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Chair: Salma Zahid



Standing Committee on Science and Research

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• (1100)

[English]

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

Good morning, everybody. Welcome to meeting number 19 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. The committee is meeting to study artificial intelligence.

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

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

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

Before we start the meeting, I want to let all the members know that the office of the Minister of Industry, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, has informed the clerk that she would be available to appear before the committee in the new year. For everyone's information, she will be appearing before the committee.

MP Noormohamed, go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Is that all the things you have to say? I wanted to say something about this. Is there more that you wanted to speak to on this one?

The Chair: No, that's what I wanted to let everyone know: We have received the correspondence and she will be appearing. We don't know the schedule for our committee meetings for the next year. Once the calendar comes out, we will schedule the meeting with Minister Mélanie Joly.

MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: On the basis of the fact that at the last couple of meetings I know my colleague Mr. Blanchette-Joncas had been trying to get the minister to come, perhaps now that we know this, it would behoove us to move that we ask her to come to the committee. I'm happy to put a motion forward that she comes to the committee by no later than whatever date, like the end of January or the first week of February or whatever it is, and that we nail the date down as promptly as possible.

I don't know if there's a willingness to do it. I'm happy to move a motion to do that in that context, but I think if we have this openness to do it, we should get it done quickly.

The Chair: Once we have the calendar and the time of the meeting, we will schedule that meeting.

Taleeb Noormohamed: On that basis, do you want me to move a motion saying that she should come?

The Chair: Yes, please go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I think if we have this, let's just get it.

The Chair: Go ahead, and then I have MP Blanchette-Joncas.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Let me think about something. I made some notes here.

Would we invite the minister to come no later than, what, February 5? That's the first four weeks in. That's just to get it on the schedule and say we want a date from her ASAP. If I were to craft it in formal language, I would move:

That the committee invite the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and the Minister responsible for CEDQ, Mélanie Joly, to appear before the committee on the topic of her mandate, on or before February 5, 2026.

The Chair: On January 26, we are coming back, so maybe the end of February might be a better idea.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I would say sooner. I appreciate that, but I think we should say earlier in February. I'm not trying to paint her into a corner, but let's just get it over with in the first four meetings. I would say February 5. If you want to be more generous, you can, but I would say February 5.

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Will her attendance be to speak to AI? Our colleague has a motion that speaks to the mandate and other aspects.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm saying all mandates.

The Chair: One person at a time, please. MP Noormohamed has the floor, and then I have a speaking order. I have MP Blanchette-Joncas and then MP Mahal.

MP Baldinelli, would you like to speak?

Tony Baldinelli: Sure.

The Chair: Okay. I will add you.

• (1105)

Taleeb Noormohamed: My motion would be to bring her on all aspects of her mandate, not just on AI, and then that would address the challenge we've been having of trying to shoehorn it into a study on AI. I would also say we make it on mandate and we put the February 5 date on it so it's not dragged *inter alia* into however many months it might take.

The Chair: You will have to send that motion in writing to the clerk.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm happy to do that.

The Chair: We need to send it out to all the MPs.

One person at a time, please. We have a speaking order.

We have a motion that has been brought by MP Noormohamed.

I'm sorry to the witnesses. We are just sorting it out.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

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

I'm very happy that we're starting the meeting this way, even though we had planned for something else. We have witnesses here today. However, I'm glad to see that the government seems to have done some soul-searching in the past few days. I think it has realized that there are limits to avoiding summoning Minister Mélanie Joly to talk to us about her budget, her measures or her strategic planning, so I'm a bit surprised.

Madam Chair, I also sense that you're willing to move things forward.

As you know, last Monday, on November 24, I proposed a motion to discuss the possibility of inviting the minister, as well as Minister Solomon, to come talk to us about artificial intelligence as part of the study that we're conducting today.

However, there's something I don't understand about the way we work in committee. We discuss certain things, and you then take steps on your end without us having any say, as if there were two groups: that of the chair and the government, which does things; and that of the committee, which focuses on something else. That's what I'm seeing today. You're providing us with information on the minister's appearance, and I appreciate that openness, but we've never adopted a motion to that effect.

I would remind you that we debated this motion in public on November 24. Our colleagues in the Liberal Party were still trying to make up stories about my grandmother that didn't hold up, saying that it was impossible to get the minister here because a report would have to be tabled in Parliament. However, I've been on this committee for four years, and I've never seen a situation like that. Last week, my colleagues were upset and said that it was impossible, that it couldn't be done.

As parliamentarians, it's important for us to be able to hear Minister Joly's remarks here in committee. The topics we discuss regarding science, research and innovation also concern the other parliamentarians.

I have a hard time understanding the situation we find ourselves in today. Something was being defended last week, and now we're being presented with new information, somewhat by surprise once again. This personally makes me feel very uneasy, because I'm not sure we're going in the right direction by operating this way. People do things behind the curtains, and we're ultimately presented with something else today. I received a text message from my colleagues. They're all showing good will. I don't think it's functional to work in this way. It shows that the government isn't really being transparent.

On Monday, I only asked for the minister to appear before the committee. On November 4, a historic budget was tabled, announcing a \$78-billion deficit. There's some good news in there, and there's some less good news.

As parliamentarians, we're entitled to ask questions about the government's direction. That can be done in the Standing Committee on Science and Research. However, there are still attempts to cover things up today; we're told that the minister might appear before the holidays. A Liberal member then tells us she might appear in February. We went from November 4 to December 4, then from December 4 to January 4, and then from December 4 to February 4. We've been waiting for three months. For the past three months, we have been unable to ask a minister from a G7 country to come and answer a parliamentary committee's questions about her files.

This is a serious matter. It's like a banana republic. The minister has been dodging the issue for three months, and her colleagues are defending her, whereas we want to be able to ask her questions in committee. I'm embarrassed for the government members. I'm embarrassed that they have to defend that position. I understand that the minister may have other things on her mind. She was in South Korea last week shopping for submarines. I understand that that will really strengthen science, research and innovation in Canada. I understand that she doesn't want to come and talk about her budget. However, the will of this committee is to invite the minister.

Today, people are going to have to tell the truth: What do they want?

Do they want to protect their government by not having the minister appear?

Do they want the public, who are entitled to ask questions through parliamentarians, to be able to hear the minister's comments by summoning her to the committee?

It's all of those issues that I'd like to clarify. I would again like to invite my colleagues to demonstrate co-operation, good faith and transparency. That starts with informing people before taking action, in particular.

• (1110)

Madam Chair, you have the responsibility to provide that leadership through the committee. What I continue to see today is a failure in that regard. You're presenting us with a done deal without talking to us about it. I went to see you last week in good faith. I told you that we were going to talk about it and that there was no problem. At the last meeting, I even pushed back the date to November 26 to have the chief science adviser appear, because, in reality, I didn't want us to resume debate on the motion.

You're doing it again today. You're repeating what happened at the start of November. When the committee met on November 5, you had completely changed the schedule and agenda, despite the fact that we had committee work scheduled. You're now telling us that you went and got this information for us, that it will serve us in committee, despite the fact that we already had a schedule and an agenda.

The same scenario is happening again today. We arrive at the meeting, you open the committee meeting and, as if by magic, our government colleagues have a solution, and you open the door for them to share it with the committee.

You can understand that this raises many concerns about the impartiality, neutrality and objectivity of doing things in those kinds of ways.

For that reason, I would like you to explain to me today why all this was done without us being consulted first.

That's the only question I have for you today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

Once we receive information, it is my duty, as the chair of this committee, to get that information to the members. If we receive correspondence that the minister would appear before the committee in the coming year, I have to inform the committee. That's why I made that announcement before we started; it was so that everyone knows.

I have a speaking list. I have MP Mahal and then MP Baldinelli and MP Noormohamed.

MP Mahal.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): I think my point was taken by.... He can talk.

The Chair: MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to my colleagues.

I'm very sympathetic to the disappointment expressed by my colleague from the Bloc. He proposed the motion several days ago. In fact, if we had settled upon the motion he had put forward then, we could have had the minister appear in a timely manner. My understanding is that the minister is appearing before another committee this week. If we had settled on this motion, we probably could have had the minister appearing here as well. Unfortunately, that hasn't occurred.

I also have a question about the procedural aspects. The motion my colleague wants to bring forward is about having the minister appear to talk about her mandate and other issues. Is that a notice of motion he'll be tabling today? Today, we're looking at AI, so it's out of the scope of what we're supposed to be doing today.

The Chair: I can clarify that. I made the announcement that the minister is appearing before the committee. It was related to that. That's why it can—

Tony Baldinelli: Again, from a procedural standpoint, I agree with the disappointment and the questions the Bloc member has. If we had resolved this motion days ago, which we should have done, the minister would be appearing. Now we hear she won't be able to appear until after the G7.

Why is it that, at first, she refused to appear before another committee, and yet will appear? I certainly have some—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. I want to clarify one thing.

We were debating that motion and I was trying to suspend the meeting, but the meeting was adjourned so that we could hear from the chief science officer.

• (1115)

Tony Baldinelli: The motion could be brought up again, and it may be brought up again, because we asked in that motion for the minister to appear before December 15, before we break for the Christmas holidays.

From our side, I have nothing but disappointment to express to the government side. We could have handled this much more smoothly and to the benefit of all members concerned. I don't think that happened, Madam Chair. That's the disappointment. That did not happen.

From my standpoint, I still have concerns. I still believe that we should at least try to see if we can get the minister here before the Christmas break—if not then, in the new year.

Again, if we had handled this correctly, we could have had the minister appear as well as the minister of AI, who we're getting on Wednesday. I agree with the disappointment that's been expressed by my colleague.

The Chair: We'll go to MP Noormohamed and then MP Rana.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I have to admit that I'm a little bit surprised.

First of all, with the greatest of respect

[*Translation*]

for my Bloc Québécois colleague, it's important not to look for conspiracy theories.

We wanted the Minister of Industry to appear before the committee. I received the information from the chair at the same time as all of you did.

[English]

On that basis, I put forward a motion that I thought would deal with the issue, which was, I thought, that we wanted the Minister of Industry to appear. Now I'm hearing that this is not what people want. They want to argue over a motion.

If people want to argue over a motion versus having the minister here, that's their prerogative. I had understood that the desire was to get the minister here as quickly as possible. Over the objection of my colleagues, as some of you will have heard, I put this February 5 date in, not February 28, to try to see if we could get her in over the first four meetings we have once we come back.

To my mind, if we can get her before then, that's great. It doesn't say that it has to be in January or that it has to be in February. It says that it's at the earliest possible date but not after February 5. If the idea is that you want to bring the minister here, let's do it.

Just to be clear, we put on the table ways in which to improve that motion that was put forward before. In particular, it was, look, you already have Minister Solomon coming on Wednesday to discuss this particular issue in the scope of his work—in the scope of the work of this study—and by extension you could discuss the scope because it relates to this. Madame Joly's mandate has nothing to do with the study.

