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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.)): Welcome to meeting number 34 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. We are meeting today to resume our study on the implications of the Canada-China preliminary joint arrangement on Canada's electric vehicle sector.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and the members. Please wait until I recognize you before speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

With that, I would like to welcome our witnesses for the first panel. Today we are joined by Professor Julian Karaguesian, visiting lecturer, department of economics, McGill University. We are also joined, by video conference, by Dr. Karim Zaghbi, professor, Concordia University, and chief executive officer, Volt-Age. Our third witness for this panel is Dr. Nadja Johnson Bressan, associate dean, school of trades, Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology.

All the witnesses will have five minutes for their opening remarks, but I understand that Dr. Karim Zaghbi will not make any opening remarks.

We will start with Professor Karaguesian.

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

Julian Karaguesian (Visiting Lecturer, Department of Economics, McGill University, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair.

Members of the committee, thank you for having me here. This is my second time testifying before a House of Commons committee on this issue. It's really a great honour.

I'm coming here with my experience of more than 25 years with the federal ministry of finance in the international trade and finance branch. I also currently teach at McGill, and I have my own advisory firm. Coming here, I represent no private interests or interests of any kind. I'm affiliated with no party. My interest, after having been invited here, is Canada's prosperity and Canada's sovereignty in the long term.

I'll make five or six points about that in the context of the government's agreement with the People's Republic of China to import,

in the first instance, 49,000 electric vehicles for the next three years.

My first point is that this tariff relief agreement for EVs, canola and other foodstuffs, through which we have very substantial tariff relief on both sides, must be seen in the context of a larger trade agreement that's going to benefit both countries. I think this will actually benefit Canada more. China represents more of our trade than Chinese trade represents for Canada. They have a much more diversified export base than we do. That's one point.

The general point here is that tariff relief agreements, trade agreements and strategic partnerships require a quid pro quo and should allow countries to play to their comparative advantage. Our comparative advantage, whether we like it or not, is in energy, agri-food and other related exports.

I would never want to give up on our skilled manufacturing workers. That's my primary concern. You cannot be a rich country without a manufacturing sector, and a significant one, but when our economic model is based in large part on deep trade integration with the United States, we cannot have trade agreements with other countries unless there's a quid pro quo, so we have to accept imports. In this case, they're from China. It's a manufacturing superpower. It has one-third of global manufacturing, so there has to be give-and-take. We cannot only export.

This leads to my second point, which is what we can do with our automotive manufacturing sector, which we've had for more than 100 years. For the 500,000 workers, primarily in Ontario, who depend on this sector for their prosperity—middle-class families that require good incomes from good jobs—what can we do?

I think we have two broad choices, and maybe, with a mix of good policy and luck, we have three choices.

One is to go deeper into North American integration and to a kind of “fortress North America”. We haven't been in a fortress North America, but we've been in free trade agreements, NAFTA and then CUSMA, which came at the request of the Trump administration. Since the turn of the century, when our automobile production peaked at three million vehicles, we've seen the sector in long-term decline. Last year, we produced only 1.2 million vehicles, compared to the three million 25 years ago. In the context of the NAFTA platform, we have seen a migration of over 60% of our automobile production to Mexico and the United States.

We could stay in this platform, where Mexico has emerged as one of the six largest automobile producers in the world. We can try our luck there, or we can go global. We can take a page out of Australia's book. I'm not saying we should do this. I think there's a third way.

Australia ceased, as a result of a very strong currency and as a result of heavy government subsidies, to produce automobiles on a large basis about two to three years before COVID. More than its entire auto manufacturing population has been absorbed into the defence sector, which is growing rapidly in the context of a defence industrial policy aimed at defence sovereignty in Australia. In this new and enlarged defence sector in Australia, the wages and the earnings are higher.

• (1535)

I think there's a third Canadian option, which is to admit or to accept willingly and happily that the United States will always be our largest trading partner, but we can take a page out of Australia's book and have a mix of an automobile industry where we're producing EVs in a global sector where 70% of EVs are—

The Chair: Time is up. Can you just wind down?

Julian Karaguesian: Is that the time?

The Chair: Yes. You can talk further when we go into the rounds of questioning.

With that, we will go to Dr. Johnson Bressan.

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

Nadja Johnson Bressan (Associate Dean, School of Trades, Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today.

Niagara College is a community college that has been providing post-secondary education for over five decades, offering 1,950 courses, 130 full-time programs and 18 part-time programs, with 8,544 students.

Colleges and universities are the foundational pillars of the future, serving as critical engines for economic growth, industry innovation and social stability. Valero and Van Reenen reported a significant association between GDP per capita and post-secondary institutions, as well as an effect on views on democracy on a long-term basis.

This committee is collecting information for the preliminary agreement between Canada and the People's Republic of China in

the electrical vehicle sector and its implications for Canadian society. To understand the impact of the educational system, an analysis of the production of these electrical vehicles in Canada must be addressed first.

In 2025, 10,700 zero-emission vehicles were produced and sold in Canada. Honda reported 55,987 conventional hybrid vehicles produced, with 35,325 sold in Canada, for a total of 46,025. This figure represents the production of HEVs and ZEVs sold domestically and accounts for 93% of the quota of vehicles produced in China that are anticipated to be commercialized in Canada.

Although the initial projections indicate that the automotive industry would bear the brunt of the change, the implementation of a quota for electrical vehicles in Canada has given rise to a far more significant and intricate imbalance.

The low-carbon industry workforce requires technical skill sets that align technology with green literacy and transferable skills, shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy, energy efficiency and technologies for carbon capture. The current geopolitical climate has thrust the world into an unprecedented reality that we can no longer ignore. Unemployment in Canada has kept to 6.7% over the past six months, while new industries, such as low-carbon industries, struggle to find workers with the skills necessary to perform within the new industry technology.

Skills shortages account for 7% of the labour productivity gap, placing Canada behind the United States. The projections for low-carbon industries are encouraging; however, they are constrained by the need for training and skills to adapt to the new technologies.

The current EV arrangement will affect the production of EVs in Canada and in Ontario, with consequences not only for employment but also for recruiting, retention and retraining of the workforce. Different regions and countries are now competing for a limited pool of skilled labour. Canada is experiencing labour shortages in nearly every sector, with a greater impact in skilled trades opportunities. The Canadian occupational production system has estimated 1.2 million jobs opening in skilled trades between 2022 and 2031, with one in five Red Seal workers at retirement age.

Adding to the factors already mentioned that limit and constrain the post-secondary sector, between 12% and 22% of total jobs across Canada rely on exports. To adapt to the new market, the automotive industry has retrained on skills, shifting towards electrical vehicles and the low-carbon industry, making the decision to import EVs a challenge for the job market.

Given the intersecting challenges already stated, growing evidence suggests that importing electrical vehicles not manufactured in Canada and equipped with foreign software and telemetry represents not only a disadvantage to our society, but, in the long run, a challenge for consumers when maintaining and upkeeping their vehicles. Other technological challenges have arisen from EV technology in recent years in addressing safety concerns on how to rescue vehicles and passengers from accidents involving fire and battery packs that accumulate 680 volts and 140 amps of live current.

Niagara College, in partnership with an economic institution, has launched a program to educate and train firefighters and paramedics on this technology. This was only possible due to partnership with the automotive industry and their guidance in providing reliable access to design and engineering specifications to safely and reliably put out fires while rescuing victims.

• (1540)

Reliance solely on market dynamics will not adequately capture the socio-economic benefits of the low-carbon economy. We must instead actively pursue industrial strategies that employ a targeted set of policy instrument strategies, involving all sectors of our economy, to achieve favourable outcomes and build the future together.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we will get into our first round of questioning. We will begin our six-minute round with MP Baldinelli.

You will have six minutes, MP Baldinelli. Please go ahead.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I'm going to begin with you, Dr. Johnson Bressan. Thank you for being here.

Niagara College is ranked the number one research college in Canada, and it attracts over \$40 million in funding, going back to 2023-24. I'm always so proud to highlight the incredible work of the students and faculty at our Niagara-on-the-Lake campus and the important work that is being done in Welland as well.

Ms. Bressan, Niagara College has a number of programs for students looking to enter Canada's auto manufacturing sector. In 2018, the college opened a new \$1.4-million green automotive technology lab. In 2024, the college received funding from the federal government of about \$365,000 for their motive power program. Then in 2025, you had this innovative program with the RBC Foundation, which helped fund an electric vehicle first responders training program at Niagara College, and that was worth about \$450,000 in pledged programs. The work that you're doing in such a short amount of time is incredible.

You talked about the 49,000 assembled Chinese EVs coming into the country. You talked about the disadvantage of that. Are Chinese EVs a risk and threat to the future and viability of EV auto manufacturing programs like the one at Niagara College?

• (1545)

Nadja Johnson Bressan: The challenge that is posed here is that we have no access to the design of these vehicles. While we have access currently to the design of vehicles in Canada at the moment, we are finding challenges in making sure that we are safely deploying rescue teams when rescuing people from vehicles during accidents.

In this partnership, if we don't have any access to the design and specifications of these cars, we have no idea how to deactivate a battery. That can kill someone, like a paramedic getting into a car as a first responder and having no idea if that battery is alive or was unplugged at the moment of the accident. We don't have access to those plans.

Tony Baldinelli: That's interesting.

From a research perspective, the big three automakers spend about \$980 million each year on research here in North America, and that flows down to places like Niagara College and to the programs that you present to students who enrol.

Chinese EVs and Chinese companies will not be doing that research. What's the impact on Niagara College, for example? What would be the impact on future student enrolment because of that loss in research dollars?

Nadja Johnson Bressan: The research dollars are just one piece of the impact. When we think about how many of the trades are inside an automotive manufacturing plant, we are talking about all of them, from welders to motive power to electricians. It's all of the trades.

The impact on research is enormous, because part of what we are doing at Niagara College right now is research on this sector and how to identify these key factors of the batteries and the construction, the building of the car. We can only do that because we are in constant communication with the automotive industry in the development of this research.

Now, in a partnership, it is possible if this partnership provides access to the specifications and the development of this car. I am not certain that we have that.

Tony Baldinelli: The great thing about the college system is the relationships it establishes within the communities and the businesses that utilize the services and the training of the students that are there.

We have a General Motors engine propulsion system located in St. Catharines, and GM has a relationship with Niagara College. Do you think that this relationship could be put at risk as the government pursues Chinese EVs?

Nadja Johnson Bressan: If they're manufacturing at their plant and the jobs they have today are placed at risk, then their relationship with the college—not just Niagara College but any college—will be at risk.

Tony Baldinelli: I have a quick question about something you mentioned in your remarks.

Last week, probably all members met with local firefighters. The International Association of Fire Fighters was in town with Jim Lee. The union from Niagara Falls was in town. The number one issue they had and discussed was lithium-ion battery fires, which they describe as “not ordinary fires”. When a cell enters thermal runaway, it generates intense heat that can exceed 700°C.

You talked about the innovative program that was established and struck last year with the RBC Foundation so that you could provide training to firefighters, paramedics and emergency services personnel. If you have some time, can you describe that program a little bit more?

• (1550)

Nadja Johnson Bressan: When a battery—a pack of batteries, actually—catches on fire, it can reach 3,000°C. If one of the cables that feeds those batteries is pinched or damaged for any reason, the car gets to a place where there can be 140 amps on its chassis, and I'll just remind you that 10 amps can kill you. It could be 140 amps, depending on the vehicle, and that's the thing. We are talking about electrical vehicles, but we are not being very specific. What type of electric vehicle? Are they HEVs? Are they zero-emission vehicles? Are they hybrids? What kind of technology are we talking about?

