Freeland, when she comes, would answer every single one of my questions. It may not make me happy, but he said I would be satisfied. Mr. Chair, being happy but not satisfied is never the position of the opposition.

Getting back to the motion, because it has been approximately three and a half minutes, to move to five meetings on modernizing Quebec's and Canada's ports to find new markets to reduce reliance on the United States, it's my understanding that there have been three or so reports on ports by this committee in previous parliaments in which the government was given recommendations. I'm not going to speak to those reports. I wasn't there. All I'm going to say, Mr. Chair, is that the fact is, we have not given recommendations to the government for them to ignore as they have the three previous port studies that this committee has done. We do the public a disservice and we do ourselves a disservice if we are not making recommendations on BC Ferries before proceeding to another port study that will be largely ignored by the government.

Why do we know that, Mr. Chair? This committee worked so hard just before we rose for the session. I know Mr. Barsalou-Duval was working overtime. I know our members were working overtime on Bill C-5, and the thing is, the committee ended up passing that legislation with many accountability checks. To my friend from the Bloc, I say congratulations. A number of his amendments were included. Some were supported by us—many, I believe—and I think it's made for better legislation, but we gave that to the ministers who said it was necessary for the good of the country to speed up projects.

The Major Projects Office, Mr. Chair...like the recommendations this committee made on previous port studies, none of them have been designated under Bill C-5 as being in the national interest. It seems to me that we get into such a rush on what the government thinks is important to it, and it doesn't even act on it.

Before going into another study on Canada's ports.... I'd be happy to talk about ports; in Prince Rupert, for example, I have some concerns. That particular port is currently being sued by a local first nation for an exclusivity deal. At some point, we may want to talk about whether ports should be able to simply make those deals and not reveal it, when they are supposed to be doing indigenous consultation. That happened, 100%, under this government's watch. That lawsuit...this first nation.... I'm sure the government will try to ignore that as well.

BC Ferries is still very important to me, Mr. Chair, but there are other issues that could be addressed before we get to it. Let me quickly point out some other issues.

For example, if you're flying in western Canada on one of our airlines, sometimes, through no fault of the staff or pilots, you will suddenly find out that you are grounded or have to circle around, because there are massive shortages with NavCan. Tim Perry, the Air Line Pilots Association president, has publicly said that this is a huge concern and is hurting Canada's international reputation. If someone cannot make their connection in places like YVR, it's a huge problem. I know these labour shortages have even affected the Kelowna riding. It's not my riding, but I'm sure many constituents in my riding have been affected by these labour shortages with NavCan.

Unfortunately, it doesn't seem as though they're accountable to anyone. They're very nice people. They came and talked to me, and they gave assurances that everything is well in hand. I know that there are members from Winnipeg in the Liberal Party. I know this

because Mr. Lauzon is on this committee, and Mr. Lamoureux is in the House of Commons, where he is the voice and face of the new Liberal government. He talks endlessly, in fact. I'm intrigued by his holding many constituency meetings at the local McDonald's. I bet you that he's probably heard about this issue, because Winnipeg is one of those affected airports, in addition to Vancouver and, I believe, Calgary.

Calgary is one of those airports. Quite honestly, I have to say that, since 2021 or 2022, there has been a fleet modernization. We've seen Air Canada, WestJet and others modernize their fleets, and this has changed the course. We have members of Parliament from Alberta and Saskatchewan who have to fly to either Calgary or Vancouver just so they can then fly to Ottawa, because of the connections.

When we have NavCan's international reputation causing us issues and when we have members of Parliament interested for their constituents, and pilots.... You wouldn't believe how many members of Parliament have contacted my office who have pilots saying that this is a major issue, yet we hear nothing from the Liberal side on this. We need to bring them in. We need to ask questions of Nav Canada regarding how they're going to rectify these shortages.

I also know that CBSA often has issues with computers being down. I've had people stuck in line, tweeting me with pictures because I'm the opposition's shadow minister for transportation. They're asking me what I'm going to do about it. Well, I haven't had the chance to get the mic to say that these are important issues.

Really, I wanted to finish the study on Driver Inc., so I'm very supportive of having the changes Mr. Barsalou-Duval asked for. Originally, I was the one proposing three meetings. To see three meetings in this motion, Mr. Chair, to specifically deal with the changing context for truck drivers in Canada is absolutely excellent.