The request we were trying to make at the last meeting when we got into this debate in the first place—when, by the way, we could have, to Mr. Baldinelli's point, resolved it, but there seemed to be no desire to come to a compromise on this—was to say that we have him coming, and let's produce a separate motion that invites Minister Joly to come on her mandate and not necessarily part of this study.

Frankly, I don't want to limit the scope of my inquiry of Minister Joly to just this particular study. I would like to talk to her about many other things. I am sure that members opposite probably want to ask her about more than just AI in this country. By jamming it into that motion and into this study, we are limiting our own ability to ask the minister questions. This may surprise members opposite, but members on this side would also like to know certain things that expand outside the scope of this particular study from the Minister of Industry.

The intention at that time was to say, look, let's not be silly with this. Let's deal with the Minister of AI, who is coming on Wednesday. We don't need to worry about adding him to the motion. We have a date. We have an appearance. We're ready to dance on that. We don't have a date for Minister Joly, but now we have an understanding that she is coming. She's offered to come. We know that she has said she wants to come. Instead of playing in theory, let's now nail her down to a date to be able to come. Let's do that in a timely fashion. Let's work as a group to be able to get that done.

If that's the focus, Madam Chair, if that's what people want.... That's what I was trying to do. I have to say that I really take umbrage at this idea that somehow we're trying to jam Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas from moving this. If he wants to move the very same motion that I have proposed, that's great. Let him do that. I would gladly support it. What I'm not going to support, what we're not going to support, and what I would imagine members opposite

probably don't want to support, is a motion that limits their ability to ask questions to just the scope of this particular study.

There's this notion that it's a conspiracy theory. Using language like “banana republic” makes for a great clip, but I'm not sure it resonates with where people are. If people are looking for serious conversations happening in this committee....

By and large, Madam Chair, I would say we've done a pretty good job in this committee of making sure we're staying on point and staying on the issues we have. I really dislike the fact that we have two witnesses to whom I would love to be asking questions right now—

The Chair: There are three.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm sorry. There are three witnesses to whom I would like to be asking questions right now.

I do have to make the point that we went through and wasted a whole bunch of time. We could have suspended that meeting. Instead, we adjourned so that we wouldn't waste the time of the national science adviser. We're back in the same conversation now.

Again, I will say to my colleague opposite that if he's interested in having the minister come on something beyond the scope of just this study, that's the motion I've presented. I've put the most aggressive date possible on the basis of what we know in terms of when this committee is sitting. Let's pass that motion. Let's get a date from the minister. Let's move on to getting to the witnesses—or, we can discuss this until the cows come home. I'm certain we have the capacity to do that in this group, but that choice I leave to my colleagues opposite.

• (1120)

The Chair: I have quite a list.

MP Rana.

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

As my colleague already mentioned, the minister has confirmed that she is coming. I think we should not waste our time. We should move forward. We already have three witnesses here. We just need the time frame for when she is appearing. We only have three more meetings left before our break. As Taleeb mentioned, the date of, I think, February 5 is not too far. We should wait for that date, and we should move forward right now.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next I have MP Deschênes-Thériault.

I would like to welcome MP Deschênes-Thériault to the committee. Now he will be the permanent member for the science and research committee.

Welcome. The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to join the work of this committee. I think that, together, we can have constructive discussions to advance science and research in Canada; at least, I hope so.

As the chair just mentioned, I'm a new member of the committee. I just arrived. I have taken the time to read the various information brought to the committee's attention in the digital binder.

This morning, opposition members expressed a desire to hear from the Minister of Industry so that she could talk to us about her mandate in relation to the 2025 budget, which was tabled at the beginning of November. It includes significant investments in research and calls for innovation.

I think it's extremely relevant to hear from the minister so that she can talk about those investments and so that committee members can ask her questions and better understand the direction and details of certain investments.

It appears that the minister's office informed the chair that the minister was willing to meet with committee members, provide them with those details and discuss her mandate with them. The chair informed committee members that the minister had responded positively to the invitation to appear before the committee. That's a favourable response, then, and it's good news. It's a sign of openness and co-operation on the part of the government.

My colleague Mr. Noormohamed then moved a motion to ensure that this meeting wouldn't take place too late. Since we don't want to hear about the minister's mandate in April or May, it's important to set a date. The motion before us states that it would be no later than February 5, that is, during the first two weeks after Parliament resumes.

The committee already has a busy schedule over the coming weeks, but we have witnesses today whom I would very much like to hear from. In fact, I took the time to prepare my first questions for this committee meeting, and I have a whole series of questions to ask regarding this important study on artificial intelligence.

The Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation will be appearing before the committee this Wednesday. This will also be extremely important, since budget 2025 includes investments in artificial intelligence. That includes \$1 billion to create a sovereign cloud. I want to hear from Minister Solomon on those various issues.

However, if we also want to have the time to have a good meeting with Minister Joly, we have to give her time, and I think February 5 is a reasonable date. I would like to mention that the motion uses the phrase "on or before", so it isn't open-ended.

If the committee wants to meet with her before February 5, there will be a four-week delay. I'll explain; there are two weeks left in the already busy schedule, and there will be another two weeks after the return from the winter break. The committee can hear from the Minister of Industry in the first or second week after the return from that break.

As a new member of the committee, I'm interested in several elements: the international recruitment strategy and the \$1.7 billion in the 2025 budget to recruit experts from abroad. I want to know how that will be done, how that money will be spent, who will manage it and who the partner will be. We can discuss that with her. Of course, there's the issue of artificial intelligence, but investments in research and innovation far exceed that in the budget.

I think the committee should adopt the motion inviting Minister Joly to appear before the committee to discuss her mandate. Of course, that won't prevent members who have questions about artificial intelligence from asking her, since that's part of her mandate. However, if others wish to ask her questions about the international recruitment strategy, for example, they'll be free to do so.

I see that we all seem to agree on the importance of inviting the minister to come and speak to us soon and on the fact that we want more details on her mandate. I think my colleague's motion could easily be adopted.

When the minister appears before the committee, I'd also like to discuss the issue of advancing, promoting and supporting research in French. I know that's a priority for other members around the table as well.

Over the past few weeks, I have had constructive meetings with a number of stakeholders in the research sector. They asked me questions about that. I don't have all the answers, per se, but when the minister is here, I will ask her about it.

I'd also like to better understand how we're going to adopt a francophone lens for some of the investments that will be made in research, and how we can ensure that that happens. It should be noted that one of Canada's strengths lies in its ability to innovate and conduct research in both official languages, English and French. When the minister appears before the committee, I will certainly be interested in asking her questions about that.

Regarding the international recruitment strategy, I want to know if we've thought about how to also look for francophone talent abroad. There's cutting-edge expertise in various fields, and there are French-language international experts.

● (1125)

As part of that strategy, couldn't we consider a lens that would support, celebrate and promote research in French? I would like to discuss those kinds of issues with the minister. If we limit ourselves to the motion on artificial intelligence, we won't be able to ask all those important questions, and that will prevent us from having as rewarding a meeting as possible. For that reason, I'd like to insist on those points.

I think we should adopt the motion that my colleague moved this morning to invite the minister as soon as possible, that is to say, by February 5. That's a fairly short time frame. We don't want to wait until the spring, because not only do we, as parliamentarians, want to ask these questions, but we also want to be able to give proper answers to the stakeholders with whom we have relationships in the communities. My riding has college and university campuses, and I want to be able to go back home to provide them with information, some of which can be obtained during a meeting with the minister.

I may have other points to mention later, but for the moment, those are the points I wanted to add to the discussion. I think my colleague wanted to continue, so I'll stop there.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I have MP Blanchette-Joncas, then MP Baldinelli and then MP Noormohamed.

Go ahead, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

This isn't the first backpedalling I've seen from the government. I've been a parliamentarian for six years, and what I'm seeing right now is pretty classic. I have to say so for the sake of the people I represent with dignity and pride. No one has been able to tell me why today, on December 1, the Liberals are in favour of the idea of inviting the minister, while on November 24, last week, they were opposed to it.

Do you see the Liberal government's hypocrisy? There's a lot of it per square inch!

[English]

Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Madam Chair—

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: When we want to speak, they seem to try to interrupt us for whatever reason—

[English]

The Chair: We have a point of order.

MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: While I respect immensely the member opposite, he is misrepresenting substantially what was actually said by members on this side.

The Chair: That is not a point of order.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, you just heard my colleague's intervention, which once again shows his bad faith. He doesn't want to co-operate; he just wants to protect the interests of his government, which lacks transparency and a spirit of co-operation.

The motion I moved on November 24 was very clear and very explicit:

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

My colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault just told us, "as soon as possible". I proposed "before the end of the parliamentary session". They want to put this off until February, several months after the budget. I repeat: It has been pushed back from November to December, then from December to January, and from January to February. That's three months later. Last week, we couldn't agree, because we wanted the committee to report its findings and recommendations to the House after the meeting. Today, I challenge Mr. Deschênes-Thériault to find one example, since the creation of this committee that has existed since January 2021, where we discussed things that we never presented to the House. I challenge him to do that.

I'm going to use the words that my colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault mentioned: "openness" and "co-operation". I welcome him to the committee. I will gladly co-operate with him, but I will tell him what this government's openness and co-operation mean.

I've been trying to reach the Minister of Industry for a month and a half. I can't say "Minister of Science" because, as you know, the word "science" no longer appears in her title. That's a pretty good indication that she's no longer very interested in science, research and innovation. She's focusing entirely on industry, and you're hiding her away by refusing to bring her here. Is that openness and co-operation, when a parliamentarian asks the minister's office, not once but twice, for answers to their questions about the budget? Is that openness and co-operation on the part of my colleague and his government? That isn't how I see openness, co-operation and transparency.

Do you know what's still ridiculous? I'm going to say it: It's the hypocrisy surrounding what we've just experienced. On November 24, we moved a motion to bring in the minister, and committee members suddenly seem to have become responsible for her schedule. They're the ones checking to see if she's available. They're wondering if she'll be having a coffee and a muffin at such and such time or if she's going to be at this committee meeting.

Madam Chair, things have to be put back to how they should be according to the rules and procedures: The standing committees of the House of Commons are sovereign. If committee members want to invite ministers, parliamentary secretaries or other people, it isn't up to government members to check the schedule of the minister and her office.

Here's how it works, Madam Chair, and I'll let you correct me if I'm wrong. As far as I know, the committee invites the minister and her office to appear. It isn't up to my colleagues to say that they've talked to her office, that she's available, or that she's at the G7 shopping for submarines in Korea and that she'll eventually come after the holidays once she has digested her turkey and meat pie.

