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Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry



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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): The committee is resuming. We are now in public, and we are in a business meeting.

Mrs. Thomas has the floor.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

First, the CBC leadership gave direction to their people to not call Hamas a terrorist organization, which is to side with the terrorists. Then the CBC started actually pumping out false information after saying that it was incumbent upon them to report only the facts.

They put out a story with the title, “Hundreds killed in Israeli airstrike on Gaza City hospital, Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza says”. Only moments later, they discovered that this was actually false information. Of course it is. Their intelligence came from Hamas. You have the CBC taking public dollars and using those dollars to broadcast a message from a terrorist organization. It's despicable.

The request to this committee is that we have the opportunity to speak to CBC's leadership and understand why they've been giving the direction that they've been giving, why they've been presenting the misleading and false information that they've been presenting.

They falsely claimed that the explosion was the result of Israel's purposely attacking the hospital. They falsely reported that it killed hundreds, and they falsely used B-roll to show dead bodies being removed from a hospital and the wounded being cared for. Only hours later, we discovered that the hospital actually wasn't hit; it was the parking lot. Hundreds weren't killed; wounded weren't removed.

This is a public broadcaster taking over a billion dollars from Canadians in order to tell a false narrative on behalf of a terrorist organization.

Therefore, my request before this committee—

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Chair—

The Chair: Martin, [Inaudible—Editor] go next, yes.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Can she keep going?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas. I have to acknowledge the hands that go up, and I am doing that.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Well, not in an interruptive manner.

The CBC took taxpayer dollars and used that money to spread misinformation or to tell an outright lie. They used taxpayer money to be the mouthpiece for a terrorist organization known as “Hamas” and that is despicable, and for the members opposite to try to excuse that is even more deplorable. It was irresponsible storytelling at best and outright advocacy on behalf of a terrorist organization at worst. Again, Canadian taxpayer dollars being used for these purposes....

It was damaging to the Israeli people, it was damaging to Canadians, it was damaging to the relationship Canadians have with their journalists, and it was damaging to journalists themselves, because there are good journalists who are doing good work who are waiting to get the facts and to report them accurately. When the CBC doesn't do that, it causes distrust among the Canadian public at large, and if you don't have trust, you don't have credibility.

Without that, how are Canadians supposed to be able to know that what they're getting is accurate? How are they supposed to be able to trust the news that is coming their way if reporters or broadcasters like the CBC don't take the time and put in the energy and exercise the care or the discretion to get things right?

The motion I am moving at this committee is this:

Given that,

Hamas has been a declared terrorist organization by the Government of Canada since 2002, and

The horrific Hamas terrorist attack against Israel left thousands of innocent people dead and injured, and

That an email directive sent from the Director of Journalistic Standards of CBC News, Mr. George Achi, to all employees of CBC News, directed them to downplay coverage of the horrific, sadistic, violence perpetrated by Hamas against innocent people in Israel by not referring to the attackers as terrorists, and to falsely claim that Gaza continued to be under occupation after Israel had pulled out in 2005,

The CBC receives \$1.4 billion in public funding through taxpayer dollars annually, and that this committee has a mandate to review Government expenditures,

The Committee:

a) Denounce Mr. Achi's comments and report this to the House

b) Summon the President of the CBC, Catherine Tait, to appear for 2 hours by herself within seven days of the motion being adopted,

c) Summon the CBC Director of Journalistic Standards, George Achi, to appear for 2 hours by himself within seven days of the motion being adopted,

d) Invite the CBC ombudsman, Mr. Jack Nagler, to appear for a minimum of 2 hours to address the CBC's position on Journalistic Standards and Practices.

That last point around journalistic standards and practices is so important, because, again, not only did the leadership at CBC give a directive to refrain from calling Hamas a terrorist organization, which it is officially declared to be under law in Canada, but the CBC also published a story that put blame on Israel for the blast that took place at a hospital, and this was wrong. It was a lie. It was false information the CBC received directly from Hamas, a terrorist organization.

• (0850)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): A point of order, Madam Chair, can Ms. Thomas direct her comments to the chair, please?

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Yes. I don't know why she was staring at you.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm handsome, but I hope it's not for any other reason, you know....

An hon. member: Yes, focus on the chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Let me begin again for your sake, the chair's sake.

The Chair: I heard what you have to say, Ms. Thomas, every word.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It's okay. I'll just say it again.

It's very important that this committee understand two things: that the CBC gave two directives—or, I should say, that the CBC gave one directive and published one false story. The directive that was given to the CBC was to not call Hamas a terrorist organization, which it is. Canada has officially declared it a terrorist organization—

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): I have a point of order.

That is false, and Mrs. Thomas knows that. She should stick to facts and not try to spin or torque what the actual directive was.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

Ms. Thomas, please note what Mr. Julian said. Go ahead and speak. You have the floor.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: The CBC leadership not only gave direction to refrain from calling Hamas a terrorist organization—which it is, based on a decision made by the Canadian government in 2007, more than 20 years ago—but also—

I'm sorry...?

A voice: It was 15 years ago.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm sorry. I said 2007. You're right. I apologize.

Let me correct the record.

The CBC leadership gave direction to not call Hamas a terrorist organization. The Government of Canada officially declared it a terrorist organization more than 20 years ago. That decision is known. That is an official decision made by the Canadian govern-

ment. That is not something that is up for debate. That is fact, so for the CBC to give that directive is alarming.