[*Translation*]

It's important in order to understand the approaches. It's vital for the committee's report. Our committee will potentially hear directly from the victims. Their voices and words matter. We must give them time to explain their points of view and to address the challenges. That's really important to me.

[*English*]

It's also important for the different associations. For example, I'm just going to give a quick shout-out to one of the groups that is actually in this, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group, because I know they're watching these proceedings. They have been keen to come here. I've seen some of the work they've done on their website and some of the very harrowing tales they have of the changing landscape of truck driving in Canada. I'm very supportive of that particular motion.

The challenge we have here, Mr. Chair, is the way this motion is currently constructed. We can't support it at this time without some major changes. I would start with the major changes needed for BC Ferries. I can't move forward without some sense of closure. I need closure, Mr. Chair, and unfortunately the government has not been able to give me that, because I don't feel that it has been accountable. I don't think that.... I still believe that the loan should be cancelled and that we should be looking to see how we can build these ships here in Canada, rather than allowing them to go to a hybrid shipyard in China and supporting their industry—their war machine—because it's all fundamental. It's all one thing to them.

Here in Canada, we have the very successful national shipbuilding strategy. I know that the government celebrated that and said all the wonderful things it does for the economy. Places like Halifax, with the Irving shipyard, have benefited very much. There is Seaspan, a great company that is producing fantastic Coast Guard vessels—the science vessels—as well as icebreakers, which do not use only Canadian steel, but use some.

Much of the steel, Mr. Chair, for icebreakers—I'm not sure if you're aware of this—actually comes from Finland, where Davie shipyard is a part owner. One of the things that I think we should have a real conversation about if we're going to do “made in Canada” is seeing whether we can import some of that specialty here in Canada, because when I last checked, Mr. Chair, we have some excellent steel companies.

These are all issues right now that I'm afraid the Government of Canada is not addressing.

We could consider, as I said, supporting the elements that Mr. Barsalou-Duval has obviously negotiated with the government members, because essentially it seems that this motion that was amended originated from the Liberal Party. I guess if Mr. Greaves were present, I could actually say that it appears there is a coalition between the Liberals and the Bloc. Actually, Mr. Lauzon said earlier that there was a coalition between the Conservatives and the Bloc, but that would be a silly thing to say. Ultimately, as you know, those in the Bloc have their ideas about what is good for their province, and we Conservatives have our own ideas. Sometimes the two travel the same way, and obviously, sometimes the Liberal Party seems to want to support and be supported by the Bloc, at least in the current way that this motion was amended.

I think it's a very silly thing for anyone to say—and I know that Mr. Greaves tried to make a point of this on Twitter—that it was really.... You wouldn't believe this, Mr. Chair. He actually did a report to his constituents, with a lovely background, because Victoria is beautiful. The coastline is very beautiful.

Stéphane Lauzon: On a point of order, it's been more than three and a half minutes since he talked to the main motion. Maybe he could talk about the main motion. He's been talking about BC Ferries for about eight or nine minutes. The subject here is the main motion.

Dan Albas: No, the subject is you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[English]

This is a reminder to all members to try to bring it back as much as possible. We have an unofficial three-and-a-half-minute rule, but we've used it in the past and I think we should include it here.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours.

Dan Albas: Pros will refer to the motion every three and a half minutes.

Again, Mr. Lauzon was saying, in relation to the study of Driver Inc. and the motion, which now includes many of the measures, now including the ports.... I'm speaking to the motion. He alleged that there was a coalition.

I'm clearing the air. People who may have been confused by that statement from Mr. Lauzon can know that I think it was just political rhetoric. What was also political rhetoric, though, was Will Greaves' doing a little report to his constituents, saying it was the Conservatives who were filibustering and stopping the meeting. He actually posted Mr. Lauzon's statement that it was a coalition between the Conservatives and the Bloc.

I think it's really important, because had Mr. Greaves been here, he may have addressed this directly. Maybe he would have admitted that he was wrong and Mr. Lauzon was wrong. He might have wanted to speak about pipelines, MOUs and things like that, as my colleague Mr. Lawrence had asked him to.