I understand that my colleagues are uncomfortable with the idea of having the minister appear; they want to hide her away behind a curtain. Once again, this demonstrates the government's lack of transparency and lack of understanding.

When we look at this today, there's very clear hypocrisy. Last week, they were against the motion. They were talking about the reports and saying that the committee's work shouldn't be submitted to Parliament.

Again, Madam Chair, let them give me the date, time and subject of a single committee study that would have been submitted to Parliament. There has never been one. I've been on this committee since January 2021, and we've always operated this way. Now, all of a sudden, abracadabra, that no longer has any value.

Even my colleague Mr. Noormohamed told us last week—I was stunned to hear him say it—that it was better to have the minister appear because we wouldn't have to report to Parliament, that we could post our clips on social media, and that reports didn't achieve anything anyway, since no one reads them.

Madam Chair, I still can't get over it. I shudder just talking to you about it. He said that publicly. Doesn't that show that some parliamentarians, and a government parliamentary secretary, don't care about the committee's work?

• (1130)

Respect for the democratic institutions of the House of Commons and Parliament is at stake. My colleague said, word for word, that people didn't read the reports. It's as if witnesses, who are here today, don't have any value in his eyes, since reading the reports is meaningless to him. In other words, they have no meaning. I'm telling him that I disagree with him. Tens of thousands of dollars, if not millions of dollars, are invested every year to conduct these important studies. They make it possible to give the government recommendations and make a difference.

That shows the government's view of democratic institutions.

In fact, the example comes from the top. There has been a new Prime Minister since last April. He barely comes to Parliament and travels all over the world. Do you know what he did last? He introduced a bill allowing him to circumvent the laws. I thought to myself that this might have happened before in the history of Canada or that it was possible in the context of a crisis. However, he's taking advantage of the crisis to advance his economic and political agenda and bypass Parliament.

I'll say it again: In June, my Conservative colleagues supported the gag order to pass Bill C-5. I've rarely seen that in the history of Canada. Four weeks after a new Parliament was elected, the official opposition supported a gag order to get that bill passed. I would be embarrassed if I were them. I can tell you that I voted against it.

I'll come back to the matter of bypassing democratic institutions and completely ignoring science, research and evidence. I invite people to look at the budget, and I will take this opportunity to say that I'm a fact-focused person.

On page 301 of Bill C-15, the budget 2025 implementation act, No. 1, there's the possibility for a minister to circumvent all acts of

Parliament, except the Criminal Code, to advance projects of national interest. Laws no longer have any meaning in Canada. A minister could get up one morning and decide that a project is important for the national interest.

This is an unprecedented totalitarian shift. A minister would have the power to decide that a project can circumvent environmental, tax and transportation laws, and even consultation on laws for indigenous peoples, first nations. When Justin Trudeau was in power, this same government was lecturing us about truth and reconciliation. Well, what happened last week? It was a disaster for the environment and science. Votes were bought in Alberta. A new pipeline goes against—

• (1135)

[*English*]

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

The Chair: Wait one second, Mr. Blanchette-Joncas. There is a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I understand why my colleague is uncomfortable.

[*English*]

Taleeb Noormohamed: It's on relevance with respect to the content of what we're having right now: a debate on my motion. I'm not exactly certain how any of this diatribe has anything to do with that.

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

Taleeb Noormohamed: It is. It's about relevance, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a great deal of respect for the people listening to us, and I want to thank them for their understanding. What they're doing is important, and I want to say that. The truth always wins out, and the people listening to us carefully will see what the truth is. The government has no environmental conscience, it couldn't care less about science and research, and it went to Alberta to buy votes to calm things down. That's what has really been going on lately.

I'm going to reiterate the facts, since that's what matters to me. Despite its grand veneer of being environmentalist, under Justin Trudeau, this government bought a \$34-billion pipeline called Trans Mountain. The goal is to exploit fossil fuels, or oil and gas, and export them to Asian markets. Everyone who came here told us that it indeed flew in the face of science.

Last Wednesday, the committee heard from the chief science adviser. When I asked her if she thought it was dangerous for the government to circumvent laws, she said it was “a nightmare”. It's a nightmare to see the government allow itself to circumvent the laws and make decisions that aren't based on science, research and evidence so that it can move its projects forward.

I understand that my colleagues are very uncomfortable today. They're doing some fancy footwork, but people need to know the truth. I'm not embarrassed to look at the people here with us and tell them that that's the reality and the truth. I wanted to take a moment to say that. Last week, there were people who didn't want to invite the minister, and this week, all of a sudden, as if by magic, they want to invite the minister, but on their own terms and not at the committee's discretion. They're proposing that she come three months after the budget was tabled. In my opinion, once again, that shows a lack of openness, co-operation and sincerity in their efforts.

Earlier, my colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault used the words "openness" and "co-operation". I appreciate his good faith. Maybe he's a bit naive; I don't want to judge him, but he needs to look at what happened in committee on November 24. His own colleagues filibustered, meaning that they didn't stop talking, contorting and saying whatever they wanted, even if it meant contradicting each other, to buy time and prevent us from speaking until the meeting was adjourned, so that we couldn't pass a motion. Since then, they may have done some soul-searching and realized that what they did last week was indefensible, so they have decided to backpedal and move a motion today.

No one on the other side of the table can give us any explanations. We're told that, last week, I seemed to suggest that we discuss only artificial intelligence with Minister Joly. That isn't true. I just named the minister. When I proposed that she appear, it was to discuss her entire mandate, not just artificial intelligence.

As I always say, the truth always wins out. When you do good things in life, you don't have to hide it. The same is true for the government's projects. If it works on good projects, it doesn't have to circumvent the laws. Those laws, particularly environmental laws, were created because they're good.

As for the pipeline project that was approved last week, first nations weren't consulted, and it's going to be imposed on British Columbia even though the province wasn't asked to consent. I challenge my government colleagues to show me the scientific studies and the evidence.

My colleague just said that it was unbelievable. I can't believe it either. After all, it was the chief science adviser who said it was "a nightmare". Scientifically speaking, it's devastating that a government that claims to defend science doesn't want to conduct scientific studies to determine whether its project is a good one. In addition, it's passing legislation to get around that.

I want to be on the right side of history in Canada, on the side of people who don't have to hide the truth, who conduct rigorous studies and who obey the law.

• (1140)

Sometimes laws have to be amended, but once again, I invite people to see the depth of this government's hypocrisy. It's exploiting a crisis, the one surrounding U.S. tariffs, to advance its economic and political agenda.

Allow me to go even further: The Prime Minister isn't just a good banker; he also has a good network of contacts. Today, we're

entitled to wonder if that benefits his economic interests and the people close to him.

The Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office is Michael Sabia, whom we know well in Quebec, since he worked at Hydro-Québec and the Caisse de dépôt et placement. He's now here in the federal government, and he has worked at the Department of Finance as well. I myself was a member of Parliament at the time, from 2019 to 2021, and I sat on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Mr. Sabia sold his shares in Brookfield because he found it important to avoid any conflict of interest related to bills introduced by the federal government. That way, people wouldn't have to wonder whether those bills might serve interests other than those of the public.

However, the Prime Minister doesn't seem to think it's important to sell his shares. He put them in a blind trust, which is managed by two people who are part of his team.

Madam Chair, why don't we play a game, okay? I'm going to play with you, but it's me who will pick the referees. That's what the government is doing right now. Do you see how nonsensical that is?

I think we have every right to ask ourselves the following question today: Does this government really serve the interests of Quebecers and Canadians? If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide and wants to avoid conflicts of interest, all he has to do is get rid of his shares to show that he's there to serve the public. Given his past as an investor and the CEO of Brookfield, I can understand that he has built assets. However, when people make the leap into politics to serve the public, they also have to uphold a duty of transparency and impartiality, and that's what the Prime Minister refuses to do. He doesn't want to sell his shares in Brookfield.

In fact, you will note that every time the Prime Minister travels around the world to promote various infrastructure projects, whether they be pipelines, mining infrastructure or port projects, someone from Brookfield is there waiting for him, directly or indirectly. I'm glad our colleagues from the Conservative Party brought it up. There is some discomfort on the government side—

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Just one second, please.

MP Deschênes-Thériault.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I challenge the relevance of what Mr. Blanchette-Joncas is saying to the topic at hand. We're talking about a motion on the appearance of the minister on her science and innovation mandate, yet we're talking about the Prime Minister's trips to develop our international trade. I believe it's off topic.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I would request, MP Blanchette-Joncas, that you keep your comments relevant to the motion we have on the floor, please.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's important to understand what we do outside Parliament because it influences what happens in Parliament. Once again, we see the reaction of our government colleagues. They want to hide the truth and don't want us to talk. The member is so uncomfortable that he wants to cut me off when I talk about what the Prime Minister—his boss—has done. People aren't stupid all the time, after all. I have a lot of respect for the people listening to us today. I would be very uncomfortable if I were in my colleague's shoes.

I'm an empathetic person in life, and I felt a lot of sadness last week when the former minister of Canadian identity and culture, Steven Guilbeault, resigned from the government caucus. As we know, he was an environmental activist before entering politics. He has convictions, which may not be the case for some of our government colleagues. It's always nice to have a good salary, to toe the line, to keep your head down and tell yourself that you have to pick your battles. Last week, Mr. Guilbeault made a half-honourable gesture. He resigned from his—

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: On a point of order.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Once again, Madam Chair, this is a cover-up—

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, MP Blanchette-Joncas, but we have a point of order.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: It's the same thing again. The motion concerns the invitation that was extended to Minister Joly, Minister Evan Solomon, and not to our colleague Mr. Guilbeault.

I don't understand the relevance of my colleague's comments. It would be interesting to discuss the motion before us.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I request again, MP Blanchette-Joncas, that you keep your comments relevant to the motion we have on the floor.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know I'm always looking for the truth. This is important in science, research and innovation. The primary mission of people who do research is the quest for the truth. We make assumptions and we want to verify whether they are fully or partially founded, or whether they are false.

As far as I'm concerned, the connection I'm making with my colleague who resigned, Mr. Guilbeault, is that he wasn't comfortable with the scientific decision. That's the connection I want to make with Minister Joly's appearance.

[English]

The Chair: I request that you please keep your comments relevant to this motion on the floor.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

That's the connection I'm making. I made this long presentation so that you understand what's going on right now. Our colleagues are so uncomfortable with our inviting Minister Joly to appear that they are trying to postpone her appearance indefinitely. They're doing the same thing they did to their colleague Mr. Guilbeault. They forced him, handcuffed him and made him a prisoner of his convictions to the point where they forced him to resign because he was annoying.

My colleague just did the same thing today. He won't let me speak the truth. He refuses to say that the government doesn't believe in science because, otherwise, it would no longer develop fossil fuels and hydrocarbons. That, Madam Chair, is the truth that the government wants to hide today.

