



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 023

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Chair: John Brassard



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• (1630)

[English]

The Chair (John Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. The committee is meeting today pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) (h).

We will have some discussion in public. Basically, what I want to do is try to tie up some loose ends today. The first thing I want to discuss with the committee is the letter we received from Brookfield.

Madam Clerk, when was that distributed? Was it on Monday morning? Was it in both official languages?

The Clerk of the Committee (Nancy Vohl): It was on Friday.

The Chair: It was Friday. Okay.

If you recall, when we had Mr. Beber here, there was some discussion about sending some information that had been requested. We got a letter back from Brookfield, dated December 5, in relation to the composition of certain Brookfield funds, disclosure of limited partners and investment funds, Brookfield tax payments from 2022 to 2024 and an exhaustive investment portfolio, and they concluded the letter with a statement.

My purpose is to see whether the committee wants or needs any further action on this letter.

Mr. Majumdar.

Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): I appreciate the opportunity, Chair, and I appreciate the chance we've had to review the letter from Brookfield over the last few days.

If I could just offer a perspective here, the reason we have a cloud of corruption is that the Prime Minister has created the cloud. The issue, which we can clearly see from the letter, is the Prime Minister. If he wants full public confidence, he can waive confidentiality on anything related to his own holdings. Nothing in the letter prevents transparency if the Prime Minister chooses to be transparent. The only person who can clear this up is the PM. He can authorize the release of information relevant to his ethics screen.

Canadians deserve to know that the decisions made by the Prime Minister have no bearing on his personal financial interests. They need to know that parliamentary oversight depends on transparency from public office holders. The PM's ethics screen works only if

Canadians can see him proactively removing doubt, not hiding behind this confidentiality.

This is about protecting public trust in our institutions, which is something the Prime Minister has so far refused to do. He can direct Brookfield to waive confidentiality, and we can understand exactly how he is not incentivized to benefit from these things.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Majumdar.

Mr. Cooper, I saw your hand.

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and let me say that I was disappointed, but I have to say, at the same time, not all that surprised at the response from Brookfield. It is, nonetheless, an unacceptable response. We have seen a complete lack of transparency on the part of the Prime Minister when it comes to the extent of his vast conflicts of interest as they pertain to Brookfield. While I'm disappointed and while I say that the response from Brookfield is unacceptable, at the end of the day this could all be cleared up by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister withheld from the Ethics Commissioner, and he's withheld from Canadians, the 1,900 other Brookfield companies that we learned about when Mr. Beber appeared before this committee. Mr. Beber, at committee, confirmed that when Brookfield does well, the Prime Minister does well, having regard for the fact that he has stock options and stands to make tens of millions of dollars from those stock options, as well as, of course, future bonus pay from the Brookfield global transition fund I.

If it is the case, as it is, that when Brookfield does well, Mark Carney does well, then it is relevant to know what these other Brookfield companies are. The fact that the Prime Minister has not disclosed them raises questions about the robustness of the so-called ethics screen insofar as many potential conflicts of interest may not be captured by it. When Brookfield says, there's nothing to see here because these other companies are de minimis relative to the Prime Minister, I'm not prepared to just take Brookfield at its word.

When I asked the Ethics Commissioner, it was clear that he had not seen these other 1,900 companies, so I don't understand how he could look at this and take at face value Brookfield's assertion that there's nothing to see because it's de minimis. We need to find out what these other 1,900 companies are, and I would call on the Prime Minister to help us clear the air by requesting that Brookfield provide them if he doesn't already have them. Of course, given the fact that he was chair of Brookfield up until a year ago, he would have most, if not all, of those companies. At the very least, we need to know the companies that are in Canada, but there could very well be others.

What we have seen with respect to the total lack of transparency continues. It's just part of the pattern of not being forthcoming, because not only do we not know these companies, but we now saw, based upon the testimony of the Ethics Commissioner, that the Prime Minister basically was hiding from the Ethics Commissioner all of the various times that he met with Brookfield. The Prime Minister was told by the Ethics Commissioner to stay away from Brookfield, yet, two days after the federal election, a Brookfield-owned company on the screen was lobbying the Prime Minister. The Ethics Commissioner had no idea about that.