Getting back to the report that is proposed here, I think it's very interesting that the Bloc has asked for the Prime Minister of Canada's Office to be added to the list for a production order. Why is that interesting? It's because TVA Nouvelles did a story in the past three days outlining that the Prime Minister has been seen multiple times with a gentleman, and this obviously has some connection to the issue that has absorbed so much press time in Quebec.

I find it really interesting that the government has welcomed this. I will give the government a bit of credit. It is trying to open up the doors of the Prime Minister's Office in this motion. That's very interesting, and I hope it was done with the coordination of the Prime Minister's Office, because I wouldn't want Mr. Kelloway to lose his job as parliamentary secretary. Apparently, if you don't consult with the Prime Minister's Office on things like agreements with the Bloc on Bill C-9—

Mike Kelloway: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. I'll be very quick.

The Chair: Yes, sir.

Mike Kelloway: Thank you for your empathy, sir. I appreciate that.

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

Mike Kelloway: It's not a point of order. It's just a—

The Chair: I will say the sentiment, particularly as we leave for the holidays—

Mike Kelloway: I wanted the sentiment on the record. I appreciate that, sir.

The Chair: It's very heartwarming as we move to the holidays. Thank you, Mr. Kelloway.

I'll turn the floor back over to you, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: The reason I connect it directly is that this motion, obviously, had some coordination...in order to keep your parliamentary secretary, because parliamentary secretaries are the decision of the Prime Minister; they're not the decision of the minister responsible. We've seen where it's been known that somehow the agreement with the Bloc on Bill C-9 has been.... The Prime Minister's Office said publicly in a news story that they weren't consulted. I certainly hope that's the case, because Mr. Kelloway brings so much to this committee when he's allowed to talk.

Mr. Chair, there is so much that I want to say in regard to this motion. I think that the Drivers Inc. part has been improved, so Conservatives can certainly support that end of it. Going to a port study, as I have said.... Considering how many reports this committee has done, we want to see the Drivers Inc. study go forward.

We have been listening to Mr. Lauzon and raising points of order on relevance and repetition so that we would get to the main motion. I understand how members could be frustrated, even with my discussion here thus far, which I would not say has been lengthy. It may feel that way to some members, Mr. Chair, but if we measured my time compared to Mr. Lauzon's time to make his points, I would say that I'm but a speck—a speck like a piece of sand in the ocean that Mr. Greaves did his beautiful video from. I'm almost in tears, Mr. Chair, because I miss Mr. Greaves. I haven't heard him for so long.

I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that in order for us to move forward, we need to see some substantive changes to this particular motion as it currently stands, so I formally move an amendment, and the amendment would add to the front end of the motion that's before us and go around. I'm going to read it out entirely from beginning to end.

I believe that our team has sent the clerk a translated copy so that it can be circulated, so perhaps everyone can read along. This is one amendment to the entire motion; we are not sending five documents as was done last time, which created much controversy.

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Dan Albas: I'm glad to hear you say that, Mr. Chair. In fact, if you were to say publicly that there was much controversy, I'd appreciate that.

Here we go:

1. That the analysts prepare a report for the committee on the study of BC Ferries and that the committee review the reports of BC Ferries and the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada once they are prepared by the analysts;
2. That, in relation to the committee's ongoing study of the financing by the Canada Infrastructure Bank of new vessels for British Columbia Ferries, pursuant to paragraph 108(1)(a) of the Standing Orders, an order be issued to Seaspan ULC to produce:
 - the report prepared by Shirocca Consulting at the request of Seaspan ULC regarding national shipbuilding capacity in Canada;
 - all correspondence between Seaspan ULC and British Columbia Ferry Services Inc. concerning or related to the acquisition of vessels;
3. That, given that the Minister of Public Safety, Gary Anandasangaree, and the former Minister of Transport, Christia Freeland, did not appear before the com-

mittee as part of the ongoing study of the financing by the Canada Infrastructure Bank of new vessels for British Columbia Ferries, the committee report their absence to the House;

Now we'll go back to the original motion, because I'm just going to read it here:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities request that the Departments of Transport, Revenue, and Employment, as well as the Prime Minister's Office, forward to the committee clerk, within 60 days of the adoption of this motion, all correspondence, reports, emails, and documents relating to the issue of non-compliance in the trucking industry since January 1, 2022, and that Departments and Agencies tasked with producing the documents apply redactions as per legal obligations under the Privacy Act and Access to Information Act;