When the minister appears, it will be important to talk about her mandate. However, I look forward to being asked questions about her discussions with the Prime Minister on science issues as well. After all, this is not just anyone. Yes, he used to work for Brookfield, but he is also the former UN special envoy for climate finance.

Do you know what he said when he was in that position? He said that fossil fuels should stay in the ground. What did he have last week? It does the complete opposite. He's going to table a new pipeline—

• (1150)

[English]

Aslam Rana: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: One second, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

MP Rana.

Aslam Rana: Thank you Madam Chair. You know the hon. member has the floor of Parliament for a forum. He can discuss all of these things over there on the floor of Parliament, but in here, we have only science and research. I think we should stay on our mandate. All of our witnesses are waiting here too.

Thank you.

The Chair: MP Blanchette-Joncas, could you please keep your remarks relevant to this motion? It is important.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I will indeed repeat that I think it's important for the minister to appear, I hope, of course, before the holidays. As you know, that is what I asked for in the notice of motion I tabled on November 24.

I don't always pretend to have the truth, and I don't always pretend to do the right thing. However, I can see right now that it's not one, not two, but three government colleagues who want to interrupt me. They are uncomfortable with me telling the truth and stating the facts.

They may not like what we're doing right now, but if they disagree with any of the facts I've mentioned, they can let me know. I have no problem with that. However, what makes me uncomfortable is that they adopted one position last week and, seven days later, they've adopted another.

Once again, this shows just how ingrained the lack of transparency and collaboration is in the DNA of the party in power.

What motion is being moved today, Madam Chair? It isn't a motion telling us that the minister must appear as soon as possible. Our colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault told us earlier that we would like Minister Joly to appear "as soon as possible".

I read the motion and, once again, I deplore the way government members work. I have to say that the motion was tabled this morning. We didn't get a phone call or an email before.

[English]

Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Chair, on a point of order, I count this as being repetitious. This is the fourth time we've heard the same thing now. While I appreciate Mr. Blanchette-Joncas' frustration, if the purported intention is to deal with the matter at hand, repeating himself is not helpful.

The Chair: Please keep your comments relevant to the motion.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I keep coming back to the motion. I was just talking about that. Again, I was empathetic. I think my colleague Mr. Noormohamed is embarrassed that I told the truth about the fact that he said last week that he didn't read the reports or care about them. Maybe that's why he wants to interrupt me. I'll say it again publicly. I invite him to reread the transcript. He literally said that it was better to invite the Hon. Mélanie Joly to make clips for social media, because he thinks the reports are useless since no one reads them. So I understand why he's a little uncomfortable and that he's trying to get back at me, as he just did. I find that unfortunate, Madam Chair. Do you know why? I have been the vice-chair of this committee since 2021, and I'm not embarrassed to tell people that I have always worked collaboratively and openly to advance the work of the committee.

In that same spirit, I want to come back to the motion. Why have the minister come in February? I find it inconsistent. If it's important for her to come and see us, why would she come and see us three months after the budget is passed? I have a lot of questions for her. I meet people every day, every week, who ask me whether it's possible to get answers to their questions.

Madam Chair, the reason I was so adamant about having the minister come before December 11 is that I've been reaching out to her for a month and a half. I've been emailing her team for a month and a half. I have to tell you something that's going to hit you hard and hurt you, and I hope they don't take it personally, obviously, because it's the truth again. I want people to be able to understand the truth. Minister Joly's office didn't even acknowledge receipt of the emails I was sending. It's embarrassing, isn't it? The team of a minister whose country belongs to the G7, which is supposed to manage its agenda, is unable to read the emails sent to it by another par-

liamentarian's team. You see, Madam Chair, it's that collaboration, that openness and that sincerity in working with opposition parties that are lacking.

However, I will remind them of one thing, Madam Chair, and I hope they will think very deeply about this in the coming days and months. This is a minority government. It is the democratic will of the people that ensures that the work of these people must be done by consulting the opposition parties, and not only after they have taken action.

The other truth, Madam Chair, that explains why I wanted to bring the Hon. Mélanie Joly before the committee as quickly as possible is that neither committee members nor opposition members were consulted on budget matters. When it comes to science, research and innovation, no one has contacted us, Madam Chair. We tried to contact the minister's office: radio silence. They are more concerned with travelling than with consulting the opposition parties and developing public policy.

You know, Madam Chair, I remember one important thing from my colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, for whom I have a great deal of respect. I think we share common motivations when it comes to defending science in French, and even promoting. I don't need to call on the minister to tell us that there's zero dollars in the budget for science in French. That's the truth, Madam Chair. I invite her to read the public statement issued by the Association francophone pour le savoir, or Acfas, following the adoption of the budget. It's zero, Madam Chair, zero dollars for science in French. It's not because they don't know that there are problems or issues. We know that.

Once again, this shows that this government has no priority, no will and no vision. That's the question I intend to ask Ms. Joly when she comes here, I hope. In my original motion, we asked for her to appear before December 11. I chose that date, not because I thought it would be nice that day or that it would be pleasant, but because it's the last day before the holiday break.

I'll show you once again my good faith and my desire to work together. I'm prepared to work longer after the end of parliamentary business, if ever we were to invite her on December 15, December 20—

• (1155)

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting.

I have a quick question for our witnesses. It's almost noon. I'm sorry about that. I know you came all the way from Toronto—to were on the same flight—to appear before the committee. Is it possible for you to stay a bit longer? Maybe what we will do is hear from the witnesses for this panel and the second panel after we are done with this. Are you okay to wait?

What about you, Mr. Gupta?

Arvind Gupta (Professor, Department of Computer Science, University of Toronto, As an Individual): I am fine to wait, but my colleague does have a flight.

The Chair: What time do you have to leave?

Pina D'Agostino (Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, As an Individual): My flight is at two o'clock.

The Chair: Soon you will have to leave. Let's see how it goes in another five or six minutes. I'll let you know.

Tony Baldinelli: If I may, perhaps a solution would be to propose a motion to extend hearings by a day so these witnesses can be invited back and attend.

The Chair: That is okay, once we deal with the motion we have on the floor. Let's deal with it and then we can go—

Tony Baldinelli: I apologize deeply for today.

These are witnesses from whom we should be hearing, but we're in a procedural debate. I was looking forward to this conversation this morning, and—

The Chair: Yes, let's get through this and maybe we'll have an opportunity for the witnesses to give us their testimony.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I hope to be brief, but I think it's important to take these minutes today to set the record straight and put things in perspective. Again, the problem is deeper than it appears. I did give a presentation and explained several facts to raise public awareness, because that's my role as a parliamentarian. The scientific community also has a right to have its questions answered. However, even I, as a member of Parliament, when I meet with people from the scientific community, those involved in science, research and innovation, I don't have answers for them. They're not getting answers, even through members of Parliament. So it becomes a problem.

Today, I'm seeing the following. My government colleagues want the minister to appear, but again, on their terms. They want her to come later, for whatever reason. Perhaps she will be appointed to another position. I'd like her to stay in her position. We appreciate it very much when we have time to ask her questions, of course.

However, what is really profound is this. The government members want to manipulate us through negotiation. They say they want the minister to come to the committee, but they don't want to report to Parliament.

Madam Chair, any work done here in committee has always been presented to Parliament. Right now, we're seeing hypocrisy. My colleagues agree to have the minister appear before the committee. They checked her schedule, made sure that everyone was nice, that everyone was on her side, that everyone was comfortable, but on one condition: There must be no report. It can't cause too much of a stir.

We are in Canada, a G7 country, we have a minister, it costs thousands of dollars to run this committee, but, for the government members, it isn't important that we produce a report. Once again, I see that my colleague Mr. Noormohamed disagrees with regard to

reports, because he says they're useless and that he doesn't read them. Once again, he is showing a total lack of respect for the democratic institution of the House of Commons and Parliament. Last week, he was fighting like the devil. He said that reports are useless in committee.

That, Madam Chair, is the situation we're currently facing. I feel very uncomfortable on this December 1, 2025. I never thought, in my career as a parliamentarian, that a minister from a G7 country would appear before a standing committee and that members of her own government would deem that what she has to say isn't important enough for the rest of Parliament to hear.

Madam Chair, there's something else going on here. When you do good things, I repeat, you don't need to hide them, you can spread the word, spread the message—

• (1200)

[*English*]

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

The Chair: I'm sorry. On a point of order, we'll go to MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Notwithstanding the personal attacks and the rules with respect to decorum, and putting all that aside, the member opposite has just pointed out, for all of us—you're welcome to go and read the record—that he's repeating himself.

If there's something new, I'd love to hear it. Otherwise, this is an absolute waste of time.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Blanchette-Joncas, if you can—

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I've learned something quite important in politics. Sometimes you have to repeat a message to get it across. Sometimes you also have to repeat it so that people understand the truth. As my colleague Mr. Noormohamed said, last week, clips on social media are more valuable to him than reports from the Standing Committee on Science and Research. On November 24, he said to invite the minister and post short clips on social media.

He thinks that's more valuable than preparing a report and presenting it. It's embarrassing. As vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, I'm embarrassed that one of my colleagues would say this publicly. He is entitled to his opinion. I, too, have thoughts that I would rather he or other people not know about. He has publicly and concretely expressed his vision of democracy and his vision of government; he has publicly shown that he has no regard for the work of the committee. For him, we're here to waste time, have lunch and drink coffee. The committee's work isn't important; no one reads it anyway, and today he's lecturing us, telling us—

[English]

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

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I raise two points. First of all, it's repetition. This has been said four or five times. We don't have memory problems. I think we understood it the first time.

Second, the member's comments aren't related to today's motion, which concerns the invitation of the ministers. We have witnesses I would love to hear from. I would therefore like the member to avoid repetition and ensure that he remains relevant to the topic under discussion.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I would request, please, that you make sure there is no repetition and that your points are relevant to the motion we have on the floor.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

You know, Madam Chair, the truth is always relevant. Here, I'm seeing that my colleagues Mr. Deschênes-Thériault and Mr. Noormohamed, to name a few, are uncomfortable with the truth because it makes them look bad. Once again, this shows the true face of this government. I don't take any joy in repeating the truth. I'm only doing so to make sure that my colleagues understand the predicament they've gotten themselves into and that they realize how they're behaving.

The work here is public, so I know that anything I say today could be held against me. As a result, I'm careful about what I say. I always base my comments on facts and on what people have said before. Once again, they may disagree with me, and I would like my colleagues to explain themselves today. I hope that, in the future, we'll be able to change the way we do things and work in this committee, because I'm very uncomfortable with the way we do things, and I've mentioned that to you. That's why I want the minister to appear as soon as possible.

I will summarize and conclude my lengthy presentation, which I thought was very important today. Of course, it's also to raise awareness among the scientific community and the public watching us.