Further to that, on May 6, the CEO of Brookfield Infrastructure met with the Prime Minister in Washington, D.C. The Ethics Commissioner had no idea about that. In October, Mr. Beber, the chief operating officer of Brookfield, met with the Prime Minister alone in the Prime Minister's office. The only reason the Ethics Commissioner knew about that was testimony at this committee, and this is from a Prime Minister who claims that he is in constant contact with the Ethics Commissioner. It seems that when it comes to meeting with Brookfield, all of the times the Prime Minister's been caught meeting with Brookfield, the Ethics Commissioner has been left in the dark.

Along the lines of a lack of transparency, hiding things, we then see what has been discovered buried in the budget implementation act, Bill C-15.

• (1635)

We see buried in the budget implementation act a set, a law, amendments, that would give any minister within the government the discretion to exempt any entity—so that could be a corporation, body or person—from any law, any act of Parliament other than the Criminal Code.

The minister would have the ability with respect to the exemption to effectively hide the nature of the exemption, because the minister could exclude information that the minister asserts concerns safety, security, or confidential or personal information. Those are very wide parameters for a minister to hide from Canadians the scope of an exemption to a corporation, or for an individual to be exempted from following the law.

What sorts of situations could those be? It could mean that Brookfield could be exempted from complying with the Lobbying Act, from having to report all the times that they're lobbying the Prime Minister and those in this government. It could mean that a company could be exempted from procurement and contracting rules, opening the door for sole source contracting. It could mean

the gutting of environmental laws, access to information, and every law other than the Criminal Code.

We've seen this movie before. We saw this movie back in 2018, when the Liberals snuck in to the budget implementation act a deferred prosecution agreement regime. They snuck it in for a very specific purpose, and that was to interfere in the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin for all of SNC-Lavalin's extensive corruption. We saw Justin Trudeau then, within months of that being snuck in to the budget implementation act, interfering in the prosecution, interfering in the independence of his Attorney General, and then attempting to obstruct justice and cover it up, abusing his cabinet confidence powers.

We've seen this movie before, and just like in 2018, this was snuck into the budget implementation act. No minister talked about it. It's very clear the Liberals were hoping that no one would read the full bill, a 700-page bill, and that it would be missed, but it would be law. There are a lot of questions about how this got in here, what the Prime Minister's involvement was, because something simply doesn't add up. Something smells, quite frankly.

With that, I would like to put on notice the following motion.

That the committee:

a) undertake a study of the subject matter of Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, and of the process by which this bill and budget 2025 were developed, with a view toward assessing ethical concerns that arise from certain provisions of the act, certain measures in the budget, and the process by which the act and budget were developed, and, for the purpose of this study, invite witnesses as may be proposed by members of committee to provide testimony, and, at the conclusion of this study, create a list of recommendations to be reported to the House and deposited with the clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance for its consideration;

• (1640)

(b) order the production of all records in the possession of the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council Office related to any meeting in which the Prime Minister and/or any staff from the Prime Minister's office were present that in any way relate to budget 2025 and Bill C-15, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025, including but not limited to stakeholder engagement and the development of budget 2025 and Bill C-15, from the period beginning on March 14, 2025 and ending on November 4, 2025; these records should include but not be limited to calendar entries, briefing notes, memoranda, emails and records of conversations, and these documents are to be provided with the clerk of the committee in both official languages and without redaction by no later than three weeks following the adoption of this motion;

(c) should the government fail to deliver the documents referenced in (b), as ordered, and by the deadline established by the committee, report the material facts to the House at the earliest possible opportunity;

(d) commence the study referenced in (a) immediately after the committee finishes hearing witness testimony for its study of challenges posed by artificial intelligence and its regulation, provided that no more than three additional meetings are scheduled for this witness testimony; and

(e) make use of the evidence received during the study referenced in (a) for the committee's review of the Conflict of Interest Act.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper.

That motion has been put on notice, and you'll distribute that to the clerk so we can further distribute it to the members of the committee.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. Saini, I have you next. We're on the Brookfield letter.

If you have any comments on that, go ahead.