Depending on the technology, it will not have an impact on our jobs, but depending on the technology, it could have a different impact on our economy. We have provided this training to—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, but we've gone beyond time. Thank you.

We will now proceed to MP Rana for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for your time.

Professor Karaguesian, you recently argued that Canada is going to gain more than what we'll lose from this arrangement, but some people are a little hard on it and don't agree with these comments. What do you think? What are they missing?

Julian Karaguesian: Do you mean whether Canada would be a net beneficiary or benefit more than China would benefit from a relationship with us? Do you mean whether we will benefit in a significant way?

Aslam Rana: Yes.

Julian Karaguesian: Well, we could do ivory tower economics, but we're not going to do that here, and I don't think we should do that at all. However, there are some useful models in economics. One of them is the gravity model: How much trade would there be between two countries if there were only geography to consider, and no geopolitics or tariffs?

My own back-of-the-envelope calculations—and those of my colleagues, and right across the board—suggest that we'd go from about \$130 billion in two-way trade with China to about \$370 bil-

lion. Those are my own estimates, based on how I compute the gravity model—to get technical.

Based on the fact that we're complementary economies—we're a natural resource superpower, while they're a manufacturing superpower—my own estimates suggest a threefold increase within 10 to 20 years in trade if there were no geopolitical considerations.

Aslam Rana: How do you weigh the benefits of the cheaper EVs for Canadian consumers against the pressure they put on domestic producers? Is there a way to have both, or is this a real trade-off?

Julian Karaguesian: I think there are a few benefits. One is affordability. Two is clean air and climate change mitigation. Three, if we want a broader relationship with China and the rest of the global south, there has to be a quid pro quo. We have to give something up, but I'm not suggesting in any way to give up our manufacturing or our skilled workers, not in the least.

Four, whether intentionally or not, the actions of the current Trump administration and the previous Biden administration were and are an attack on our economic model, and we have to expand trade with the rest of the world and with the global south, where three out of every four people on this planet live and which has 60% of global GDP at purchasing power parity. It is in our long-term interest to mend fences and trade with the entire planet. We can be a prosperous country, even if some of our manufacturing is just parts of global supply chains.

Then there's the technology transfer. I'm talking about technology transfer to Canada from the People's Republic of China, where they lead in 66 of 76 technologies, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, according to The Economist magazine, according to the EIU and a range of other institutes with expertise in technology.

• (1555)

Aslam Rana: Do you think this arrangement will complicate relations between the U.S. and Canada?

Julian Karaguesian: I do. I think it already has, but we're facing a kind of unintentional—or intentional—forced decline by Washington. They are making trade with the United States more costly for us. We've been an incredibly loyal ally. We've not hurt them in any way. They are making trade with the United States costly with a range of tariffs. They're telling us that they're going to repatriate the rest of the automobile sector with the Detroit three. They're also telling us that if we try to diversify our exports, they'll punish us.

Our only choice is to diversify our exports, which will make us more resilient, more sovereign and, in the long run, more prosperous.

Aslam Rana: Thank you very much.

Dr. Zaghbi, what are the biggest research gaps Canada needs to close to stay relevant in the battery space over the next decade?

[Translation]

Karim Zaghbi (Professor, Concordia University and Chief Executive Officer, Volt-Age, As an Individual): Thank you for your question.

It has to be said that, today, China has manufactured more than 410 gigawatt hours of lithium iron phosphate, LFP, batteries, the safest in the world. They have no thermal runaway, they do not catch fire or explode.

That technology was developed in Canada, specifically in Quebec, by Hydro-Québec, the Université de Montréal, and the University of Texas. So we are very familiar with the technology. I feel that it's a good thing that the Chinese vehicles arriving in Canada are equipped with that technology.

Quebec, especially Hydro-Québec, has enormous expertise with batteries in Canada. We have no choice today because lithium is the lightest metal with the smallest ions. So the energy density of lithium ion batteries will remain the same for more than 100 years, just like lead batteries.

However, research can continue into everything involved with sodium ion batteries, for example, or all-solid-state batteries, with their great energy density.

In Canada, by ourselves or with the support of China, we should perhaps start producing those batteries on an industrial scale. The ecosystem in our country is clean energy, human capital and so on. What we do not have is the ability to scale up to industrial levels. This will be a major factor. Thirty or forty years ago, E-One Moli Energy, from Vancouver, and Hydro-Québec, took great steps forward. Today, our only choice is to look at ways in which we can work with China, by providing research institutes...

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Can you quickly wind up? The time is up for MP Rana.

[Translation]

Karim Zaghbi: Attention is more focused on lithium ion batteries on an industrial scale and on job creation in Canada.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now, we will proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

[Translation]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): My first question is for you, Mr. Zaghbi.

Are you saying that Canada's main challenge at the moment is developing and marketing these innovations on an industrial scale?

Karim Zaghbi: Let me first explain the circular economy, from mining to recycling. I will be telling you about critical minerals, about processing lithium or cobalt, for example, about producing

cells, modules, blocks. I will also talk to you about the product's second life, as recycling.

We are used to the ecosystem today, particularly when it comes to processing. However, we are not used to cell manufacturing. That requires major funding as well as expertise. Thirty or forty years ago, the feeling was that Canada was the brains and Asia was the brawn. I feel that was a serious mistake. In Canada today, we have to make what I call the "industrial" transition towards manufacturing cells specifically. Through collaborative work, we must focus on one or two chemistry processes so that the cars are not expensive. They are LFP and NMC, meaning nickel, manganese and cobalt.

I have to say that graphite, silicon, copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese, aluminum, iron and phosphate are critical minerals that Canada has. Processing is not a problem. Let's focus on the way in which we are going to manufacture the cells in Canada, starting now.

• (1600)

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

Mr. Zaghbi, what do we have to do to make sure that Quebec research, Canadian research, into electrification remains here and is not taken and developed elsewhere?

Karim Zaghbi: I would start by considering universities and the industry. Each time a patent is issued for an invention, we should actually add clauses stipulating that the technology is done here first, in Quebec, in Ontario, or anywhere else in Canada, before it is sent to other countries. The clauses are one thing, but we must also work with federal and provincial governments to make sure that, as a result of those clauses, the first factories are built here in Canada.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

In your view, can Canada be competitive if we are not in complete control of the value chain for the batteries, from extraction to recycling?

Karim Zaghbi: Canada has an exceptional ecosystem. With the exception of Australia and, to a lesser extent, Africa, this is rare. We have all the critical minerals, as I have just mentioned. We have green energy, especially in Quebec, we have human capital and we have deep-water sea ports. Canada does almost all of its trade with G7 countries.

The fact remains that we currently do not have the machinery to scale up. That's the expertise we need in order to build factories and industrialize the area quickly.

Yes, we are competitive because our energy is not expensive. We have the critical minerals. Let me give you a simple example. Panasonic makes batteries for Tesla. The lithium comes from Chile and is processed in Europe. Then it goes to China. The nickel comes from Indonesia and is processed in Japan. The cobalt comes from Congo and crosses China in order to be processed in Japan. China now dominates the synthetic graphite technology. All the materials in the electrodes, the anodes and the cathodes, come from Asia. At that point, the supply chain heads to the United States. Imagine the logistics. Imagine all the time spent in ships, the greenhouse gas emissions, and so on.

The best strategy, I feel, is for us to develop a stable, green supply chain in Canada.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

Mr. Zaghbi, let's go back to the competitive advantages you mentioned, specifically hydroelectricity and critical minerals. We also have expertise in making batteries.

Quebec has all that. In your view, does Quebec have a strategic advantage that Canada is not fully realizing at the moment?

Karim Zaghbi: We have to realize it. When I was at Hydro-Québec, where I brought in Sony at the time, there was unfortunately no political dynamic, as it is called today, to manufacture cells, and so on. So we really have to think about joint ventures, working with well-established companies, possibly Chinese, in order to develop the first production chains that allow cells to be manufactured in Quebec.

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: In your view, is battery recycling a strategic lever towards gaining sovereignty in critical minerals?

Karim Zaghbi: I always say that we have to consider the balance between natural mining and urban mining. Natural mining is about the critical minerals. As politicians, you really have to consider legislation that would require batteries made in Canada, starting say in 2040 or 2050, to contain a minimum of 50% recycled materials. The demand is fierce.

There are two things to consider, because society is moving towards electrification, artificial intelligence and energy storage. I am not talking about the locations needed; I am just talking about the critical minerals. The demand is fierce and, without recycling, we will never get there. There really must be a balance between natural mining and recycling, which is becoming very important.

Of course, we must also think of the logistics. How do we recycle it all? How can we have one-stop shops? How can we legislate the recovery of batteries from electric cars, trucks and so forth?

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

With this, the first round comes to an end, and we will proceed now with the second round of questioning.

We will begin with MP Holman for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

• (1605)

Kurt Holman (London—Fanshawe, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses who are here today at the science and research committee.

Dr. Zaghbi, Canada has a strong potential in batteries and electrification. How critical is it for Canada to build end-to-end capacity from critical minerals to battery production to vehicle integration rather than relying on imports?

Karim Zaghbi: As I said, there are some steps that you are able to do. As I explained, if you have the mind for the transformation, it is not a very heavy investment. We have the technology. We have universities. We have the institutes. It's very good that we can create the supply chain for the first and second transformations. Don't sell our raw materials outside. This is a big mistake. These are steps one and two. I think Canada will be able to do them.

When we go to make lithium-ion batteries, the batteries are divided into three parts. These are the anode, which is negative; the cathode, which is positive; and the electrolyte. The state of lithium in the anode and cathode is what we call an ion. This is what lithium-ion is. We don't have the technology and machines today to make these cells. We need to collaborate with Asian companies in order to come back with this process and scale it.

When we have the cells, we're going to have the module. The module means the collection of 200 or 300 cells in the pack. Cell packs are easy for us. We can make them in Canada. The part that we need collaboration on and heavy, intensive financing for is the cells.

Kurt Holman: Where in the EV value chain are the highest-value jobs and economic benefits created? What happens if Canada loses those stages to other countries?

Karim Zaghbi: I don't think we can lose this to other countries.

The demand for... We've seen recently what happened with the Iran war and our dependence on oil. I have been working on EVs and batteries for 40 years. I have asthma. Sometimes, we forget that eight million people pass away; these are Harvard numbers. I don't think we are losing this expertise.

We need to be smart. What's the best partner for Canada that can invest with us on research and development, innovation, scaling-up and commercialization? We need to be in a relationship that is win-win. As I said, we need to have this transition as soon as possible.

Kurt Holman: If Canada imports more finished EVs, rather than building them domestically, what do we risk losing in terms of innovation, intellectual property and long-term competitiveness?

Karim Zaghbi: My thinking is step by step. Right now, as you know, students and the middle class need to have electric vehicles that are affordable for everyone. The mistake is only buying external vehicles. We need these partners, if they're sending EVs here, to invest in the research institutes. As I said, they must invest in manufacturing, sales and EVs.

Do you remember 50 or 60 years ago? For Japanese cars like Honda, Toyota, Mazda and so on, it was really anti-Japanese. You see Toyota and Honda today making these cars, HEVs and EVs, here in our country. We need to think about a win-win situation; it's not only about buying a car.

We need to manufacture together here, but step by step. I think the first step is to show that we are going to accelerate the implementation of electric vehicles. The next step, as soon as possible, is let's make these models or the next models of EVs here, to create jobs and to have the innovation and licensed technology in the existing factories we've built here in Canada.

Kurt Holman: How difficult would it be to rebuild that capacity once it's lost here in Canada, in your opinion?

The Chair: Give a quick, 10-second answer.