Why, last week, did my colleagues not want the minister to appear, to the point of filibustering? We weren't even able to finish the meeting. The recording of the November 24, 2025, meeting is available to the public. People can go and watch it. The government members come back to us today, December 1, and Mr. Noormohamed, as if he had pulled out his magic wand, says he has a solution for us, that he has spoken with the minister, that her dog is fine, and that we'll be able to have her appear in February.

Madam Chair, nothing has changed in seven days, except that it has snowed a little in the last few hours and days. That said, we see that Mr. Noormohamed wants to impose his conditions once again. Why? Well, he's protecting his interests. He's protecting the inter-

ests of his political party and his government. He doesn't want the minister to appear, as we wanted, before a certain date.

Once again, I would also like someone to explain to me why we aren't allowed to report on what the minister will tell us here in committee. That's what I'm fundamentally concerned about at this committee. Earlier, I challenged the government members to tell me otherwise, that a minister could appear and that we didn't need to include that in a report, that it wasn't important for it to be presented to the House of Commons.

Today, I think it's important for people to understand how this committee finds itself paralyzed in carrying out work that I think contributes to strengthening research and science in Canada. We see that the government says one thing but does the opposite. The government says it's important for the minister to come, but not in just any old way, because transparency has its limits. She has to come on a certain date, depending on her availability, but it will be three months after the budget is tabled, because people will have time to forget that. You know that the motto of Quebecers is "*Je me souviens*", or "I remember" in English. I remember very clearly what I said today and what has happened over the past few weeks and days in committee.

The other thing I remember is that this parliamentary committee has always presented the results of its work to Parliament. If we want to be transparent, I think it's important that we are truly transparent in the work this committee does. It's important that this not be limited to just a few members or a few individuals on the committee. You know, there are 343 members in the House of Commons. So it's not just the ten or so colleagues who are here, whether they are regular members or associate members, who should be able to see what the minister has to say. It's important that what she does in this committee also has an influence in the House of Commons, because everything we do here is interconnected. Do you understand?

That's why I'm insisting on this today. I hope that the government will listen to reason and understand that, when we do work here, first of all, it's useful to prepare reports. Second, it's not just committee colleagues who should be able to read them. Every day during debates in the House of Commons, we debate issues that we didn't work on in committee, whether it be in agriculture, health, certain infrastructure programs, and so on.

● (1205)

I find it dangerous, Madam Chair, that they're now seeking to set what I would describe as a historic precedent. There's no way that people in the government—

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting.

MP Blanchette-Joncas, please hold on for a second.

Madam D'Agostino, would you like to leave because you have a flight?

Pina D'Agostino: I'm trying to see if I can move it.

The Chair: Okay, I'll check in with you.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to wrap up quickly. I understand that there have been talks. Once again, Madam Chair, I hope we'll be able to adopt the motion I tabled on November 24. As you know, it was never possible to adopt the motion. It's not because I didn't want to.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor. First we have to deal with that motion, which was moved by MP Noormohamed. Then we can go into any other thing.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I understand, but it's related, Madam Chair.

Once again, I disagree with the way we are proceeding. I told you that earlier. I moved a motion on November 24, and you wanted to suspend the meeting. In the end, you adjourned the meeting without us voting. Today, we have a new motion that bypasses the original motion, which we were never able to vote on. It's a procedural flaw, Madam Chair. It goes against the regulations.

I am therefore saying that the motion tabled today by my colleague is invalid, because we should normally resume debate on the original motion that I tabled on November 24. There's also that element to consider—

• (1210)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting.

It was relevant to the point I made in regard to the appearance of Mélanie Joly. I said that the motion was in order. If you want to challenge it, then you will have to challenge the chair's ruling.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I understand that it's your main argument to say that the chair's decision should be challenged. Once again, I think this is putting us up against a wall. I disagree with this way of proceeding. I'm not embarrassed to say so publicly.

I went to you in good faith last week, and you told me that we were going to have a discussion about resuming discussions on my original motion, which we haven't had.

Now, I notice that you've chosen to do it in a different way. So I think you made your choice, which was to favour a government member to have him introduce his motion at the expense of mine, which was valid and on which we were never able to vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm doing my job as the chair. It was important for me to communicate that information in the beginning.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I understand that you're doing your job. I am, too. However, I will repeat the truth and the facts: on Monday, November 24, we moved a motion. I just want us to vote on this one.

[*English*]

The Chair: Right now, we have a motion on the floor, which has been moved by MP Noormohamed. We have to deal with that before we go into any other thing.

Have you wrapped up?

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: No. I wanted to ask you about that, Madam Chair. Why is it impossible to resume debate on the motion of November 24?

The meeting was never adjourned by a vote. Initially, you wanted to suspend so that we could resume debate and to allow the chief science adviser to return on November 26, as planned on the calendar.

I also have to share with you something else I'm uncomfortable about. Why, in this committee, don't we vote on motions or adjournments and resume debate from previous meetings?

[*English*]

The Chair: In regard to your question, the meeting was adjourned at that time. MP Baldinelli moved that motion and it's a non-debatable motion. When I asked everyone, the majority of the people said yes. If you wanted a recorded vote, you should have asked for a recorded vote at that time.

The majority of the people were in favour of adjourning the meeting and the meeting was adjourned.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

I hear what you're saying. Perhaps, in the haste of the moment, it was done quickly. In any case, I'm telling you how I experienced it. It happened so quickly that I thought there were a lot of people who wanted to wrap it up. I didn't even have time to raise my hand to say anything. The gavel had already come down, so it was impossible.

I would still ask you to show some openness so that we can get back to the motion that was moved on November 24.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. I need to have a quick second with the witnesses.

If you would like, take a five-minute break to go to the wash-room or anything. I know it has been over an hour.

Arvind Gupta: I worry about my colleague's flight.

The Chair: Have you been able to re-book it or do you have to leave?

Pina D'Agostino: I'm not able to change my flight.

The Chair: Will you have to leave?

Pina D'Agostino: If I may, I was hoping to at least read my statement and then, if possible, take any off-line questions.

The Chair: What time do you have to leave?

Pina D'Agostino: It's probably 12:30, because my flight is at two o'clock.

The Chair: Okay.

She has to leave at 12:30.

I will ask for the consent of the members if they would like to—

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, as I indicated earlier, I would propose a motion that we extend this hearing by a day to at least invite back our witnesses from the first hour, so that they could fully take part and not only in presenting their statements—

The Chair: MP Blanchette-Joncas has the floor.

I just wanted to talk to the witnesses.

You are next. I'll come to you once MP Blanchette-Joncas completes. I just wanted to ask the witnesses if they have to go to the washroom or they want to get something.

Yes, MP Noormohamed? Is it related to that? Otherwise, MP Blanchette-Joncas has the floor.

Taleeb Noormohamed: He has the floor for as long as he wants it.

I'm just asking a logistical question, because we have two witnesses that I think we'd want to ask questions of. If Dr. D'Agostino has to leave, I think it would be good if, before she leaves, we have an understanding from the committee for her on what we would like to do.

I mean, if Mr. Blanchette-Joncas wants to talk till the cows come home, that's his prerogative. I just want to know what we're doing with these three lovely people who I think a lot of us have questions for.

Dr. Murphy doesn't have a flight to catch, I don't think, but we have two folks that—

An hon. member: We all want to be where Dr. Murphy is.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Yes—not here.

• (1215)

The Chair: In order to deal with everything, we will have to have unanimous consent to see if we can hear from Dr. D'Agostino before she leaves. It cannot be a majority thing or only one person. It has to be unanimous consent if we would like to hear her remarks, because MP Blanchette-Joncas has the floor.

Yes, MP DeRidder, it is related to this?

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): No. You just said what I thought.

The Chair: MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Again, I would like us to bring in the minister as quickly as possible and report on this. That's all I've

been asking for from the beginning, so I hope my colleagues have heard my request clearly. That was my primary motivation.

From what I understand today, there was a lot of discomfort on the part of committee members belonging to the government party.

In conclusion, we would never have gotten to this point if my government colleagues had adopted the motion as I presented it last week, on November 24. I can read it again if my government colleagues don't remember it. We were asking for the minister to appear before the committee, so we lost a week to get her here. On top of that, they're now telling us that they want her to appear, but that there will be no report when she does. Those two things are inconsistent.

I hope people remember that my only request today is to be able to—

[*English*]

The Chair: Just one second, please.

MP DeRidder.

Kelly DeRidder: I thought we were going to see if we had unanimous consent to have Dr. D'Agostino say her intro before she has to leave.

Maxime, could we see...?

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to hear from Dr. D'Agostino before she leaves?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Everyone is in favour. Okay.

I really want to apologize to our three witnesses and also to the other three who are supposed to appear before us at noon.

Dr. D'Agostino has to leave.

There is unanimous consent. You have the floor.

Please give your opening statement. You will have five minutes.

Thank you.

Pina D'Agostino: I'm very appreciative.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the members of this important committee for inviting me.

My views draw on over two decades as a lawyer, policy analyst, scholar and professor in intellectual property law, AI and emerging technologies.

My name is Pina D'Agostino and I'm a professor at Osgoode Hall Law School at York University, and a tier 1 York research chair. I serve as the university's associate vice-president research and a scientific director of Connected Minds, a \$318-million federally funded Canada first research excellence fund, advancing transformative AI research.

I also serve as the chair of the board for the Ontario Centre of Innovation.

In addition, I'm the founder and director of the IP Innovation Clinic, Canada's largest pro bono IP clinic. Since 2010, we've helped over 600 innovators across the country recognize, protect and commercialize their IP, saving them over \$2 million in legal fees through more than 5,500 hours of pro bono support, resulting in many Canadian company success stories, millions in funding raised and thousands of jobs for Canadians.

As someone deeply immersed in Canada's innovation ecosystem, I see both significant opportunities and very real challenges. Canada's world-class researchers made us an early trailblazer in AI, yet we're now losing our competitive edge. If we fail to protect and commercialize our AI innovations, our economy will lose out.

Global corporate investment in AI reached over \$250 billion in 2024, and this figure is climbing. Now is the time to foster made-in-Canada companies to drive our economic growth and sovereignty.

Central to any AI strategy must be the role of our universities. Across the country, researchers and graduate students continue to make groundbreaking AI discoveries. Yet, too often, they struggle to secure IP rights or see their IP transferred to foreign multinationals and funders. Strengthening university IP support is critical.

A novel solution is to expand university-based IP legal clinics, which are highly effective to help innovators protect their IP. The IP Innovation Clinic is a leader in this area, and clinics across the country have blossomed based on our model and thanks to our alumni.

A second solution is for tech transfer offices and other innovation hubs to specialize and focus by sector—for example, machine learning, quantum, neurotech, biotech and clean tech—rather than support all emerging tech in lots of little shops and try to boil the ocean. This sector-specific approach would create a national network, improve efficiency and improve sector expertise. In economically scarce times, we need to be smarter, work more efficiently together and coordinate across provincial efforts and multiple levels of government.