Gurbux Saini (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Chair, after sitting here for the last six months, I have not heard one single word from my friends on the opposite side that deals with the actual issue of amending the ethics laws. All we hear are bogus theories based on all prime ministers. We have heard witness after witness tell us that the Canadian ethics laws are the gold standard of the world. They are the best in the world.

We have also been told by people who actually take care of them—the Clerk of the Privy Council and the chief of staff of the Prime Minister—that absolutely there are no issues, but my friend continues to spread those theories so they can be seen in a good light on TV or they can spread those messages on public media to score cheap political points. This is not the place to play political games; this is a very serious committee that deals with the ethics of parliamentarians.

We've been told by the Ethics Commissioner... As recently as last Monday, he sat here for two hours and answered every single question. Mr. Cooper raised a question with him last Monday about 1,900 companies. We were told those 1,900 companies are limited partnerships. They are all over the world. It has nothing to do with the Prime Minister or any of the companies. He still continues to spread these bogus theories in the public domain so he can score some cheap political points.

Mr. Chair, this is a sad day for our democracy when people.... All they have to do is pick. The other thing I want Mr. Cooper to know is that this is the same Prime Minister who ran for public office. Canadians knew who he was. Canadians also knew who the Leader of the Opposition was, who couldn't even hold on to his own bloody seat. The public—Canadians—elected this Prime Minister to be the Prime Minister of the country, and we still continue to play these cheap political games.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saini.

I'm going to remind the committee that we will be dealing with the report based on the evidence we heard. We will be able to provide some submissions in terms of recommendations once that draft report is done.

I was going to go to drafting instructions today, but Mr. Thériault is not with us. I felt it fair to him to be able to provide the analysts with some direction. What I'm going to suggest going forward... I've talked to the analysts about this, and the clerk, and we've done this in the past. Over the course of the next couple of weeks, we can provide drafting instructions by email to the clerk, which would then be passed on to the analysts. That would provide Mr. Thériault with an opportunity, with no disrespect to Madame Gaudreau.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thériault has been very much involved in this study, and it has been to the benefit of all of us. I want to give him a chance to continue.

[*English*]

We will have an opportunity to deal with the Conflict of Interest Act in the context of the study that we did and make those recommendations. That's to come.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The next speakers will be Mr. Hardy, Mr. Sari, Ms. Lapointe and Ms. Gaudreau.

Mr. Hardy, the floor is yours.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on what was said here recently.

I believe that the role of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics is to ensure that ethics are always respected. We were told that a sufficiently informed person who wants to learn about issues that could raise the appearance of conflict of interest could come to us and suggest that we conduct studies on the subject. So I think that is what we are doing here.

On Monday of this week, we were told that we should fine members for asking questions. I think that is bad politics. We are here to ask questions that people pass on to us. Our role is to represent them.

When my constituents come to see me to report a situation that they think creates an appearance of conflict of interest and ask me to dig into the matter to see what it is, it is my role to ask questions. I am sorry if it implicates the Prime Minister, but it does. Right now, we have to make sure there is no conflict of interest.

The letter from Brookfield says, "A fund's performance depends solely on performance of portfolio companies, not on the identity of investors." I would say that performance also depends on the markets in which those funds are invested. If the Prime Minister improves those markets to benefit himself or potentially benefit himself, that has implications.

It is important for the public to know what is going on. The goal is not to attack an individual, but to ensure that an individual is not taking advantage of the system or that no ill-intentioned person can take advantage of the system. That is our role.

Here is another sentence from Brookfield's letter that I find interesting: "On an individual basis these investments are each de minimis to Brookfield's trillion dollars in assets under management...."

Brookfield is answering for the committee by telling it that it does not need to worry, that it should not take an interest in the situation. It is not up to that company to decide for Canadians whether a situation needs our attention or not. We are all here to play that role and make sure that mistakes are not made.

For my part, I find two things interesting in the Brookfield letter.

The first is that it is the Prime Minister who is putting Canada in this situation. He was the one who decided not to sell his shares, not us. So if Brookfield wants to decide for Canadians what should be reviewed and what should not be reviewed, I think that is a mistake.

I am going to end on the second thing that I find interesting.

