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# Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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Chair: John Brassard





# Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Thursday, May 28, 2026

• (1530)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 43 of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using Zoom.

We are in committee business. I have two items for discussion today.

The first point is small. You will all have received the study budget to be adopted for the two meetings the committee had in relation to the main estimates.

Is it the will of the committee to adopt the budgets for \$500?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** I see consensus on that.

The second point is that we are resuming debate on the motion moved by Michael Barrett on Thursday, April 23, as already amended. It reads:

That the committee:

(a) require the Privy Council Office (PCO) to provide the committee, on a quarterly basis, with a report detailing each time an assessment was undertaken relating to the application of the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen, pursuant to the assessment tool on the application of the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen, including assessments originating in the PCO or any department, from the previous month; these reports must include (i) a summary of each instance where an assessment was triggered; (ii) the record of the outcome of each analysis; (iii) any records of discussions or considerations that are in the possession of the PCO or any department related to each analysis, including notes and meeting minutes; and (iv) any correspondence related to each analysis, including emails, text messages, instant messages and other records of conversations; and the first report, which shall be provided to the committee by no later than June 15, 2026, shall include the complete set of information for each assessment since the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen came into effect;

(b) post the reports publicly on the committee's website; and

(c) invite the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner every quarter, to discuss the contents of the most recent quarterly report from PCO.

There was an amendment moved by Ms. Chagger asking that the motion be amended as follows:

1. by replacing the words:

"an assessment was undertaken relating to the application of the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen, pursuant to the assessment tool on the application of the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen, including assessments

originating in the PCO or any department, from the previous month; these reports must include (i) a summary of each instance where an assessment was triggered; (ii) the record of the outcome of each analysis; (iii) any records of discussions or considerations that are in the possession of the PCO or any department related to each analysis, including notes and meeting minutes; and (iv) any correspondence related to each analysis, including emails, text messages, instant messages and other records of conversations; and the first report, which shall be provided to the committee by no later than June 15, 2026, shall include the complete set of information for each assessment since the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen came into effect; and,"

with the words:

"the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen has been applied. Given that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has advised the Prime Minister against learning of when his screen has been applied until a decision has been finalized and made public, such decisions shall be shared after this point, subject to any limitations or privileges that may apply such as national security or cabinet confidence"; and

2. by adding the following:

"(b) require the Privy Council Office (PCO) to provide the committee, as necessary, any updates to the assessment process for applying the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen;".

We are on the subamendment right now of Mr. Barrett. He moved:

That the amendment be amended by adding, in part 1 of the amendment, after the words "the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen has been applied", the words "or not applied following an assessment".

This is where we resume debate today.

Mr. Hardy, I have you first.

[Translation]

I will then give the floor to Ms. Gaudreau, followed by Mr. Cooper.

[English]

Mr. Hardy, please go ahead on the subamendment.

[Translation]

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

I'm glad to be back and to be with you today.

Once again, I believe we are talking about some things that are essential to our democracy, and those are transparency and accountability.

We proposed a motion that, all in all, is very simple.

I would like to give a brief history of what is currently happening and the proposals we've made. This will help us to better understand them. I also want the people watching us to know what's happening, to see a bit of how the situation is developing, and to understand, or not, why our Liberal colleagues are refusing our proposal.

We request that the Privy Council Office come once every three months to provide a summary of the situation each time the conflict of interest screen is activated.

Why was the conflict of interest screen activated?

It was activated because our Prime Minister holds shares in 2,000 companies with excessively significant connections in the Canadian economy and the international economy. We want to ensure that every decision made here at home is made in the interest of Canadians and not to benefit his portfolio. It is extremely important that, at such a critical moment in Canadian history, at a time when the international economy is undergoing major changes, citizens know that the decisions made by elected officials are made for them.

Why does the conflict of interest screen exist?

As I was saying, there are 2,000 companies involved, but unfortunately 1,900 of them are not covered by the screen. This is why we asked questions here, and we still don't quite understand why. There are 103 companies covered by the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen.

I would also like to remind you that the conflict of interest screen is being implemented by employees who report directly to the Prime Minister. Here, we're an oversight committee. I believe it's normal for us to want to know when the conflict of interest screen was activated so that we can perhaps go over something again, ask questions, and ensure that everything was done properly. Furthermore, if the employees who report directly to the Prime Minister are the ones examining the Prime Minister's activities, that in itself leaves room for a potential conflict of interest.

Our proposal is really very clear.

Item (a) of the motion requests that the report be made here. We want to know when the screen was triggered, and we want to know the results of the analysis. Once again, I would like to say that this information should be accessible. We want to have access to documents, minutes and the exchanges that took place. We want the committee to have the opportunity to review this report. We do not want it to be me or any of the other members of the committee. We want the committee, everyone here, to be able to analyze it. It's important because we're asking for transparency.

Through point (b), we want the report to be made public. We want people to know what's happening.

Point (c) requests that the commissioner come to give us some of his time every three months, so that, ultimately, we can review our analyses.

We tabled this motion here, but it was immediately blocked once our colleagues' party became the majority on the committee. Now, they're trying to amend the motion.

Their first proposal is to remove 75% of what we proposed. We told ourselves that they clearly did not want to give Canadians and Quebecers access to what is happening here and that they did not want to give them access to the analyses that are supposed to be done on their behalf and for them.

We were told here that the screen was activated, but they're not giving us any additional information under the pretext of national security—they even wrote that down. Basically, asking questions has become dangerous. It's serious.

However, it's not complicated. We have a Prime Minister who leads a country and makes decisions that have a big economic impact on the wallet of every Canadian and every Quebecker, but they also potentially have a big economic impact on his own wallet. All we want is clarity and assurance that the decisions that were made were made for the right reasons. However, we're told that, for reasons of national security, it's better for us not to know. Basically, it's like telling citizens that, for their own safety, they shouldn't know where their money is going.

Then, the Liberals proposed adding "as needed". Ultimately, who will decide that the report from the Privy Council Office will come before us, the members of the committee? Adding "as needed" will ultimately allow them to decide what the committee should analyze.

• (1535)

That amounts to saying that it's not up to the neutral and independent oversight committee to decide what we should analyze. It is up to them to decide, on a need-to-know basis, when it's time to give us the information.

In order to collaborate and work together, we proposed a sub-amendment. Basically, we want to know whether the screen has been activated, because if it's up to the employees who report directly to the Prime Minister to activate the screen, then they're also the ones who decide that it doesn't need to be activated. However, if it did not need to be activated, we would like to know what mechanism was used, what considerations were made and what discussions took place.

Once again, it's important that we do our protective work. The opposition has an important role, which is to protect citizens and to balance power. It's important that we have our say in a decision-making process, especially when it involves billions of dollars being invested and we're being told not to ask questions. Even today, in the House, we were called conspiracy theorists just because we want to have access to information. When we ask questions, we're conspiracy theorists. That, I believe, is serious. I honestly think that people are really fed up with being taken for fools. They're tired of being told that when they have a question, it is not the right question and that they should ask the questions they want, otherwise national security or the national interest are compromised.

The tool was presented to us, and it is quite interesting. Thanks to this tool, the conflict of interest screen, we can see lots of really relevant things.

I just want to remind you of something quite relevant and important. From the beginning, we've been told that the screen is extremely effective, because the Prime Minister no longer knows what he owns. He placed his assets in a trust without any oversight rights. That is based on the premise that the person responsible for his account may have sold everything and he doesn't know it. Basically, this is the basis on which the Liberals say the Prime Minister is no longer aware of what he has, that he never gave any instructions, that it's impossible that he told people to pay attention to certain things in particular, and that he certainly never even gave his point of view on his intentions for the future, on what he wanted to do with his shares, and on his long-term vision for Brookfield. All of that apparently fell into oblivion from the moment he became Prime Minister. There is a conflict of interest screen in place, and he put his shares in a blind trust, so we are all protected, because he had instant amnesia, he no longer knows what he owns, and he has no idea where he was going with Brookfield.

