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Chair: Salma Zahid

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● (1540)

[*English*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 26 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. The committee is meeting to study governance and accountability of federal science policy and institutions.

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

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

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

I would like to welcome our witnesses for the first panel. Joining us by video conference are Arif Babul, distinguished professor, University of Victoria; Azim Shariff, professor, University of British Columbia; and Dr. Ivan Oransky, executive director, Center for Scientific Integrity.

Welcome to all the witnesses.

All of you will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Then we will go to our rounds of questioning.

Professor Babul, we will start with you. You will have five minutes. Please go ahead.

Arif Babul (Distinguished University Professor, As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me to contribute to your deliberations.

I would like to start by noting that my comments today are based on my experiences in the domain of natural sciences and to a lesser extent health sciences.

I would like to touch upon three issues.

First, there are roughly four distinct and different types of research that government funding agencies support: basic research, which is the search for new knowledge; applied research, which uses that knowledge to solve specific problems; engineering research, which transforms those solutions into usable systems; and innovation, which then deploys these systems into society. Each of these has different objectives and outcomes. It is important, therefore, that any governance or accountability effort ensures that each is evaluated using appropriate metrics.

There is, however, one common and important output: the training of highly qualified personnel. More than 50% of science Ph.D.s now work and drive innovation outside academia. They are in demand not only because they are technology- and data-savvy, but because they are trained to think creatively and solve complex problems.

Second, these four areas are an integral part of the discovery to innovation ecosystem. To start with, I would like to emphasize the importance of sustaining discovery research, because innovation ultimately depends on it. Importantly, only the government is in a position to fund discovery. To that end, Canada's investment in research capacity has not kept pace with costs. The real purchasing power of an NSERC discovery grant, for example, has largely stagnated over the past two decades, while research expenses have risen substantially. Consequently, grants today support less research activity than they did 15 to 20 years ago.

Third, we must ensure that our discovery to innovation ecosystem operates on a level playing field and is guided by transparent evaluation procedures. On the whole, the current process is well regarded internationally, but there is room for improvement. This is where this committee can play a role in continuing to push for change that further improves the system.

I would like to briefly touch upon four areas for your consideration.

First, governance must recognize that current evaluation systems can inherit and amplify past biases. There is substantial evidence that prestigious awards and recognition histories, all commonly used as indicators of excellence, have themselves historically reflected disparities related to gender, race and other factors. When these are used in grant evaluations, earlier inequities can cascade forward, affecting funding levels and future competitiveness. Governance framework must, therefore, examine whether the criteria and indicators used in assessment unintentionally reproduce structural barriers. The objective is not to weaken standards, but to ensure that Canada's research funding system identifies and supports genuine excellence rather than reinforcing historical patterns that may obscure it.

Second, external assessments of our research systems have noted that they tend to be risk-averse, favouring proposals with incremental outcomes over true innovation—high-risk innovation. From a governance perspective, this underscores the importance of mechanisms that can identify and mitigate such tendencies.

Third, fairness requires mechanisms to enhance transparency. Presently, applicants can only challenge procedural issues, not substantive assessment errors. However, evaluators are human, and mistakes do happen. Governance systems should consider structured appeal mechanisms, as well as additional transparency measures that would enhance accountability. In this regard, the European Research Council's approach is worth considering.

Additionally, securing participation of qualified independent international panellists, as has been done by the National Science Foundation in the U.S. for many years, would further strengthen the perception of impartiality. With virtual meetings now common, international participation is more feasible than ever.

To conclude, a strong science policy is not only about funding decisions; it is about ensuring that the system consistently identifies and enables excellence and innovation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Babul.

Now we will proceed to Professor Shariff.

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

Azim Shariff (Professor, University of British Columbia, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

I am a professor and Canada 150 research chair of moral psychology at UBC. I'm not here to comment on the legal or financial feasibility of the proposed monitoring body. Instead, I'm here to describe the psychological factors involved in why such a body might be necessary, how it would be received and how it might affect the mission of truth-seeking in Canada.

One finding from my research is especially relevant. We find that the perception of politicization reduces trust in and support for institutions. Critically, this occurs even for people who share the institution's perceived political orientation. Even liberals distrust institutions they see as liberally biased, and even conservatives distrust institutions they see as conservatively biased. When an expertise-based institution like science is seen as politically aligned, trust doesn't just become polarized; it erodes across the board. When that happens, truth-seeking in Canada suffers.

That politicization can come from two directions. The first is externally. When political power over institutions is used to advance contested political objectives or to manage how scientific findings are communicated, these signals cue people to interpret scientific research through their partisan lenses. Science, depending on one's political in-group, is seen as an ally or an enemy rather than as our shared common ground for truth. There is internal politicization as well. When institutions blur the line between empirical scholarship and political advocacy, or are perceived to be enforcing political conformity among their ranks, this too erodes trust in our institu-

tion. Both of these processes have undermined science in the United States. My plea is that we avoid walking further down that path in Canada.

The reason this is so fragile is rooted in basic human psychology. We are all subject to motivated reasoning and other biases, but it's much easier to see these biases in others than ourselves, something called the bias blind spot. Scientists are just as guilty. Most academics do their jobs in good faith, but we are also overconfident in our ability to detect and correct our own biases.

When we talk mostly to politically like-minded colleagues, we are subject to another well-researched process; that's the law of group polarization. When most members in a group start out leaning in one direction, the group tends to drift towards greater extremity over time. Left unchecked, groups can drift a long way indeed. Being smart is no protection from this. In fact, because motivated reasoning relies on thinking, the smarter you are, the more powerful it can be.

Science has historically managed these human tendencies not by assuming that scientists are unbiased but by building in proper incentives, norms and guardrails—peer review, replication and an environment that encourages disagreement of any idea at any time by anyone, so long as they have the evidence. Science works not just because of the abilities of scientists but also because of the constraints on them. No one likes being scrutinized, but a thoughtfully designed monitoring and accountability body could be useful in protecting these structures, thereby ensuring that Canadian science is both effective and trusted across the political spectrum.

For such a body to strengthen rather than weaken trust among both scientists and the public, its design must carefully minimize both actual and perceived politicization. Any monitoring body should, first, like the Office of the Auditor General, be visibly insulated from day-to-day partisan motives. Mechanisms like multi-party appointments and fixed or staggered terms can help ensure that the body neither is, nor appears to be, politicized.

Second, the body should audit procedural fairness and integrity, not adjudicate the merits of particular research projects. It should not try to replace peer review. The body's outputs should emphasize aggregate trend-level reporting—patterns in funding outcomes or demographic and viewpoint diversity—rather than spotlighting individual grants. Your committee, your colleagues and the public will always be able to cherry-pick research programs that sound absurd. Some really are absurd. Others lead to medical revolutions like GLP-1 agonists. It's sometimes hard to know in advance which is which. If oversight becomes focused on anecdotes, it will sow antagonism between scientists and the government, and fuel the politicization that it should be trying to extinguish.

Finally, and most mundanely, its design should actively restrain itself from mission creep and administrative overload. In other countries, comparable bodies that have been good for ensuring accountability are broadly despised because of the workload they impose. That burdensome paperwork doesn't just cause frustration; it can also reshape incentives. Time and resources shift toward timid bureaucracy rather than scientific risk-taking.

● (1545)

The question is not whether science needs guardrails. It does. The trick is to design a system that neither denies nor amplifies biases but disciplines them. Any accountability body should be designed to manage politicization and strengthen science rather than the other way around.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shariff.

We will now proceed to Dr. Oransky.

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

● (1550)

Ivan Oransky (Executive Director, Center for Scientific Integrity Inc.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to speak today to this important issue.

I'm the executive director of the Center for Scientific Integrity, a non-profit organization based in New York that is perhaps best known for publishing Retraction Watch, a journalism outlet. In December 2024, I had the honour of speaking to this committee about threats to the scientific record brought on by academics gaming the system to inflate their number of publications, their citations and the other metrics by which they are judged.

That was an example of how government can accidentally erode scientific integrity by overrelying on these simple metrics. Today, you are considering how government can promote scientific integrity. As you may know, Canada's current system of oversight has been described by others as a patchwork that does not prioritize transparency, but this can be said of many countries' approaches, and I'd like to share our reporting with you and what we've learned over the last 16 years.

The U.S. was the first country to establish formal oversight of research misconduct, beginning in the late 1980s with the creation of what later became the Office of Research Integrity, or ORI, and the National Science Foundation, or NSF, and its Office of Inspector General, or OIG. Their legal mandate is to ensure the integrity of federally funded research. The ORI covers Public Health Service-funded research, including NIH-funded research. The NSF's OIG covers science and engineering.