However, IP creation is only the first step. We must also ensure that Canadian IP remains in Canada. Throughout our history, Canada has struggled to retain our homegrown IP. The core ideas behind insulin, the electric wheelchair and the cardiac pacemaker were all developed here, yet commercialized abroad by foreign entities. We cannot allow this to happen again with AI. Today, six of the 10 largest recipients of Canadian-produced AI patents are foreign entities. This is unacceptable and must be addressed.

Also, we must finally tackle the growing concerns on AI data and copyright. Many AI models are trained on unlicensed copyrighted materials, undermining the livelihoods of creators. Canada must fashion its copyright law so that authors' rights and their economic interests are properly protected. Each day a new lawsuit seems to be launched, also calling into question fundamental issues of ethics and access to justice.

These challenges are not new. I've studied the impact of emerging tech on creators since my doctorate at the University of Oxford over 20 years ago. Back then, the Internet was the big disruptor. The lessons from this earlier tech and even earlier disruptions must inform our AI approach. While new tech brings benefits, the “move fast and break things” model has harmed us plenty. This issue matters not only for creators but for Canada's broader economy. It makes economic and sovereign sense for Canada to protect its data and copyright.

Responsible AI adoption also requires addressing the energy demands of AI. I can speak with some credibility here as I serve on the board of Electra Inc., Canada's second-largest electricity company. Generative AI systems are far more resource-intensive than traditional computing. As energy demands rise, we must build Canada's capacity and fix our aging grid.

● (1220)

On a final and most telling note, and I conclude here, Canada must insist on a human-centred innovation approach, like Canada's Connected Minds CFREF program. While we harness the benefits of AI, we need to mitigate and predict the harms, to protect our children and the most vulnerable members in society before the lawsuits, mental health issues and other harms happen.

Thank you again for inviting me. I was looking forward to the discussion.

The Chair: Thank you. I really appreciate your appearing before the committee and coming all the way from Toronto. I would really like to apologize that we didn't have the opportunity to ask you questions. Thanks a lot once again and, if there is anything you would like to specify, you can always send it in in writing.

With that, you can leave. Thank you once again.

Pina D'Agostino: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: If the other two witnesses would like to wait, we will continue our debate on the motion by MP Noormohamed.

We go back to MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I've had discussions with my colleagues to show my good faith and openness. Some of my colleagues have amendments to propose, which we could reach an agreement on. I hope we can conclude this debate sooner rather than later and make sure that the original motion is respected. This means that I want to ensure that we have Minister Mélanie Joly appear to answer our questions about the directions in the budget as quickly as possible, but also that we can still report to Parliament, as has always been the case.

For the sake of our committee's credibility and transparency, I also want to make sure that my other colleagues who are not here today can find out about these issues and the comments we're going to make to the minister.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, I have MP Baldinelli on the list, then MP Noormohamed and, then, Madam Desrochers.

Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, I offer apologies to the witnesses here.

I'm going to propose two motions, if I could, quickly. One is—again, to my comments earlier—about possibly extending this study by one meeting so that we can hear again from those witnesses who should have been here for the first hour. I think—

• (1225)

The Chair: We will first have to deal with the motion we have on the floor, and then we can go into the other items, so please, we have a motion on the floor, the debate is happening and we have a list of speakers.

Tony Baldinelli: My proposed—I would hope—friendly amendments to the motion that has been put forward by my colleague would be this: That, in the wording of his motion, and to be consistent with my Bloc colleague's earlier motion, we add in not only the Minister of Industry but the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, and that they appear no later than before Christmas; and that we not include the word “report” in this motion. Then, that way we can have what Mr. Blanchette-Joncas has been looking for, which is to have both ministers attend to speak about their mandates so that we can move forward.

Because the original conversations we had on the first motion dealt with the mandates, we'll have the Minister of Artificial Intelligence appear on Wednesday, in his capacity to talk about artificial intelligence. However, the original motion, which we're having difficulty with, was about inviting both ministers to talk about their mandates.

I took solace and comfort in the comments of my one Liberal colleague, Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, who talked about how, if we wanted to have meetings before the February 5 date, we could do that. My hope is that we can propose doing so before Christmas.

The Chair: Please send your amendment in writing to the clerk so that all the members will have it. I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that everyone can have a washroom break also, and then we will come back.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1225)

(Pause)

• (1255)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

MP Baldinelli has the floor, and he will read the amendment that he is proposing.

MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for my colleagues' indulgence.

Again, this is my hope to find somehow some kind of solution to the issue that we're facing right now. The motion that I had proposed, and I would hope it would be considered a friendly amendment, would be this: “That the Standing Committee on Science and Research invite the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation to appear before the committee to discuss their mandates for no less than two hours each on or before December 11, 2025.”

The Chair: This is your amendment to the motion proposed by MP Noormohamed.

MP Noormohamed.

Taleb Noormohamed: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank my colleague opposite for his amendment.

Here's what I would say. I would be entirely supportive of inviting Minister Solomon to come back to speak on his mandate. I would be entirely supportive, as I noted from my earlier—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. I just need to tell MP Baldinelli about the amendment he is proposing. As per the clerk, this is not an amendment.

I will ask the clerk to clarify.

The Clerk of the Committee (Cédric Taquet): I just wanted to say that usually an amendment amends the text of the main motion, but the committee seems in an agreement to pursue this way. Then, I would guess that that's a new motion worded as an amendment, but if the committee wants to debate this motion, it's fine.

The Chair: Are you proposing an amendment to that motion or...?

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, in all fairness, to your earlier point when the motion was originally tabled, it wasn't provided to us in a copy format. I'm trying to find a solution to an indicated motion that was just spoken and not provided in text.

The Chair: If every member agrees, that's fine, we can proceed that way.

Tony Baldinelli: It's my hope that they would.

The Chair: Does everyone agree with what MP Baldinelli is proposing, that we go ahead with it?

It is up to the will of the committee members.

Mr. Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Just to clarify, I'm happy to treat it as an amendment and work with Mr. Baldinelli and debate it to try to get to a good outcome. My understanding is that we're trying to land the plane of having Minister Joly appear, as well as now having Minister Solomon appear, again, on the mandate, both of which I think are reasonable things.

I'm less concerned about the process we follow to get there and more concerned about getting to the outcome. If it's easier to work with this as a new motion, great. If it's easier to work with this as an amendment, that's also great.

• (1300)

The Chair: Are members okay with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Let's go ahead.

We have the wording from MP Baldinelli.

Mr. Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Here's what I would say. On principle, I think it's a great idea to have both appear on their mandate. We would be happy to support that, but would propose two amendments to that.

One, we have them appear for an hour each as opposed to two hours each, because that's going to chew up another two meetings.

Two, I would also suggest that we say, best efforts, before December 11, but no later than February 5, because December 11 is less than a week and a half away; and I note that both ministers are at the G7 during the period of time following the 4th through I don't know how many days thereafter. Then, I understand that one of the ministers may be travelling.

What I don't want to do is put ourselves in a situation where we are disappointed and frustrated, but I do want us to push hard to get them here as early as possible. I don't think that ad infinitum into the new year is an acceptable answer either. If we can put reasonable guardrails around that, I think we could probably live with it.

The Chair: MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: Are there no opportunities to do meetings virtually, Madam Chair, once the House has risen? During COVID, we did that.

The Chair: For that, the chair has to be in person; the chair cannot be virtual. But that's all a logistic issue, and it's the Christmas holidays, so I cannot say anything. I'm also travelling out of the country, so I really cannot say that during the holidays we can...or if the ministers would be available. It's Christmastime—we have to be mindful of that. Everyone plans things ahead of time.

Tony Baldinelli: With all due respect, if a committee put forward a 106(4) and if I had the support of all members to call an emergency meeting, then we could do that. Is that correct?

I will put that theory on the table now.

The Chair: MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm going to propose two amendments to my friend's motion, if I may.

They're to change the language that says, “two hours each” to “one hour each” and after the date, “before December 11, 2025”, to add “if possible, but no later than February 5.”

The Chair: You are proposing an amendment to the already amended....

Yes, we have that. Is there any debate on that?

MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: I just need a few minutes to caucus with my team, and then we'll come back.

The Chair: Out of respect for our witnesses, we have witnesses for the second panel also and two witnesses who have been waiting here since eleven o'clock, so maybe we can request that the witnesses can leave. I think it's not appropriate that we're two hours into it, and we are still keeping the witnesses.

If this is going to go on, it's not a good idea to keep the witnesses held here.

MP Blanche-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanche-Joncas: Madam Chair, I move to adjourn debate.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a motion to adjourn the debate. It's a non-debatable motion, and we will have to vote on that.

I will ask the clerk to please take the vote.

Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Madam Chair, what are we adjourning debate on? Is it on the amendment, the subamendment or the motion itself?

We're stacked right now. There's my motion. Then there's an amendment to my motion, and there's an amendment to the amendment. Which of those three elements are we adjourning debate on?

• (1305)

The Chair: Just to clarify, I've checked with the clerk before we get into the vote.

We have a motion to adjourn the debate. The amendment by MP Baldinelli, which was accepted by all the committee members—everyone agreed—now has a subamendment. This will adjourn the debate on the motion that was presented by MP Noormohamed, then on the amendment, which was accepted, and then on this subamendment, which is on the floor.

We are going to vote for the adjournment of the debate.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Chair: MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I move to adjourn the meeting.

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: I'll suspend the meeting so that the witnesses can come in, and we can take the testimony from everybody.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1305) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1310)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

We have two witnesses from the first panel: Dr. Arvind Gupta and Dr. Gail Murphy. We never released them, and they have been waiting.

I'm sorry for all you've had to go through since 11 o'clock.

We have three witnesses for the second panel: the Canadian Nuclear Association, with George Christidis, president and chief executive officer; Cohere Inc., with Joelle Pineau, chief AI officer; and Electricity Canada, with Francis Bradley, president and chief executive officer.

We will hear from five witnesses.

Dr. Arvind Gupta is appearing as an individual professor from the department of computer science, University of Toronto, and Dr. Gail Murphy is from the University of British Columbia. She is vice-president of research and innovation, and she is joining by video conference.

All witnesses will have five minutes for their opening remarks.

I'm sorry for all the delay. We sometimes have to deal with these procedures. On behalf of the committee, I would like to apologize for your loss of time.

We will start with Dr. Arvind Gupta.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I need some information, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I'd like to know how long the committee meeting can last and how much speaking time each party has left. I just want to make sure we know how much time we have left.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will hear from our witnesses, then see what the resources are like.

We will start with Dr. Gupta for five minutes.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: The witnesses have a maximum of five minutes each, but I'm trying to figure out how many minutes we have left and how late we can continue the meeting so that I can adjust my questions accordingly.