We put a screen in place—actually, it's not “us”, it's clearly “you”—with the ethics commissioner. The role of this screen is precisely to activate when Brookfield enters the picture and when one of the 103 out of 2,000 businesses is part of the equation. That is always changing, because, as we know, Brookfield continues to invest in all kinds of things. The operations director even came to see us here to say that when Brookfield makes money, the Prime Minister gets richer. This means that the Prime Minister remains the holder of his shares without knowing it, and things continue to go very well for the business, because it's always being visited, three days before or three days after. While the Prime Minister is there, there are always interactions. Each of the projects—or most of them—that the Liberals are currently choosing are largely drawn from Brookfield's portfolio of companies, which is active and includes businesses in which it invests.

Okay, so we're going to study the screen. We recall that Mr. Sabia, the person in charge of the screen, himself sold his shares to ensure he would not be in a conflict of interest. This means that, initially, to be able to do the work that is asked of him and meet expectations, he thought it would be important to sell his shares.

It would seem that the present moment is a period of intense crisis because, in each announcement our Prime Minister makes, he tells us that the world is more dangerous than ever and that we are living through a time of uncertainty and unprecedented major changes in history.

However, it's not important enough for him to sell his shares and make it clear to Canadians that every decision is truly being made in their interest.

• (1540)

In this proposal, we're assured that everything will turn out well and everything will be done properly. I have an excerpt here. It's as if the Prime Minister were talking to us:

For the sake of convenience, the relevant sections of the Prime Minister's screen are as follows:

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and I have agreed that a conflict of interest screen is an appropriate compliance measure, aimed at preventing any opportunity to further my interests or to improperly further those of Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corporation, and Stripe

Inc., and any company owned or controlled by them (“the Companies”) of which I am aware on the date that my blind trust was established.

Already, the Prime Minister has told us here that it's only for what he is aware of at the time it happens. He said that we will be able to find them in Appendix A, but unfortunately, we do not have access to Appendix A. Therefore, we can't know all the companies that are owned and the related companies.

It's so easy to create documents that create a veil and throw dust in people's eyes to show others how well the government is doing things. However, in the end, we will never know if he is doing things right; we just have to trust him, because asking him questions puts national security at risk. What we are experiencing is a bit special.

To return to the amendment, I would say that what we're asking for is completely normal. We just want to know when the screen is activated and what the mechanisms are. We want to know when it was decided that it would not be activated. As a neutral committee, we want to have the right to ask relevant questions to inform Canadians about the decisions our Prime Minister makes and the billions of dollars spent each week.

I find it a bit unusual that even today, we're facing colleagues who not only refuse this but also propose to remove 75% of what we are proposing, using national security as an excuse and telling us that we're asking for too much and always exaggerating. Once again, they show that transparency is not what they want. In fact, they requested a closed meeting from the very first moments of their majority. The first thing they did was turn off the cameras so that people wouldn't find out. Moreover, when we come back in front of the cameras and propose things to have more clarity and to work on behalf of the citizens of Quebec and Canada, they refuse transparency, they don't want to take responsibility. They call us conspiracy theorists who jeopardize national security by asking questions.

Honestly, I think the situation is clear and that citizens are capable of forming their own opinion about what is happening here. I hope the Liberals come to their senses. In fact, they are not there for themselves, they are there for the people, and the people they represent do not all agree with them. They have the right to know why things are happening this way and why decisions are being made. It's not to be mean, it's to be neutral, efficient, and transparent. This is our role here. We're here to serve the public. Institutions are there to serve the people, not to serve themselves, and even less to be used by people seeking to gain advantages.

That has to be clear and straightforward for the public. That's how we will be able to earn its trust. Every witness who came here told us that this trust was eroding and that people had less confidence in institutions. The only way to regain trust is to drastically correct what is happening right now, to go completely in the opposite direction and to be entirely transparent.

That is what I have to say about our motion and the subamendment. I hope my colleagues will come to their senses quickly.

• (1545)

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

Ms. Gaudreau, you have the floor to speak on the subamendment.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Chair, allow me to convey the greetings of my colleague, Luc Thériault, whom I am replacing.

Next week, the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation is going to submit a strategy on artificial intelligence. Since the committee worked hard on this and there were many important recommendations, I think it would be very helpful for the report to be tabled before the strategy is presented.

The committee already has the draft report, but is there a way for the committee to quickly table it in the House?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes. Right now, we have to schedule some time to make sure we do the draft consideration of the report. You're quite right that it has been distributed. I am trying to work with the clerk to find some time to do that as soon as possible. We haven't landed on that as of yet because we are still in the middle of the lobbying study. There are witnesses scheduled for that next week. Then, of course, the minister is coming with the Ethics Commissioner for Alto on June 11. We've already determined that. It's likely that we may end up dealing with this in the fall when we come back.

[*Translation*]

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Regarding the subamendment, Mr. Chair, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics from the very beginning, from 2019 until 2021, and it's still a disaster.

We want to engage in prevention to avoid repeating the same mistakes. I remember very well the first motion I submitted to the ETHI committee. It was to call for the resignation of Mr. Morneau, who was then the Minister of Finance, because he did not recuse himself. Do you remember the case involving the WE Charity in 2020, and the figure of \$48,000? Then, what happened next? Mr. Morneau resigned and submitted his application for a position at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD. Everyone knew Prime Minister Trudeau's interests at the time. Mr. Morneau is a banker, a shareholder and a businessman.

When I talk to the voters in my riding of Laurentides—Labelle, they are more than cynical. They're even wondering how good our safeguards are against partisanship and a lack of transparency. They're really discouraged.

I'm the only one here in this room who can afford to say that, and sometimes, I have no choice but to say it. I'm not seeking power. It must not be obvious to you. If I were in your place, if I were forced to protect the Prime Minister who tells you not to worry, because there won't be a scandal... Listen, it's written in bold letters. I want to say that people are not idiots. On the other hand, it can be overdone. For my part, I want to find the best means to ensure that breaches of the code of ethics are not overlooked. I look at the motion and I think that we really have a very prescriptive guideline. I see that there's been a major change. I need to be convinced that nothing will slip through the cracks. Honestly, where is the balance?

At this committee, we will never engage in major partisanship. Yes, we will always engage in filibustering; I experienced a 44-hour filibuster during the discussion on WE Charity. I know what it is.

We need to show our fellow citizens that we have a backbone, insofar as we want to protect their interests. We are not talking about \$48,000, like when Mr. Morneau resigned. We want to prevent it and we want to make sure it doesn't happen again. When I go back home, people ask me what we are afraid of. When you're not afraid, you say, "well, yeah."

Furthermore, organizations have told us about all the accountability they have to provide to justify a small amount like \$40,000, otherwise the aid will be withdrawn and they'll have to shut down. It's insulting.

I never imagined that we wouldn't be able to, maybe, find a balance here, but there's a really significant gap. I didn't have the numbers, but when I say that among the 2,000 companies in which the Prime Minister is a shareholder, 103 are covered by the conflict of interest screen, I can't believe it.

If necessary, Mr. Chair, we can take a break to talk and make sure we're all on the same page. This is what they did at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs—Mr. Cooper is a member of that committee—and also at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates—I believe Mr. Barrett was there. We've done it several times.

I have the feeling that it might end up in a filibuster. We don't have much time left, so, it's a call to conclude, to come to something.

What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

• (1550)

We might receive a no. And if it's a no, what's on the table doesn't work.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gaudreau.

[*English*]

I have Mr. Cooper, followed by Mr. Al Soud.

Mr. Cooper.

**Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak to the subamendment put forward by Mr. Barrett. I want to take a step back to provide some context on what is before this committee.

The subamendment put forward by Mr. Barrett would mandate that the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office disclose to the committee every time a decision is made with respect to the Prime Minister's ethics screen. It's important to note that the ethics screen was set up at the insistence of the Ethics Commissioner in the face of the Prime Minister's extensive conflicts related primarily but not exclusively to Brookfield.

The Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council came before this committee last fall and provided the assurance that the screen was being robustly used and that an assessment tool had been created within the PCO and the PMO to guide the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council, both of whom are charged with the responsibility of administering the screen, to do so effectively.