The letter goes on to say, “This disclosure framework, which is consistent with standard practice for companies of comparable scale....” Unfortunately, there are no comparable-sized companies in Canada at present. No company of that size has interests directly linked to the Prime Minister, such interests cannot be treated the same as other companies of a similar size would do.

I think this entire letter clearly shows that Brookfield is trying to avoid being involved and wants to tell us that we are not to investigate them, that everything is fine and that we should not ask any questions.

I think that is a big mistake. We have to continue our process.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hardy.

I am so glad you brought up the letter, because that is what we are talking about, and I know we need to carry out committee business properly.

The next speaker will be Mr. Sari, followed by Ms. Lapointe and Ms. Gaudreau. Mr. Cooper has his hand up again.

Mr. Sari, you have the floor.

Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will go back to the letter again.

We may or may not like the letter, but we cannot share its content. Personally, when I read the letter, I understand the response, which is still honest and quite complete. It candidly answers all the questions we have been talking about at this committee. That said, whether members of other parties like it or not depends on the perceptions they may have.

Do I like the letter or not? That is not the issue. I am not an expert in the field, but I rely on the testimony of the experts we have called. They encouraged us to read that letter, to understand the ethical issue. Most of them are specialists in the field. Almost all of them told us that our system is quite strong. The questions we sent to Brookfield and the answers we received allow us to align with the advice we received from experts in the field. The letter is very good, and the response somewhat completes the study.

Furthermore, what I especially do not appreciate is the links people are making. Right now, I am not talking to the committee, but rather to the people listening to us. You have to be very careful. Go and see the experts that the committee, including the members of the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party, has summoned. You will see exactly what they say about the situation. They say we have a very strong system. Other countries find that we have a fairly robust system in this regard. Furthermore, experts say that the

Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mark Carney, is currently not really in a conflict of interest.

I reiterate that, following this meeting, we need to refocus our work to see if anything needs to be changed. We must not personalize the debate, as we are doing right now, because we are undermining the trust of the people listening to us, and that is very dangerous. We are politicizing ethics, which is very dangerous. We have to be very careful about that.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chair.

● (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

You suggested that I introduce the members of my team who are here on the Hill today.

With me are Rachid Ben Larbi and Alexia Alderson. This is Ms. Alderson's first time on the Hill. She usually works in my constituency office. I would like to welcome them.

I am going to continue along the same lines as my colleague Mr. Sari.

We have been working on the review of the Conflict of Interest Act since September. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner appeared before the committee twice, at the beginning of the study and last Monday.

I will now come back to the subject of the letter we received.

We heard from witnesses, including Michael Sabia, who is the first public servant on Parliament Hill with such an impressive track record. He has held positions at Hydro-Québec and the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. These are incredible positions. We also heard from Marc-André Blanchard. They explained how the blind trust and the conflict of interest screen work. They have both answered all the questions asked by the committee members.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner came at the beginning of the study. He then paid close attention to the testimonies of the two witnesses, Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Sabia. When the Commissioner testified again before the committee on Monday, he told us he was very satisfied with their answers. He was also very satisfied with the explanations regarding the blind trust and the conflict of interest screen.

Also, the Commissioner talked about our laws. As my colleague said, people envy us because we have the best structures against conflicts of interest. Our system is world-renowned. At one point, the Commissioner said that we could draw inspiration from British Columbia in order to add something to our system. He told us so, and it will be up to us to include it in the report when we get it done.

Finally, I find it a bit difficult to hear these comments, which are made only to use up time. Some are trying to shine a light on something that does not exist. The Prime Minister does not have access to the decisions that may affect Brookfield. He wrote it in the conflict of interest screen, and everyone seemed very satisfied, except for certain people.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is very comfortable with what happened, and he is satisfied with the explanations. I read the Brookfield letter and I understood it, but in the end, what is important to me is what the Commissioner will say about all the testimonies we have heard.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for pointing out how important it is that Mr. Thériault is present to share his point of view. Obviously, when those who were not here for the study make recommendations, it is something else.

Why are we here today? In principle, the committee reviews legislation, and it ensures that there is no appearance of conflict of interest. That is one thing.