The ORI assesses investigative reports submitted by academic institutions and decides whether misconduct has occurred. Misconduct specifically means, in the federal definition, falsification, fabrication or plagiarism that is "committed intentionally, or knowingly, or recklessly", and represents "a significant departure from accepted practices."

Notably, while the ORI can investigate any researcher receiving government funding, it can do so only at the request of the researcher's academic institution, which creates a significant conflict of interest. Universities are generally reluctant to discuss, let alone properly investigate, misconduct. This and a lack of subpoena power limits ORI's reach. If findings of misconduct are made, sanctions can include mandating retraction, suspension of funding, and oversight of future research activity. In sharp contrast, the NSF OIG does have subpoena power.

A completely separate U.S. regulatory arm, the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, can investigate and sanction clinical investigators conducting regulated research. The FDA's relatively toothy regulations permit the disqualification of investigators who repeatedly fail to comply with requirements or who submit false information. Debarment typically follows a misdemeanour or felony conviction, and debarred researchers are prohibited from working with anyone with an approved or pending drug product application. In rare cases, researchers who have committed severe misconduct while working with government funds have been forced to pay back those funds and have received lifetime debarments.

By contrast, Europe lacks an overarching federal authority analogous to the ORI, instead having a decentralized and heterogeneous regulatory landscape shaped largely by institutional autonomy. Germany has opted for a highly decentralized approach. To be eligible for funding from the German Research Foundation, commonly referred to as the DFG, institutions are required to establish internal structures capable of investigating and dealing with misconduct allegations. The DFG also maintains its own committee, which investigates allegations related to its funded research.

Separately and independently, the national German research ombudsman can also receive allegations and occupies an advisory role in cases requiring conflict reconciliation. A notable weakness of this system is that not all research is conducted in universities. There is little oversight of doctors, for example, undertaking clinical research.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden maintain the most formalized European oversight structures. All three countries have a centralized agency authorized to conduct misconduct investigations, although the primary burden of regulating integrity still falls on institutions.

The U.K. exemplifies a non-statutory, institution-centred model with no national investigative authority comparable to the ORI. Institutions there are expected to handle allegations internally, guided by the concordat to support research integrity and supported by research bodies such as the U.K. Research Integrity Office, which provides guidance but lacks the power to conduct independent investigations or impose sanctions. China has also recently introduced a comprehensive punishment framework for misconduct.

I thank you for your time, and I welcome the opportunity to expand on my comments during the Q and A with the committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will proceed to our first round of questioning of six minutes each. We will start with MP Ho.

Please go ahead.

● (1555)

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first set of questions is for Professor Shariff.

You mentioned in your opening statement the perception of political bias and the politicization of public institutions and how that may erode public trust in our institutions. Could you elaborate on that a bit more? Have you seen this trend getting worse in recent years? Can you provide a few examples of that?

Azim Shariff: Trust in science and in universities in Canada is relatively high. It's higher here than it is in the United States, so that's good. There is a difference between how much it's trusted by liberals and conservatives, with conservatives trusting it about 20 percentage points lower than liberals.

In the United States, we've seen it decline for both groups, but more sharply for conservatives. I think the United States represents a cautionary tale for the direction that things could go if both external and internal politicization factors are present.

Vincent Ho: The last time you were at this committee, you spoke quite extensively on some of the negative consequences of EDI policies in granting research funding in Canada, and you listed a couple of examples. Do you think that plays any role in that trust?

I believe you mentioned the appointment to a CRC vacancy. Because the pool of candidates was rather limited and because of the Liberal policy of finding someone from only equity-seeking groups, it was virtually impossible to fill it. Do you think that plays into the lack of perception of trust?

Azim Shariff: There is some research, actually, that directly bears on that. A couple of political scientists at UBC ran an experiment where they presented the demographic quota policy related to the Canada research chairs. What they found was that for the group presented with the policy, it reduced trust in the research the university produces. It did that for both liberals and conservatives to almost exactly the same degree.

That is a good example of the fragility of trust and legitimacy and how they respond to different policies, so yes, for that particular policy, I think there is evidence that it erodes trust.

Vincent Ho: Do you mean EDI policies in terms of filling research—

Azim Shariff: I can't comment on all EDI policies. It's a wide range of things for the demographic quotas. People cue into issues of procedural fairness for them, which I think rubs people the wrong way across the political spectrum. I think that's what they were responding to for that policy. It might be different for other EDI policies.

Vincent Ho: I am referring to that specific policy.

To build on that, if someone were from an equity-seeking group and they were selected for one of these key positions, that person would now carry the weight of how they may have been selected because of this policy. Of course, the public view would potentially be that this person wasn't picked up based on merit, but because of demographic factors.

Do you think that plays a role in the public's perception?

Azim Shariff: I'm not familiar with the research on that, and I apologize for that, because I imagine there is quite a bit of research on it. In my own experience, I wrote a note to the committee to say it affected me.

Vincent Ho: Why do you think that's the case? Do you find these policies are too restrictive? Do they exclude bodies of talent based on merit and therefore create those tensions?

Azim Shariff: For this particular policy, anything that shrinks your talent pool means you're less likely to get the best candidates. There is a way it compromises the broad, truth-seeking mission of hiring excellent scholars.

For that particular policy, there could be an erosion of trust from that, which we talked about. If those are the two primary goals—truth-seeking and trust—I think that particular policy has effects on both. Again, however, that's narrowly referring to just that policy.

● (1600)

Vincent Ho: On a slight change of topic, you mentioned increased politicization in your opening statement, and the example you used was the Auditor General. Could you elaborate a bit more about that and why that might be the case?

Azim Shariff: What we've seen in the United States is an attempt to solve perceptions of internal politicization with external politicization. There's been a heavier hand of government intervention in micromanaging content aspects of academia in both what gets researched and what gets specific funding grants, as well as the curricula.

Doing it from the external side has very much exacerbated politicization and has eroded trust. It's created a lot of enmity between academics and the government. It's made people perceive more politicization rather than less. The solution to politicization is rarely more politicization.

The Chair: Your time is up.

Vincent Ho: Thank you.

The Chair: We will now proceed to MP Noormohamed for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thought we were going to have a conversation today about ensuring that we measure research well, but we're back on the EDI thing. It's important to take a minute on that, Professor Shariff, because the implication in the question from my colleague seems to be that equity hires produce poorer research. In your experience, is that the case?

Azim Shariff: No.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you for that very clear answer.

Perhaps I can turn to Professor Babul.

On the same question of how the EDI awards ladder works and whether we are leaning in to give an award to people who deserve a chance because they're not good enough, is that really how the system works, as my friends opposite might want us to believe?

Arif Babul: I spent a lot of time reviewing data on this. There's now considerable research and data on the impact of inequity and bias in the system. I'm not speaking to a very specific mechanism for addressing that inequity; I will leave it to Azim to deal with that.

It is well known that this is a problem, and it works in the following way: If you are excluded in some fashion through various gatekeeping mechanisms from the early career awards, then your chances of getting a mid-career award decrease, because your awards and your award history become part of a metric for excellence. If you do not get either of those two, chances of getting a senior excellence award are further diminished.

This tends to preferentially affect women. It tends to preferentially affect people of colour. More recently, it's been shown that even within that category, there is a gradient in the sense that women of colour are the most affected by this mechanism. The fact that there is a problem is clear.

The Canadian Association of Physicists suspended their awards program for one year—I believe it was in 2021 or 2022—after a survey was carried out, and they revamped their system to re-examine whether there was bias in the system. They have launched that again.

I can give you several anecdotal examples of where this gatekeeping can work, if you wish.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Yes, please. It would be interesting.

For context, you're a physicist. Is that right?

Arif Babul: I'm an astrophysicist.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Where are you a fellow outside of Canada, in systems that perhaps might be perceived as less DEI-friendly? Could you give us some examples?

Arif Babul: I am a fellow of the American Physical Society. It's a much larger pool to swim in than the Canadian system, for example. I've also received prestigious awards in the U.K. Most recently, I was named to a Leverhulme visiting professorship, which I currently hold at the University of Edinburgh and held previously at the University of Oxford. I was also recently awarded the Infosys visiting chair professorship at the Indian Institute of Science, which is one of the premier science institutions in the world.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Let's lean into you as an example. Would you be an EDI hire, and how did this work for you, or not?

● (1605)

Arif Babul: I was hired in Canada before EDI became a thing. I would like to think I came in based on my excellence, but what I will say is that I have personally experienced barriers in Canada specifically.

As I noted—you may have not caught on to it—I have received awards all around the world, except in Canada. I have received awards from my own university for research excellence—career-long research excellence—but not from the general community. I'm at a point in my career where I shrug my shoulders and say "whatever", but I worry about the effect of that on younger people coming through the system. They don't have the same chances that I had outside Canada, for example.