The assessment tool, which they tabled a copy of with this committee, contains a step-by-step analysis. It sets out the matters that must be included in the screen, and the matters that must be included relate to "Any direct engagement by Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corporation, or Stripe Inc and the companies listed in Annex A of the Prime Minister's Conflict of Interest Screen." In other words, it's the companies the Prime Minister has declared a conflict in relation to.

We know the Prime Minister has other conflicts that are not in the screen that he didn't disclose, but that's a separate issue. There are 103 companies, or 103 conflicts listed in annex A. The matters that must be included in the screen relate to any direct engagement with respect to those companies listed.

The tool the PCO and PMO designed then goes on to set out the matters requiring assessment. The tool notes that certain sectors warrant specific attention, including real estate, mortgage insurance, the airline industry, the expansion of the nuclear industry and the expansion of and investment in the renewable energy sector, including solar, wind and hydro, as well as the credit card industry.

Upon identification, is one of the listed companies captured by a matter that the Prime Minister could be engaged in? Does it relate particularly to any of these areas, given the Prime Minister's declared interest, where he has interests in relation to real estate, mortgage insurance, the airline industry, the nuclear industry, the renewable energy sector and the credit card industry, which are the sectors that have been specifically identified as red flags?

● (1555)

There is then an analysis undertaken if it is triggered. This is the threshold question:

1. What is the Prime Minister's involvement/What decision is being sought from the Prime Minister/What matter is he being asked to discuss or engage on?

That's the threshold question. That's what must be answered.

The tool then provides matters that must be included in the screen:

2. Does the decision or discussion involve direct engagement between Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corporation, Stripe Inc. or any of the companies listed in Annex A and the Government of Canada (e.g. contracting for goods and services, applications for funding, meetings)?

Then there are the matters requiring assessment:

3. Are the interests of one of the Companies involved in the decision or discussion, and if so, in what way?...
4. Is the decision or discussion in relation to a matter of general application?...
5. Does the decision or discussion involve the interests of at least one of the Companies as a member of a broad class of persons or entities?...
6. If the decision or discussion applies to a broad class, is the interest/benefit of at least one of the Companies disproportionate to those of the other members?...
7. If the decision or discussion is (1) not of general application and does not apply to a broad class or (2) there is a disproportionate interest/benefit despite being applicable to a broad class, is there a direct link between the Prime Minister's involvement and the opportunity to further one of the Company's interests?

Then the tool provides examples to assist with the assessment. Examples include questions of a general application:

If the decision or discussion applies to an undetermined group of people or companies, then the matter is of general application.

If the decision or discussion applies to a regulated activity and to an [indefinite] group, then the matter is not of general application.

If the decision or discussion applies to a particular entity, person or group of entities or persons, or to a particular situation then the matter is not of general application.

Further examples to assist with the assessment include questions related to a broad class:

If the decision or discussion applies to a larger number of entities or people, who may have different characteristics, but share at least one important characteristic, such as teachers, homeowners, lawyers, financial services companies, etc., then the matter applies to a broad class.

If the decision or discussion applies to a small group, then the matter does not apply to a broad class.

If the decision or discussion applies to a larger group, but one of the Companies has a disproportionate interest/benefit...then the matter does not apply to a broad class. A disproportionate interest/benefit refers to an imbalance in proportion to others.

This is the tool that is being used. These are the questions that are supposedly being analyzed to determine whether a matter can appropriately be put before the Prime Minister or should not be put in front of the Prime Minister and be kept at arm's length from the Prime Minister.

For the purpose, we were told, of transparency and accountability, this analysis is documented. It's documented in a two-page template that is filled in. Upon that two-page analysis, the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council make a decision as to whether the screen applies or does not apply. If they can't make a decision, they then, pursuant to the tool, seek more information. Those are three options. They can make a decision that it applies or that it doesn't apply, or they need further information.

● (1600)

In the event they request further information, presumably that information is provided. Then a yes or no decision is made. The subamendment by Mr. Barrett simply provides that this committee be able to see these two-page analyses that are conducted every time there is a red flag—the red flag being the Prime Minister maybe having a conflict of interest in relation to a matter. It's not that he does. It's that he might.

What the Liberals seem prepared to do is say that they'll provide us with the times when the screen is invoked and when a determination is made that the Prime Minister has a conflict on a matter that isn't of a general application. Of course, that kicks in when a decision disproportionately impacts Brookfield's interests, relative to other companies, as part of a broad class or otherwise. However, they won't provide us with the times when this form is filled out and when the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council say they don't believe he has a conflict, so he can engage on the matter, even if the matter involves Brookfield or one of the companies listed in annex A, which relates to companies with which he has a declared conflict.

The rationale is really unclear. Why do the Liberals seem so strongly to want to resist this common-sense subamendment by Mr. Barrett? It would go a long way toward providing the transparency Canadians deserve, so they can know the Prime Minister is not making decisions where he has a conflict of interest. It's so they can have the assurance that the ethics screen—which is supposedly a safeguard to prevent the Prime Minister from engaging in matters in which he has a conflict of interest—is being invoked appropriately. Frankly, if the Prime Minister wants to stand behind the ethics screen, and if we're to accept that everything has been done in such a robust way....

I would have thought the Prime Minister's Office and the Liberals on this committee would be very eager to say, "Here it is. Here are the times when red flags were raised. Here is the analysis that was undertaken. In light of the analysis, here is the decision that was made by the chief of staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council, one way or another." Yes, it's good to know the times when the Prime Minister has.... I won't say "recused himself" because the ethics screen is designed so that it isn't—supposedly—put in front of the Prime Minister. That's so he won't have to recuse himself. He would supposedly have no idea a matter is before his government.

• (1610)

If it were used in the way that the Prime Minister's Office and the Clerk of the Privy Council say it's designed to be, and as the Ethics Commissioner asked that it be designed to do, it would completely shield the Prime Minister from those decisions. That's fine, but we need to know when that happens.

I would argue that it is relevant, if not more relevant, to know the times that a red flag was issued and the decision was made that the Prime Minister could weigh in, even though it relates to a matter in which he has some sort of declared conflict—in all likelihood related to Brookfield given the companies and entities that are listed in annex A, although not necessarily.

I spoke a few times to this at the last meeting, on Monday, and said several times to Liberal members that if there's something I'm missing here, something that would clearly explain why it's impossible or problematic to disclose the times that a decision is made by the chief of staff and the clerk that the Prime Minister doesn't have a conflict that rises to the threshold to invoke the ethics screen, provide what those reasons are. However, no reasons have been offered, or at least to the degree that some rationale has been put forward. There seems to be a completely inadequate explanation as to why this committee shouldn't be made aware of the times that a de-

cision is made to not invoke the ethics screen in the face of a red flag relating to a conflict.

One of the explanations that was provided was that it was cumbersome. Precisely that word might not have been used, but that was effectively one of the arguments that was made. It's not clear to me how it could be cumbersome, because we know that back in the fall, when the clerk and chief of staff came before this committee as we undertook a review of the Conflict of Interest Act, we were told that the tool had been triggered 13 times, and decisions had to be made about whether to apply the screen or not apply the screen. On seven occasions, a decision was made not to invoke the screen, and six times the decision was made to invoke the screen. It could have been the reverse of that, but there were 13 occasions when there had been a red flag and a decision one way or another had been made.

That would have been, as of the fall, documents that amount to 26 pages, with 13 different summations—13 different occasions when the chief of staff and the clerk signed off on the tool to answer this question, ultimately: Do you concur that this issue engages or does not engage the application of the Prime Minister's conflict of interest screen? What is cumbersome about that? What is difficult about that?

We know from the update that has been provided to this committee that, not surprisingly, other conflicts have been flagged given that other decisions have come forward, and that there were 14 occasions when the screen had been applied—that a decision was made that, yes, in fact, it does engage the Prime Minister's application of the conflict of interest screen and therefore he should be shielded from having any knowledge or any involvement in respect of the matter.