[*English*]

The Chair: I will have to see, because we also have question period. We will hear from the witnesses, then see where we are. I will let you know what time we have after we hear from our witnesses.

Without any delay, Dr. Gupta, go ahead, please. You will have five minutes.

Arvind Gupta: Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me today.

I am Arvind Gupta. I'm a professor of computer science at the University of Toronto. I was also a member of the AI strategy task force that was convened by Minister Solomon.

Canada is proudly the birthplace of deep learning, and we continue to be a world leader in the foundational techniques that define the artificial intelligence revolution. AI is a very fast-changing technology, and one thing we are certain about is that this technology will continue to evolve at a very rapid pace.

We know that AI has the potential to fundamentally transform our economy and our society, but it is less certain how this will happen. We must develop policies that allow us to incorporate the potential of AI while managing the many challenges that this technology brings to us.

The rapid development of AI and the potential for significant disruptions call for Canada's AI strategy to be centred on ensuring that we stay at the forefront of AI. We must be a leader in developing the underlying foundational techniques of AI. We must develop the mechanisms to leverage this technology for the benefit of all Canadians, and we must ensure that the systems we develop are ethical, fair and transparent.

All Canadians must see that they have a place in the AI revolution and that they can garner the skills that allow them to navigate and emerge on the other side of this revolution better and stronger.

I want to give you some of the common themes that we heard on the task force.

First, it's important that the Canadian government identify priorities and direct resources to those priorities. Because the AI landscape is changing so quickly and geopolitics is playing a bigger and bigger role in the adoption of AI, we cannot afford to take a peanut-butter approach to policy-making. Government must build on our strengths. It must ensure that AI is broadly diffused and that Canadians see the benefit of this technology.

Second, research and talent are the bedrock of any national AI strategy. Because AI is evolving so quickly, Canada can only benefit if we stay at the forefront as an AI thought leader. We cannot be successful without building an expansive talent pool trained to apply the latest AI techniques. We must take an inclusive approach to training, ensuring widespread understanding and appreciation of artificial intelligence. We must ensure that the best and brightest from around the world are attracted to Canada and ready to contribute to Canada's being an AI leader.

There's widespread belief—and the media propagates the belief—that AI can only benefit the few and negatively impact the many. I do not believe that this is a valid way of seeing this technology. Done right, Canada and Canadians can all benefit from this new technology. Public policy should focus on ensuring that we have the instruments in place to address the changes that are coming from this technology.

Perhaps no issue has gained more attention than the potential for AI to result in large-scale employment disruptions. We do not yet know the extent or the impact of AI unemployment, but now is the time to make sure that we develop training and skills programs to allow Canadians to better understand AI, understand the disruptions it may cause and understand where new opportunities may arise. Canadians must have confidence that their government is aware of these challenges. They must believe that business leaders are giving their teams and their employees necessary AI competencies, and governments must start thinking about the social safety nets that we may need if these disruptions are widespread.

- (1320)

We must take a multidisciplinary, multisectoral approach to building new AI systems because AI will have an impact across all scientific disciplines across all economic sectors. It will impact the way we relate to each other and the way we do business.

We must think about issues like privacy—privacy for health care, as AI impacts the health care system, and privacy in the way we deal with—

The Chair: Could you please wind up?

Arvind Gupta: —government, education and finance.

Let me conclude by saying that this ethical use of AI is perhaps the most important issue we must take on. How do we take this new technology on board and apply it in a way that everyone understands is being done in a fair and transparent manner?

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Gupta.

We will now proceed to Dr. Murphy for five minutes.

Please go ahead, Dr. Murphy.

Gail Murphy (Vice-President, Research and Innovation, University of British Columbia): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting me to join you today.

As you've heard, I'm Gail Murphy. I'm vice-president of research and innovation and a professor of computer science at the University of British Columbia.

I currently serve as the vice-chair of the Digital Research Alliance of Canada, which is a national not-for-profit organization with a mandate to provide compute, data and software for Canadian researchers. I recently had the honour of serving as a member of the Government of Canada's AI strategy task force.

I'm joining you from the traditional ancestral and unceded territories of the Musqueam people, which for centuries has been a place of learning and discovery.

UBC is the second-largest research university in Canada, with nearly 80,000 students and more than 17,000 faculty and staff at campuses in Vancouver and Kelowna and at sites throughout B.C. Today, over 100 UBC faculty members and hundreds of students are focused on fundamental and applied AI research in the vibrant B.C. AI ecosystem, establishing and growing companies, integrating AI into the health system, and furthering critical industry sectors like the life sciences, critical minerals and forestry.

AI as a research field is moving at warp speed, with new discoveries every day. Keeping pace is not only imperative but also essential. Only three years ago, the power of large language models born from Canadian ingenuity became evident to the public. Already, those at the forefront of AI are thinking about how to move beyond the limitations of these models. We cannot rely on letting others invent the future of AI. We need to keep inventing it here in Canada with Canadian values. We also need to do more to ensure that the discoveries we make find their way into application in ways that benefit Canadians.

Moving AI research into application is challenging, in part because of the many pathways by which AI can be used. One pathway is through the formation of AI-first companies, which place AI at the core of their strategy and operations. For example, Variational AI, a Vancouver-based company working with UBC researchers, is focused on providing a foundational model to speed up drug discovery. AI-first companies often require significant infrastructure to build the models on which they rely.

Another pathway is when AI is embedded into products or services. For example, UBC researchers have shown how diagnosis in rural, remote and indigenous communities such as Haida Gwaii can be improved through the right combination of training, hand-held ultrasound devices, cloud platforms and AI. Making this pathway a reality requires support to bring AI experts together with domain experts.

Another pathway is to develop AI solutions for critical points in the supply chains of different economic sectors. For instance, UBC professor Frank Wood has created the UBC spinoff Inverted AI, which is building predictive human behaviour models for autonomous driving. Supporting these companies to be successful can require rethinking how to integrate Canadian companies into global trade supply chains.

There are four key areas in which we can start to better support the continuum in these pathways.

The first area is research. Canada can stay at the forefront of AI discovery by enhancing and expanding the AI institute model. The institutes can be enhanced to serve as hubs that bring talent from universities, colleges, technical institutes and industry together to address mission-driven, dual-purpose challenges. The institutes should be expanded to fully deploy world-class talent that is currently underutilized, including in B.C.

The second area is focus. Canada should aim to focus and accelerate specific areas of global strength. Focus could be brought through missions or challenges posed to the AI institutes. Potential areas of focus that could broadly benefit Canadians and the Canadian economy are AI for health and AI for robotics.

The third area is AI supply chains. Canada should aim to globally lead in critical parts of the global AI supply chain for particular sectors. In selected areas, Canada can establish pre-competitive industrial research and development centres, based on successful models in other countries, for different kinds of technology. These centres accelerate industry within the country and create new companies and a highly trained workforce.

The fourth area is compute infrastructure. Canada lags its peers for AI research infrastructure on multiple rankings. To support discovery and application related to Canadians, large-scale sovereign compute with access to Canadian data is needed for both researchers and SMEs. The Digital Research Alliance of Canada is well positioned to lead on this infrastructure for Canada.

I hope that the committee finds these contributions to its study helpful.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I look forward to addressing any questions you may have.

• (1325)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Murphy.

We will now proceed to Mr. George Christidis, who representing the Canadian Nuclear Association.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

George Christidis (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Nuclear Association): Thank you. I very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you today.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the standing committee. It's a privilege to appear before you today to speak on behalf of the Canadian Nuclear Association.

For over 60 years, the CNA has been the voice of Canada's nuclear industry. Today, we represent over 120 members from coast to coast, from world-leading utilities to key uranium mining companies and the important Canadian supply chain based on CANDU technology that makes one of the world's leading nuclear technology ecosystems, employing over 89,000 Canadians directly and indirectly.

We are pleased to be taking part in today's hearing, which is very important. The Canadian nuclear industry is a strategic asset that enables Canada's economic goals, goals of energy security, innovation as a means of creating jobs and investments that support national and provincial goals. It is critical, not just for energy but for

our economic competitiveness, long-term energy security and environmental sustainability goals, that nuclear technologies be considered.

This strength is rooted in our world-class domestic capabilities: from our vast uranium reserves and robust, end-to-end nuclear supply chain to our nuclear reactor technologies, R and D expertise and vital contributions to nuclear medicine, such as the production of isotopes that are key in fighting cancers and other illnesses.

We are actively demonstrating this capability and capacity through the highly successful refurbishments of the Bruce and Darlington nuclear sites which, at \$26 billion, are on time and on budget. There is also the planned refurbishment at Pickering and construction all the way for world-leading small modular reactors at Darlington in Ontario. There is active planning now for large reactors in Ontario, as well as the inclusion of nuclear technologies in key provinces such as New Brunswick, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and there are huge opportunities for new nuclear export opportunities globally that will create jobs in Canada and enhance our collective geopolitical capabilities.

We applaud the recent federal government's inclusion of nuclear in key initiatives to support the development of this technology and the development of these projects across Canada. However, more will need to be done in order to meet very important goals. This includes how we finance nuclear projects and create regulatory regimes that will, in the end, feed the possibility of enabling AI and data centre capability in Canada.

Continued government and private sector investments are key, as well as an efficient regulatory regime, to ensure that the strategic sectors enable growth that will create critical jobs and investments in Canada.

A renewed interest in nuclear energy is being observed across Canada and around the world, driven by imperatives such as energy security, geopolitical instability, accelerating the electrification of industry, transport and heating, and meeting climate objectives. It is also foundational for the consideration of the AI sectors developing in Canada.

Today, along with the need for more electricity and energy across Canada, the emerging growth of artificial intelligence and the data centres required to power them will significantly increase the need for more reliable energy that's non-emitting. Nuclear has to play an important role in that effort. Nuclear energy is key to the electrification of key sectors, as well as creating new opportunities in Canada.

The rapid growth of the artificial intelligence industry will add to the already unprecedented forecast for more energy across the board, and I have to stress this. Already, without artificial intelligence or data centre technology, most provinces will see a tripling of electricity demand by 2050. They estimate that the modern artificial intelligence models and data centres they rely on will further increase this demand that will be seen across the country.

This is where nuclear-generated electricity is key. Nuclear energy provides reliable, carbon-free baseload power that will enable artificial intelligence industry requirements. This is a means by which Canada can be an attractive destination to invest in this sector, as well as in others. The nuclear sector creates high-paying, skilled jobs, and this will be critical in any debate on how artificial intelligence and data centres impact employment and growth in other sectors.

The battle to host these new data centres is an economic and, some say, national security discussion. It will require significant electricity. That means needing more non-emitting, cost-effective energy to meet economic and environmental goals.