I will mention a gatekeeping exercise. I had a colleague who graduated from an Ivy League school, had been hired previously in the United States, had done phenomenally in securing grants and early awards and came to Canada and wanted to be nominated by his colleagues for an award. His colleagues and his own department refused, to the point where he turned to me and said, "Would you mind nominating me?" I did, and it turned out that he got the first award. That first award then opened up the opportunity to secure additional awards. Today, that person is a fellow of the American Astronomical Society, who in recent years was invited to be a plenary speaker at the American Astronomical Society meetings and so on and so forth.

Taleeb Noormohamed: This is because somebody gave them an opportunity to apply for something on the basis of their merit, but the door was opened because somebody understood that there are systemic barriers in place that make it difficult for certain individuals to access those awards based on their merit. Is that correct?

Arif Babul: Absolutely. I'll give you one more example. I'll give you one very famous example that makes the rounds in Canada.

Professor Sajeev John, in the 1990s and 2000s, was touted as a potential Nobel laureate. He is a professor at the University of Toronto. He is a physicist.

The Chair: Maybe we can come to this in the second round, because the time is up for MP Noormohamed.

Arif Babul: Sure.

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

Please go ahead, sir.

[*Translation*]

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

I'd like to welcome the witnesses who have joined us for the first hour of this important study.

Mr. Oransky, your organization has been documenting systemic failures in the science system architecture for years, including serious methodological errors, substantial corrections and other structural flaws.

Does this situation mainly stem from individual behaviour or structural incentives related to funding, assessment mechanisms and scientific career trajectories?

[*English*]

Ivan Oransky: The answer, I would say, is both. In other words, even though I believe that real change will come only when there are changes to the incentive structure, which I will detail in one moment, it obviously still requires individuals to take part in behaviour that we may find objectionable or even may be to the point of being considered misconduct.

The incentive structure, which is quite consistent around the world, although it obviously takes different forms in different places, has been, we believe, responsible for a great deal of the misconduct—the bad behaviour—and even sometimes the acceptable but borderline behaviour. That incentive structure is based almost exclusively on what is known, of course, as "publish or perish", which is really now what we think about as "be cited or perish". In other words, how many times are your studies or your papers cited by other researchers?

These turn into metrics such as, for example, the metric known as an h-index, which is one measure. Universities and governments are devoted to—and I would argue maybe obsessed with—rankings that are based not exclusively but in large part on citations. What you have is a system that is from the top down, and by "from the top", I really am referring to governments. In different parts of the world, that takes different forms. Governments could be provinces or could be other regions, and then it's from those regions or the governments themselves to the research institutions—universities,

medical schools, etc.—that therefore want to be higher in the rankings so they can obtain more funding.

What happens? Search committees, deans and provosts search for and want to hire researchers who have a history of being cited more often and who therefore probably will be cited more often. It is a sort of awful cycle where a lot of people get left out, frankly, while doing really amazing work and work that is much more robust but isn't as splashy. I think it's something we all should be paying attention to.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Is there currently an independent national body, governmental or otherwise, responsible for analyzing these incentives on a consolidated, periodic and even transparent basis?

[*English*]

Ivan Oransky: There isn't one that has any real authority. There are different organizations sometimes. I and others at the Center for Scientific Integrity are asked to give testimony or to speak with different organizations—for example, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine here in the U.S. There are other organizations that I've been invited to speak to in different parts of the world.

I don't think there's a lot of incentive to change the incentives. People talk about it a lot, but I have not seen a sustained effort that is driving toward this.

That being said, one of the things we've seen in the U.S.—and in other countries as well, but we know the U.S. best—is that different federal agencies are tasked with looking at these issues, but that ends up being its own kind of patchwork. It would be a wonderful development if there were not just a national but an international effort that looked at—I wouldn't say creating better incentives—doing away with the sorts of incentives we have now.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Is the data related to systemic failures that you analyze generally integrated into the evaluation and adjustment of science funding policies?

[*English*]

Ivan Oransky: It is somewhat. That's changed to some extent, because about two and a half years ago, our database of retractions, which has about 63,000 retractions in it now, became fully available and open thanks to its acquisition by another non-profit called Crossref.

There are organizations, whether they're private or public, that are starting to incorporate that. For example, in India, I would argue that there is a fairly intense rankings culture. One of the agencies there has said that they were going to penalize universities that may be high in the rankings but have high retraction rates. That's actually complicated, and I don't want to make it sound like a magic wand, but it says that there is at least a growing recognition that the same behaviour that leads to high rankings—in other words, pushing and pushing papers and incentivizing papers—can also lead to misconduct and of course to retraction.

Retractions, as I'm always fond of saying, are a very imperfect metric for anything, but as part of a system of metrics or a system of looking at what's going on, they can be quite useful.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, the first round comes to an end. We will now proceed to our second round, with MP Baldinelli for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us this afternoon.

Mr. Shariff, thank you for joining us today. It's good to see you again. I'm going to start with you.

In your testimony and some of the remarks you made, you spoke about science needing guardrails, and you spoke about the perception of politicalization and how it hinders trust and erodes trust. You mentioned that there are two types. You talked about external politicalization and institutional—internal—politicalization. I found your comments about the law of group polarization interesting—that if left unchecked, groups drift along the way.

Based on the comments you've made and on what I've heard from Mr. Oransky and Dr. Babul about how we go about enhancing transparency, would the Canadian science establishment benefit from establishing an independent body or function for the monitoring, analysis and accountability of federal science policies? Would it be beneficial for advancing the governance and accountability of federal science policy in institutions?

Dr. Oransky, you talked about what's happening in the United States and how it differs from Europe. Could we benefit by having a system here in Canada such as that?

The question would be for all of you.

● (1615)

Ivan Oransky: I'll answer briefly so my colleagues can give their own remarks.

There are discussions around the world, particularly in Australia—where I was recently for a meeting that was looking at some of these same issues—about how important it is for there to be an independent body. I will defer to my colleague Dr. Shariff, who can talk about how that can be upended in different ways. In fact, we are seeing that in the United States.

Let me sort of talk out of both sides of my mouth at once for a brief moment.

On the one hand, when it's done properly and it has its own guardrails, I would argue that an independent federal-level government agency like the ORI or the NSF's Office of Inspector General can serve a really important purpose if it's given the authority and the tools. It can also, however, be politicized. I think we need to be very conscious of that.

What you need to do if you're thinking about this is set up a system that allows for both things, with guardrails on both. The history of the ORI in the United States shows us this. I won't go through the whole 40-year history, of course. At different times, the way it has handled different cases has either boosted its trust or defanged it in certain ways, just to be brief about that.

In general, we think that an independent body that assures that universities are not purely investigating their own—because that is a big conflict of interest in our eyes—should exist, but I'll defer to others.

Azim Shariff: I can weigh in.

The question is, really, what problem are you trying to solve? One of the reasons that all three witnesses have talked about very different topics is that we're a little unsure of what this body is trying to achieve. We all have our own concerns. I have concerns about some of the topics that I've talked about, but I'm also very mindful that a lot of the cures can be worse than the disease. That is why I echo Dr. Oransky's point about having guardrails on these things and making sure they are not worsening the problem rather than improving it.

He mentioned Australia. Australia has some horror stories about the agency overpoliticizing things by micromanaging particular grants. It resulted in a lot of lost trust and conflict between science and the government, as well as politicizing science further in a way that was not helpful.

Tony Baldinelli: Go ahead, Dr. Babul.

Arif Babul: I would like to build on what my two colleagues have mentioned, and particularly what Dr. Shariff just spoke about, which is the mandate of this oversight body.

It's absolutely essential. If the mandate is to promote and establish improved metrics and mitigate bias, that's great. If the mandate is more than that—because governance and accountability can move in that direction—micromanaging individual grants, instead of peer review, becomes a problem. Enhancing the peer review system is a good thing.

If we are moving towards mission creep in the four areas that I specified, the discovery, the search for knowledge, is essentially a marketplace of ideas. This is where people just churn things out, and then some of these ideas turn into innovation down the road at some point. I can give you practical examples of that. Mission creep will mean that we will only fund AI-directed research or we will fund other directed research. That is dangerous because it will undermine our ecosystem.

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting—

Arif Babul: What is it that we want to do? That's the key question.

The Chair: Thank you.

Professor Babul, MP Baldinelli's time is up. I'm sorry.

We will now proceed to MP Rana for five minutes.

MP Rana, please go ahead.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for your time.

Professor Babul, you have worked inside some of the strongest academic governance systems we have. In your experience, how do we strengthen transparency in federal science funding without crossing the line into revealing the inner workings of confidential peer review?

● (1620)

Arif Babul: NSERC, for example—I'm most familiar with NSERC—has gone a long way towards this. This year I was asked to review a grant, and I was explicitly told that my report would be sent to the applicant—anonymized, of course, but it would be sent. That's one way of bringing in transparency.