• (1615)

In the fall, a total of 13 matters came before the clerk and the chief of staff, and there were 14 times when it was applied after several months had passed. We couldn't be talking about hundreds of other occasions when there was a red flag. We're probably talking about 14, 15 or maybe 10 to 20 times that a decision was made that the screen did not apply.

The notion that it is somehow burdensome is just not genuine. It's not a reasonable explanation for saying that we as a committee, an oversight committee, the ethics committee, shouldn't be privy to knowing the occasions when a decision is made that the screen should not be involved.

Another argument that was put forward was in essence—again, I'm paraphrasing—that that's not how it works. I'm sorry, but is that not how it works? A Liberal member said that we have the Ethics Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Act, and that if matters arise in which it's thought that the screen should have been invoked because the Prime Minister was in a conflict, there is a process in place through the Ethics Commissioner to deal with breaches of the Conflict of Interest Act. Yes, it's true that we have an Ethics Commissioner, but it goes without saying that it becomes more difficult for members of Parliament—opposition members and Liberal members, assuming that they are also interested in oversight—to work to provide appropriate oversight when there isn't full and complete transparency.

How can one scrutinize whether the Prime Minister was in a conflict or not in a conflict when it's entirely possible, absent disclosure, that members of this committee and Canadians are left in the dark about decisions that he may, in fact, be involved in making? To say there is a process—that there's an Ethics Commissioner and that if there is a possibility the act was violated, we can write to the Ethics Commissioner and the Ethics Commissioner can undertake an investigation—isn't an adequate explanation for that either.

If we were to accept the submissions of the clerk and the Prime Minister's chief of staff, the whole purpose of the ethics screen is to avoid exactly that type of scenario. I take it that's exactly what the screen is supposed to do to prevent breaches of the act. If we don't know when red flags have been raised and decisions are made that the Prime Minister can proceed, then there's a major transparency gap, one that the subamendment put forward by Mr. Barrett seeks to close.

• (1620)

I would cite the Ethics Commissioner in his 2023-24 annual report, in which he states on page 22 that transparency is “a pillar of the Conflict of Interest Act and, indeed, of all effective conflict of interest regimes.” Precisely in order for there to be confidence that the ethics screen is being applied appropriately, there has to be transparency.

What the Liberals are saying is that they'll give us transparency selectively, but they won't give us transparency in those cases where there are certainly questions about the Prime Minister's conflict of interest and a decision is made that he has the green light to proceed. In those cases, they're going to keep this ethics committee, members of Parliament and Canadians in the dark. All that will be left for us to do is our digging, and if we stumble across something or find something, well, there's a process. Until then, unless that happens, it's effectively “too bad, so sad”.

They may characterize it in other ways, but that is what they are doing. That's the consequence of not adopting the subamendment brought forward by Mr. Barrett, which is the position of Liberal members of Parliament on this committee. It begs the question I keep asking: Why? I continue to invite Liberal members opposite to help me better understand the rationale, because it isn't too cumbersome. Saying that it's not the way things work and that there's the process of going through the Ethics Commissioner is, again, totally inadequate for the reasons I've outlined.

Without any further explanation beyond what are totally disingenuous, illegitimate, inadequate and not persuasive explanations, the inference I am left drawing is that, first of all, we have a Prime Minister's Office that really isn't interested in transparency. They created the facade of transparency, but on matters that are clearly material to whomever the Prime Minister is involved with or engaged in—matters in which he has a conflict of interest—the posture, the position, of the PMO is to effectively tell this committee and Canadians to pound sand. They won't say that or use those terms, but that is one thing we are learning from this debate and from the resistance we're seeing from Liberal MPs, no doubt based on the input from the Prime Minister's Office.

• (1625)

The other thing, putting aside the general contempt, really, for transparency that we're seeing, is that this raises questions about how robustly the ethics screen is being applied. How many times has the ethics screen not been applied when it should have been applied? Maybe it's never. Maybe it has always been applied when it should have been, but perhaps not. If the Prime Minister's Office is so confident that everything is above board and has been applied robustly, then show us the analysis. Show us the times that the Prime Minister's chief of staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council signed off and said, “No, the Prime Minister can proceed; there isn't a sufficient conflict of interest here.”

I don't have a lot of confidence in the ethics screen and the way in which it is being administered. As a starting point, we have an ethics screen to avoid conflicts of interest on the part of the Prime Minister being administered by persons who have a conflict of interest, insofar as the clerk and the chief of staff both serve at the pleasure of the Prime Minister. They're not independent. Regardless of the extent to which they're acting fully in good faith and trying to apply the ethics screen, they're not independent. They're in a conflict. That's a problem, but it's a problem that seems to be accepted by the Ethics Commissioner. I'll concede that.

It underscores all the more why there needs to be some level of transparency. We have no mechanism to know when and how often the screen is being invoked or not invoked on matters in which there have been red flags. In fact, before this committee undertook the study in the fall on reviewing the Conflict of Interest Act, we were left completely in the dark. We had no idea how it was being used. We got some answers as to how many times—13—the tool had been used and an analysis had been prepared. We got a copy of the tool, but we have no other information.

Of course, matters that likely warrant scrutiny, or could warrant scrutiny, from this committee are not in cases where the screen has been invoked, because it's been invoked, so the Prime Minister has no involvement in the matter. It's on matters where he is involved. Some of those areas could be grey areas. Some of them could be areas where he has a blatant conflict of interest but for whatever reason, the Clerk of the Privy Council and the chief of staff signed off and said, “Go ahead, Prime Minister.”

Then there could be unlikely or other instances where the answer, as any reasonable objective person would say, was, “Well, no, they got it right; it shouldn't be invoked.” All Mr. Barrett's subamendment is saying is, “Show us those times and be transparent.” If you're so confident in the ethics screen and if this is the answer or solution to guarding against a Prime Minister making decisions in which he has a conflict of interest—a Prime Minister who doesn't have an ordinary number of conflicts of interest by the standard of former prime ministers but the most conflicts of interest because of the roles he played prior to being elected to this place and serving as Prime Minister....

● (1630)

We have, as a backdrop to all of this, of course, documented cases where the Prime Minister has met with Brookfield, notwithstanding that those executives were executives of companies listed in annex A. I will rephrase that. Based on everything we have seen over the past year, there have been multiple instances where the Prime Minister has not abided by the advice of the Ethics Commissioner to stay away from Brookfield. In fact, he's done the opposite in several instances, which, again, raises the question of how many times this screen has not been invoked on matters relating to Brookfield and other conflicts that the Prime Minister has declared and does have.

It's quite disappointing that Liberals are being directed by the Prime Minister's Office to not support Mr. Barrett's subamendment. It raises questions about exactly what the Prime Minister's Office is hiding. By hiding, I mean they are hiding. They're hiding these reports from this committee and from Canadians. Why?

Just before I got to this committee, I was in question period, and I put forward some questions to the government on a matter involving the 200 million tax dollars that have gone to a company called Maritime Launch Services for a so-called spaceport in Nova Scotia. I asked some very straightforward questions today about how the Liberals entered into a lease with a nearly bankrupt company—a company whose independent auditor's report specifically flagged or questioned whether the company was a going concern.

The Liberals nonetheless proceeded to enter into a lease for a so-called spaceport with a nearly bankrupt company. They entered into the lease in March of this year but backdated the lease to April 1, 2025. They backdated it by a full year without any work having been undertaken by Maritime Launch Services. There was no proof of value for tax dollars, even though Maritime Launch Services got \$20 million because the lease had been backdated. I said there was no work, and all you have to do to see that is look at the site, which consists of a poorly designed concrete slab and a gravel parking lot.

● (1635)

The Liberals handed Maritime Launch Services 20 million tax dollars by backdating the lease. Then we found out that the chair of the board, immediately upon the lease being entered into, a lease in which \$20 million was funnelled to Maritime Launch Services, decided to sell three million shares that were previously worthless or nearly worthless and raked in \$1.8 million.