Karim Zaghbi: From my experience, I'd think about joint ventures and starting to make the first lines together to learn from that and try to create.... As you know, gigafactories are really to think about operators, technology, schools for batteries, learning from these partners and then implementing them ourselves for the next generation or the next pilot line and so on. We need to learn and implement this in our country.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up for MP Holman.

Now, we will go to MP Deschênes-Thériault for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Karaguesian, thank you for your remarks.

In January, you published an article in *Maclean's* magazine in which you repudiated some myths or misinformation about the arrangement with China. This is the Standing Committee on Science and Research. It is important for us to be rigorous and to avoid sensationalism. I would like to give you the opportunity to correct some false information about the arrangement with China now circulating in the public sphere. I would like to hear your comments on the matter.

[English]

Julian Karaguesian: I have a counter-question. Do you mean that with respect to the importation of Chinese vehicles and national security?

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Yes. In the *Maclean's* article, where you were discussing economic diversification and security issues, you were addressing various myths that have arisen.

[English]

Julian Karaguesian: Okay. Thank you. I'll be brief. I'll stay within the time. I think I have 30 seconds.

The idea that Chinese EVs pose a risk to national security because they're spy machines on four wheels is nonsense. We can ask our Australian friends about that. I believe 41% of the entire EV market is Chinese brands, made in China, and 80% of the total EV market is other brands, including Chinese brands that are made in China.

I don't think importing 49,000 vehicles is going to wipe out our industry, even if that rises to 70,000 by 2031. I believe my colleague sitting next to me from Niagara College said we make something like only 15,000 EVs a year in Canada. The importation is less than 3% of total vehicle sales in Canada, including fossil fuel vehicles.

I also think we should clarify a certain point about importing vehicles from China. There has to be a quid pro quo on tariff relief, trade agreements and strategic partnerships. We have a diverse country. The west produces food and energy. The east coast has fisheries. Ontario is manufacturing. British Columbia has a mix, but it's mostly natural resources, energy and tourism. These are in our comparative advantage. We cannot sacrifice the entire country, or the rest of the country, because of 49,000 vehicles, especially at a time when the new government, under Prime Minister Carney, is embarking on nation-building projects, a defence industrial policy and an automotive industrial policy that are going to protect skilled manufacturing workers, which would be my first priority.

I just do not think the importation of 49,000 vehicles poses a threat to our economic prosperity and our national security. I think we could probably handle a lot more because we're going to have to co-operate with China. It represents one-fifth of humanity and it is the largest economy in the world on a purchasing power parity basis. We're going to have to get along with India and other countries as well. It's a big world out there.

We're always going to be trading mostly with the United States, at 50% or 60%, or maybe more. It's probably down from 80%, but the United States represents 4.5% of the world's population. Our trade with the rest of the world, for our long-term prosperity, is going to have to rise as a trading nation.

Thank you. I hope I answered your question.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you.

In the *Maclean's* article I mentioned, you used iPhones as an example. They are mostly made in China, but when imported into Canada, they can be used safely.

Can you tell us a little more about the comparison you were making with iPhones?

[*English*]

Julian Karaguesian: Absolutely. Thank you.

I made that point for a couple of reasons. On the point on iPhones, if any country is intent on spying on Canada, why would it use automobiles? In this particular case, the idea that China is going to spy on us with automobiles.... I'm sorry. I find it laughable. China assembles, I think, 85% of the world's iPhones. I believe most people in this room have some kind of smart device, and it's probably an iPhone, so if China's going to plant espionage software to spy on the west, would it not do it with iPhones? Would it not use its space station?

I think we need to dispel certain things. We need to protect our sovereignty and our national security, which are things I take very seriously, as well as human rights. I come from a people who lost all of their human rights on my father's side. These are issues that I take very seriously, but I think we have to get away from some of the national security hysteria that has been created outside of this country so that we do not trade with China, and get away from the particular country where this national security hysteria was created so that it can maintain leverage over us.

I'm not talking about the—

• (1615)

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting. The time is up for MP Deschênes-Thériault. Thank you.

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

[*Translation*]

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

My question goes to the professors in the room.

I want to make sure that I understand what you are saying. You are saying that, in your opinion, importing 49 000 electric vehicles from China is not implicitly a threat to our security.

I am trying to understand what the government told us. On April 17, 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney said that China was the greatest threat to our security. On April 26, 2024, the government itself stated that it wanted to impose tariffs of 100% on Chi-

nese electric vehicles. What was the reason for that? It was that smart vehicles equipped with Chinese technology posed significant risks to the privacy of Canadians, to their data, and to Canada's national security interests.

That needs to be explained. The government used to say one thing and now it is trying to say the opposite of what it said, or at least to downplay the impact. I would like to hear your opinion on the matter.

[*English*]

Julian Karaguesian: Thank you for your question.

Political figures—all of them—say many things. I can't account for what certain political figures say at certain times, whether it's during elections, before elections or after elections. I'm speaking here based on my own experience and my own world vision.

We live in a world that can be very dangerous. We live in a world that can have cutthroat competition. I think we have to remember that as a country as rich as we are, having the second-largest inheritance of energy, natural resources, land and water—after the Russian Federation, we have the second-largest inheritance in the world—we still can't sit on our laurels as a nation, whether it's with respect to national security or our long-term prosperity.

My comments on this come from my own experience and my own world vision. It doesn't seem plausible to me that 49,000 cars are going to wipe out our automobile industry and skilled workers, which I would make our first priority. I don't think it poses a national security risk for the very reason that all, or most, of our smart devices are made in east Asia and our iPhones are assembled in China. If you want to spy on somebody, would you not use a communications device? Would you not use your brand new space station?

As far as the economy is concerned, in terms of wiping out our automotive industry, our automotive industry has contracted by 60% because of the NAFTA platform. I say this as a pro-market economist—

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting. The time is up.

With that, we will go to MP DeRidder for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Karaguesian, thank you for being here with us today.

I have a couple of questions that I just would like a yes or no for, please.

Do you have any national security training?

Julian Karaguesian: No.

Kelly DeRidder: Have you talked with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada at all?

Julian Karaguesian: No, I haven't.

Kelly DeRidder: It's solely your opinion that bringing Chinese EVs into Canada doesn't pose a national security threat.

Julian Karaguesian: Do you want a yes or no?

Kelly DeRidder: Yes.

Julian Karaguesian: No, I don't think it does. No, I don't.

Kelly DeRidder: I'm asking if it's based solely on your own opinion.

Julian Karaguesian: Yes, it is.

Kelly DeRidder: Thank you for that.

You also think we should move beyond U.S.-centric policy. In practical terms, what does that look like when our auto sector is structurally integrated with the U.S. market?

Julian Karaguesian: What it looks like is, if we want to engage with... We have to be clear about the context that we're in. We're facing a set of converging crises on the economy and an attack—intentional or not; it doesn't matter—on our economic model. Our economic model is predicated on international trade, primarily with the United States. The economic model of our social welfare state that we all enjoy as Canadians, even if it's under strain, was built when there were seven workers per pensioner. We don't have that anymore. There are 2.5 workers per pensioner right now. Our model is under attack and we need to adjust it.

The very country that we trade with the most is making it more difficult and costly to trade with it. If we want to maintain our prosperity as a trading nation with only 41 million people, we have to engage with the rest of the world. What does it look like for our automotive sector? Australia provides one example. We don't have to follow the Australian model, where they've abandoned the assembly of automobiles, become integrated in supply chains and moved most of that manufacturing base into the defence sector. We can have an automotive industry.

The People's Republic of China accounts for 70% of global production. We can integrate into its supply chains and we can still make cars here. Their carmakers make cars in 17 to 20 countries. I believe just BYD makes cars in 17 countries outside of China.

It really depends on what you negotiate with them. We can negotiate an agreement where we import cars and use our supply chains, critical minerals and inexpensive electricity, as the honourable member from Quebec was talking about. We have a lot of advantages, so we can trade and invest, not only with China but with the entire planet. We have to—

• (1620)

Kelly DeRidder: Do you think those same negotiating strengths that we have in Canada should not be used as well to ensure that we maintain our biggest trading partner in our CUSMA negotiations?

Julian Karaguesian: Absolutely, I do. We send 75% of our exports to the United States, yet the people who run the country are making trade with them extremely costly. It is because of the NAFTA platform that our industry has contracted by 60%. Why? It's because the big three could move to Mexico.

Kelly DeRidder: If we have 75% of our market going to our biggest trading partner but we're trying to diversify our markets, which is adding extra constraints on maintaining that trade relation-

ship and putting barriers in the way, wouldn't this have a reverse economic impact, especially in our automotive sector?

Julian Karaguesian: Our automotive sector has been in terminal decline since the turn of the century. There's the whole rest of the country that we have to think about: the fisheries in the Atlantic, the farmers in the west, our energy sector. We have a big, diverse country, and we have industrial policies for defence and for the automotive sector.

I don't think it's right to be passive in the face of power that says, "You're going to pay tariffs to trade with us," which are 50% on steel, in some cases, and 25% on automobiles. The leader of the country is saying that they're bringing back the rest of the automobile production.

We could be passive in the face of this, or we could be proactive, as Prime Minister Carney is being. He is taking it as given. He can't change what they are doing, but he is going to trade more with the rest of the world. As a sovereign nation, we should be allowed to do that, whether it's with China, Brazil, India, Europe or whoever. As a sovereign nation, we should be allowed to trade with whomever we want.

Kelly DeRidder: The reality, though, is that a lot of these trading relationships already existed before the current Prime Minister took office. There were 51 of them that already existed before he began travelling around the world and making new trade agreements, and none have happened in this past year—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up, MP DeRidder.

We will now end this panel with MP Rana for five minutes.

Go ahead, MP Rana.

Aslam Rana: I welcome you, Dr. Johnson Bressan.

I am from McMaster University's city, from Hamilton.

There has been a wave of investments announced for EVs and battery manufacturing in Canada. Is the college system ready to supply the workers that plants are going to need, or is there a gap?

Nadja Johnson Bressan: That's a complex question, but I would say that it is, partially. The college sector, in general—and I'm not just talking about Niagara College—is adapting to new technologies that go from cyber-physical systems to low-carbon industry. That is what we are talking about today.

We are getting ready for it. Some colleges have more than others, and it depends on the investment in research that comes from industry and governmental institutions. However, I'm not going to say we're at 100%. I would say that we're 75% ready to deploy that trade-skill workforce.

• (1625)

Aslam Rana: More EVs on the road also mean more demand for electrification, chargers, installers and service technicians outside the factory floor. Is trades training keeping up with that side of things?

Nadja Johnson Bressan: We train our students to work in these new technologies in two ways: to work with the new technologies so that they cannot be replaced, and to be critical in that work with the new technologies. Therefore, we are training them to be not only operators but also thinkers and to help in this new industry.

I don't know if I answered your question.

Aslam Rana: Yes.

If there were one thing that the federal government could do to better align skills training with the direction this sector is heading, what would that be?

Nadja Johnson Bressan: It would be to create policies to ensure that we are part of this industry. As all my colleagues have said, it could be a great opportunity for us to create our own industry to support this in the future, and that would help the future of not only trades but also all other professions involved in this advancement. If the government could do one magic thing, it would be to create a policy that ensures that we are building in Canada.

Aslam Rana: Thank you.

Dr. Zaghbi, we mostly talk about EVs in terms of cars, but you work on electrification more broadly. Where are the bigger opportunities that are not getting enough attention?

Karim Zaghbi: I believe that when you see the market, it is divided into three parts: the consumer electronics, the EVs and energy storage. As I am leading the electrifying society initiative, you can see that in the next 20 years there will be a big demand on electricity because of the electrification of transportation and because of AI, artificial intelligence.