That the Committee add three additional meetings of two hours each as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada, so that in the first meeting, it can hear testimony from victims of heavy trucks and representatives of Justice for Truck Drivers, The Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group (CCRSA), and The Joy Smith Foundation; in the second meeting, testimony from representatives of 6S Trinity Transport, J+ R Hall Trucking, Dan Express, Carmen Transportation, Ludwig Transport Limited, Canada Post, and the Association des professionnels du dépannage du Québec; and in the third meeting, testimony from the representatives of BC Trucking Association, Ontario Trucking Association, Canadian Council of Motor Transportation Administrators (CCMTA), and the Alberta Motor Transportation Association;

Here is the new addition, Mr. Chair:

5. That, given the significant and persistent problems faced by VIA Rail passengers, including prolonged delays, community needs, and customer service issues, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee devote two meetings to the matter; that the committee invite the President and CEO of VIA Rail, representatives of CN, and the Minister of Transport to testify as part of the study; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House;

The next part is just as was written:

That, immediately following these meetings, the committee, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), undertake a five-meeting study on what is needed to support, diversify, and modernize Quebec and Canada's ports to find new markets to reduce reliance on the United States; that the committee report its findings to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

7. That, given that,

significant staffing shortages and operational challenges continuously affect NAV Canada, and that kiosk failures and staff shortages are affecting the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), negatively impacting Canadian airports, airlines, and air passengers; and

in October, three Canadian airports were victims of an alarming cyberattack that hacked flight information systems and public announcement systems, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of at least three meetings on the operational and security challenges facing Canadian airports, and gaps in federal safety and security regulations that affect airline pilots and airport firefighters; that the following witnesses be invited to appear before the committee:

The Minister of Transport, for at least two hours, separately from the Minister of Public Safety;

The Minister of Public Safety, for at least two hours, separately from the Minister of Transport;

The President and CEO of NAV Canada, as well as other competent NAV Canada officials;

The President of the CBSA, as well as other competent CBSA officials;

Representatives from Montreal International Airport;

Representatives from Vancouver International Airport;

Representatives from Winnipeg Richardson International Airport;

Representatives from Kelowna International Airport;

Representatives from the Air Line Pilots Association; and
 Representatives from the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF);
 And that the committee present its findings and recommendations to the House;

You're going to be excited about this one:

8. That, regarding the committee's schedule, it shall proceed with its work in the following order of priority, with the understanding that the Chair may deviate from this schedule provided there is consensus from all parties:

- (a) Additional meetings on the study entitled "the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada";
- (b) The study on VIA Rail;
- (c) The study on the ports of Quebec and Canada; and
- (d) The study on the state of NAV Canada and the CBSA.

Mr. Chair, I believe this has been sent to the clerk. I would like to be put on the list to speak to the motion, unless everyone is happy with this and we can just end today on a positive note so that everyone can look forward to the new year together.

The Chair: Colleagues, given the length and complexity of the amendments put forward by Mr. Albas, I'm going to suspend for a couple of minutes to make sure that we can get it circulated and that we can all understand what we're looking at.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair.

● (0900) _____ (Pause) _____

● (0935)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Mr. Albas, you had your name on the list. Unless you want to pass it over to somebody else to comment, the floor is yours, my good man.

Dan Albas: I think it would be helpful, Mr. Chair, if we heard from the other side on where we're going on this. I would ask you to drop me down the list.

The Chair: Duly noted.

I'll turn the floor to Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We would like to propose just one amendment to item number 3. At the end, we would like to replace "the committee report their absence to the House" with "the committee reissue an invitation to appear".

We aren't asking for any other changes. We would like to agree to Mr. Albas' motion as it stands.

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to add something to item number 5, regarding the list of witnesses. I believe that we're asking Via Rail and CN officials as well as the Minister of Transport to appear at both meetings. I would like to add to this list of witnesses the Coalition pour le retour des services d'un train de passagers en Gaspésie.

That's all on my end.

The Chair: Mr. Kelloway and Mr. Lauzon, would you like to comment on Mr. Barsalou-Duval's motion?

Stéphane Lauzon: Yes, of course. We discussed this matter. The organization is very committed to this issue, so we agree with this proposal.

The Chair: Are there any other comments or questions?

[*English*]

Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I would like to separate the two motions because I think they are two very different propositions.