Six years ago, in 2019, I was just starting out as an MP, and it was the first time I sat on this committee. You know as well as I do that, when we had to take the bull by the horns to take care of cybersecurity or privacy, we were told every time in committee that it was not clear and not safe. My colleague said that. I lived through some nightmares, which I can name. I spent 40 hours being filibustered by the Liberals on WE Charity.

We would not be here if the Prime Minister had officially laid his cards on the table at the outset, if there had been no doubt about him and nothing on which we could have made a judgment.

I saw the opinion, and I read it, as you did, Mr. Chair. Honestly, I do not think the committee would be having this discussion if it was not for the information that could reveal the appearance of a conflict of interest. That is what happens when you are a member of Parliament. You are being thoroughly scrutinized. I can tell you that there are companies that really know everything about me.

I do not understand. It saddens me to see that, once again, in 2025, the committee is stuck managing this.

Maybe everything is fine, but seriously, when there is doubt, that is the committee's job. I hope the Prime Minister will stop hiding. Right now, it is as though someone is looking for trouble, while there are other issues to be dealt with. The people watching us are saying, "Oh no, not again, please." There are international issues, especially with everything that is happening on the web. This issue should be dealt with by the committee. I think that if the letter had been more specific by disclosing information, we would not be here today.

Think about what should have been done in the first place.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

I am reflecting on the discussion, and I think we could do that once the study is completed.

[*English*]

It's good for the soul.

Mr. Cooper, I had you next, but you ceded to Ms. Church.

Go ahead, Ms. Church.

Leslie Church (Toronto—St. Paul's, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my colleagues for their comments about the opportunity that we have as a committee to explore issues of importance that extend to some of the issues that we've explored over the past number of meetings, particularly as they pertain to intelligence and where that intersects with the privacy and information rights of individuals. I think there are many interesting things that this committee could be examining.

We've spent the better portion of this fall considering aspects of the Conflict of Interest Act. I think it's incumbent on us to look at the mandate of this committee and at the purpose behind the Conflict of Interest Act itself. I think there are opportunities for us to reflect carefully, as parliamentarians, on how we make the conflict of interest regime better. I think that's always the purpose of being a parliamentarian on a committee like this.

I think that it is also incumbent on us to call out when this committee wanders into areas of jurisdiction that aren't best placed with the committee. As my colleague mentioned over the course of the fall, we've not only heard on multiple occasions from the Ethics Commissioner himself, but we've had full disclosures. We've had witnesses appear. We've had the chief of staff to the Prime Minister. We've had the Clerk of the Privy Council.

However, I have to agree with my colleague on this side of the table that I think we risk wandering into an area where we are too focused as a committee on trying to prosecute what is better left within the responsibilities that Parliament has entrusted to the Ethics Commissioner than with this committee in terms of individual dealings.

I think that the Ethics Commissioner has, on more than one occasion now, told this committee that he is satisfied with the conflict of interest regime that is in place concerning the Prime Minister and that the Prime Minister is considered by the Ethics Commissioner to have properly divested his assets. We have heard from senior figures working alongside the Prime Minister about the seriousness and the depth of the procedures and policies that are in place to govern conflicts of interest. We've heard as well from Brookfield about the nature of its business, the work that it continues to do and the cautions that it raises or the limitations it has in terms of its own privacy and other responsibilities, which I think we need to take under careful advisement as a committee.

I am really most concerned about the slide by this committee into areas of trying to create linkages and trying to brew conspiracies where conspiracies don't exist. I think we owe something better to Canadians than that. That's why we should be focused on, first and foremost, getting to the end of this study with serious recommendations on how to improve the Conflict of Interest Act, with a clear understanding of all of its purposes, as well as to consider other issues that this committee could properly work on.

To that end, Mr. Chair, I would like to move this motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), the committee undertake a study of the use of AI in algorithmic pricing in Canada; that the committee hold a minimum of six meetings for this study; that the study explore the costs to Canadian consumers from these practices; that the committee hear from representatives of major digital retailers in Canada, including Ticketmaster, Air Canada and Amazon, as well as from experts on algorithmic discrimination and any other witnesses the committee deems necessary; that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

• (1705)

I think pursuing this type of study is in the interest of Canadian consumers. We've heard this from some of the witnesses we've had as part of our study on artificial intelligence. It would have a meaningful impact in terms of the work that this committee could do for improving and potentially creating novel approaches and novel frameworks to govern what is an emerging area of concern. It would be a very good area for Parliament to consider. It's certainly where the standing committee can make a contribution to the understanding of Parliament in this area, which I think increasingly concerns Canadians, their pocketbooks and the way that consumers are treated in the marketplace today.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Church.