It is not only EVs that we need to think about. We also need to think about green energy, like solar and wind or even increasing nuclear for energy, and storage. Storage becomes very important. Especially in the winters, when you have peak demand and so on, storage and batteries can play an important role. The consumer electronics are a very small part. We need to really focus on energy storage with electric vehicles.

What happens is that sometimes we forget what we call V2X: vehicle-to-grid, vehicle-to-home. As you know, in Canada we have cold winters, ice storms and snowstorms and so on. Sometimes when you lose the grid, then your electric vehicles and your home—your solar panels and your batteries—will play an important role, not only for your home or... Then, also, there are our friends, indigenous and first nations, who are off-grid. We need also to think about them and how this would play an important role for those off-grid. We cannot bring the transmission lines to those com-

munities. Focusing on energy storage and on EVs is the most important part.

Aslam Rana: Thank you.

There has been real public money put into programs like Volt-Age and the innovation clusters. What makes that kind of investment turn into something industrial—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Your time is up. We have to end this panel. Maybe you can complete your question and then the witnesses could submit a written response.

Aslam Rana: Thank you, Madam Chair.

What makes that kind of investment turn into something industrial and where does it tend to get stuck?

The Chair: Thank you. Who was the question directed to?

Aslam Rana: It's for Dr. Zaghbi.

The Chair: Dr. Zaghbi, if you can submit a written response to this question, that would be great, because we have to—

Karim Zaghbi: Very quickly, as you see, I like to learn a lot of—

The Chair: We have to end this panel because we have to start the second panel. You can send a written response.

With that, on behalf of all the members, I want to thank all three witnesses for appearing before the committee and providing their important input towards this study.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1625)

(Pause)

• (1635)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

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

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you'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.

For our second panel, I would like to welcome our witnesses. We are joined by Sarah Goldfeder, executive director, government relations and corporate affairs, General Motors of Canada Limited; Brendan Sweeney, president and chief executive officer, Pacific Manufacturing Association of Canada; and Bentley Allan, vice-president, future economy, the Transition Accelerator, who is joining us by video conference.

Welcome to all three witnesses. Each of you will have five minutes for your opening remarks, and then we will go into a round of questioning. We will start with Ms. Goldfeder.

Please go ahead.

Sarah Goldfeder (Executive Director, Government Relations and Corporate Affairs, General Motors of Canada Limited): Thank you.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear today as part of your study on the implications of the Canada-China preliminary joint arrangement on the electric vehicle sector.

General Motors of Canada is concerned about the change to the EV surtax, particularly the lack of appropriate security guardrails around it. Unfettered access, even if limited by quotas, will weaken Canada's ability to protect its people, its national interests and its automotive industrial and technology base.

Previous actions undertaken by the government protected our workforce and preserved protections for consumers and for a Canadian way of life that the auto sector has helped to sustain. You've heard from other witnesses about the security risks posed by connected electric vehicles controlled by foreign actors. If manipulated by bad actors, the hardware, software and data these vehicles collect could enable foreign surveillance, espionage and sabotage that could target individual Canadians, communities, critical transportation and energy infrastructure, and civic and political leaders.

These risks are real, clear, tangible and immediate. They compound and become deeply ingrained as more foreign EV imports operate in Canada, imports from potentially hostile powers. The government is well aware of these risks, as it has been well briefed on the threats through consultations and conversations with Transport Canada and ISED workgroups. The risks are not only near-term. There are larger strategic national security risks that could be even more detrimental to Canada's ability to chart its course on global trade and security. This arrangement makes Canada more dependent on foreign entities, not only for finished vehicles but also for the ecosystem of emerging technologies that will shape the sector's future.

As a nation, Canada has only just begun investing in the supply chains and technologies needed for the EV transition: critical minerals, batteries, rare earths, motors, sensors, software, industrial robotics and advanced manufacturing. With the current economic environment and consumer demand, investment has slowed. We are in a fragile moment. We should protect progress, not endanger it.

This agreement will bring in products that rely on highly subsidized, opaque supply chains and on labour and supplier inputs centred outside of North America. This will undermine Canada's supplier base and hollow out our skilled automotive workforce.

General Motors of Canada is the number one seller of EVs in Canada today, with just under 20% of market share—just over 4,000 vehicles in the first quarter of this year. Put differently, 49,000 EVs this year would equate to one-third of the current market. At a minimum, we must ensure that any EVs entering Canada compete on fair, rules-based terms and fully meet Canadian safety,

environmental, labour, cybersecurity and data governance standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear. I look forward to answering your questions.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now, we will proceed to Mr. Sweeney for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Brendan Sweeney (President and Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Manufacturing Association of Canada): Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important study.

My name is Brendan Sweeney. I'm the president and CEO of the Pacific Manufacturing Association of Canada, or PMAC. PMAC's members include Honda and Toyota, the largest vehicle manufacturers in Canada. PMAC is about a month old.

My comments today focus on the implications to industry rather than science or research. PMAC is concerned about the implications of any agreement that reverses an astute decision made in 2024 to place a surtax on EVs imported from China and instead provides non-market actors with access to Canada's vehicle market. This undermines investments that PMAC members have made in Canada, disrupts the level playing field we've worked hard to create and introduces a vehicle assembly plant-sized irritant onto the CUSMA negotiating table.

PMAC members began manufacturing vehicles in Canada in 1986. Their manufacturing footprint and economic impact have grown considerably since. In 2025, PMAC members manufactured 77% of all vehicles assembled in Canada and employed 60% of all vehicle assembly plant workers. Those employed by PMAC members enjoy higher wages, greater job security and more opportunities for advancement than in other plants.

PMAC members Honda and Toyota are unique among automakers in Canada in that they continue to operate their Canadian vehicle assembly plants at or near full capacity and have never engaged in assembly plant layoffs. Moreover, a growing majority of vehicles assembled in Canada by PMAC members are hybrid electric.

The Canadian manufacturing footprint and economic impact of PMAC members have grown as the result of investments in a policy environment that is supportive, that is market-oriented and, until recently, that offered a level playing field to vehicle manufacturers from Japan, the United States, South Korea and the EU alike. PMAC members appreciate any efforts by the federal government to maintain this level playing field, which supports our mutual success. Allowing the import of any number of vehicles manufactured by non-market actors at or below a most-favoured-nation tariff rate disrupts this level playing field. It jeopardizes the ability of PMAC members and presumably other market-oriented actors to compete, to innovate and to contribute to Canada's economy.

PMAC is especially concerned about disrupting this level playing field when non-market actors have engaged in questionable practices related to intellectual property; received and continue to receive unprecedented state subsidies; rely on inputs manufactured with forced labour; and generally have little interest in market-based competition or in making meaningful investments—a complete knock-down, or CKD, facility is not a meaningful investment—in the jurisdictions to which they seek to export vehicles.

It's important to be realistic. There are ways to engage constructively with China. There are ways to do business with Chinese companies, but we at PMAC do not believe a vehicle import quota is the best option. We have built an integrated and productive North American automotive industry in which market-based actors like Honda and Toyota have invested in Canada and made significant progress related to electrification. There's work to do to re-establish a productive relationship with the United States, the primary destination of 90% of vehicles made in Canada. Taking actions that are misaligned with those of our largest trading partner doesn't help to re-establish that productive relationship.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sweeney.

We will now proceed to Mr. Allan for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Bentley Allan (Vice-President, Future Economy, The Transition Accelerator): Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members. It's a pleasure to be here with you today.

I'm an associate professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University, as well as the vice-president of future economy at the Transition Accelerator. I'm also the founding director of the Centre for Industrial Policy, an initiative we launched this month to bring rigorous analysis to Canadian industrial strategy at a moment when the stakes are extraordinarily high and getting higher almost every day.

My overall remarks have two key messages. One is urgent and one is constructive.

The urgent message is that the condition of Canada's auto sector is more serious than the headline numbers suggest. The trajectory of the Canadian auto sector should be understood as an emergency for Canada's manufacturing as a whole, especially within the con-

text of Prime Minister Carney's drive to create more geopolitical leverage and secure our autonomy in a dangerous world.

The constructive message is that the federal government's February 2026 auto strategy is, in its basic design and set-up, a really excellent piece of strategic work by the government. The task before this committee is to ensure that those tools are deployed within a coherent, strategic framework so that the strategy can actually translate into productive capability on Canadian soil, and so that the industry here in Canada can once again compete at the global technological frontier.

In every major industrial economy, the automotive sector is not just one industry among many. It's the anchor of the manufacturing base, and it's a systems integrator that brings together a country's most advanced production capabilities. Where automotive manufacturing thrives, the surrounding ecosystem thrives, whether it's the upstream steel, aluminum and metal that come in, or electronics, advanced material, engineering services, digital services and now, increasingly, AI. There are also potential linkages to batteries and upstream critical minerals. When those are connected to a strong auto sector, they all thrive. When the auto sector withers, the broader manufacturing economy tends to follow.

This is the context for understanding and evaluating Canada's current situation. According to a recent analysis for the Centre for Industrial Policy by Greig Mordue and James Meadowcroft, Canada's vehicle production-to-sales ratio has fallen from 1.85 produced vehicles to one sold vehicle in the mid-1990s to 0.7 to one in 2024. For the first time in a very long time—many decades—Canada now consumes more vehicles than it assembles. This is a major, long-term contraction that predates the trade turbulence of the last couple of years.

That headline number of 0.7 to one, as troubling as it is, understates the severity of the problem. New analysis from our centre drawing on OECD trade and value-added data shows that the Canadian content embedded in those motor vehicles has actually fallen below 50%. When that is combined with the production-to-sales ratio, we end up getting, in value-added terms, 0.35 of value added to every one car sold in Canada. For every dollar of automotive value that Canadians consume, the Canadian economy is now producing about 35¢ in those vehicles.

This should be understood as an emergency for Canada's manufacturing sector. As a whole, auto sectors anchor industrial economies, as I argued earlier. When that anchor drags, the rest of the manufacturing economy is likely to follow.

Canadian automotive R and D has stagnated alongside that production, with the country now accounting for less than one-third of a per cent of global automotive patents. Pure subsidies or unstructured industry support will not help the situation. Good industrial policy means helping firms move to the global technology frontier while building a more competitive and productive industry. To do that, we need generational investments in the industrial commons for electric vehicles and automotives generally, and a concerted effort to build value added in the upstream value chains by filling out the mines-to-mobility supply chain.

In this context, the auto strategy announced in February represents a meaningful step forward. As my colleague Moe Kabbara and I argued at the time, its most important feature is the explicit integration of climate competitiveness with industrial policy. For too long, Canadian EV policy was structured around sales mandates and emissions reductions—compliance obligations rather than a focused effort to build domestic industrial capability. I think the new framework presents an opportunity to put domestic industrial capability at the heart of Canadian automotive policy and Canadian EV policy.

The remissions framework deserves the particular attention of this committee. As designed and, I think, as intended—and as indicated in the Prime Minister's and Minister of Industry's remarks—it links preferential access to the Canadian market to investment in Canada, or could be used to do this. Companies that build here, like Toyota, GM and Honda, can generate credits. The companies that don't build here would not generate credits.

● (1650)

This is, in its underlying logic, a direct echo of the duty remission scheme Canada used in the 1980s to attract Japanese, Korean and other offshore manufacturers into Canada. This is one of the most successful industrial policy instruments in Canadian economic history and one we can learn from today. Market access is a real source of leverage in a mid-sized economy like Canada's, and using it strategically—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting. Your time is up. Could you please finish in the next 15 seconds?

Bentley Allan: Sure.