The European Research Council goes further. They record transcripts of the discussion that takes place at the panel level. They anonymize it, but they release that to the applicants as well. This way you can see the discussion is focusing on science and merit, rather than on whether somebody is coming from a particular background or school, or some factor that has relatively little to do with accomplishment.

These are the kinds of examples that one can do. I think the European Research Council's model is probably the most open and transparent today, yet it still preserves the anonymity of the system.

Aslam Rana: You have seen how international collaborations judge Canada. How important is it that Canada preserve the perception that our funding decisions are based on merit? Also, in your opinion, what has most threatened that perception today?

Arif Babul: The biggest challenge that Canadians face with respect to international partners is less to do with perceptions of bias within the system. This is much more of an issue internally.

From the outside perspective, our biggest challenge is funding. We do not have sufficient funds to hold our own in international collaborations and to play leadership roles. That goes back to what I mentioned before—funding has stagnated over 20 years.

In real dollars, we buy less today than what we could achieve 20 years ago. This is true for the discovery grants, and this is true for CRC. Various reports that had been commissioned by the tri-councils have more or less said exactly the same thing. It really comes down to this: Do I have the capacity and the human resources to participate fully and carry my weight in an international collaboration?

Aslam Rana: If you had to choose to protect your peer review confidentiality at all costs or expand data transparency as far as possible, which principle protects Canada's research ecosystem long term, and why?

Arif Babul: We don't have to choose between those two. There is a well-established middle ground where the transcripts, for example, can be released, the dialogue can be released, but completely anonymized. I had no problems with my report being released to the applicant. I just made sure that I couldn't be identified when I was writing the report. The main thing is that I was being genuine in my criticisms and in in my praise. That's the important thing. The focus should be on the science.

Aslam Rana: Thank you.

Professor Shariff, in the context of research funding, what types of transparency actually build trust with the public and which kinds unintentionally erode it?

Azim Shariff: I think what Dr. Babul was saying there is accurate in terms of funding and hiring, recognizing that people are being judged for their abilities rather than for alignment with any political motives. This is the best way.

Transparency is a great incentive for people to maintain that focus. If they know that there are conversations and that their decisions are able to be monitored, they will focus on the right things.

Aslam Rana: What is the single biggest risk you see for the public's trust in Canadian science governance if we get this wrong?

Azim Shariff: It would be to add external politicization: to micromanage grants to make it seem like the government is trying to pick winners and losers. Again, the path to the U.S. is the cautionary example here. I would encourage us to do anything to not go down that road.

● (1625)

The Chair: Time is up for MP Rana.

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

Please go ahead.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Oransky, public investments are significant, amounting to billions of dollars per year. When a system funds, assesses and supervises its own mechanisms, is this self-regulation sufficient to guarantee public credibility, in your opinion?

[*English*]

Ivan Oransky: There's a conflict of interest no matter how you try to look at a system and assess it, judge it or even hold it accountable.

There are other models where if you federate this.... Europe has not gone in this direction. One might imagine, for example, Europe having a federated system where each of the states, each of the nations, has their own funding and funding mechanisms, but also where everyone is accountable to one organization.

I take Dr. Shariff's point about the journey to the U.S. Look at the example of China. I would also urge against any measures that would take you closer or on a journey to what China has gone through. China is getting, as you may have seen, many audits and is very highly ranked. People talk about this, and there have been stories recently about it. What often isn't mentioned is that China also has the highest retraction rate of any country.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: What do you think of the idea of creating an independent function separate from the executive, like the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, whose mandate would be to analyze the government's scientific decisions, but also to assess their transparency and performance?

[*English*]

Ivan Oransky: I think it's quite powerful. If you look at the U.S., we have two major agencies. I would point to the Office of Research Integrity in terms of biomedical sciences, and the National Science Foundation's Office of Inspector General. In an ideal world, those operate independently. They have their own subpoena power.

I will, unfortunately, have to second what Dr. Shariff has said about the U.S. I'd just express a lot of concern that those organization have been really struck—they've been decimated, in fact—by the number of people who are working there. This isn't a government that says it is very concerned about fraud, waste and abuse.

Again, I think independence is crucial. I would urge the government to consider an organization that truly is independent—like an auditor general or an inspector general—that would operate that way.

The Chair: We will end this panel with two minutes for MP De-Ridder and then two minutes for MP Noormohamed.

MP DeRidder, you will have two minutes. Please go ahead.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): I would like to start by using my time to put in a notice of motion, please. It's just a notice. They're passing it around now. Thank you, Clerk.

This is the motion:

> That the Standing Committee on Science and Research undertake a study on tent encampments and their intersection with the drug crisis in Canada, with a focus on research gaps, data limitations, and opportunities for innovation; that the committee invite witnesses including, but not limited to, federal departments and agencies, academic researchers, public health experts, Indigenous organizations, municipal representatives, and community-based service providers; that the committee hold no less than three meetings on this study; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

Also, at the very beginning, the sound was a bit off. May I request that we get written beginning statements into the committee, just in case we might have missed something from the sound at the very beginning? That's just a request.

The Chair: Yes, we'll get that.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you so much.

I think I have time for one question.

Azim, this question would be for you.

I recently watched a panel from the Canadian Science Policy Centre conference. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry praised the impact of DEI policies on Canada's science and research sector. We've heard a very different story here in committee. A couple of witnesses have come out and said that it's undermining our research. There are lot of things happening.

You said yourself that "Science and scholarship work best when everyone is invited to participate" and that DEI policies can potentially leave "talent on the table". Given the increased global competition for top researchers, can Canada afford policies that risk sidelining talent rather than maximizing it?

● (1630)

Azim Shariff: This gets to the challenge of EDI being such a broad net of policies and omissions.

It's important to separate two things here. One is this issue of removing barriers and maintaining equality of access. That's a way to strengthen science by bringing the best candidates in. There are processes that remove barriers. There are ones that add barriers.

That's what I was talking about the last time I was here, in September. They should be removing barriers rather than adding barriers, and making sure everyone is on board.

Kelly DeRidder: Do you think we're currently adding barriers with our applications?

Azim Shariff: Yes. With the Canada research chairs program, I think we're adding barriers with the demographic quota aspect.

Kelly DeRidder: I agree.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now end this panel with MP Noormohamed for two minutes.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I want to go back to the original intent of this study. If I could, I will perhaps go to you, Professor Babul.

In the context of accountability, which I think is really important in grant-making and in the assessment of where support is going, can you talk a little about the importance of tying funding to specific deliverables, milestones and outcomes?

As you talk about this, perhaps reflect on your opening comments, which talked about the moon shot versus the more pedestrian.... I don't want to call it pedestrian, but it's the more observable, short-term outputs or outcomes of the research versus the investments in perhaps quantum mechanics that not long ago resulted in quantum computing today.

Can you talk to us about the importance of how we should look at accountability in this regard, how we should be thinking about measuring success and how we should be looking at outcomes rather than outputs in the very technical fields that you operate in?

Arif Babul: It's important to go back to the four categories of research I highlighted. I will focus first on basic research.

Basic research is walking in the shadows, walking in the dark and stumbling around trying to find ideas. We are trying to understand the natural world. Often it is ill-defined, in many ways, when we're trying to do the research we're doing. The ideas that come out of it are the kind you just mentioned, such as the discovery of quantum mechanics and the ability to trap light, which I didn't get a chance to finish last time. Professor Sajeev John at the University of Toronto pioneered that. These discoveries eventually translate into applications and into such innovations as the CCD camera that we all walk around with in our iPhones. It takes time to do that.

In terms of measuring and quantifying discovery, it's very difficult to do so in some sort of mission-specific manner, because there is no mission to speak of. We are stumbling around, to be perfectly honest. People call it curiosity-driven. We're trying to discover.

On the other hand, innovation—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Time is up. Perhaps you can send the answer in writing to the committee. Then it can be circulated to all members.

Arif Babul: Okay.

The Chair: With that, this panel comes to an end.

Thanks to all the witnesses for appearing before the committee today.

We will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so the witnesses for the second panel can take their seats.

The meeting is suspended.

● (1630)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1640)

The Chair: I call the meeting to order. Welcome back.

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

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your 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.

All comments should be addressed through the chair.

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

We are joined on this panel by Frédéric Bouchard, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, Université de Montréal; and Anna Triandafyllidou, professor and Canada excellence research chair in migration and integration, Toronto Metropolitan University. She's joining us by video conference. We also have Martin Maltais, president, and Sophie Montreuil, executive director, both from the Association francophone pour le savoir.

Welcome to all the witnesses. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks, and then we will proceed to the rounds of questioning.

We will start with Mr. Bouchard.