We are in committee business. The motion is in order.

Do you have it in both official languages?

• (1710)

Leslie Church: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Are you able to share that with the clerk?

Leslie Church: Yes.

The Chair: If you could do that now, what I would like to do is distribute it to the members of the committee, so they have it on hand and can have a look at it.

It is in relation to artificial intelligence. We have an ongoing AI study right now, which is Mr. Thériault's study. For that study, Mr. Thériault proposed that we have a minimum of four meetings. I would like to see some consistency in the number of meetings we can have. Instead of six, maybe we can have a minimum of four, and then it's left up to us. That's not going to come from the chair but will have to be an amendment by somebody.

I am going to suspend for a couple of minutes, so that it can be distributed to members of the committee and they can have a look at it. Perhaps we can deal with it fairly quickly.

We're suspended.

• (1710)

(Pause)

• (1715)

The Chair: Ms. Church's motion, in both official languages, has been distributed. The motion is in order. There were some discussions among the parties here.

Ms. Church, would you entertain, similar to what we did with Mr. Thériault's motion, a minimum of four meetings, rather than the six that you prescribed in the motion?

Leslie Church: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay, so we'll change it to reflect that.

The motion is on the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sari, do you have any comments on the motion?

Abdelhaq Sari: Yes, Mr. Chair.

When it says four meetings, in English, does it really mean four meetings, Mr. Chair?

I am asking because sometimes we could have one-hour meetings with only one witness. Sometimes there are meetings that last two—

The Chair: Each meeting is two hours. When we organize meetings, we invite witnesses for two hours for one of the studies we are conducting.

Abdelhaq Sari: Great. That is the case, even though we are conducting two studies.

As far as the motion itself is concerned, I completely agree on this very important point.

If you recall my interventions on the first study that was proposed by Mr. Thériault, I always intervened along those lines. There are two ways we could intervene when it comes to artificial intelligence. The first is on the development of solutions and systems, and the second is on the utilization and use of those solutions.

Where I completely agree with this motion is on the study of the misuse of artificial intelligence as it relates to the end consumer. Such misuse could work against the consumers as far as prices are concerned. Most studies show that consumers are buying a lot more online now. We saw prices fluctuate, especially during Black Friday, which lasted not a day, but an entire month. In fact, we should be talking about Black November, not Black Friday. We have seen platforms like Amazon manipulate prices, and there were others.

I think this motion is super interesting in that it mainly proposes regulating the use of this element. It is a way to protect the end consumer.

I also think of Ticketmaster. Another example I could give you is Uber. One study showed that the algorithm even looked for the battery level of the consumer's phone and that the price changed according to the level of the phone's battery and the outside temperature.

Still, Uber was called out on this algorithm. For example, two people starting at the same place and going to the same destination did not pay the same price, depending on the level of the battery on their phone. The person whose phone had a weaker battery was more vulnerable and paid a higher price.

Vulnerable consumers are taken advantage of in this kind of situation. It is up to us, as legislators, to protect them against such use of AI.

It is very interesting, and I think the study could really benefit the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sari.

I do not know if others want to weigh in on this.

Do we agree on the motion?

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: No, I do not agree.

As I understand it, the study proposed by my colleague Luc Thériault in his motion has not been completed. According to a motion moved and adopted in September, this study was to be completed.

The Chair: We have not finished this study yet. We will pick it up after Christmas when we come back.

The study being proposed now is different from the one proposed by Mr. Thériault in September.

We will finish this one and then start the other one. We may have two more meetings to complete this study.

We have heard testimony. However, the witnesses who had accepted the invitation to appear today were the same as those proposed by Mr. Thériault. They will be coming in January. We believe that the minister will also be appearing before our committee in the new year.