I think we have to rethink Canada's value added in this new world, and there's an opportunity to do that through the remissions framework and through the auto policy that the Canadian government has articulated.

We can do that, I think, while being selectively exposed to Chinese EVs, with 49,000 Chinese EVs here in the economy. That would enable us to see what the competitive technological frontier looks like, but we're going to have to work hard to make sure that value added is built into the Canadian economy.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will start our first round of questioning.

We will begin with MP Baldinelli for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Ms. Goldfeder, it's good to see you again. Thank you for being here.

I was struck by your comments, when you mentioned the agreement that Canada has struck with the Chinese Communist government. You mentioned that we need to protect progress, not endanger it, and your fear is that it's going to hollow out our skilled workforce.

General Motors has been in Canada since 1918 and in my close community of Niagara—in St. Catharines in particular—since 1929. I had the pleasure of working for four summers at the General Motors facility. It put me through university, so I drive a GM. I'm GM proud.

However, I have a concern. GM had plans to put an EV battery component line in that powertrain facility, but the market isn't quite there yet. In fact, in the last year, there have been almost \$70 billion in writeoffs by auto manufacturers. General Motors reported \$7.6 billion, and Honda reported \$15.7 billion. All together, when you add them up, there have been almost \$70 billion in writeoffs.

Now, you talk about General Motors currently being the largest EV manufacturer and seller in North America, and we're bringing in close to 49,000 EVs, which are going to be almost 40% of the market. What's the impact on General Motors? What's the impact on General Motors in St. Catharines because of that?

Sarah Goldfeder: It's important to preface this by saying that consumer demand for EVs has not been what we thought we would see, and it has not been what the Canadian government or the auto manufacturers were hoping would come to pass. We made a lot of really ambitious plans around St. Catharines, around CAMI in Ingersoll and around many of our plants in the United States and Mexico to move into an EV transition.

What changed wasn't the entry of any particular vehicle. It wasn't anything other than consumer demand in the long run. We discovered that we created a supply chain and the infrastructure to build more vehicles than consumers were willing to purchase. That's one of the reasons we're at this particularly fragile moment now. It means that rather than looking to another jurisdiction to provide us with vehicles, we should be continuing to protect the ecosystem that we have here.

Tony Baldinelli: Currently, the government is going to be allowing 49,000 vehicles into this country from China.

• (1655)

Sarah Goldfeder: This year...

Tony Baldinelli: Can General Motors export into China?

Sarah Goldfeder: No.

Tony Baldinelli: Is there any reason?

Sarah Goldfeder: The Chinese government likes to keep its market protected.

Tony Baldinelli: It's protected. Thank you for that.

Mr. Sweeney, I'm going to go to you now.

The Japanese ambassador to Canada said that continued access to the U.S. market, as provided for under CUSMA, is essential for current and potential increased Japanese investment in auto manufacturing in Canada. Can I get your comments on that?

Brendan Sweeney: He's absolutely right.

Tony Baldinelli: Can you follow up? What is the main concern that your two companies have with regard to now allowing 49,000 Chinese vehicles into this country?

Brendan Sweeney: The primary concern is that, in advance of what are probably going to be some pretty challenging negotiations with the United States, we've introduced that irritant.

Tony Baldinelli: That's a good word. It's an irritant.

The impact it might have on your future manufacturing.... Right now, in terms of the production of the two companies you represent—Honda and Toyota—you are at about 70% of the production that takes place here. Is that right?

Brendan Sweeney: I believe that, in 2026, we're probably at 72% or so.

Tony Baldinelli: What could the impact be on the employment, the workforces and the communities of those two companies?

Brendan Sweeney: We're doing the best we can. Our members are doing the best they can to continue to make vehicles in this tariff environment and with the irritant that we spoke about. It would be difficult to maintain the same level of production at the same scale as is happening now without some other major intervention. We're in this for the long term, but that relationship with the United States is challenging, and we have to iron that out.

Tony Baldinelli: You made some excellent remarks earlier on when you said the footprint has grown in North America and what has been created is a level playing field. You want to maintain the level playing field, and introducing 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles into this country will disrupt that. The success of the North American auto sector was always based on regulatory harmony, the agreements we had in place and the supply chains that had been put in place over a 60-year period.

Why are we trying to put that in danger of ending for an agreement that I think gets us a one-year deal on canola?

Brendan Sweeney: I don't know either.

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Tony Baldinelli: I'll cede my time.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

We will now proceed to MP Noormohamed for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

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

I thank the witnesses for coming.

Ms. Goldfeder, can you tell me how many GM employees have lost their jobs over the last two years?

Sarah Goldfeder: We have had to put most of our employees from CAMI on indefinite layoff, and because they're unionized employees, we will continue to support them for the next couple of years.

Taleeb Noormohamed: What is the reason for the indefinite lay-off?

Sarah Goldfeder: The reason is that the BrightDrop vehicles failed to take off in the market. That was our electric delivery van.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm asking about employees across the company in Canada.

Sarah Goldfeder: That's the answer to the question you asked me. It is why Ingersoll closed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: That's not what I asked you. I asked you how many GM employees have lost their jobs in Canada over the last couple of years.

Sarah Goldfeder: I was explaining that we had 1,200 employees at the CAMI facility, which closed because the BrightDrop electric delivery van never received the market we expected it to. That's 1,200 there who are on indefinite layoff, and then we have about 500 who left Oshawa's third shift.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Why was that?

Sarah Goldfeder: It was designed as a two-shift operation, which is the sweet spot for a facility. You want two shifts going. You want the capacity to increase manufacturing if you have a demand surge, which we saw post-COVID. That third shift had come on post-COVID to deal with the demand surge that we saw for our pickup trucks.

Taleeb Noormohamed: You've seen no impact at all as a result of the U.S. tariffs. Is that correct?

Sarah Goldfeder: That is correct.

Taleeb Noormohamed: That's interesting. Okay.

If you've seen no impact at all because of the U.S. tariffs, then why are so many others expressing their concerns?

Sarah Goldfeder: I didn't say we weren't concerned. You asked me about our Canadian footprint.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Okay. You didn't answer my question.

Sarah Goldfeder: We are concerned.

Taleeb Noormohamed: What are your concerns?

Sarah Goldfeder: We're concerned because we have an integrated North American market, and what we have right now is a challenging economic relationship between two of those partners.

• (1700)

Taleeb Noormohamed: When you hear Donald Trump say he doesn't want Americans to buy cars made in Canada, what does that mean to you?

Sarah Goldfeder: I hear him say that. I hear him say a lot of things. I don't know.

In our conversations in the United States, we're hearing a slightly more nuanced take on that, so I think there is an avenue for Canada and the United States to land on an agreement that would preserve our integrated auto sector and preserve manufacturing here in Canada.

Taleeb Noormohamed: How nuanced is it when the President of the United States says that he doesn't want Canadians to be making cars?

Sarah Goldfeder: He said that publicly.

Taleeb Noormohamed: He said that publicly, so are we not to take him at his word?

Sarah Goldfeder: I think there are lots of people who say to take him seriously but maybe not literally, so we take it seriously that we need to ensure we have an integrated trading system between the two countries that is beneficial to both sides.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you for that.

I would observe that we've had some interesting conversations in this committee over the last little while on some of the challenges and risks that have come forward. One of the things I don't think we have spent a lot of time on is the positive impact of having EVs and EV infrastructure in this country and what it means for the future, so on that basis, I'd like to table a motion.

I move:

That the committee conduct a study of no less than three meetings on positive examples of EV infrastructure implementation with specific references to lessons learned from Quebec and British Columbia.

We'll be circulating that motion in both official languages. It is obviously relevant and tied to this study, because I think it's important for us to make sure we are bringing this into the conversation. I'd like to move that motion now.

The Chair: Okay. Can you send it to the clerk in both official languages?

Taleeb Noormohamed: Yes, I will, in both official languages.

[*Translation*]

I can also read the motion in French:

Que le Comité réalise une étude d'au moins trois réunions sur des exemples positifs de mise en œuvre d'infrastructures pour véhicules électriques, en faisant spécifiquement référence aux leçons tirées du Québec et de la Colombie-Britannique.

• (1705)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Noormohamed.

MP Noormohamed has moved a motion that is relevant to the study. We will suspend the meeting for two minutes so that it can be circulated to all the members in both official languages.

I would request that our witnesses stay on. We just have to deal with this, and then we will get back to our rounds of questioning.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1700)

(Pause)

• (1705)

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

Mr. Noormohamed has moved a motion, which is in order, and it has been circulated to all the members in both official languages.

The floor is open for debate.

MP Noormohamed, go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Thank you, Madam Chair.

One of the things that has been top of mind as we've gone through this study is that there's an ongoing sense that as we talk about the presence of Chinese EVs in the market, this has somehow become conflated with the idea that all EVs are bad. There have been ongoing comments about how if we're not making ICE vehicles, somehow we have fallen off. In the comments from one of our witnesses today about electric delivery vehicles, the implication was that EVs somehow don't fit into our ecosystem.

One of the things I would like us to consider, which is part of the reason for this study, is that not only have a lot of good things come from having EVs in our communities and on our streets but the impact of the infrastructure that's being built around them has been really helpful. If you look at B.C., it has quietly become one of the most important case studies in clean transportation policy, and the lessons are quite impressive. When I was growing up, nobody knew what the heck an EV was. A decade ago, there was a single charger in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. In all of B.C., there was one EV charger.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Taleeb Noormohamed: My colleague opposite thinks that this is somehow a filibuster, but I just want to make a couple of important points before I cede my time to others.

It's really important for us not to conflate the things that we have been talking about here. There are 5,000 public chargers in British Columbia right now, while in Vancouver, there's one gas station downtown. What you're seeing now is that approximately 22% of vehicle sales in B.C. are, in fact, zero-emission vehicles. This is having a huge environmental impact at scale.

The second piece is that this has not just been publicly funded but also privately funded. The private investment in new infrastructure has been hugely valuable. We're seeing that you can now travel throughout the province of B.C. using your EV, and it is as effective as using an internal combustion engine vehicle.

It has showed us that public-private partnership works. For all of the things that we've been talking about in this study where we have had concerns, the presence of EVs and EV infrastructure has actually helped and has become a big part of many of those solutions and has addressed many of those concerns. In the case of B.C., the government set the framework, the utilities built the backbone and the private sector has filled the gaps.

When we talk about a study like this, I want to point out simply that we are at a tipping point right now where political narratives around where cars are coming from are becoming conflated with the idea that we somehow shouldn't have EVs on the road. I've heard this insinuation from a number of witnesses and a number of folks.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Taleb Noormohamed: I'm sorry. My colleague opposite keeps interrupting me.

What I was trying to say is that we've heard from folks that somehow there is something wrong with the idea that we should be pursuing an aggressive EV strategy in this country.

We've heard from previous witnesses that 49,000 vehicles aren't going to make a difference. What will make a difference is making sure that EVs in this country have the charging infrastructure that they require and that we're building that alongside other clean infrastructure, which has been happening. It has, frankly, created jobs. It has created partnerships with indigenous communities. It has been a substantial contributor to British Columbia. I suspect there are examples from Quebec and other provinces where this has worked.

I think it's important for us at this committee, when we're taking on topics like this, to build in the space to look at what has worked, so that if we're going to be talking about the impact of EVs writ large, whether they're imported or they are built in this country, we also understand what it takes to put them on the roads. This is an important study in that regard.

As we at this committee are charged with making sure we're looking at this in the context of science, we need to actually do that. You start to think about what powers a charge versus what powers a gas station and what powers some of these vehicles. It's really important for us to remember that, in British Columbia at least, it's powered by clean water quite literally falling through turbines.