You will have five minutes. The floor is yours.

Frédéric Bouchard (Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Université de Montréal, As an Individual): Thank you.

[_Translation_]

Members of the committee, I had the privilege of chairing the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System. Although my testimony today is based on our report, I am presenting it to the committee in a personal capacity.

Our report focused on the governance of research funding in the country. Several of our recommendations were implemented in budget 2024. In addition, measures related to the development of a capstone organization, whose creation we recommended, are included in budget 2025.

Other governments have already done this strategic work and can serve as inspiration. Quebec has done so with its Fonds de recherche du Québec and its 2022–2027 Quebec Strategy to Support Research and Investment in Innovation. The United Kingdom has done so with its UK Research and Innovation Organization and its UK Innovation Strategy. Several other countries are following suit.

In addition, our recommendations included three measures relevant to your study: the policy branch of the capstone organization, the establishment of a science and innovation council, and the development of a national science and innovation strategy.

[English]

As we explained in our report, although the current Canadian research funding ecosystem is efficient and well managed, it is fragmented and underfunded. It wasn't designed to support large international or interdisciplinary collaborations, and it lacks the means to support mission-oriented research. Furthermore, there is no coherent governance or strategy to guide its actions, yet this is exactly what the country needs right now.

Across the world, the volatility of international relations and trade is making science a pillar of national interest. We see this in various innovation-based industrial strategies, as we can see in Korea, in Japan or in Europe's Draghi report. We see it in how these strategies often support renewed defence commitments. Canada and Germany's recent defence industrial strategy announcements point that way. We also see the return of strategic science diplomacy based on favoured international partners, as we can see in the recent "A European Framework for Science Diplomacy" and so on.

[Translation]

Our mandate was not to assess program management. However, our impression is that the granting councils manage their programs effectively and with probity and that peer review remains the most rigorous method for assessing the quality of projects.

That said, it is entirely legitimate to ask whether the current program portfolio should be enhanced by adding programs that promote new types of benefits, whether they be new programs geared toward industrial policy missions, programs that support institutions outside major centres, programs focused on social innovation, or various means of supporting our cultural and digital sovereignty.

Here is how we could evaluate the performance of our programs over time. An external auditing office would provide post-hoc services. This would enable the new capstone organization's policy management team to continuously monitor programs to ensure they are achieving their objectives and to report to elected officials. It would also monitor science policies around the world to draw inspiration from best practices.

In addition, we recommend that this policy branch also facilitate links with the provinces, territories, and Indigenous communities and proactively and continuously monitor the vitality of French-language research. This approach would seek to guide program development in a manner that better reflects the legitimate aspirations of all our communities.

● (1645)

[English]

As a word of caution, we must ensure that reform is never at the expense of investigator-driven research and peer review. As the Naylor report and the Bouchard report point out, investigator-driven research in all fields is the essential foundation of talent training, research excellence, innovation and science diplomacy. This is as true for graduate students working on the history of the Peloponnesian War as it is for Nobel laureates working on solar neutrinos.

While new funding architecture and novel programs are necessary to help us meet emerging challenges, let us not jettison the best practices we already have. Peer review, while imperfect, has remained, from the days of Isaac Newton to today's Donna Strickland and Yoshua Bengio, our best means of assessing research excellence.

Canada must renew its research funding architecture to better support our prosperity, our security and our well-being. In this work, let us never forget that societies that are ambitious in their research enterprise thrive, while those that do not, falter.

[Translation]

Your committee is helping us further our research ambitions. We owe you a debt of gratitude.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to Madame Triandafyllidou.

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

Anna Triandafyllidou (Professor and Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, Toronto Metropolitan University, As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me to this committee.

In my role as a Canada excellence research chair in migration and integration, but also in my role as scientific director of a CFREF-funded program called "Bridging Divides: Migrant integration in the mid-21st century", I'd like to speak a bit about the internal governance of these programs, their accountability and their impact. That is how I have interpreted my invitation to bear witness. I will speak more about Bridging Divides, but a lot of the things I'll say will also refer to the excellence chair. My own excellence chair was approved back in 2018. I joined TMU in 2019, and it will come to a close next year.

In terms of governance, these programs, which are multi-million dollar and very ambitious programs, are really the jewel in the crown of global research. I come from a 25-year research career in Europe with international projects, and there is no equivalent to these programs. I think they're very important strategically for Canada.

Our governance has three pillars: One is internal, one is interinstitutional and the other is external. We have several levels of committees and internal procedures within our university and our consortium to guide us and make sure that in every decision we take, we have consulted with all levels, from graduate students all the way up to the most senior PIs.

We also engage very much with our vice-presidents for research on strategic priorities of the universities that are involved. There is a constant dialogue at all levels, both horizontally and vertically. However, we also engage inter intersectorally with civil society, with governments at different levels and with the private sector, because although, for instance, the programs that I direct are mainly social sciences programs, we engage very much and work together with our colleagues from health, from engineering and from data science.

In terms of accountability, there is very close co-operation and oversight from the tri-council agencies. There is a dedicated program officer. There were site visits at the beginning. We're preparing for a mid-term review site visit. There are annual financial and scientific reports that are being reviewed, and we received comments. There's a mid-term review report, which the current CFREF is going through—ours and everyone else's—and there are people to whom we can address any questions or comments we might have. As far as I know—because I also participated in the 2022 evaluation panel for excellence chairs—the programs are evaluated by Canadian and international experts, including by people from outside academia, to make sure their impact is there.

In terms of our accountability, we are accountable, of course, in the way we use our resources and in how we achieve our aims. We are asked to think about risk management proactively—all types of risks, from research to geopolitics—and we're asked to think about sustainability. The aim of these programs is to build capacity and to continue, not to finish when the funding is finished.

We have, particularly in the CFREF, a performance measurement plan, which sets clear targets and milestones and is followed precisely. There is, as I said, a constant channel of communication with the secretariat for any issue we may have, and certainly there is close oversight.

In terms of the impact on scientific excellence—which I also heard in the debate in the previous part of this session—there is an assessment of our scientific excellence through the usual metrics of academic excellence, but also through recognition at the global level, which comes with awards or with invitations to take institutional roles. Our impact is also measured through our knowledge mobilization. We work, as I said, with governments, civil society and the private sector, and usually with all of them together, to make sure that our research translates into real impact.

I'll give examples, but just give me a moment to say that we work to create the pipeline for the talent of tomorrow. Our mission is for inclusive excellence, and we make sure there's equality and equity of opportunity, not only because of the intersectional differences that exist in Canadian society, but also, for instance, for people who are the first generation to go to university. No talent has to be wasted. It is very important to create a research talent pipeline.

● (1650)

Looking at the impact, I want to give a couple of examples from our program, and I'd be happy to answer questions.

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but your time is up. Maybe you can talk further when we go into our rounds of questioning. Thank you.

With that, we will go to Mr. Maltais for five minutes.

I think you are sharing your time. Please go ahead. You have five minutes together.

Martin Maltais (President, Association francophone pour le savoir): Yes, we will be on schedule.

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for having us back as part of your study.

My name is Martin Maltais, president of Acfas and professor of education funding and policies at the Université du Québec à Rimouski. With me is Acfas's executive director, Sophie Montreuil.

[*English*]

Sophie Montreuil (Executive Director, Association francophone pour le savoir): For 103 years, ACFAS has been working to promote knowledge in French and advance the French-speaking scientific community across Canada. We have six regional branches throughout the country and close to 6,000 members. We represent a wide range of disciplines, and we work daily to promote our country's prosperity and scientific influence.

Your study on the governance and accountability of federal science policies and institutions comes at a crucial time. The creation of a new agency integrating the three granting councils is a major reform. However, the legislative context has changed. The modernization of the Official Languages Act now requires federal institutions to take positive measures to support scientific life in French. The regulations currently under review concerning part VII of the act clarify that these measures apply to all government initiatives, the modification of existing initiatives and measures to mitigate negative effects when required.

This obligation is not symbolic. It also applies to the new capstone organization, which will bring together the three councils. The future organization cannot be linguistically neutral. It must incorporate explicit and measurable targets to ensure the preservation of our nation's identity and the full economic prosperity of each of its members.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Martin Maltais: In the current context, where 23% of the Canadian population is francophone, we propose that at least 25% of federal grants be allocated, in each of the major fields of natural sciences and engineering, health, and humanities and social sciences, to French-speaking researchers, French-language universities, and French-speaking students. Such a target would be a concrete lever for bringing the two official languages closer to substantive equality, and it is a matter of economic prosperity. The proportion should be publicly tracked, field by field, and integrated into the new accountability mechanisms of the new entity.