We are going to finish this study, and then we are going to start the other study. We have another motion on the Lobbying Act. We will plan that during the break.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: I was wondering. It has been a while since I have been here. I was looking at the clarification and the details of the motion. I am not against the objective, but I wonder if, given all the work this committee has to do—its title includes the word “privacy” for a good reason—this is the right committee to study this.

I am trying to think of my colleague Luc Thériault. Can the information on the costs be added to his study? I am trying to find a constructive idea.

Time is running out and we will not have many meetings when Parliament resumes at the end of January.

• (1725)

The Chair: I know, but I kept the motion. In my opinion, this motion would give the committee an opportunity to do a lot of

things, particularly when it comes to privacy. I discussed it with Mrs. Church. We could invite a representative of the Competition Bureau. I am also thinking of privacy, the prices charged by companies, the personal information they collect to improve or increase prices.

I think these topics can be studied in committee. That is why I ruled that the motion was in order.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Okay.

The motion is therefore in order. Basically, today we would vote on the motion to plan this study when we resume parliamentary business in 2026.

The Chair: Yes. It would not be very soon after we come back, because we have other studies. There will be the one on the Lobbying Act. A motion was passed on the subject, and we need to plan the study. The Commissioner and other witnesses will be invited. We may not get back to Mrs. Church's motion until March or April. I do not know. That is why we are going to plan things.

Thank you.

[*English*]

Is there anybody else?

Are we all in agreement with this motion's passing?

(Motion agreed to)

An hon. member: Is it a minimum of four meetings?

The Chair: It's a minimum of four meetings, yes.

Mr. Cooper, go ahead, please.

Michael Cooper: In light of the failure of the Minister of AI to appear as part of the AI study despite 11 requests.... This is from a minister who says he's always happy to talk about AI but for whatever reason doesn't seem to want to come to this committee as we study AI.

Therefore, in light of the minister's continued stonewalling of this committee's request that he appear, I would move the following:

That, further to its study on the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, or AI, and its regulation, the committee

(a) take note of the fact that, despite the testimony of the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation at the Standing Committee on Science and Research where he said that he is “always happy to talk about AI” and that “[the government is crafting its] AI strategy very transparently,” the minister was invited to appear before the committee on this study but has thus far failed to make himself available to appear despite the clerk of the committee reaching out to his office 11 times in an effort to schedule his appearance since the motion to invite the minister was passed by the committee on September 17, 2025;

(b) instruct the chair to write to the minister to request his appearance before the committee on this study by no later than February 6, 2026;

(c) schedule the minister to appear for two hours by no later than February 6, 2026; and

(d) should the minister fail to make himself available to appear before February 6, 2026, report to the House the material facts.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cooper. I'm going to accept the motion.

You brought it up in the motion, but I just think it's worth repeating that we did reach out to the minister in the context of Mr. Thériault's study and the motion the committee passed. We did get a letter from the minister indicating that he would make himself available early in 2026. I take him at his word on that, so if this motion does pass, it instructs me as the chair to write a letter to the minister, which we will do this week, encouraging him to come before the committee in advance of February 6.

The only other thing I would say is that we don't know what our new schedule is going to be. Right now, we're meeting on Mondays and Wednesdays, but it could be Tuesdays and Thursdays, so we're going to keep that in mind to make sure we tighten up the timelines.

The motion is on the floor. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Monsieur Sari.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Abdelhaq Sari: Mr. Chair, I think the minister will be here before February. That is why I wonder why a condition is set out in point (d) of the motion.

I am wondering why it is implied that his appearance is not certain. We already have the information that he is coming. Why then include a condition? I have never seen the following wording in a motion: if such and such a thing does not happen, here is what we will do. He has already said he is going to be here before February, so there is no need for point (d).

[*English*]

The Chair: I just see this more as formalizing the request of the committee for him to come. As you know, we can't compel the minister to come. As I said, he's already indicated he will come. Let's formalize this in a letter.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, I just want to say that this motion is like any other. In my experience over all these years, when a motion is moved, we offer a minister to appear before the committee. This is really a common practice. The use of the word "if" is legitimate. We have to think about it in terms of time. Ministers have extremely busy schedules, so we need to include a condition in the motion.