• (1330)

Yet, I should be clear: the momentum behind Canada's nuclear expansion is not dependant on the artificial intelligence boom. Our industry must and will continue to grow regardless, driven by our national commitment to electrification across our economy and the need to replace aging infrastructure and to grow demand for clean, non-emitting power.

The artificial intelligence imperative simply reinforces how important it is to avoid delays and make sure that the right support is in place to ensure the continued success of our industry—an enabler to other key sectors.

With that, I thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to you today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will proceed to Ms. Pineau.

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

[*Translation*]

Joëlle Pineau (Chief AI Officer, Cohere Inc.): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

My name is Joëlle Pineau, and I am the director of artificial intelligence at Cohere Inc. I'm also a professor at McGill University and a senior academic member of Mila.

[*English*]

I want to start by acknowledging a very important fact: Canada helped invent modern artificial intelligence. Our researchers lit the fuse for the deep-learning revolution and the pan-Canadian AI strategy. CIFAR, Vector, Mila and AMII turned this country into a global magnet for talent.

Cohere is one of the direct products of that success. Our founders, Aidan Gomez, Nick Frosst and Ivan Zhang, met in the AI ecosystem around the University of Toronto, working in the same community that produced many of today's breakthroughs.

When they started Cohere in 2019, they faced a choice: follow the well-worn path south, or prove that a global AI company could be built and scaled in Canada. They chose Canada, and I decided to join Cohere earlier this year to further this leadership.

Today, Cohere is proudly headquartered in Toronto, with teams across the country in Montreal and Vancouver, as well as all over the world. That decision wasn't just patriotic; it was a response to a pattern we have seen for decades. Canada consistently produces era-defining innovations, such as with batteries, insulin, sonar, and today with deep learning. Our founders and the Canadian seed investors who continue to support us saw the same thing beginning to happen with AI. Cohere was founded in Canada, in part, to help break that cycle.

Canada now has the chance to be a leading player in that race, exporting our technology instead of importing it. If we choose to move with speed and agility, we can narrow our productivity gap, keep talent here at home and fully build on our early successes in AI.

We're now at a watershed moment. AI has moved from academic curiosity to the decisive factor in national productivity, security and economic sovereignty. Around the world, countries are no longer just competing firm to firm, but are competing nation to nation, mobilizing heads of state, strategic investors and defence budgets to back their AI champions and lock in technology choices for decades.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

In this context, Cohere is currently the only fundamental model laboratory in Canada that is globally competitive. We develop business and government-specific AI language models and agents with a focus on confidentiality, security, multilingual capability and sovereign deployment.

What sets us apart from other multinational artificial intelligence companies that provide technologies to the general public is that our solutions are tailor-made for organizations for which security and confidentiality are essential. Cohere has become a global platform for developing homegrown talent and actively contributing to AI research programs. We are proof that Canadian research and expertise can be commercialized here in Canada.

Your study is based on four pillars. I'll touch on each of them briefly.

First, to stay at the forefront of basic and applied research, our universities and institutes need research funding, access to computational capabilities and bilingual datasets, and structured pathways to industry so that researchers can turn innovations from their lab into products.

[*English*]

Second, on the needs of research centres and scale-ups, the single largest constraint we hear about and we ourselves feel is infrastructure. We support an expanded national compute strategy, a shared purchasing consortium and the creation of a national AI data fabric.

Third, on the role of the federal government, the most powerful thing Ottawa can do now is to become the first and best customer of Canadian AI, modernizing procurement and shifting to a posture of true partnership, where technologies that are first tested here are exported globally.

Finally, on the protection of Canadian AI discoveries, Canada should prioritize continuing to train and retain the best and the brightest, helping its businesses scale by encouraging global investment and ensuring via commercial diplomacy that our allies are using our technologies.

Cohere stands ready to be Canada's national AI partner. We are proud of our roots, proud to be building our business on Canadian soil while expanding globally, and proud to be part of an ecosystem that still punches far above its weight.

With deliberate federal leadership, we can ensure that the next chapter of AI is built, deployed and owned here in Canada.

Thank you. I hope we have time for questions.

The Chair: Ms. Pineau, thanks a lot for coming.

We will proceed to Mr. Bradley, who is representing Electricity Canada. He is president and chief executive officer.

Please, go ahead, Mr. Bradley. You will have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Francis Bradley (President and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Canada): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting me this afternoon to present Electricity Canada's views.

My name is Francis Bradley, and I am the CEO of Electricity Canada.

• (1340)

[*English*]

I'd like to thank you for inviting Electricity Canada to speak to the science and research committee on the study of artificial intelligence.

Electricity Canada is the national voice of the electricity industry. Our members are the companies that generate, transmit and distribute electricity to customers right across the country from coast to coast in every province and in every territory. Our industry impacts all social, environmental and economic facets of life. Whether it is keeping the lights on, driving down emissions in other

sectors or powering one of the largest economies in the world, Canadian electricity is the foundation of it all.

Electricity is essential to artificial intelligence. Without it, AI cannot be deployed at scale. A query tool such as ChatGPT can use 10 times more electricity than a traditional web search. To grow the AI economy and realize the potential of this new technology, we need power to support the data centres that enable AI.

To put it in context, global electricity demand from data centres is projected to double by 2026, reaching 1,000 terawatt hours. That's enough to power Japan.

In Canada, electricity demand is expected to at least double by 2050, driven by economic growth, electrification and growth in data centres. This will require our sector to build more generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure in the next 25 years than we have in the previous several generations.

To meet the challenge, Canada must change its regulatory and financing tools to enable this massive build-out. To achieve this, we have four key recommendations.

First, we cannot scale up AI and data centres without growing our grids. Canada must eliminate the barriers to building critical electricity infrastructure. This can be achieved through meaningful regulatory and permitting reform so that projects can be approved within two years.

For example, we welcome the government's efforts to streamline approvals, such as the creation of the Major Projects Office. Additionally, the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta, which will begin a path to the suspension of the implementation and management of the clean electricity regulations in that province, shows a path for better intergovernmental coordination. As we've said before, provincial electricity system operators are best positioned to make the decisions that ensure a reliable and affordable grid.

Second, the government needs to facilitate investments in expanding electricity infrastructure. This includes implementing the clean electricity investment tax credit, which we were pleased to see in the federal budget, and addressing critical funding gaps and barriers to investment, such as the EIFEL rules.

Third, the government must include the electricity sector in AI conversations and policy design from the start. There is currently no representative from the electricity sector on the federal AI task force. We cannot have a successful AI strategy without the electricity sector. In short, there is no AI without kilowatts.

Lastly, as we build out our infrastructure, we need to ensure that critical infrastructure is protected. The government should ensure that we are prepared to protect critical infrastructure and the new cyber-threats that are posed by AI. This was evident in reports of cyber-attacks using independent AI agents such as Claude code to hack into a variety of organizations at a low cost and in a fast manner. Every new technology brings new challenges and we need to be prepared for them.

To conclude, significant growth in electricity demand will come as AI use continues to increase. Canada must be ready to meet the growth and we must build for that future.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bradley.

As we are at almost 1:45, and all the members have to go to the question period, is it the will of the committee that we adjourn the meeting?

Mr. Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: If we adjourn, then is this it and these witnesses will not be asked to return again?

The Chair: There are two options. We can adjourn the meeting and then Wednesday we would have the minister appearing before the committee, or if we don't agree to adjourn, we suspend, and then we get back on Wednesday. But I'm not sure who will be available out of these witnesses because it takes a lot of time to schedule those meetings. I am not sure whether all the witnesses will be available.

• (1345)

Tony Baldinelli: Earlier we had discussed the possibility of putting forward a motion to add a day to this study and ensure that all the witnesses who are appearing here today be asked back to attend an additional meeting of this study.

The Chair: For that we will need a motion.

The motion that we are studying on AI said at least four meetings. If you want to add a meeting we will have to see when these witnesses are available, but now all the members have to get to question period.

Tony Baldinelli: It would be my motion to all my colleagues to extend by one day and invite all these witnesses back, including the first hour, so that we can hear from them, virtually or in person.

Jennifer McKelvie (Ajax, Lib.): Maybe we can suspend to sort this out.

The Chair: It's question period time. If we suspend, everyone will leave. Witnesses will have to leave. So if we adjourn—

Tony Baldinelli: Let's put it to a vote. We don't need to suspend. I think we have the—

The Chair: Can you please repeat the motion, MP Baldinelli?

Tony Baldinelli: My motion is:

That the artificial intelligence study be extended by one further meeting, and that that meeting be dedicated to hearing from all of those witnesses that appeared on Monday, December 1, 2025, so that they could fully not only provide their testimony but actually have time to take questions and answers from all members of the committee.

The Chair: We have a motion.

MP Rana.

Aslam Rana: Madam Chair, we already had their testimony. If we have any questions, we can send those in writing and we can get answers in writing instead of calling again and again spending resources.

Tony Baldinelli: I say we go to the vote.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): I think the public deserves to hear from the minister.

The Chair: To send questions is unusual. If there are some questions that are raised in a meeting, they can respond if they don't get an opportunity today, but we cannot send them the questions to respond to.

MP Deschênes-Thériault.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I move a motion to suspend.

[*English*]

The Chair: If the meeting is suspended, then we come back on Wednesday at 4:30 to start this meeting. Then we have the minister appearing before the committee. The Minister for AI is scheduled to appear before the committee on Wednesday at 4:30. If we suspend, that will be the case.

MP Mahal.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Madam Chair, in the spirit of fairness to the witnesses and to the committee in general or in whole, I would I agree with my colleague, MP Baldinelli, that we should have at least one more meeting on this, so that the testimony that we heard from all the witnesses would be better utilized.

Having written questions is not going to serve the purpose, because there are so many questions that can arise at the same time. It's always beneficial if we can have them back live. I think that the purpose of the committee is only best served if we have another hearing on the same topic. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Mahal.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I would like to understand something.

I understand that Mr. Deschênes-Thériault would like to adjourn the committee meeting, which would mean that his colleague the minister wouldn't appear before us. Is that correct?

If we adjourn the meeting, will that ensure that—

[*English*]

The Chair: If we adjourn, we will have the minister on Wednesday. If we suspend, we will not have the minister on Wednesday and will have to continue with this meeting.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Okay. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a motion by MP Baldinelli to extend this study by one meeting.

MP Deschênes-Thériault, are you moving a motion to suspend the meeting?

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I would like to correct one thing, Madam Chair.

Procedurally, I can't ask to suspend the meeting, but I can ask to adjourn the meeting.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. We have a motion to adjourn the meeting.

There will be no crosstalk, please. All questions should be directed through the chair. We have to get to question period, so we need to decide what to do ASAP.

Is everybody in favour of adjourning the meeting? A

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I want to thank the witnesses. I would really like to apologize for this. I appreciate the patience they have shown.

The meeting is adjourned.

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