Normally, in the private sector, there would be a lock-up agreement in place to prevent exactly that sort of thing from happening. Why the Liberals didn't insist upon a lock-up agreement is beyond me, other than that the whole thing is one big pump and dump scheme in which an insider got pretty rich. Getting \$1.8 million is a pretty good deal if you can get it with worthless shares—if suddenly you get \$20 million for work that was never done to bail out your nearly bankrupt company. “Here are my shares. I'm selling them, and I'll rake in a cool \$1.8 million.”

For the official opposition, those are the types of questions that Canadians want answers to to hold the government to account. It is necessary to get answers to questions like this: Why did \$200 mil-

lion go to a company that doesn't own land and is making a 1,300% profit off Crown land that it then flipped back to the federal government for a concrete slab and gravel pit in respect of a lease that was backdated by a year for no work and no value, a company through which the chair of the board walked off with \$1.8 million after selling shares immediately after his nearly bankrupt company got a \$20-million cash infusion from Mark Carney's Liberals?

What I saw in the House was the Minister of Natural Resources laughing about the matter. He thought it was funny. The member from Cape Breton, Parliamentary Secretary Mike Kelloway, in answer to a follow-up question from Greg McLean, called it a conspiracy theory.

I cite what happened in the House a little over an hour ago as one illustration of how the Liberals operate, of the complete and utter contempt they have for accountability and of the extent to which they go to gaslight, to dismiss and to laugh off what on the surface appears to be cronyism and corruption of the worst kind in the case of this so-called space pad.

Bringing it back to the subamendment put forward by Mr. Barrett, we saw a lot of the same gaslighting at the last meeting of this committee, as well as a lot of the same approach, which is to effectively thumb their nose at transparency and accountability.

● (1640)

I know that the Prime Minister and those who repeat the talking points provided by the Prime Minister's Office, whether they be parliamentary secretaries or backbench Liberal MPs, often call this Canada's new government, but it's the same old Liberal government, the same old Liberal approach. It's the same old Liberal government that has a long history of cronyism, conflict and corruption.

I sat on this committee in the last Parliament. The litany of scandals surrounding the same old Liberal government is too much to keep track of. It was endless.

There's a reason Justin Trudeau left office. He announced his resignation in January 2025. He had an approval rating in the range of 15% to 16%, the lowest approval rating of any prime minister in 35 years.

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Michael Cooper:** The highest approval rating was not 17%. If Mr. Al Soud, who worked in that office, thinks that is such a great approval rating, well, I can say 17% is 17%. He couldn't be more out of touch if he thinks Justin Trudeau was popular in January 2025. He most certainly wasn't. It doesn't matter other than to say that there was a reason he was unpopular, and that was the corruption and the litany of conflicts and scandals surrounding his government.

For Canada's so-called new Prime Minister, new government, there was an opportunity for a reset and to do things differently, but it's been more of the same. It's more of the same when we have a Prime Minister who, two days after the federal election, met with an executive who's listed as being in one of the Brookfield companies in which the Prime Minister has a conflict of interest. It's more of the same when we have a Prime Minister who, a month later, met with the CEO of Brookfield Infrastructure in Washington. It's more of the same when we have a Prime Minister who met with those connected to Brookfield in New York City and London. It's more of the same when we have a Prime Minister who met alone with none other than the chief operating officer of Brookfield in the Prime Minister's Office.

The chief operating officer of Brookfield came before this committee and admitted and acknowledged, quite appropriately so, that, given the Prime Minister's extensive "stock options and deferred share units" with Brookfield, "As the value of Brookfield increases, the value of those instruments increase." In other words, when Brookfield does well, Mark Carney does well.

• (1645)

If it is the case that when Brookfield does well, Mark Carney does well, then we sure deserve to know of those times when the Prime Minister has been involved in decisions involving Brookfield. We need to know of those times that sufficient red flags have been raised, likely about Brookfield, to warrant an analysis of whether the Prime Minister should proceed to be involved in those decisions.

I suspect that the reason the Prime Minister's Office doesn't want this committee to see when it has given the Prime Minister the green light is that it wouldn't look good for them. It would raise questions about how robustly the ethics screen is being applied and the extent to which the Prime Minister is in fact recusing himself from, is not being involved in or is being shielded from decisions related to Brookfield.

That's really what is going on here. They can come up with all kinds of excuses, but that's what's going on. They don't want Canadians to know all of the times the Prime Minister is making decisions related to Brookfield, in which he has conflicts of interest because he stands to make millions when Brookfield does well. They don't want Canadians to see that. They don't want Canadians to know about when that's happening. They want Canadians to be kept in the dark.

We need transparency. We need sunlight. We need to know. That's what the subamendment provides for. I'm hoping that Liberal MPs, upon further reflection, will maybe do something other than take the orders of the Prime Minister's Office and support Mr. Barrett's very reasonable subamendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Al Soud, you are next on the subamendment. Please go ahead.

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Out of respect for the work we could be doing here today, and perhaps because I don't enjoy the sound of my own voice as much as others do, I won't take up as much time as some of my colleagues have.

We've been having this conversation now to seemingly no end. The saddest part is that what's being proposed in the subamendment does nothing but create a parallel process to track decisions that were not assessed as requiring a screen.

To Mr. Cooper's notes on the something that's missing and on certain points we've heard previously pertaining to compromise, the motion with our amendments will provide the committee with a report that outlines situations where the screen was applied and with updates on how the process is completed, to determine whether one is needed. If there are problems—as they spend so much of this House's time and resources saying—that should be more than enough to identify them.

When we get to doing work at this committee, we hear from witnesses across the board who tell us how rigorous our system is. Every minute we spend in this room having this conversation...what certain people here are saying is that they don't have faith in those institutions.

I said this on Monday and I'll say it again. I've been on this committee for over a month now, and I've heard nothing but long rants that are turned into clips. This is time we could be spending on incredibly important studies—studies that were collectively agreed upon as matters of utmost importance. In fact, I distinctly recall being told on Monday, "Don't worry, Mr. Al Soud; we'll be able to get back to doing that work on Thursday."

We could be using today's meeting to do some work. We could be making use of the time we have today to move forward on what we collectively know to be of tremendous value, yet here we are again going on long rants for the sake of generating clips. All I ask is that we get to work. We're here.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gaudreau tells us that she wants to do real work. I have confidence in the committee members. We're here to do real work.

[*English*]

They can't say that they prioritize the work we're doing here and then in the same breath continue with rants preventing us from doing that work. They will go on, I have no doubt, but Canadians are far smarter than these members seem to think. They see through this. This is disappointing. That's all I'll add on this.

To Mr. Cooper's note on approval ratings, perhaps he could enlighten us as to where the Prime Minister's currently sit. To his comment on my time in government, I'll echo the kind words of Mr. Barrett this past Monday: Feel free to follow and like.

Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Al Soud.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hardy, you have the floor regarding the subamendment.

**Gabriel Hardy:** I am always very astonished to hear such criticism from my colleague across the way, who has been sitting on this committee for a month. As a good Liberal, he seems to have forgotten what has happened recently—in the past year, in the past decade. He speaks with a lot of emotion about being disgusted that time is being wasted, with a well-prepared text that he is forced to read on his tablet, forgetting that the Liberals spoke for 24 hours to become the majority, then to end the committee meeting. That's crazy.

Today, he is completely stunned by the fact that we are trying to understand why they don't want to give us information, and he talks to us about a waste of time. The ones currently in the worst position are my colleagues across the way. We listened to one hour—73 minutes—of monologue, which no one here paid to hear. I didn't buy a ticket for this, but we have to be here and listen to them for an hour. A member of parliament spoke to us for 73 minutes about how he views life. Please, refrain from making comments like that and putting people in their place when you have trouble controlling yourself.

I really want people to understand what's happening here. I think it's important. I won't read the entire document on the conflict of interest screen, but it is incredible. I will read some excerpts and make comments, Mr. Chair, if you'll allow me, because I want people to understand what we are talking about and what information we want. We want to understand why they don't want to give it to us.