Generally, it is the same thing at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and even the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Ministers always come. Other committees are asking for a minister to appear within two weeks, whereas we are giving the minister more time. In our case, there is predictability.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Gaudreau.

Mr. Saini, I saw your hand.

Gurbux Saini: The issue was raised, I think, a couple of weeks ago. I spoke to the minister. I think he was holding a G7 meeting in

Montreal. We have to understand that as a minister of the Crown, besides sitting in Parliament, he does a lot of other work. He has indicated that he plans to be here, so we have to accept that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saini.

I don't see anything controversial with Mr. Cooper's motion request. It just formalizes on my part a letter to the minister saying we want him here before the 6th.

I don't see any further discussion.

Are we in agreement with the motion?

We have consensus.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, committee members.

I just want to comment on the state of committee before we break here, and how we've been working. I can tell you that as chair of this committee for almost three years now, I'm very pleased with the way the committee is functioning. I think for the most part we've had very respectful dialogue among each other. Some of the issues that we deal with are uncomfortable issues. They are. This is an oversight committee, and there are four oversight committees in this Parliament—government operations, public accounts and the status of women. The purpose of an oversight committee—and it's majority-led by the opposition, including the opposition chairs—is to provide oversight on the function of government. As uncomfortable as sometimes that may seem, with some of the questions and some of the direction that we end up going, its purpose is to provide that oversight.

I think we've been doing that very effectively as a committee. It's important work, because without oversight committees—and I'll use this committee as an example—there would not have been the SDTC situation exposed, and there would not have been the WE Charity scandal.

[*Translation*]

I think Ms. Gaudreau witnessed that.

Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Mr. Chair, I was there from start to finish.

Thanks to you, things are going well at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

The Chair: Yes.

This is very important work and very beneficial not only for the country but also for democracy.

• (1735)

[*English*]

I am very, very proud of the work we have been doing this fall session. I hope it continues, as uncomfortable as it may sometimes seem, on all sides, and I try to be as fair as I can, understanding that we all have a role to play.

I want to wish all of you, with that backdrop.... Are we getting a list here?

[*Translation*]

Is there any discussion?

[*English*]

I was just about to wish all of you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. As we reflected earlier about this year, and as all of you have had that opportunity, I thought I would take this opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor.

Linda Lapointe: I would go along the same lines as what you said earlier. Things are not always pleasant, but we have a job to do here.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a restful holiday season. Make sure to take time with your loved ones. This is important if we want to come back in great shape at the end of January.

I wish the same for all the staff around the table, including the clerk and the researchers. Thank you for supporting us and helping us with our work. Have a wonderful holiday and try not to miss us.

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

Abdelhaq Sari: I simply want to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy holiday season, as well as a great year in 2026, filled with happiness, joy, prosperity, serenity and above all peace and health.

I would conclude by telling you what I say in my riding to all the people living in seniors' residences and to members of seniors' clubs: Do not forget to tell your loved ones that you love them, take the time to do so, because it is very important.

Mr. Chair, thank you for the work you do. I also want to thank all the teams that support us, all the technicians and interpreters.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Saini.

Gurbux Saini: One of the nice things in a democracy is that you can debate and come up with the best solution. I have absolutely no issues with how we debate, as long as there are things that are purposeful.

At the end of the day, to all the staff, all my colleagues on the other side and Madam Clerk, analysts and everybody else, happy birthday. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Happy birthday to you, Mr. Saini.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Gurbux Saini: Happy holidays.

The Chair: He meant happy birthday, baby Jesus. That's what he meant.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: On that note, I want to thank all of my colleagues around this table.

I also want to thank our staff.

Welcome to the staff who are here for their first time on Parliament Hill and witnessing our committee work.

I want to thank, in particular, our clerk, for the many hours that we spend working together, and the analysts as well, Maxime-Olivier and Alexandra, for all the work they do, and also our interpreters.

[*Translation*]

Thank you so much for everything you do.

[*English*]

For our technicians as well, thank you for making us live every day.

I am going to conclude by wishing you all a very merry Christmas, a happy holiday and a healthy, happy and prosperous new year.

This meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

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