Sophie Montreuil: Therefore, let us be clear: It is not only legitimate but necessary to better understand and govern how public research funding is allocated. Transparency, accountability and strategic consistency are vital to public trust and Canada's international credibility. Ensuring the full scientific vitality of the country's two official languages in the context of strategically repositioning our international and economic relationships is a unique opportunity that must be seized.

Martin Maltais: Furthermore, scientific governance cannot be limited to the granting phase. In this regard, we eagerly await the report of the External Advisory Panel on the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French, which will be released in March. This governance must also address the dissemination of results. We invite you to consider ensuring that funding criteria include an obligation or, at the very least, a strong incentive to make research results available in both of the country's official languages, across all disciplines.

[*English*]

In this regard, some people sometimes claim that the humanities and social sciences are less necessary or useful, but let us be clear: The current context of disruption—in which we are facing challenges in terms of security, digital and scientific sovereignty, demographics, the environment, defence, the ability to distinguish between truths and falsehoods and maintaining trust between nations—gives us no other choice than to continue investing in all scientific disciplines.

[*Translation*]

Acfas looks forward to collaborating with you and is pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we will proceed with our first round of questioning of six minutes each. We will start with MP DeRidder for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Bouchard, these questions are for you.

SR and ED is one of our largest programs. It has roughly $4 billion per year. We've heard testimony at this committee that about half of those SR and ED dollars—about $2 billion—go towards companies that are Canadian in name only. Effectively, we're subsidizing large foreign internationals. It sounds a bit like philanthropy to me.

To you, where does the accountability lie in the management of these programs to ensure taxpayer dollars are going towards Canadian firms instead of foreign firms like the U.S. ones, for example?

Frédéric Bouchard: SR and ED tax credits were beyond the purview of our committee report. We did hear a lot about SR and ED tax credits, because a lot of universities have intensive R and D activities with Canadian companies. It came up multiple times. I can't address the details of your question.

Let me just point out that, given the very high participation of small and medium enterprises in Canada, the fact is that many of them have difficulty attaining SR and ED tax credits. The question of the country of origin is beyond my expertise.

In the structure of the Canadian economy, SR and ED tax credits are not accessible to or are difficult to obtain for SMEs, which are a large part of the Canadian economy. When looking at the innovation portfolio and how to better support innovation for Canadian companies, it would be important to think about instruments that are designed for or work very well with Canadian SMEs. SR and ED tax credits do that to some extent, but a revised approach to supporting innovation for SMEs is probably warranted.

Help them to have R and D projects with universities and colleges, because a lot of HQP comes from universities, polytechnics and colleges. Trying to build the links between those academic institutions and SMEs is something that needs to be looked at very seriously, beyond existing SR and ED tax credits.

● (1700)

Kelly DeRidder: I agree completely. There's definitely a missing link between the SMEs being able to commercialize where applied research could do a better job of that.

Right now, only 3% of funding is going to colleges, compared to universities, where they do more of the applied research side of things. Do you think that percentage needs to increase?

Frédéric Bouchard: To me it's not so much about fundamental versus applied. The question of which institutions get what types of funding does correlate a bit with applied versus fundamental. To me the main issue is privileged access to HQP—highly qualified personnel—even more than IP. In some sense, inventions are great, but inventors are better.

Kelly DeRidder: Yes, that's for sure.

Frédéric Bouchard: Focusing on the people instead of the intellectual property is a way that we could increase the connections between a greater diversity of academic institutions and SMEs.

Kelly DeRidder: I'm going to challenge you a bit on that, because intellectual property is very important to making sure that we maintain commercialization here in Canada. When we partner through universities, we're seeing that 87% of our IP is going to foreign multinationals instead of staying here in Canada.

While I agree that we need talent, we have to ensure that we're also retaining our IP and making sure that we're commercializing in Canada. Do you think the government is doing a good job of that right now?

Frédéric Bouchard: I don't have enough information to address that. I did not want to suggest that IP wasn't an issue or that control of IP wasn't an issue.

The issue for a lot of SMEs is getting top-notch talent and having productivity gains. That may not translate into patents or new commercialization product, but it enhances the capacities of those SMEs. This is done via talent more directly than the acquisition of IP.

The IP question is fully legitimate, but I can't address it in further detail.

Kelly DeRidder: I respect that.

I'm going to switch gears a bit right now. I think funding research is a very important step for innovation. We spend over $10 billion annually in research, but we see limited commercialization from that here in Canada. That being said, we're losing about $75 billion annually in revenue, because we're not commercializing in Canada.

Do you believe there should be a stronger strategic commercialization structure within the ecosystem to ensure taxpayer dollars are helping bolster Canada's economy instead of foreign multinationals?

Frédéric Bouchard: The issue of commercialization came up indirectly in our recommendations for the new agency to have mission-oriented programs. The mission-oriented programs may be, if you will, business-facing without necessarily being commercialization-facing. For instance, in the national defence industrial strategy, it may be about making sure we have the HQP to support new businesses to do defence procurement in Canada, but it may not be traditional commercialization, because it's government procurement meeting defence commitments.

I think the commercialization issue is very important, but I wouldn't restrict it to that. One benefit of a capstone agency or similar instruments is to allow for better support for mission-oriented research in support of an industrial strategy. It could also be for social or environmental issues or for other types of missions that are a priority for Canadian citizens.

● (1705)

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

We will now proceed to MP Deschênes-Thériault for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Maltais and Ms. Montreuil.

In your presentation, you referred to the Official Languages Act. Part VII explicitly mentions taking positive measures to "support the creation and dissemination of information in French that contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge in any discipline." Today, we are focusing on the issue of governance in federal science policy.

In this context, what accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure that federal institutions meet these commitments under the Official Languages Act?

Martin Maltais: Thank you for the question.

With respect to positive measures, in the act and the regulations, as they are currently worded, it is very clear that there are a number of intended positive effects. I will very briefly repeat the elements that federal institutions must consider. In the regulations, it says:

> …federal institutions must, at the following stages of a program, policy or initiative, consider whether positive measures could potentially be taken:
>
> design and development
>
> restructuring or substantial modification
>
> update or renewal
>
> abolition or end
>
> devolution, in part or in whole

The capstone organization that will be established is an example that corresponds to the first two stages, namely design and development, followed by substantial modification or restructuring. Therefore, there must be an element within the capstone organization ensuring that the funds allocated to French-language scientific research have a positive impact. The same kind of exercise should have been carried out for the $1.7 billion earmarked for recruiting international talent.

Sophie Montreuil: Mr. Deschênes-Thériault, may I add further information?

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Go ahead.

Sophie Montreuil: You asked what mechanisms were needed, but I would say that indicators should be considered first. There must be positive measures, that's a fact. Their effects will have to be measured, so indicators will be required. We need to determine the relevant indicators in relation to the creation and dissemination of scientific information in French. Next, we need to ensure that there is an entity or structure within the capstone organization that is responsible for accountability.

The first thing we need is clear indicators that we, as a society and as a community, will collectively monitor closely.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Since you're saying that the first question should be about indicators, can you tell us a little more? What do you mean by that?

Sophie Montreuil: I will leave the answer to our president, as he is the expert on the subject.

Martin Maltais: There is some thinking to be done on indicators, but we have already developed a few scenarios.

First, at least 25% of federal funding for scientific research must be allocated to French-language universities. Second, at least 25% of researchers recruited internationally must be French-speaking. That should also have been the case for those recruited under the latest $1.7 billion initiative. Finally, at least 25% of the scholarships awarded to graduate and doctoral students by federal agencies must be awarded to French-speaking students.

Francophones make up 23% of the Canadian population, but they account for a significantly lower percentage in the scientific community. Studies show that it falls between 21% and 14%. Over the past year, new research has shown that the situation has deteriorated considerably. If we want to remedy the situation, we must set a target that is higher than the proportion of francophones in the country. If we want to strengthen the Canadian economy, that is a requirement.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: In your remarks, you also mentioned that science policies, and thus the accountability mechanisms that accompany them, must not be limited to the granting phase and the support and creation of scientific knowledge, but should also focus on the dissemination of results.

Can you expand on that, and explain why that is important?

Sophie Montreuil: I would quickly say that what's implicit in what's being said is that the Canadian government has recognized the need to support the advancement of science in French.

In French-language science, there is both scientific production and scientific dissemination. The Canadian government must therefore ensure that it is possible to conduct research in French under the same conditions as those for anglophones, and that it is possible to publish research results in French under the same conditions. This means that the entire research cycle must be covered.

● (1710)

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you, Ms. Montreuil.

I will now turn to you, Professor Triandafyllidou.

You mentioned that much of your research has received federal funding, particularly through the Canada first research excellence fund.

Based on your experience, can you tell us about federal science policy monitoring, analysis and accountability mechanisms?

Today's motion proposes adding a new entity. In your opinion, would this add to the administrative burden for researchers like you? Would it be better to focus on improving existing mechanisms? I would like to hear your opinion on this matter.