These are the types of things that often get lost in this conversation and have been lost in this conversation. It behooves us all... I'm sure my colleagues would agree, especially those across the way who may not admit to it but do drive EVs and would be keen to have a conversation about why this is important.

• (1710)

Frankly, the other thing that I think is important coming out of these examples—and I will stop after this—is why certain provinces embraced EV infrastructure and the building of EV infrastructure to the benefit of consumers, to the benefit of ratepayers and to the benefit of taxpayers who tend to save a large amount of money buying EVs versus internal combustion engine vehicles. What's worked in B.C. and Quebec? What could other provinces learn from those examples?

My hope is that the study is a productive one, where we can have meaningful conversations, bring in witnesses from those provinces and perhaps bring witnesses from jurisdictions where it hasn't gone as well because they haven't been able to—or had the means to—put in the resources to do that. These are the types of narratives that I think are important, because they provide a perspective that often gets lost in some of the super partisan, super political debate. I think this is a space where we can have that conversation.

I will say this for B.C. In many cases, building EV infrastructure was a direct response to the increase in the cost of internal combustion engine vehicles and the cost of operating those vehicles. It's turned into an economic winner. It's turned into something that has been incredibly useful for the province and for those of us who live in that province. The ease, the speed and the cost-efficiency of driving EVs is a direct result of the infrastructure that's been built.

With that, Madam Chair, I hope we'll be able to get positive support for this motion, and I hope we'll be able to have a meaningful conversation with our colleagues across, even those who think that, somehow, advocating for this motion was a filibuster.

Thank you.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Noormohamed.

Next, I have MP Deschênes-Thériault.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank my colleague for bringing this motion to the committee today.

The intent of this motion is to focus on positive examples of the implementation of electric vehicle infrastructure. In my view, it's important to consider the positive examples of what has gone well in, say, the last 10 years, in order to have better information about the next steps.

As we know, other investments are on the way. We are in the process of making the transition and we must be well prepared. I feel that we must learn from the positive lessons. Across the country, a whole series of extremely interesting projects with a lot of potential have been developed.

I would like to take a quick look back in order to help us better understand the context of my colleague's motion. Since 2016, Canada has invested more than \$1 billion to make charging stations affordable and accessible for the public. Those investments in the last decade have made possible a Canada-wide charging network. Charging stations can be found close to where Canadians live and work. The infrastructure is also used for Canadians' leisure travel.

The billion-dollar investment, therefore, has meant that more than 30,000 electric vehicle charging stations have been installed across the country. The investment was made possible through Natural Resources Canada's Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program. The next step, in my view, will be to look at the program's successes, the projects that have gone well, and the types of partnerships that have been established.

By devoting at least three meetings to this study, we will be able to hear from witnesses from municipalities, from provinces and from the private sector. That means from all those who have collaborated in such projects and who have made them a success. In that way, we would gather information on the best way to move forward. When I say "to move forward", I do not mean it in an abstract way because, as recently as last February 5, our government announced its new automotive strategy. This contained a whole basket of measures designed to protect and strengthen the industry by building a sector that focuses on next-generation vehicles and international competition.

As part of that strategy, the Government of Canada is making electromobility more attractive for Canadians. The Canada Infrastructure Bank's charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure initiative is providing investments totalling \$1.5 billion for a new five-year program to make electric vehicles affordable and to improve charging infrastructure.

Those investments will make it easier to buy and drive electric vehicles in the country. As I mentioned, our automotive strategy provides for investments to improve our charging infrastructure. The investments, then, are essential; they will be made in the next five years.

In my view, it is to our advantage as parliamentarians to fully understand what has been working well since 2016. Who knows, it may lead us to make recommendations that will ensure that things are done well and that effective partnerships are created. We have a lot to learn. The federal government makes the investments, but, as we know, it is the municipalities, the provinces and the private sector partnerships that bring these high-potential projects to fruition.

Our automotive strategy, in fact, is built on the progress already made, with the announcement of a national strategy for charging infrastructure, which will lead to the promotion of electric vehicles and attract investments from the private sector. We will not succeed in building a Canada-wide charging infrastructure worthy of the name with federal funds alone. We must also be able to attract private capital.

We have to focus on a number of important aspects. What has been successful since 2016? Which projects, using federal government money, of course, have succeeded in attracting private sector capital? We know that, when we invest public dollars, we aim to al-

so attract private capital. Those are the factors I would like to explore in the study described in my colleague's motion.

• (1720)

Very recently, we announced the first investments in our new automotive strategy. The Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program is providing \$84.4 million. The money will be used to support 122 projects throughout the country and to install up to 8,000 electric vehicle charging stations in Canada. These are concrete projects and the investment will improve the country's charging infrastructure.

Let's now look at the positive examples.

I am the member of Parliament for Madawaska—Restigouche...

[*English*]

The Chair: I am sorry for interrupting. Some witnesses are asking if they can leave. They have sent an email to the clerk. What is the will of the committee members? Should we let the witnesses go?

MP Blanchette-Joncas has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I would ask the witnesses to stay. They will be able to watch the circus that the Liberals are staging today.

[*English*]

The Chair: We can't decide based on one member. What the will is of the majority of the committee members? Should we keep the witnesses until 5:30 p.m., or should we let them go?

MP Mahal.

Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC): I agree with MP Blanchette-Joncas that the witnesses should also see what's going on, what kind of filibustering is going on in the committee and how important their testimony was before being suppressed by the Liberal members.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP DeRidder.

Kelly DeRidder: I think we shouldn't waste any more of their time, because obviously a filibuster has been chosen to take place here instead of hearing testimony from our witnesses. They might as well leave, because the Liberals will finish off what they have to say, and then it will be the end of the committee.

The Chair: It seems that some members don't want them to leave, so we will have them until 5:30 p.m.

MP Deschênes-Thériault, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to reassure my colleagues that I am not trying to be obstructive. I am trying to explain why I feel that my colleague's motion is a good idea. Let me remind my colleague from the Bloc Québécois that, if anyone is skilled enough to obstruct and fill up a two-hour meeting, we have that expert with us here around the table. Do not worry, I have no intention of speaking for as long as we have heard my colleague do on other occasions.

Let me go back to what I was saying.

I was saying that, in February, the announcement of the automotive strategy came with an investment of \$84.4 million to install more than 8,000 electric charging stations.

It was at that point that Madam Chair asked us about the witnesses being present. I was about to say that I represent a rural constituency. As we know, charging infrastructure capacity varies from place to place. There can certainly be gaps between urban and rural settings. In terms of the choice of witnesses for the study that my colleague has proposed, it is important for us to hear from people who can talk about successful projects in rural areas. If we want to make the transition to electric vehicles, we must not forget to build our capacity in rural areas, where we know that distances can be great and travelling, at times, can be somewhat more difficult. In a word, I would also like to hear about successful projects in rural Canada.

In the motion, my colleague mentioned Quebec and New Brunswick in particular. He explained why.

Since I am from New Brunswick, I will come back to New Brunswick a little later.

However, I would like to make some points about Quebec and to explain why I find it interesting that my colleague made specific reference to Quebec in the motion. As we know, Quebec is one of Canada's leaders in electric vehicles. About 42.7% of all the electric vehicles on Canada's roads are registered in the province next to mine. More than 420,000 electric or hybrid vehicles are currently on Quebec's roads, and that figure could reach 2 million by 2030.

Thanks to its network of public charging stations, Quebec is already in the lead. It would be fascinating to learn more about the successful examples that could encourage other projects elsewhere in the country. Around 28,700 charging stations are already in service in the province. Those figures are from September 2025, so that some more stations may have been added since.

However, at the same time as we look forward to an increase in the number of electric vehicles, we must also keep filling the current gaps in recharging. There have certainly been advances but major gaps remain. Work must still be done to keep up the drive to electrify transportation, not only in that province, but also across the country.

In terms of best practices, I would like to mention an interesting announcement from Quebec in March 2026.

The government of Quebec announced planned regulations to amend the building code in order to have buildings equipped for electric vehicles and to increase the number of charging stations in multifamily dwellings across the province. The new regulations require 100% preparation for electric vehicles in new construction.

But other measures are interesting too and could guide us in our work.

It is certainly the case that other provinces, including my province of New Brunswick, have put a number of positive examples in place in recent years. As I mentioned, more than \$1 billion has been invested since 2016, and we want to keep investing. It also has had an impact for the rest of the country.

With regard to the Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program, I am specifically thinking of a project worth \$1.2 million to install a fast charging network in a number of key service stations in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. If you have not been fortunate enough to visit the Maritimes, you may not know about our long highways. Through the project, we have identified 16 strategic locations in the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia so that we can be sure that people can move from one place to another with access to fast chargers. The city of Saint John also received a grant to install charging stations in various key locations in New Brunswick to meet the increasing demand.

• (1725)

Last fall, in November 2025, an announcement on this subject was made that was of considerable interest to Atlantic Canada and that could also motivate us to invite potential witnesses. I am talking about the announcement of \$10 million to promote the use of electric vehicles, of which \$9 million came from the zero-emission vehicle infrastructure program. That \$9 million-funding will go to two projects that will see 1,200 charging stations installed at various places in Canada. To be specific, I could mention a project that will allow the New Brunswick Power Corporation to install 240 electric vehicle charging stations in public locations, in street parking, in apartment building parking lots, as well as for light vehicle fleets.

I will stop here for today.

However, I would like to continue debating this motion later because I feel that it has a lot of potential, with many more examples to consider.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We are now at 5:30 and I have two people on the speakers list. MP Blanchette-Joncas is also raising his hand.

I will let the witnesses know that if they would like to leave, they can leave.

On behalf of all the members, I would like to thank you for appearing before the committee today. If there's anything you'd like to submit to the committee on this study, you can always send us written submissions. With that, thanks a lot for coming.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, is it possible to extend the committee meeting so that we have time to ask the witnesses questions?

The witnesses are here in person today. They came to be with us and we have not had the opportunity to have our second hour in committee.

Is it possible to check the available resources and to extend the committee meeting so that we can do our job as parliamentarians and ask questions relevant to this study?

[*English*]

Tony Baldinelli: I agree. I support my colleague's suggestion. I'd quite like to stay.

The Chair: Yes. That's what I have asked the witnesses. If they have something to submit, they can always send a written submission.

It's up to the members how they would like to proceed. Is it all right for them to leave, or...?

An hon. member: Would they like to stay?

The Chair: Are you available?

It depends on the timing of the witnesses. They are pretty busy, and they have taken the time to come before the committee.

MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: If we gave additional questions, would the witnesses be willing to give us written responses?

The Chair: Are you available?

Taleeb Noormohamed: I mean, I'd prefer a written response if the time is....

The Chair: What about you, Ms. Goldfeder?

Sarah Goldfeder: I mean, it's already a gift of time, so I think it's a bit of an imposition, to be honest. But yes, if there are written questions and we can answer them, we will answer them.

The Chair: MP Noormohamed, written questions are not usually sent. If they want to submit something, they can send it. We haven't done it and that will not be possible.

MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, the witnesses have been gracious with their time. I want to thank them for this opportunity and for coming.

I'm rather disappointed in the outcome of how this study is ending. The two witnesses here were talking about a level playing field, protecting the progress and not endangering it with regard to the North American EV manufacturers that currently exist and actually produce currently in North America and particularly in Canada. General Motors is currently the largest EV—

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I have a point of order.

Tony Baldinelli: No, I have the floor.

The Chair: MP Deschênes-Thériault has a point of order.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Are we on the motion?

The Chair: MP Baldinelli was next on the speaking list.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Are we still on the motion?

The Chair: Yes.