We support Xavier Barsalou-Duval's very sincere request to have that named. I can totally understand that. I think it would be considered a unanimous consensus motion for that to proceed, but I would like to speak directly to the amendment by Mr. Lauzon.

Should I do that now? What would you like to do?

The Chair: Mr. Albas, let me confer with the clerk to make sure we're following all the right steps.

● (0935) _____ (Pause) _____

● (0940)

The Chair: We're back.

Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Chair, I have unanimous consent to add the organizations that Barsalou-Duval just told us to add to my amendment.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to—

Philip Lawrence: No, no, just add it to the—

The Chair: Just add it to the subamendment.

Stéphane Lauzon: Yes, add it to the subamendment.

Dan Albas: No, no, we don't agree to that. We should have UC just on this. It will instantly change my amendment.

I'd like to debate yours, and I don't want the two tied up.

The Chair: Okay. We have a request by Mr. Albas that it be moved to the amendment itself, not the subamendment.

Do I have unanimous consent for that, colleagues?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It is agreed.

Now we will debate the subamendment that was put forward by Mr. Lauzon. Is that correct?

An hon. member: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

For that, Mr. Albas, I'll turn the floor over to you, sir.

Dan Albas: Thank you.

I'm going to say this because some people would say that I'm capitalizing on the committee's time too much: We have had months during which an invitation was made multiple times by the clerk. That was to invite former minister Freeland and the Minister of Public Safety to come here on BC Ferries. They have not done that. It was the decision of those responsible not to come.

If we do the subamendment Mr. Lauzon made, we are, in essence, directing the analysts to begin drafting a report while we still have an open floor on the testimony. To me, that is inconsistent and incoherent. I understand that Mr. Lauzon wants to be as courteous as possible to his colleagues. I understand it, because that's what a good colleague will try to do—invite them to give them another opportunity—but they declined multiple times. We're at the tail end of the year, but we were dealing with this issue as early as August. I would say that the minister and former minister have made their beds and can sleep in them now.

I think we need to move on from BC Ferries in the way this amendment already quantifies.

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

Mr. Kelloway,

Mike Kelloway: The beds analogy aside, Mr. Chair, former minister Freeland was here, I believe, in July. She was invited once, not multiple times—

An hon. member: It was on BC Ferries.

Mike Kelloway: Yes, it was on BC Ferries. Thank you.

I think we need to be clear on the facts. If we look at where we are, we've had quite a ride this past session, in terms of this committee. Whether it's the trucking study we did—again, I truly want to thank Xavier for putting it forward—or the amendments put forward in the speech by Mr. Albas.... I think there was a lot of good in that intervention by Mr. Albas. We're at a point now where.... We can look at former minister Freeland once again. There was one invite. We can invite again, and then see where we are after that.

We're on a very good footing to get something accomplished here today. It's the art of discussion, collaboration and compromise over a period of time. My hope is that we can accept this and move it forward.

We now have multiple tentacles to this, which is not a bad thing, in terms of the trucking study, Via Rail and ports. Ports are important to me. I think they're important to all of us. I understand that this has been studied before. Think about a year ago versus where we are now. The world has changed. Where we are going as a country is definitely changing, in terms of economic development and a whole host of things.

I hope we can move forward with this change. It was made in good faith. There have been multiple invites sent to the ministers. Let's get the ministers here. Let's invite them and move forward on something that's very important to Quebeckers and Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Thanks.

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

I'll turn it over to Mr. Lawrence.

Before that, I think former minister Freeland and Minister Robertson appeared on August 1, specifically on BC Ferries.

Mr. Lawrence.

Philip Lawrence: Thank you.

There have been multiple requests. We can bicker about the specifics, but at the end of the day, more interesting to me than the particular language is getting the ministers here. It's one thing to invite.... In my six years, I have seen many invitations to Liberal ministers go without their actually appearing.

The one thing for which I will give credit where credit is due is that every time a parliamentary secretary has committed to me that the minister will be there, they have shown up. It would go a long way if Mr. Kelloway would vouch for his ministers by saying that this isn't just an invitation, and he will actually get them here. These aren't people in far-off lands. They have offices next to ours whom Mr. Kelloway, I assume, would talk to as parliamentary secretary for transportation. I hope he would speak to Mr. MacKinnon daily. If he says Mr. MacKinnon can be here, I will take him at his word.