As I said earlier, I started from the fact that the Prime Minister said, “The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and I”—as Prime Minister, he speaks to us like that—“have agreed that a conflict of interest screen is an appropriate compliance measure.” They think it's fine. Our opinion is not important because they possess the absolute truth. When he says “to prevent any opportunity”, we here believe that this isn't the case. When we do the analysis, we ask ourselves what's happening. The public doesn't think that's the case.

He then says, “to further my interests or to improperly further those of Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corporation, and Stripe Inc., and any company owned or controlled by them [...] of which I am aware [...]”. What I find interesting here is that we're starting to hear “yes, but”, “maybe”, and expressions like “of which I am aware”. However, we know that by placing his shares in a blind trust, the Prime Minister theoretically is no longer aware of what will happen after that.

Right there, he just gave himself a little loophole by saying, “on the date that my blind trust was established”. He's talking about Appendix A, which we don't have access to because it's confidential. He adds: “This screen will prevent me from giving preferential treatment to any of the companies while I exercise my official powers, duties, and functions as a principal public office holder.”

That's the end. It won't be very long, because I hate wasting time in life. It's really serious how much I hate that. The Liberals made me realize even more how much I hate wasting my time and wasting other people's time. Listen to this carefully: “This screen is administered by my chief of staff and by the Clerk of the Privy Council [...]”. The chief of staff is an employee of the prime minister, and the Clerk of the Privy Council is an employee of the prime minister, so, a second loophole. The first loophole is the phrase “of which I am aware” and the second is that two employees who report directly to him will administer it. He then says that the screen is “to ensure that I am neither made aware of nor participate in any official matters or decision-making processes involving the companies' interests.”

He adds: “I may, however, participate in a discussion or decision on a matter that is of general application [...]”. This is a third loophole. When you are prime minister, everything is of general application. You are making decisions for the entire country. Right there, there is a hole as big as a 20-wheel truck in the applied conflict of interest screen: “[...] or that affects the companies' interests as a member of a broad class of persons [...]”.

The Prime Minister is once again giving himself a loophole by talking about a “broad class of persons”. Brookfield is one of the Canadian companies known for engaging in the most tax avoidance. It's tangled up in initiatives that the Liberal government is currently involved in, under the pretext that these are decisions of general application. Next, we're being told how to conduct the analysis. It's important, because we've been given the document to reassure us. However, when I read it, I'm far from reassured. I actually find it really unusual that it was accepted.

• (1650)

The document states, “To conduct the analysis, contextual information related to the companies that are subject to the screen [...]”. There are 103 companies subject to the screen out of the 2,000 in which he is a shareholder. Wow! It can't be said that this is a very robust screen if 95% of the companies are not subject to it.

When he says, “[...] and the sectors of the Canadian economy that warrant specific attention [...]”, once again, this is a fourth or fifth loophole—there are so many loopholes that I no longer know which one I'm at—to say that we will only focus on the sectors that warrant specific attention. It goes on.

I turn the page and keep going. Part A discusses the matters that must be included in the screen. It states, “Any direct engagement by Brookfield Asset Management, Brookfield Corporation, or Stripe Inc. and the companies listed in Appendix A”—which we do not have—“of the Prime Minister's Conflict of Interest Screen [...] will routinely and automatically be included in the screen and not discussed with or provided to the public office holder.” That's the first step, which is supposed to have been implemented.

However, the director of Brookfield told us that he spent a day in the Prime Minister's office when he was appointed. We read this document and we tell ourselves that the Prime Minister is not supposed to have discussions, meetings—it's stated at item (i)—“with known subsidiaries of the companies”. But it's not a subsidiary, it was a representative of Brookfield itself who came to his office for a day. We look at that and say to ourselves that something happened in the first paragraph. They forgot to continue reading the document.

Next, it states, “[...] decisions regarding a financial grant or contribution to known subsidiaries of the companies”. The lobbying commissioner came to tell us that if a person requests grants, then that is considered lobbying, but requesting “contracts with known subsidiaries” is not necessarily lobbying. Once again, there's another step. We can go directly to it. No problem. In Part A, there are already problems because the instructions were not followed at all, right from the first week.

Let's go to Part B, under the heading “Matters requiring assessment”, that is, when the two employees of the Prime Minister will analyze a situation, particularly when “the private interests of the companies captured by the Prime Minister's Conflict of Interest screen are largely concentrated in a small number of sectors.” Here, we come back to the issue of “general application”. Brookfield is focused on several major sectors that decision-makers in Canada currently seem to have a lot of interest in. It therefore seems that, if Brookfield is everywhere, it won't be affected by any analysis of this screen.

I won't read the entire document to you, because there are items that are just empty words, but I'll continue my reading. “Conversely, such an assessment is not required if decisions are taken solely under the authority of a given minister [...]”. I remind the committee that there was a minister who initially recused himself, then decided not to recuse himself, and ultimately voted directly on the matter he was supposed to have recused himself from. This minister, whom we will be receiving here soon, may have encountered a conflict of interest. We had given him the definition. When people recuse themselves, it is either because of a conflict of interest or because they are incompetent. The minister has not yet come to explain to us why he recused himself, but he did indeed recuse himself, and then he defended the Alto high-speed train project, debated it and voted in favour of it, even though his wife is vice-president of the company.

According to this screen—and it doesn't protect Canadians much—decisions are made under the direct authority of a minister, and we are not required to activate the screen. That doesn't make me feel confident. Imagine, a minister can recuse himself or herself, for example a finance minister, the number two in the country, and then withdraw that recusal. However, this document says not to worry, there's no problem, we're protected if the decision is made directly under a minister. Anyone listening to us might say that, yes, I might be somewhat right.

Next, it talks about the sectors that warrant specific attention. It's funny because we're being told to be careful with certain sectors, like real estate. Of course, Brookfield is directly involved in real estate, and the screen does not change anything. We make announcements every week about investing billions of dollars in it. There's

also mortgage insurance, the airline industry and the expansion of the nuclear industry. Once again, Brookfield is active in these sectors, but apparently there's no problem, because the screen wasn't triggered.

We don't know what's happening, yet announcements are being made. There's the expansion in the renewable energy sector: solar, wind, hydroelectric. That's exactly what was announced in the major projects initiative. It's timely, because I sit on the committee that met with the representatives from the Major Projects Office. I know because we analyze those projects.

• (1655)

It can be done. That's not a problem.

If there had been many obstacles to these projects and they had not progressed, we could have said that they were blocked by the conflict of interest screen because they would have too broadly favoured the interests of the Prime Minister. However, that's not what happened at all. Every week, billions of dollars in spending are announced in sectors directly affected by Brookfield that are supposed to be covered by the conflict of interest screen, including industries and the credit card sector.

I'll read one last passage from the document, then I'll stop, because after that, it's about the questions that need to be asked and how they should be asked.

Changes to tax policy are generally understood to be of a general application and/or benefitting a class of persons. The majority of potential tax changes are not expected to be the subject to the screen [...]

I have an example. I went to get an analysis of that famous tax policy. The Liberal government implemented tax policies that are supposed to have a broad and general application and therefore should not be subject to the conflict of interest screen. Now, through a bill, it has established and expanded generous refundable investment tax credits for clean electricity technologies, clean technology manufacturing and carbon capture projects. What's happening is that these measures directly subsidize Brookfield's vast portfolio of renewable energy assets and its green transition funds. If the tax policies are general, I should be entitled to benefit from them. On the other hand, we realize that what is described as “general” benefits the Prime Minister's company in particular.

Let's go further. Accelerated capital depreciation is subject to a different tax policy. In fact, the same bill provided a productivity super-deduction by offering deductions for accelerated depreciation and the immediate deduction of new capital expenditures. This significantly reduces the taxable income related to large real estate infrastructure projects. There you go, once again, a nice advantage for our colleagues and friends across the way, who seem to have an exceptional appreciation for Brookfield.

I'll finish my reading here so as not to waste time. My colleague seems very interested in what I'm saying.