Tony Baldinelli: Yes, I currently am. My colleague indicated that, in his view, not enough had been spoken about with regard to what had been taking place in the North American auto manufacturing sector. This study, if I can read it back into the record, was to look at the new agreement with—

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, MP Baldinelli, but the witnesses were about to leave.

Thank you once again. If you want, you can leave the meeting.

Tony Baldinelli: If they'd like to listen, I'll be going for a couple of minutes here.

The Chair: I have a point of order from MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Could you check with the witnesses to see whether any of them can stay so that we can ask them questions? I understand that some witnesses may have to leave, but can others stay? We are hoping to be able to ask them questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: It is entirely up to the witnesses whether they want to stay and listen. I don't know how long this will go on. I have a few people on the speaking list. We might not come back to questions. We might come back. Right now, I don't know. I will leave it to the witnesses. If they want to leave, they can leave. If they want to stay, they can stay.

Sarah Goldfeder: You don't know if we're going to be asked—

The Chair: No. I have a speaking list. I'm not sure how long this will go on. I cannot give you any idea on the timing. We can only go to a vote on this motion once the debate has collapsed. If I have a speaking list, we have to continue.

Thank you.

Go ahead, MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, again, I want to express my disappointment with regard to the tactics that have been utilized this afternoon by my Liberal colleagues. Again, we were listening to representatives of the major manufacturers currently employing thousands of Canadians in the automotive sector and the EV sector. They talked about the need for a level playing field to protect progress with regard to EVs and not endanger it.

They're here today because we're currently studying the following:

...new agreement with the People's Republic of China, which permits up to 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles to enter the Canadian market, the Standing Committee on Science and Research undertake a study of no fewer than four meetings to examine the scientific, research, and industry implications of this agreement on Canada's electric vehicle sector; and that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

We have two witnesses here who have used those words in their presentations. We need a "level playing field", and "We should protect progress, not endanger it."

What we've done here, ladies and gentlemen, is.... We have 600,000 people working in the automotive sector in Canada. This is an insult to the 1,200 workers at GM Ingersoll, the 500 in Oshawa who lost their jobs and the hundreds of workers in St. Catharines, in the powertrain division, who have yet to be called back because General Motors was going to put an EV battery plant in St. Catharines but put that on hold because of low demand with regard to the existing EV market.

Again, the major manufacturers have written off, in this year alone, almost \$70 billion when it comes to their EV investments. Let that sink in for a moment. The federal government only promised to invest \$50 billion in that segment. The EV market is one we want to nurture, not cede to an outside player that does not share our values. I said the word "values" because that is, in essence, what we would be doing by allowing 49,000 Chinese EVs into this country, and growing by 6% ad infinitum because there's no limit on that growth every year, ladies and gentlemen.

Again, what we've done is cede those for a one-year deal on canola. Well, bravo to this government. For example, Toyota is the largest—

• (1735)

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

I just wanted to make sure my friend got the clip he needs before I called my point of order.

I just want to—

Tony Baldinelli: I'm still going.

Taleeb Noormohamed: We are now on the motion, so—

Tony Baldinelli: I'm getting to that.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm failing to understand how this is relevant to the motion.

The Chair: This is not a point of order.

Tony Baldinelli: I'll get to that, Madam Chair, because I'm getting—

The Chair: Please keep it relevant to the motion. We are debating the motion proposed by MP Noormohamed.

MP Baldinelli has the floor.

Tony Baldinelli: I'm getting back to that. He mentioned that he raised his motion because of what we are studying here. I'd like to propose some changes to that. I think we could have a great study with regard to what my colleague is proposing. I don't think we have to limit it to what's going on in Quebec and British Columbia. I'd like to see what's going on in Ontario.

If you remember, the Independent Electricity System Operator wrote a report in December 2023 about getting Ontario to a fully green grid by 2050. That's going to cost \$400 billion, ladies and gentlemen. We're going to need six times the 14,000 workers that currently exist. It's going to take us from 44,000 megawatts to 82,000 megawatts. Is that something we need to consider? Do we have the infrastructure in place? Do we have the electrical generating capacity to even get there? Do you know what? Let's study that. Let's look at that.

Let's look at the examples that we can have, but at the same time, let's recognize that we have current auto production taking place that we want to nurture. The RAV4 is the largest-selling hybrid, and not only in Canada but within North America, I think. Do you know what? That is produced here. Let's nurture that.

If you look at the EV strategy, you see that the rebate doesn't even go fully to the hybrids. It only goes to EVs. Why are we precluding hybrid electric vehicles? Why are we doing that? Ultimately, it should be the consumer deciding the vehicle they want, not the federal government.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to see that we move forward with my colleague's motion, and I'd like to ask that we remove the word "positive" from "examples" and that we open it up to lessons learned "throughout this country". We will accept that on the condition that it doesn't preclude our schedule that is currently examined.... We will table this, and when we have an opportunity to do so, we'll do so.

However, I think what we've done this afternoon is just totally disrespectful, and not only to the witnesses. They have an excellent story to tell. They have an EV product that they want to grow in North America. What we've done is that we've not provided them with the opportunity to tell their story and to tell this committee the threats that are being put in place by the current agreement that this government has to allow Chinese EVs.

They're not going to establish manufacturing capacity in this country. These knock-down kits are hundreds of jobs. They're not a supply chain. We're not going to get the value added on the technology. When BYD was in Brazil, it got shut down. The construction got shut down for human rights violations. It got shut down in Hungary for human rights violations. Are these the people you want to be doing business with?

• (1740)

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Baldinelli, but could you keep the remarks related to the motion, please?

Tony Baldinelli: Again, I'm just going to come down with my comments on this. I would like to make an amendment to the motion that's before us to say this:

That the committee conduct a study of no less than three meetings on examples of EV infrastructure implementation with specific references to lessons learned throughout the country.

The Chair: We have an amendment on the floor.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

MP Noormohamed, go ahead.

Taleeb Noormohamed: I think it's a good amendment. I would certainly be pleased to support it.

The Chair: Is everyone supportive of the amendment? I think we have unanimous consent for this amendment.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: Now we have the motion as amended.

I have MP Sudds on the list and MP Blanchette-Joncas.

MP Sudds, we are on the motion as amended.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Kanata, Lib.): I'm fine to go to a vote.

The Chair: Next is MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

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

We have seen quite a circus this afternoon. Now we can see the arrogant attitude of this new government that has gained its majority by making deals with floorcrossers.

Madam Chair, permit me to go back to the motion. I find it interesting, of course. However, I also find the government's language to be really inconsistent. On the one hand, they say that they want a study on the energy transition. That is important and involves trying to reduce the number of gas-fuelled vehicles on our roads. On the other hand, those gas-fuelled vehicles are being funded by public money. It's being done through subsidies that use public money for pipeline projects. Let's remind people about the Trans Mountain project, which cost \$34 billion.

My colleague Mr. Deschênes-Thériault was patting himself on the back just now about an investment of \$1 billion. But Trans Mountain cost \$34 billion. You don't need a PhD in mathematics or quantum physics to understand that \$34 billion is a whole lot more than \$1 billion. The member was reading his shopping list to us, of course, but look what the government has promised us lately.

The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources has promised us another \$10 billion for a new pipeline to British Columbia. Then we are told that this is important, that we are going to do a study on the energy transition and on electric vehicles and we will see the positive effects of it all.

Madam Chair, I am in favour of this study. But, once again, the government has some explaining to do because the walk does not match the talk, so to speak. The government cannot achieve its objective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, yet we are still investing in industries that emit most of the greenhouse gases. So I find a lot of inconsistency in what the government is saying.

I have always been struck by something for the entire time I have sat on this committee, right from when it started in 2021. Of course, the government's words and actions are inconsistent, but something else is striking and I believe it sums up the actions of the current government. Canada's Chief Science Advisor is not just anyone; she is paid from public funds to advise the government. She told us that she had never been consulted on a project of national interest in which the government is investing a lot of money. She has not been asked to give her scientific advice.

So I hope the government will listen to the advice of its Chief Science Advisor. Let us not forget that, at the time, she described the situation as a nightmare. She saw that the government was bypassing all kinds of legislation, the Criminal Code excepted, in order to promote some projects in the national interest. That concerns me. We are not short on announcements from this government, we are short of concrete measures designed to meet the targets it had already committed to meet.

Once again, we have wasted a lot of time. I am upset that we have not been able to ask questions of the witnesses who have joined us today to be part of this study on electric vehicles.

I will support this motion. Once again, I am hoping that the government will also be able to make sure that the public is on board in terms of trust. My colleagues stated this a little earlier and I am really proud to state it too: the greatest number of electric vehicles are in Quebec. This is because of political choices and political will. We did not wait for the federal government to make announcements or provide subsidies.

We are told that it is important to see the positive effects of electric vehicles and, indeed, to build new infrastructures. However, a little more than a year ago, this same government put a stop to the subsidies on electric vehicles. Why were the subsidies not good a year ago and why were they suspended? I would surely tell you that the government put a stop to them because of the political pressure it had to face when it reinstated them a year and a half later. I am really looking forward to hearing about all the impact on the supply chain, on the public's purchasing of electric vehicles, but also about the conflicting signals this sends to the public.

If the subsidy was a good one, why did the government not keep it? It reintroduced it a year and a half later. This disconnect between what the government may say in its speeches and what it does is the kind of thing that makes the public sceptical.

● (1745)

In the House this morning, one of the things we were debating was Bill M-9, which the government has introduced in order to change the composition of committees. So today, this is the last meeting of the committee that reflects the true will of the public: a minority government.

Now the government is going to have a majority in the committees, albeit a small one. The government has 51% of the members of the House, but it is going to award itself the power to have 58% in the committees. That is a super-majority, as they say. It's scary. I believe that the coming weeks and months will usher in a new kind of governance. I will also say that it's scary because, once again, it does not reflect the will of the public.

I will make the same case about electric vehicles.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting.

Can you please keep your remarks relevant to the motion we are debating?

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I will be delighted to do that.

So let me remind you that one Canadian in three trusts democratic institutions. Is there a good connection between the government's words and actions and the general public, if you will excuse the play on words? Two thirds of the population no longer trust democratic institutions. That's not something the Bloc Québécois invented; it's a survey from Statistics Canada.

So I am afraid that this kind of disconnect between words and action will result in...

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting again.

Can you please keep your remarks related to the motion we are debating? Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, I understand that you do not like me saying that only one Canadian in three believes in Parliament. But it's the truth. You say that it is not part of the motion. But it certainly has to do with the link between the motion that

the Liberals want to see adopted and the inconsistency that would create in terms of other kinds of government measures.

I certainly hope that I can put an end to this debate so that we can proceed to the vote. I would even like us to have a little time to do what we came here to do today. By that I mean ask the witnesses who took the time to come to join us some questions about the study.

● (1750)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I see no other person wanting to speak, so we will go to a vote on MP Noormohamed's motion as amended by MP Baldinelli.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 9; nays 0)

The Chair: Is it the will of the committee to adjourn the meeting?

Kurt Holman: Madam Chair, I'm sorry to interrupt.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Holman.

Kurt Holman: As I'm sitting in for MP Vincent Ho, I'd like to move his motion that was put on notice on Friday, April 24.

The Chair: Yes, you can move it.

Kurt Holman: I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(i), the committee undertake a study of the Government of Canada's \$200-million agreement concerning Spaceport Nova Scotia near Canso, Nova Scotia, and its implications for Canada's space sector, science policy, research capacity, and innovation ecosystem;

That the study examine the cost, procurement process, value for money, readiness of the facility, expected scientific and research benefits, expected use by federal departments and agencies, and risks to taxpayers;

That the committee hold no fewer than four meetings;

That the committee invite the President of the Canadian Space Agency, the Chief Science Advisor of Canada, officials from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, officials from the Department of National Defence, representatives of Maritime Launch Services, and any other witnesses the committee deems relevant;

That the committee order the production of all contracts, briefing notes, value-for-money assessments, procurement records, scientific or research assessments, correspondence and related documents concerning the agreement within 30 days; and

That the committee report its findings to the House.