Anna Triandafyllidou: Thank you for the question.

I can speak from my personal experience at Toronto Metropolitan University.

The existing structure works very well, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't have another organization that could achieve economies of scale.

What I can tell you is that the Chair of Excellence and the Canada First funding are interdisciplinary and bilingual at their core.

Rather than trying to translate everything, our goal is to engage in publications, events, and knowledge dissemination in either English or French. We believe this is true bilingualism: having spheres of knowledge in both languages with the same vitality.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up.

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

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Bouchard, in the report from the committee you chaired, you noted that the federal research support system is fragmented and consists of separate entities that are sometimes disconnected, with similar but non-coordinated mandates.

In your opinion, does this fragmentation undermine the system's strategic coherence and make it more difficult to identify clear overall responsibility?

Frédéric Bouchard: Yes, absolutely.

It is more difficult. In fact, the councils do very good work and the boards do very good work, but they each do it for their own organization. Of course, there is some concerted effort, because everyone is in Ottawa and we work together for the common good, but there is no comprehensive strategy to guide their actions.

For example, if you look at talent development, it's partly done by all the councils, but the Canada Foundation for Innovation is also involved in it, to some extent. There's also Mitacs, as well as parapublic groups that support different missions, but there's no overarching strategy to guide their actions.

The capstone organization wanted to remedy that, but there was also the idea of creating the Science and Innovation Council and launching a national strategy for science, research and innovation, in order to set common goals that might be, for example, the goals mentioned by my fellow witnesses. A national strategy could identify cross-cutting goals and ensure that the various organizations, whether unified or not, can achieve those goals.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: You talk about a lack of strategy. As a result, there is currently no authority responsible for an integrated and strategic overview of federal research support.

Frédéric Bouchard: Some people are interested in the ecosystem in general. For example, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research fall under the Department of Health, while the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada fall under Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, which is the Department of Industry.

Of course, they talk to each other, but these are two departments that, to some extent, oversee the largest investments in research and innovation, not to mention organizations like the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which is relatively close to the federal portfolio. Then you have CIFAR, Mitacs, Genome Canada and Brain Canada. So there are all these organizations that are essential to the ecosystem and that, at the moment, are not coordinated by a comprehensive strategy.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: In your 2023 report, you also recommended the creation of an independent advisory body to assess the system overall and publicly report on it. That's a lot of what you said about the capstone organization.

In concrete terms, should this organization play a role in strategic analysis, performance evaluation or cross-coordination, or even all three, in the context of accountability for scientific policies and federal scientific institutions?

● (1715)

Frédéric Bouchard: Absolutely.

I understand the purpose of the audit. It's important for elected officials to be able to ensure that the public interest is well served. So I understand that.

What an audit unit can't consider is the forward-looking and dynamic aspect. It's not that we're against an audit team. However, the big gain, in our opinion, would be for it to be done within an agency. On the one hand, elected officials could call on them at any time to dynamically ask about the situation. On the other hand, we could evolve programming in a more agile way.

When there are legislative changes, whether to official acts or for other functions, how long does it take before they are reflected in the programming, criteria and indicators? We believe that doing so from an internal policy direction at the agency would allow for better responsiveness in order to evolve programming.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: You mentioned the Naylor report, which dates back to 2017. Your report is from 2023. So the successive reforms announced are piling up. Your report proposes an overall independent assessment of the system, unless you mainly suggest internal and sectoral analyses.

Here's my question. There isn't necessarily an independent assessment, even of your own reforms. So how do we avoid periodic reproduction of the same findings?

Frédéric Bouchard: I'm an inherently optimistic person, so I tell myself that we're going to move forward and make progress.

I'm concerned about how slow we are on this. We have taken real action and made real progress. That's obvious. However, it must be understood that we are less of a privileged partner to other countries than we were 20 or 30 years ago. For example, a few years ago, we were France's fifth-largest international research partner. Now we're number eight. We were the fourth-largest partner of the United Kingdom. Now we're ninth.

So I wouldn't want the efforts being made to confirm the recommendations to delay the implementation of the recommendations, for which there has been a very broad consensus for at least ten years.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: In the recommendations in your report, how do you see the possibility of incorporating a clearly identified authority responsible for the overall performance and consistency of the federal system in support of research?

Frédéric Bouchard: Ms. Montreuil's comment on this issue was very important: The choice of indicators is important. However, we can't identify the appropriate indicators, except for specific legislative changes, unless we have an overall strategy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to MP Mahal for five minutes.

MP Mahal, please go ahead.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): Thank you to all the witnesses for coming here for this testimony today.

Madam Chair, I'll be sharing my time with my colleague Mr. Ho.

Dr. Bouchard, my question is for you. You chaired the advisory panel on the federal research support system, and your report directly informed budget 2024, as you already acknowledged in your opening statement, as well as other government reforms. With the government publicly stating that many of your recommendations were adopted, would you agree that you were effectively one of the principal architects of the current research funding framework, yes or no?

Frédéric Bouchard: No, because the recommendations that were implemented did not.... We haven't seen the capstone organization yet. The funding recommendations were made in 2017. We were confirming, on the funding side, recommendations that were made before.

In some sense, the most important recommendations for us haven't been acted upon.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Doctor, did you not just say that the recommendations were adopted in the 2024 budget?

Frédéric Bouchard: I said some recommendations were, related to graduate training, so catching up for graduate student funding and for the beginning of an increase in the councils. Actually, they did announce that they wanted to work on the capstone organization, but we haven't seen that reform yet.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: On a scale of one to 10, how many recommendations were adopted and how many were not adopted?

Frédéric Bouchard: I would say the most important ones were announced, but they are not yet enacted. Recommendation one was the creation of the capstone agency. It hasn't been created yet.

● (1720)

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Only one recommendation has not been created.

Frédéric Bouchard: No, it's not just one, but many.

I don't want to begrudge that. Significant investments were made, and the research community was very thankful for that, but recommendations were made in terms of a research support system and were organizational in nature. They haven't been enacted or announced yet. It's been announced that they would work on it.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: From a layman's standpoint, is it fair to say that you were substantially involved in that report and that the government has in fact implemented that report to a considerable degree?

Frédéric Bouchard: No. The key recommendations haven't been enacted. They were announced, but the work hasn't been public. I haven't been involved in developing the capstone agency.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: If the recommendations were not adopted, did you follow up with the government as to why they were not adopted?

Frédéric Bouchard: I ask on a regular basis, "How are we on capstone?" I do ask the question on a regular basis.

I am encouraged that it is still on the table. It was announced in the 2025 budget that the work would be pursued, but it hasn't been. I don't know more than what was announced in the budget.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I'll cede my time to my colleague.

The Chair: You have one minute and 45 seconds.

Vincent Ho: You can keep going, Jagsharan. It's fine.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: I'll stay with you, Dr. Bouchard.

Since budget 2024, we have seen the creation of new advisory bodies, plans for funding the capstone organization and large spending announcements, but very little in the way of simplified governance, measurable outcomes and commercialization success.

Given that this reflects part of the blueprint that you offered in the budget 2024 report, do you accept responsibility for how the system is now being implemented by the government?

Frédéric Bouchard: No.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Why not?

Frédéric Bouchard: It's because I am not the minister.

I'm an expert, and we've made recommendations. We consulted with close to 1,000 people in Canada and with other jurisdictions. We made our recommendations. Some of them were acted upon, especially for the increase in graduate student funding and in some increases to the councils—

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: Are you suggesting—

Frédéric Bouchard: As for the organizational recommendations, they announced that they would work on them, but we haven't yet seen the exact nature of that. It's too early.

If they act upon those recommendations, you can ask me the same question and I'll be able to answer it. Once we see that, I'll be happy to take credit for it, if it corresponds to our recommendations.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal: What do you think of—

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

We will proceed to MP McKelvie for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

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

My question is for Dr. Bouchard.

I was wondering if you could speak to what you think some of the key objectives for capstone should be.

Also, earlier panels spoke to the risks of politicization. How do we ensure that we can bring capstone forward and keep politics out of it?

Frédéric Bouchard: In the lacunas we observed in the current ecosystem, there was a fragmentation. There was a difficulty of eligibility for Canadian scientists to build collaboration with international partners and work with them. There was a worry that interdisciplinary research was difficult to support in the current set-up. It's not a lack of goodwill on the part of the actors, but the funding instruments are not designed to support interdisciplinary research.

One of the big things missing, which is becoming more and more important, is mission-oriented research. CIHR does that to some extent in the health sector, but if we had a large mission on, let's say, food security or on limiting foreign interference or other types of larger societal needs or capacities, those would be difficult to launch in the current set-up.