The Chair: Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: Can I have you work with the clerk and clarify something? We invited former minister Freeland after she resigned, because there were a number of questions about her testimony that were blatantly contradicted in the documents we received in regard to BC Ferries. It's my understanding that the clerk, once he was asked by the committee to invite both the Minister of Public Safety and the former minister, would have done that more than once.

I would like the clerk to clarify whether entreaties were made on more than one occasion since we asked and invited her to come in as the former minister.

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll suspend for a minute or two while he looks that up, and we'll reconvene after we get that information.

The meeting is suspended to the call of the chair. It shouldn't be too long, colleagues.

- (0945) _____ (Pause) _____
- (0950)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Colleagues, the clerk was able to do some research while we were suspended and found the information to show that Ms. Freeland—former minister Freeland—was invited September 18 following her appearance on August 1, and she was unfortunately unable to attend. That clears things up for committee members.

Mr. Albas, the floor is yours.

Dan Albas: Was she unable or unwilling?

The Chair: I believe the wording was “unavailable”.

Dan Albas: Okay.

As far as I've seen, we've made that in good faith. It was followed up. I'd like to move on with the report. I would like to give our analysts some closure. I would like to give all of us some closure.

I don't agree with the subamendment from Mr. Lauzon, although I understand why he moved it. It's a courteous thing to try to do, but I think at some point we just have to say we'll move on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albas.

I don't know if we're going to have support for this, but we will go to a vote. There's nobody else on the speaking list.

Please, guys; it's a Christmas miracle.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Chair: Colleagues, the subamendment has passed, so we'll go to the discussion on the amendment.

With that, I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I would just hope that the clerk would invite both the Minister of Public Safety and the former minister of transport to come to committee. It's really important for the committee in terms of the analysts knowing what they can.... They may have material testimony that will change the nature of the report.

I hope, since Mr. Lauzon has offered the courtesy and the Bloc has supported that courtesy, that this committee would immediately ask them, that they would be pressed to immediately pick a date and that it would be as early as afforded under this motion so that we can give the analysts the time they need to make room. If the answer is no, then I also hope that is reported back to us at the earliest opportunity, because I believe that ministers have a duty to be accountable. At that point, I would discuss reporting to the House their failure to attend.

Thank you.

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

Monsieur Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Chair, I don't want to speak about the motion per se. However, since I don't see any other hands raised, I would like to draw your attention to something.

If we do indeed pass the motion, I would like to move another motion. I would ask you not to adjourn the meeting before I've had a chance to move my proposed motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Are there any other questions or comments?

[*English*]

We'll go to a recorded vote on the amendment as amended.

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

The Chair: I'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: I'm going to print this recorded division and put it up in my office for posterity.

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

Colleagues, we are now in discussion on the motion as amended. Are there no takers? Okay.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Is this the right time to move my motion, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I would like to get the motion passed before giving you the floor.

[*English*]

We'll go to a vote on the motion as amended, colleagues.

Mr. Clerk.

Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, could you just clarify what the motion was again?

The Chair: We can read it all out if you'd like, Mr. Albas.

Dan Albas: No. Didn't Monsieur Barsalou-Duval have a...?

The Chair: He has a separate motion, sir. We're dispensing of the motion as amended.

Dan Albas: Okay. Thank you very much. I just wanted to make sure we didn't miss him, because I hate it when members get missed.

The Chair: I fully understand, Mr. Albas. I will make sure that Mr. Barsalou-Duval has the floor following this vote.

Mr. Clerk, I'll turn it over to you for a recorded division, sir.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

The Chair: Good job, colleagues. I will point out that it was unanimous.

There was some good work behind the scenes to get that done, and I want to thank all members for their diligence in achieving this.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you had another motion to move.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My motion concerns the committee's vote on a request that all groups appearing for the study on truck drivers give the committee the list of their members. To date, all the associations appearing before the committee have provided their list of members, with the exception of one, the Canada Truck Operators Association.

The motion seeks to reiterate our desire to obtain the list of members of this association. I'll read the motion:

That the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities order the Canada Truck Operators Association to demonstrate transparency and good faith by providing the committee, within 15 days following the adoption of this motion, with a complete and up-to-date list of its official representatives and donor members, as have all other organizations that have appeared before the committee as part of the study of the changing landscape of truck drivers in Canada.