To my knowledge, this motion has been submitted in English and French.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Holman.

Go ahead, MP Noormohamed.

Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Chair, I want to suggest two things.

First, I think we're all happy to debate the motion and have discussion on it. I suggest that we suspend to discuss it amongst ourselves.

Second, perhaps we could suspend the meeting and pick this up on Thursday when we have the proper time to be able to engage in that conversation. I do think this is a good conversation to have. I think we all have questions.

The Chair: Is everyone okay to suspend the meeting and then resume it on Thursday?

Taleb Noormohamed: That's end of day on Thursday.

The Chair: Is everyone okay from your side?

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Madam Chair, can you explain to me what is happening?

A motion was moved and passed. Then, instead of continuing the committee meeting with the witnesses who are still here, you are entertaining a new proposed motion. That is not the usual way in which we proceed.

[*English*]

The Chair: We voted on a motion. Now MP Holman has moved a motion and it is in order because he is subbing in for MP Ho. This motion was put on notice on Friday, and 48 hours have passed. Now, what we have is a motion moved by MP Holman on the floor. Some members are suggesting that—

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: A point of order, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Let me just finish.

Some members are suggesting that we should suspend the meeting. Is it the will of committee members to suspend and then resume on Thursday?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: You have the floor, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: You have done that twice now. Last April 23, you took away our speaking time, which is an affront to parliamentary privilege. You planned two months of sittings at the last minute and you imposed it on us, you forced it down our throats without consulting us. This is neither teamwork nor collaboration. I am telling you this today most firmly, but I do so with great regret.

On two occasions today, I have seen you try to suspend or adjourn the committee meeting. It is as if you have no interest in our continuing the committee's work, even though we have witnesses here with us.

[*English*]

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

What Mr. Blanchette-Joncas is saying is entirely out of order. Basically it violates the decorum of the committee and attacks the chair. There's a limit to this.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Noormohamed.

I would like to let MP Blanchette-Joncas know that it's not me. The members of the committee have every right to move a motion. As long as that motion is in order, the members can do it. I'm not taking away your time. Two members have moved different motions. Then we have to go through the process. We have to go through the debate, and we cannot go for a vote until we have had the debate.

MP Holman has moved a motion. We have the motion on the floor. MP Holman wants to continue the debate on this motion.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: A point of order.

[*English*]

The Chair: I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that members can have a look at the motion that has been moved by MP Holman.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1755)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1755)

The Chair: Okay, we have a list.

MP Holman has the floor.

Kurt Holman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can we go to a vote with regard to the motion I set forward on behalf of MP Vincent Ho?

The Chair: As long as we have a speaking list, we cannot go to the vote.

We have MP DeRidder and then MP Blanchette-Joncas.

Kelly DeRidder: I don't need to speak.

The Chair: MP Blanchette-Joncas, you have the floor .

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Can you just explain your process to me? I have been a member of Parliament for six years and I have never seen this before.

During a speaking rotation, a motion from the Liberal Party came up. When the motion was passed, instead of continuing the rotation, you gave the floor to another committee member so that he could introduce another motion. Then you suspended the meeting. Now we no longer have any witnesses.

I am trying to understand why, after the motion was passed, the rotation did not continue as arranged.

• (1800)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

As I have explained to you before in terms of the suspension, members have a right to move a motion. The motion was moved by MP Holman, which was in order.

I have people on the list. We really have to suspend the meeting now and we will come back on Thursday. I am the chair and I have people on the list.

It is six o'clock. The meeting is suspended and we will come back on Thursday.

[The meeting was suspended at 6:01 p.m., Monday, April 27]

[The meeting resumed at 11 a.m., Thursday, April 30]

• (8300)

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

Welcome back to meeting number 34 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research. We are resuming the meeting suspended on Monday, April 27, in order to debate the motion by MP Ho, which was moved by MP Holman.

Next on the speaking list is MP Deschênes-Thériault.

Go ahead, MP Deschênes-Thériault.

[Translation]

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

I move that the committee proceed to drafting instructions—

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I have a point of clarification.

The Chair: We have a dilatory motion on the floor.

Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, I have a point of clarification before we go to Mr. Deschênes-Thériault.

I'm looking, but I don't have the blues in front of me. The blues are, if I could suggest.... Every committee member here would probably agree that getting the blues in a timely manner.... It has been disappointing, to say the least. We've been required to do drafting instructions, for example, for the EV study. Unfortunately, we still don't have the blues for Monday, which would assist in this regard. I've been watching the television proceedings from the previous hearing on Monday.

My understanding is that when you suspended, Madam Chair, my Bloc colleague had the floor with regard to that matter. He didn't cede speaking on the motion. He asked some questions with regard to some of the decisions you made. My understanding is that my colleague never ceded the floor with regard to discussions on the motion. My Liberal colleague may well be on the list to participate in speaking, but my understanding is that the Bloc would be first. We would continue because we suspended the meeting. We never ended the meeting, so we are legitimately picking that up.

My feeling is that once we go to the Liberal member, he's going to—it's happened four or five times already with Liberal commit-

tees—call a vote to go in camera, which would be extremely disappointing. We were going to discuss a motion with regard to the decision made by this government on Spaceport. Ultimately, on the change this government made, they have the numbers. They can defeat it, but they should be defeating this motion in public so the public can see what is taking place here.

• (8305)

The Chair: MP Baldinelli—

Tony Baldinelli: No, I have the floor. Then I'll cede my time. This is a point of clarification with regard to how this meeting is running. Madam Chair, let me finish.

It is rather disappointing to see that this may be what is happening again. Once we go in camera and a decision is made to end the discussions, we will vote. None of us is able to discuss what happens in camera. We won't be able to discuss the vote on that motion. I want to point this out and point out my disappointment with regard to what is happening here today.

I will also say this. In 2021, when I was re-elected, I had the pleasure of sitting on the science committee. Kirsty Duncan was the chair. Kirsty Duncan would be disappointed in what you're doing here today, Madam Chair.

Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC): I have a point of clarification, Chair.

The Chair: Let me reply to MP Baldinelli.

When we suspended the meeting, MP Blanchette-Joncas was speaking on a point of order. He's not here today. The floor is for the member who had it, not the party. It will not go back to the Bloc.

MP Deschênes-Thériault is on the speaking list, so the floor goes to MP Deschênes-Thériault.

Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault: I move that the committee proceed to drafting instructions, Madam Chair.

Vincent Ho: I have a point of clarification on that matter.

The Chair: Wait one second, MP Ho. A dilatory motion has been moved by MP Deschênes-Thériault.

Tony Baldinelli: You should be ashamed of yourselves.

Vincent Ho: As a newly elected member—

The Chair: Wait one second. It's one person at a time. When I am speaking, please let me finish. I am trying to explain one thing to you.

MP Deschênes-Thériault has moved a motion that we move to drafting instructions. Those drafting instructions happen in camera. They cannot happen in public, so we will have to move.... This is a dilatory motion. I will provide you with clarification after that. We have to vote on this.

Vincent Ho: As a point of clarification, I just want to understand that we are shutting off the cameras. That is what the motion will do. My understanding was this was a carry-over from the past meeting—

The Chair: It's a dilatory motion, which was moved by MP Deschênes-Thériault. We have to vote on it. There is no debate on it. Please—

Vincent Ho: I just want to understand. Are we shutting off the cameras? Is that what we're voting on?

In light of a motion we have to study the space pad... Are we shutting off the cameras? Is that what we're doing? I just want to know. For the benefit of everyone on this committee—we have a lot of newly elected MPs on this committee—and the public, I want to know if we're shutting off the cameras.

Is that what this motion effectively does?

The Chair: MP Deschênes-Thériault has moved a motion to move to drafting instructions. We will vote on it. If that motion passes, we will move on to drafting instructions, which are done in camera. They are not done in public.

Kelly DeRidder: I have a point of clarification, Madam Chair. This is purely for clarification purposes only.

We had a motion tabled and on the floor to study this space pad, which we didn't get a chance to vote on at the last committee meeting. Instead of doing that today, there's now a very strategic plan to make it look like they only want to go to drafting instructions, instead of moving the actual motion to go in camera. This was strategically planned so that it looks a little different to Canadians.

What I would like to say to Canadians right now—

Doug Eyolfson (Winnipeg West, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Kelly DeRidder: —is this is absolutely... We have never gone in camera—

The Chair: Wait one second, MP DeRidder. There's a point of order.

Kelly DeRidder: —yet, today, at this committee meeting, when we're about to vote on a motion—

The Chair: MP DeRidder, we have a point of order.

MP Eyolfson.

Doug Eyolfson: This is debate, and the motion is not debatable.

Kelly DeRidder: Clarification points are. I would like clarification on what's actually happening here today.

The Chair: I am suspending the meeting for two minutes to get some clarification.

• (1105) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1115)

• (8315)

The Chair: I call the meeting to order.

MP Deschênes-Thériault has moved that we move to the drafting instructions, and we will go to a vote.

I would like the clerk to please take the vote.

Tony Baldinelli: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Baldinelli.

Tony Baldinelli: If I may, I'd like to seek clarification through this point of order.

The Chair: There is no point of clarification.

Tony Baldinelli: It's a point of order, then.

The Chair: Yes.

Tony Baldinelli: We're on meeting 34. Is that correct, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Tony Baldinelli: The only item listed on our agenda is our continuing with the implications of the Canada-China preliminary joint arrangement on Canada's electric vehicle sector. There's nothing else listed. My understanding is that my Liberal colleague's motion was to take us to a specific item that is not on the agenda that is posted here. My understanding is that's not feasible or allowable.

You may have listed those agenda items in meeting number 35, but we're continuing meeting 34, Madam Chair. If they'd like to do that and go in camera, they'll have to do a separate motion on that, but not move to an item that isn't on our agenda.

If they want to, they can. They can look into the cameras, tell their constituents and Canadians that they want to move in camera. That's fine. They can do that. That's their right, but they have to do that on a separate motion, not on the dilatory motion that was presented to move to a specific agenda item.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Baldinelli.

For the clarification of all members, a dilatory motion is designed to dispose of the original question before the committee either temporarily or permanently. Dilatory motions do not require notice, and they cannot be amended or debated. They are put to a vote immediately. If the motion is to proceed to another order of business, the motion results in the matter then under consideration by the committee being replaced by the order of business proposed in the motion. If the motion is carried, the committee immediately proceeds to the order of business referred to in the motion.

There is no such thing regarding whether or not it is on the agenda. We are going to a vote.

• (8320)

Vincent Ho: I have a point of order. I'd like to challenge the chair's ruling on that.

The Chair: Do it after the vote.

Vincent Ho: On what you just said, I'd like to challenge your interpretation of the rules.

The Chair: He has moved a dilatory motion, so we have to go to a vote. After that, if you want to challenge my ruling, we can come back. The vote is starting.

Vincent Ho: The basis of that vote is your ruling and your interpretation of the rules. If I challenge the ruling, we have to go to a vote on that, which is also dilatory.

The Chair: This is a dilatory motion. I have asked the clerk to take a vote. We cannot do anything else during the vote. The vote has to be taken. After that, if you have something, then you can bring it up.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: We will now go to the drafting instructions. The drafting instructions are done in camera, so I'll suspend the meeting so that we can move from in public to in camera.

The meeting is suspended.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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