What we're asking for is not complicated. We just want to have access to the document. It's supposed to be a two-page document. We know that we'll already have access to one of the requests because, when the screen is activated, the committee is supposed to be aware of it. What we're asking for is to also know the instances where an assessment concluded with the decision not to apply the conflict of interest screen. It's not complicated, because there are two possibilities.

The first is that you don't have any documents when you do analyses because they were done on a napkin. It happened recently. In fact, the Minister of Finance said that he had planned a major project worth billions of dollars on a napkin. If that's the case, we have a serious problem right now. If you're doing analyses on a napkin to address ethical issues, I think it would be good for us to know.

The second is that you do not have them, those famous analyses, which would lead us to think that things are being hidden.

If the two employees reporting directly to the Prime Minister conduct analyses, and they do not do them on a napkin, you should have the documents. Why not give them to us? We're supposed to be neutral. Let's analyze them here, as a team, together. Next, as Mr. Al Soud just said, we'll get to work. Working is all we want. Provide us with the documents so that we can work.

However, in the end, they refuse to do it. They're asking us to stop requesting the documents because they're doing the assessments on napkins. Otherwise, it's because they want to hide the information. Why refuse to provide it to us?

What I find funny is that people here keep accusing me of wanting to make clips. It's funny, since I've been doing it, people are more informed, they seek out information more, and they are more interested in politics. The fact that there is laughter at the back of the room, I find that really interesting, because what is happening here interests me a lot. I'm not being partisan. It disgusts me that taxpayer money is being spent and they don't want to tell them why or how. I find it sad that people act like that in a democracy.

We're told that all is well. I don't agree with that. Every weekend, people come to see me to tell me that they can no longer make ends meet and that they are no longer able to pay their rent, their food or their gas. It's too expensive. On the other hand, we learn that the Prime Minister spent \$520,000 to travel by plane, eat hearty meals and drink fine wine. Meanwhile, people are skipping meals. Then, we are laughed at because we ask questions. It's serious. What's happening here is really serious.

All we want are documents. We don't want partisan documents. We just want to be able to analyze them as a team and make clips to inform people.

• (1700)

That's what we want to do. We want to inform people so that everyone can form their own opinion. I'll say here what I said in the interview and in several other places. I had a job before becoming an MP, so the day it no longer works and the people from my community tell me that I don't represent them, I'll go do something else

with my life. It's up to these people to make their decision based on the information we provide them.

The Liberals are laughing at us. They keep telling us that we're dragging out the meetings, while they have been giving non-stop monologues and we've listened to them for 24 hours. It was sad to hear.

When we ask for something that should exist, they tell us we are asking for too much. Why do they refuse to answer our questions? If an assessment was done, it means someone thought it needed to be done. There's a human being who looked into it and thought that maybe we should do an analysis, just to see if there's a conflict of interest. Then, it was decided that there wasn't one. If the analysis was started, it means there was reasoning and a potential conflict of interest. We're not crazy, extremists or conspiracy theorists. If there's a process under way, it means that someone on the Liberal side thought it'd probably be a good idea to analyze it. Can we know? That's exactly what we are asking for.

We ask the Liberals to be humble when they come here, and to provide information to Canadians. That's all I have to say.

• (1705)

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

Ms. Lapointe, you have the floor regarding the subamendment.

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

I'm happy to see that Ms. Gaudreau wants to move forward and that she wants to work.

What I see in my riding is that people are very concerned about what's happening south of the border and around the world, geopolitically. That's what people talk to me about. They're very proud of what our Prime Minister is doing, about what's happening and the agreements he has signed. Canada's economy is a medium-sized economy, and it makes free trade agreements so that Canada is less vulnerable to our neighbours to the south. That's what I hear.

We can do several studies. We have a report to do on artificial intelligence, and we can complete it before the end of summer. On the table, there's also the study proposed by my colleague Leslie Church, who is currently online, on pricing algorithms. We can do this work.

We can also conduct a study on the Privacy Act of Canada. I don't know if Ms. Gaudreau had the chance to read the "blues" of the meeting where Michael Sabia and Marc-André Blanchard came to talk about what we were doing. I know she wasn't the one who was there, it was Luc Thériault. At the time, I thought that I would've preferred Michael Sabia, who is the top public employee, and Marc-André Blanchard, who works in the Prime Minister's Office, to appear before us from the start. They convinced me that the system worked. I understand that we can have differences of opinion, but these people, these senior officials, convinced me that they were doing their jobs.

The Prime Minister has a blind trust. It's in the name, it's blind. There's an additional screen. This is where the civil service machinery is ut in place. This is where Michael Sabia and Marc-André Blanchard come in. As far as I'm concerned, I'm fine with it. I'm satisfied that Michael Sabia and Marc-André Blanchard are doing their job.

I request a vote on the subamendment. Next, I'll call for a vote on the motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your statement, but there are people on the list who wish to speak on the subamendment, and we must go through the list before voting.

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper, you have the floor. Go ahead on the subamendment.

**Michael Cooper:** I have to say, on the subamendment, that it is quite rich for, in this case, Mr. Al Soud to assert himself as the arbiter of what constitutes a waste of time for this committee and what doesn't. He characterized my submissions as "rants" and said that I am wasting the committee's time in calling for the Liberals opposite to support a subamendment that would provide transparency on whether the Prime Minister's ethics screen is being appropriately invoked. If the member opposite thinks that's a waste of time, I guess it's par for the course with these Liberals, who think transparency or accountability are one big waste of time. This speaks to the absolute arrogance of the Liberals and underscores their total contempt for accountability and the oversight role of this committee.

That's ironic given that we had to put up with more than 24 hours of filibustering from Liberal MPs to block accountability with respect to Alto and the Minister of Finance's apparent conflict of interest. He introduced, spoke to and voted for legislation that gives billions of dollars to Alto, notwithstanding that his spouse is a VP at Alto.

When we called on the finance minister to come before this committee to answer some questions about what on its face is a conflict of interest, we had to listen to 24—it seemed like 100—hours of filibustering from Liberal MPs. I didn't hear Mr. Al Soud talk about wasting time at that point. I didn't hear any Liberal MPs talk about it being a waste of time. Now that the Conservatives are insisting that Mr. Barrett's subamendment be adopted and are imploring Liberal MPs to join us in getting the subamendment passed so we can have transparency around the ethics screen, it's somehow a waste of time.

Again, on accountability and transparency, the Liberals treat this as one big waste of time and one big inconvenience. That was the position of Madame Lapointe. She said, "I don't really care about transparency." I'm paraphrasing her, but that's what she said. "I don't need transparency because I trust the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Mr. Blanchard, and the Clerk of the Privy Council, Mr. Sabia."

I'm not going to in any way impugn the integrity of either Mr. Sabia or Mr. Blanchard, but I don't think most Canadians would consider simply saying, "I trust them" to be adequate or good enough. It's simply not good enough to say, "We trust you to make decisions on a matter that relates to the Prime Minister and conflicts of interest."

• (1710)

Mr. Al Soud talks about a big waste of time, yet the fact is that we had to endure 24 hours of filibustering at this committee by the Liberals as they dragged proceedings out. They said the minister couldn't come the week of May 6 and that he could come on May 23. Now we're in the week of May 23, and we were told on Monday that the minister can't come before this committee until sometime in June. I can't recall exactly the date, but it's in about two weeks from now that he'll finally make himself available to answer questions about his apparent conflict of interest in relation to Alto.

The Liberals talk about wasting time. They talk about the work this committee could be doing. Maybe they should ask themselves why they put this committee through a 24-hour filibuster to provide us with a window during which they claimed that the minister would be available to come before this committee to answer questions about an apparent conflict of interest, and now he's not coming for another two weeks. Did they put us through a big waste of time?

For Liberals, who claim that they value the work of this committee so much, they sure don't seem very excited or enthusiastic about having the minister come to this committee to answer questions about a conflict of interest. Again, for Liberals, transparency and accountability are just one big waste of time.