If people are interested in debating the motion, I would like to comment on it too. I would like to be part of the speaking round if people wish to comment. However, if everyone would like to adopt the motion as it stands, I wouldn't necessarily need to say anything more about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

Colleagues, it sounds straightforward, but I think there are a couple of things we need to discuss. I'll suspend for a couple of minutes as we distribute that, and we will reconvene at the call of the chair.

The meeting is suspended.

- (0955) _____ (Pause) _____
- (1011)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Colleagues, I'll turn the floor over to Mr. Albas to get us started.

Dan Albas: I want to mention briefly that with the rationale given that some people are not comfortable sharing their information.... It could be that there's just a wariness about sharing personal information with a parliamentary versus a governmental source. This is a real thing. Conservatives believe we should judge by the testimony and the merits brought to the conversation. Regardless of whether the list is verified with personal information...we don't think that is germane to the situation.

Thank you.

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

Colleagues, you've all received the motion. Is there any further debate?

Mr. Lauzon.

[*Translation*]

Stéphane Lauzon: I just reread the motion. We agreed to recommend that the organization provide the documents. I reread the motion twice, and the French version states that the association must "demonstrate transparency and good faith by providing the committee". It's as if there were an obligation to provide documents within 15 days of the adoption of this motion.

Behind the scenes, I understood that we wanted to invite the organization to provide the documents, specifically a complete and up-to-date list of its official representatives. However, that isn't what this motion says.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you raised your hand. You have the floor.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Earlier, I read to the committee a motion stating that the committee "order" the organization to submit its list of members. The motion sent to the clerk stated that the committee should submit a "request" to the organization. A request isn't as strong as an order. I gathered that this was an acceptable compromise for the committee.

I must inform everyone around the table that I would have preferred "order". This term gives us much more strength and certainty. However, I want to work with everyone.

I would also like to add that, if this group fails to comply with the committee's request should the motion be adopted, I plan to move a motion to report this to the House. I think that it would be an unacceptable affront to the committee members if a single organization decides not to submit its list of members. A single organization, whose disruptive and disturbing impact we have observed, chooses not to demonstrate the necessary transparency that everyone else shows. In this situation, one organization is advocating for a model deemed unacceptable by almost all the witnesses who appeared before the committee. The members of this organization don't even dare to speak on their own behalf. When all these people came to the committee to speak on behalf of this organization, and when we saw all these people doing the same thing in the public arena and in the media, they were never active members of this organization. I have serious doubts about the legitimacy of this type of organization.

I have many other things to say. However, above all, I hope that we can reach a reasonable compromise that will satisfy everyone. If the committee members have more to say on the topic, I'm ready to speak more as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Lauzon, you have the floor.

Stéphane Lauzon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand my colleague's explanations.

I don't have any issue with wanting the Canada Truck Operators Association to demonstrate transparency and good faith by providing the documents to the committee. We could write "by recommending that the organization provide the documents to the committee, within 15 days following the adoption of the motion". We already made this request and the organization already responded to the committee. It may not be the desired response, so I'm prepared to invite them again to respond to us transparently and in good faith.

Your explanations helped me understand things a bit. The motion more or less repeats what we asked for, but the organization failed to provide the list. If we ask them again, we might receive an answer this time. After reading and rereading the motion, I agree with moving in this direction. You gave good explanations, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

I'll need to discuss this with my colleagues, but I'm prepared to agree to the motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lauzon.

[*English*]

It looks as though we're all on the same page, colleagues, so we'll go to a vote on the motion put forward by Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Clerk, we'll have a recorded division, please.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 5, nays 0 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: With that, colleagues, I want to mention three quick things, if I may.

The first thing I would like to highlight is the birthday of Ms. Nguyen's mother, who's turning 75.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Happy birthday to you, Kim, on behalf of all members of our committee.

Second, in addition to Alexandre's birthday yesterday, his son Wallace is turning eight tomorrow.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Happy birthday to you, Wallace.

Colleagues, I just want to say thank you for your hard work over this past session. It was a lot of hard work that we did. We got to a good place at the end and that's what counts. I want to thank you for that, and I look forward to working with you in the new year.

Finally, I want to say for those of you celebrating, Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas as well. I wish you all the best in the new year.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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