Those were the main gaps in the current funding. Overall, we were hoping that they would coordinate the efforts of the existing actors to make sure these problems are not just technological. As my witness colleague pointed out, social science and humanities are very important in addressing these issues. Sometimes it's a sociologist or an economist working with an engineer and with public health to identify how to establish food security. It's relatively difficult to do that right now, and the capstone organization was designed to do this.

I must say that with the increase in our defence commitments and with industrial strategies that will be adopted to support this, it becomes supremely important to have such instruments, if only to put the money from industry and universities together for a shared project.

There were other aspects to this, but that was the general set-up. It was that we needed some sort of quarterback to make sure that the whole team would move forward on the field.

● (1725)

Jennifer McKelvie: How do we keep politics out of it?

Frédéric Bouchard: We're all human, so I guess there is always politics.

More seriously, the basic importance of peer review in committees was addressed earlier. The batting average of scientists in peer review is actually very good. It is imperfect and it is perfectible, but basically, if you have peers, you have to give them clear criteria, and the programs have to be well designed. To me, that's a separate issue, but if you give them the right criteria and the programs are well designed, external assessment can say whether this is good or this is bad.

A lot of the grants are actually assessed via committees. Scientists across Canada, who oftentimes also have international experience, see these reports in committees and say that this can work or this may not work. This is the gold standard in science across the world.

As pointed out in the previous panel, transparency can be increased and improved. There are various means of improving it, but it's not a bad idea to determine what good science is. In the same way, since I'm wearing a cast right now because I ripped my Achilles tendon, I want my orthopaedic surgeon to give me advice, and when I want more advice, I want to ask another orthopaedic surgeon. I don't want to ask an engineer. You want the experts to assess which projects are the ones with the highest quality.

Jennifer McKelvie: I'm not sure I have time, but you had three key recommendations or measures. Maybe you could repeat them. The first was capstone and the second was something on science and innovation, and there was a third. Could you just repeat what the second and third recommendations were?

Frédéric Bouchard: In terms of a national strategy, right now it's difficult to determine if the system is performing at the level we want, because it's not obvious what the goals are at the system level. We know what the goals of individual programs are, but we don't have an overall architecture for determining what the objectives are. Is it regional development? Is it commercialization? Is it patents? Is it HQP? Depending on what you choose in terms of science policy, you then adopt indicators to see whether you have progress.

Quebec has the Quebec strategy to support research and investment in innovation—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Bouchard—

Frédéric Bouchard: —so it's possible to have such indicators.

The Chair: Thank you, MP McKelvie.

We will now end this panel with MP Blanchette-Joncas.

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

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Maltais, is there a structured mechanism in place today to assess the efficiency of incentives for science in French in light of the obligations set out in the Official Languages Act regarding vitality?

Martin Maltais: The simple answer is no.

[*English*]

There is no such thing.

[*Translation*]

Sophie Montreuil: Do we need one?

Martin Maltais: Do we need one?

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: If this development requires measurable and longitudinal monitoring of scientific capacity in French, can it be sustainable if it relies on ad hoc measures rather than a structured monitoring architecture?

Martin Maltais: Clearly, there needs to be a structured monitoring architecture. Anyone who monitors indicators will tell you that.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: In your opinion, would an independent analysis and accountability feature, such as the topic of today's study, make it possible to ensure sustainable monitoring of this growth?

Martin Maltais: We think it's relevant to have that kind of follow-up. The fact that the capstone organization hasn't been created yet allows us to include indicators on scientific life in French and obligations through the capstone organization's internal committee, whose mandate would be to monitor investments in science in French and in the promotion and development of scientific life in French. I would remind you that 23% of Canada's population is French-speaking. However, scientific life in French is not at the same level as that of anglophones. That balance doesn't currently exist.

The opportunities for a young person to access knowledge written in French have been reduced to very little. The ability to translate research findings to make them accessible, both for students in courses and for public decision-makers in the state or hospitals, is a challenge. The most conclusive research results are used essentially in anglophone communities around the world, and they're produced by people who have another mother tongue. It's not just a francophone language issue, but in this country, it's a matter of identity.

Earlier, Ms. DeRidder said that it was necessary to attract talent. I agree with her. However, talent must be not only high-quality talent that meets the needs of Canadian industries, but also talent that respects Canadian values and identity. Yet, what's missing when recruiting foreign talent is just that. Who are they recruiting? Are we undermining science in French in what we're doing, or are we going to support it in all the decisions we're going to make about science and technology?

● (1730)

[*English*]

The Chair: Can you quickly wind up?

[*Translation*]

Martin Maltais: The issue, in our view, is the identity of the Canadian nation.

Sophie Montreuil: I'd like to add one last thing.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have just a few seconds.

[*Translation*]

Sophie Montreuil: Mr. Blanchette-Joncas, I remind you that the Government of Canada has commissioned a group of experts who will submit recommendations that will no doubt answer your question.

[*English*]

Kelly DeRidder: There was no interpretation.

Martin Maltais: She was saying that the group of experts who will produce a report in a month from now—in March—will give some answers to the question you raised.

The Chair: Before we end this panel, I have a few things for the information of all members of this committee.

For Thursday, February 26, as yet we have only had three witnesses confirm.

For Monday, March 9, we only have two witnesses confirmed so far. We would need more suggested witnesses from members in order to have our usual six witnesses on two panels. The clerk has already gone through the list of suggested witnesses.

MP Noormohamed, go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Chair, obviously people have submitted witness lists. I gather the tri-councils aren't able to come until later.

If we can't get people to come to the next meeting or on Monday, is there some value in consolidating them into one meeting and not wasting everybody's time with one or two witnesses? How do others feel about that?

Tony Baldinelli: It makes sense to me.

The Chair: Hold on for one second.

MP Noormohamed, what were you suggesting?

Taleeb Noormohamed: My suggestion, if we don't have enough witnesses for a full roster for Thursday, is that perhaps we can consolidate them all on the following Monday so that we have one robust meeting rather than two meetings.

The Chair: The clerk added, which I missed, that on Thursday, the second hour can be committee business if members are okay to discuss one or two things.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Do we have enough to discuss?

Tony Baldinelli: We could do that, but if we could get more....

● (1735)

The Chair: Members will have to send a list of witnesses if we want to have more witnesses.

Go ahead, MP Ho.

Kelly DeRidder: I say that we consolidate.

Vincent Ho: I'm sorry, but whose turn is it to speak? Is it my turn?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, MP Ho.

Let's have one person at a time, please.

Vincent Ho: We could even shorten the number of meetings for this study if we're having trouble finding witnesses.

The Chair: The clerk has gone through all the witnesses, and this motion asks for at least four meetings. If members want, we can go into that.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I can tell you clearly that we have suggested additional witnesses to the clerk. I think it would be respectful to consider that before deciding on something else and possibly thinking that these people would not be available to come and testify as part of this important study.

[*English*]

The Chair: Will you be sending a list with more witnesses before the end of the day today?

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: It's already done.

[*English*]

Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton, Lib.): On a point of order, Madam Chair, can we discharge the witnesses?

The Chair: Yes. I'm sorry. Thanks for saying that.

Thanks a lot to all the witnesses for appearing before the committee and for contributing to this study. If you desire, you can leave.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, it has indeed already been sent to the clerk. We have a list of witnesses, no problem. I believe we will be able to continue this study.

[*English*]

The Chair: MP Ho.

Vincent Ho: If the clerk has already contacted the witnesses—it looks like he got the full list—and if witnesses can't make the time to appear, it would be prudent to shorten this study by maybe a meeting or two so we can continue the important work that this committee has to do on other studies and subjects of interest.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Ho.

MP Blanchette-Joncas indicated that he has sent a list for more witnesses, so I will ask the clerk to look into that and whether we can get them for the Monday after the break week, which is March 9.

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

The Chair: Yes, MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Are witness slots not determined by seats in the House and by composition of the chamber? If so, we need to think about that in our consideration of how many spots we're allocating and where.

The Chair: Yes, generally, it's based on the total number of witnesses, divided by the representation we have at the committee, but we didn't get many witnesses from the Conservatives for this study, and the tri-councils are not available. They are available on Thursday, March 12, but they are not available before that.

I can check with the clerk about whether we have any success with the additional list.

MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Just on this, the idea of having a meeting for the sake of having a meeting is not particularly productive. If we have witnesses, by all means we should be here and should give them the due time—no question about it.

I don't know about my colleagues, but I think time spent here waiting when we don't have witnesses could be spent dealing with constituents or with other things. We could go out and argue about something else. I mean, there are lots of options available to us. I just want to make sure that we're maximizing everyone's time.

The Chair: The notice for Thursday's meeting has gone out, with one hour of committee business and three witnesses.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay.

The Chair: We will see what response we get for March 9. Based on that, we will let you know.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.