They think they're above the rules. They think they're above the law. They think nothing applies to them. They will lecture. They will speak in the most condescending and sanctimonious ways possible, but when it comes to conflicts of interest and questions about the Prime Minister and the conflict of interest screen, they will act holier than thou, all the while basically thumbing their noses, saying, "To hell with providing transparency." I'll just say that I won't accept any lectures from Liberal members opposite talking about what is a waste of this committee's time and what isn't a waste of this committee's time.

I know that Mr. Al Soud and Madame Lapointe listed a number of items that they thought this committee should study. I don't have any objection to the items they listed, but none of the items listed actually deals with the core function of this committee, which is to provide oversight around the Lobbying Act and the Conflict of Interest Act. Instead, we saw a 24-hour filibuster and a date on which the minister was supposed to come but didn't to answer questions about a conflict of interest.

Ms. Church, who thinks this is so funny, said that the Minister of Finance would be at the committee of the whole for four hours. He was at the committee for four hours, and I think he didn't answer a single question in the four hours he was there.

• (1715)

In fact, I asked him some questions about the spaceport and why, for example, the lease was backdated. He said that maybe he would put me in touch with some astronauts. That was his explanation. He said that it was all very exciting work being done to launch a spaceport, and maybe he'd put me in touch with some astronauts.

Why am I attacking the space industry? That was his question. That was his answer, instead of addressing the very real issue of \$20 million being funnelled to Maritime Launch Services, on a backdated lease, to bail out a nearly bankrupt company. The chair of the board has been fined \$100,000 for securities infractions and walked away with \$1.8 million when he sold three million shares after the \$20-million infusion of cash. The minister's response was that this is an attack on the space industry. That's the best he could give in the way of an answer. Give me a break. It just speaks to their contempt.

I hope that when the minister comes before this committee, if he comes—I hope he doesn't find another excuse not to come before this committee, but we'll see—he does a better job of answering questions than he did for four hours during the committee of the whole. He provided no answers and treated the process as one big joke in answer to very specific questions about how the government is spending taxpayers' money.

I spoke about the Prime Minister's litany of conflicts with respect to Brookfield. I would also note, as conceded by Mr. Beber, the chief operating officer of Brookfield, that when Brookfield does well, the Prime Minister does well.

In the last year that the Liberals have been in office, Brookfield has done very well under the government. This is a Liberal government that has fast-tracked a Brookfield-owned LNG project. This is a Liberal government that handed half a billion tax dollars to a foreign space agency—the European Space Agency. I know the Prime Minister calls himself a European, so maybe that's how he justifies sending half a billion tax dollars to the European Space Agency, which is connected to and owned by Brookfield.

Then there is the multi-billion-dollar investment in carbon capture, with Pathways Alliance. The premier carbon capture company associated with Pathways Alliance is none other than Entropy. Who owns Entropy? It is Brookfield, of course. What fund at Brookfield invested \$300 million in Entropy? It was the global transition fund I.

• (1720)

Who set up the global transition fund I? The Prime Minister did. Who stands to make tens of millions of dollars in carried interest payments, a.k.a. the future bonus pay from the global transition fund I? It's Mark Carney. He stands to make tens of millions. Here you have a multi-billion-dollar investment from Mark Carney's government into Entropy for carbon capture, a company that is owned by Brookfield and by the very fund that Mark Carney stands to make tens of millions of dollars in future bonus pay from.

Madame Lapointe, with the greatest respect, says that we should just trust Mr. Sabia and Mr. Blanchard. What we see is a Prime Minister who in a lot of respects may be ignoring the conflict of interest screen altogether and is landing in a very good position from all the money that is being doled out by his government to various Brookfield companies and interests, including interests that benefit the very investment fund that he stands to make tens of millions of dollars from.

I provide that background to say that Mr. Barrett's subamendment does not come in a vacuum. It comes in the face of a lot of conflicts that the Prime Minister has with Brookfield—a lot of taxpayer dollars that are going to Brookfield and ultimately benefit the Prime Minister and his future bonus pay and stock options. It comes in the face of a Prime Minister who has basically said that he's quite comfortable helping to see that Brookfield does very well because he will do very well. All we're asking is for the Prime Minister's Office and the Clerk of the Privy Council to show us their analysis of when they think there isn't a conflict of interest in relation to Brookfield. In that respect, this subamendment is actually very narrow in scope.

There are a whole lot of other areas to explore around Brookfield, around how the Prime Minister is benefiting directly or indirectly, whether it be with the fast-tracking of the LNG project, the half a billion dollars to the European Space Agency or the multi-billion-dollar investment that is going to benefit Entropy, which is going to benefit Brookfield and specifically the global transition fund I. All of those things fall outside of this issue of the conflict of interest screen perhaps—or perhaps not. I really wonder. For example, was the ethics screen flagged? Was it flagged when the government announced a multi-billion-dollar investment in carbon capture with Pathways Alliance, with the beneficiary being Entropy? Was there an analysis done on that?

• (1725)

Was there a red flag? Was there an analysis done? Did Mr. Sabia and Mr. Blanchard say to the Prime Minister, "There's no problem here. We'll make a multi-billion-dollar investment that benefits your investment fund and your bonus pay"?

If an analysis was done and that was the decision, then there are some questions to be asked. If there was no analysis done, then the question is, why? Why wasn't an analysis done? To what extent are matters involving the Prime Minister, where he has a conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest, being missed by this tool that we were told is the be-all and end-all by Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Sabia?

I would ask the same question about the European Space Agency. Half a billion dollars benefited Brookfield. Was it flagged? Was an analysis done? If the decision was made that the Prime Minister had no conflict there, then, again, some questions need to be answered, and if an analysis wasn't done, well, that raises questions about what kind of a tool the ethics screen really is.

The Liberals say that all of this is one big waste of time. I'll tell you that demanding transparency and working to see that this committee fulfills its responsibility of providing oversight of the most conflicted Prime Minister in Canadian history are not a waste of time. It is the responsibility of this committee and every member of this committee, and it's a responsibility that I certainly will not shirk as a member of the official opposition. The core responsibility of the official opposition is to hold the government to account. That's what we're doing here. Now, it may not be what Liberal members on the committee necessarily like to see or like to hear, but it is our core responsibility, and that's not a waste of time.

We're going to continue to press this matter. We had the benefit of Mr. Al Soud and Madame Lapointe making submissions, and I respect the points they made to the extent that they've said that they consider accountability and transparency to be a waste of time and that we should just trust Mr. Sabia and Mr. Blanchard. In both of those submissions, what was totally missing was any explanation for what the problem with Mr. Barrett's subamendment is.

I've spoken at length on the merits of this, but what I have not heard from Liberals opposite is exactly what they object to with Mr. Barrett's subamendment. I know that Mr. Al Soud stated that where

the ethics screen was triggered, reports would be provided to this committee.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** You have another couple of minutes, Mr. Cooper.

**Michael Cooper:** All I can say is that I certainly am aware that that's what would be provided to this committee, but that's not the issue. The issue is what is not provided to this committee. That is the issue, and what we have not heard is an explanation as to why they don't want this committee to see those reports.

I know that Madame Lapointe would like us to just trust Mr. Sabia and Mr. Blanchard. I know that she would like us to somehow say that all is well, that there's nothing to see here and that there are no questions to be asked because supposedly the Prime Minister is signing all of these agreements and making us less dependent on our sovereign neighbour, whatever that's supposed to mean. I thought he was the great deal maker, the guy who could get a deal done with our largest trading partner. It's only a \$33-trillion economy, but he hasn't done very well in that regard.

I know that Mexico is at the negotiating table. Where's Canada? We have all kinds of jobs—over two million jobs—that are directly tied to a trade agreement with the United States, and the master negotiator is AWOL—

• (1735)

**The Chair:** I'll have to cut you off there, Mr. Cooper. We've run out of resources. I appreciate your intervention.

Mr. Al Soud, get your hard hat, your coveralls and your work-boots on for next week, because we're coming back on Monday and dealing with the lobbying report. That's the Lobbying Act study. Make sure you get your hard hat, your coveralls and your work-boots on, and roll up those sleeves and get to work, sir.

The meeting is adjourned.





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