Further to that, the CBC just recently ran with a story accusing Israel of the attack on a hospital. They did not verify the facts. They did not take the time to get the story correct. Instead, they just took information that was fed to them by Hamas and they pushed it out the door. Only moments later, they then had to retract the title of their story and the misleading information within it, because they had new information—because Canadians held them accountable and pushed back on their lies.

For a public broadcaster to take over a billion dollars and use that taxpayer money to propagate a false narrative fed by Hamas is absolutely deplorable. It is incumbent upon this committee to hold the CBC to account and to make sure that Canadians are being given accurate information.

The reason this is so important is that when false information is put out there, it is damaging to the Israeli people. It is damaging to the Canadian public. It is damaging to the relationship between Canada and Israel. It is damaging to journalists who do good work but are now not trusted because some people at the CBC have determined that it's in their best interest to propagate lies.

Mistrust is at all-time high. The CBC is publicly funded, and those in it have a responsibility to get it right. To be on the side of the terrorists is wrong. It is the wrong side to be on. Shame on them. Shame on us if we don't take the time to hold them to account.

Also, Chair, shame on Mr. Noormohamed...for laughing.

• (0855)

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

In this entire rant, she has been looking at me and directing her comments about Hamas to me as a Muslim member of this committee. I have had just about enough of it, Madam Chair. That comment is an exact example of the Islamophobia in this place that people like Ms. Thomas continue to perpetuate.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, I would like to ask you to be careful with your choice of words when you are referring to members of the committee personally.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I take your caution. Thank you.

For the record, there is a camera here. It happens to be in front of the member who just spoke. If he wishes to not be there, he is welcome to move to where he would be out of my eyesight, but that is his responsibility.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: That's why I moved.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, you named him. I'm sorry. I have to call you on that.

Now, have you finished, Ms. Thomas? Can we proceed to debate? I have a few hands up.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

I believe that my colleague Ms. Gladu raised a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Gladu is not the first in line.

We'll go to Martin Champoux, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: She raised a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Martin.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): It was the same point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Martin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let's say that what we just heard was at least distracting, as it was a clear demonstration of Ms. Thomas' ignorance of journalism. This spread of her ignorance about journalists has consequences because there are people who subscribe to it and believe in it. There are people who do believe that journalists on the ground are being influenced and brainwashed by Hamas or any party in a conflict. You really have to think that journalists are naive and incompetent to believe such a thing.

I want to take advantage of the time I have right now to highlight the work of journalists on the ground, be they from CBC or Radio-Canada. Like most of us, I am obviously following the conflict from afar, and I find that these journalists do an absolutely remarkable job. That is worth noting. Their working conditions are unimaginable. We have no idea what they are going through on the ground. They provide us with the most professional and accurate information possible.

Of course, this is a conflict and, in a conflict, there is so much information circulating. It is handled in the best possible way, but there are times when information is incorrect. In the case of the bombing of the hospital in Gaza, just about every news outlet—even the most serious and rigorous ones in the world—ended up disseminating the same information and retracting it when the information later became clear. So accusing the CBC of being incompetent in conveying information provided by Hamas is such a show of bad faith that I want to denounce with all my strength because it is unacceptable that this is being done in this way.

On the issue of the directive, as I pointed out in the House, it is unacceptable for CBC management to issue directives to the newsroom. Newsrooms must be airtight and absolutely independent of any management influence and ideological influence. We know that there are currently situations at the CBC that are raising questions about the message or ideology being pushed everywhere. That is not just the case at the CBC, but we will come back to that. Journalistic independence is a principle we discussed when we studied Bill C-18. We talked about the importance of rigour in this profession. If there is one place where I am convinced people are rigorous, it is at the CBC and Radio-Canada.

A number of experienced journalists have spoken out about this directive not to label an organization or not to use qualifiers to label it. On Sunday evening, on *Tout le monde en parle*, Céline Galipeau, whose values, credentials and reputation will not be questioned, and Jean-François Lépine, a journalist whose experience no one will question, either, both explained why organizations are not labelled in conflicts. And yet, it seems that people are not listening to

these arguments and do not want to understand them. They just want to look at the sensationalist side and say that news agencies don't want to label Hamas as terrorists because they want to protect people. That's not it at all. They simply want to make the information as clear, precise and non-partisan as possible. This is a principle that is generally debated even in large newsrooms. Some people agree and some don't, but the fact remains that it is up to newsrooms, journalists and information professionals to make those decisions.

I read an excellent article written by Mr. Shapiro in *The Conversation*. A short sentence in the article did a great job of expressing the neutrality, objectivity and independence that journalists must have in their choice of words when talking about situations as sensitive as the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. As soon as you start using labels, you designate a bad guy and a good guy because, by default, if you label one party as the bad guy or call it a terrorist, you automatically declare that the other is the good guy. The journalist doesn't have to make that distinction. What they have to do is make sure that the facts are as accurate and as rigorous as possible. The journalist reports facts.

● (0900)

The blunder is not the fact that the directive was sent; it's the fact that it was sent in writing. This is a directive that has been in place for years in the largest newsrooms in the world, in the newsrooms that cover these kinds of conflicts. That directive exists at the Associated Press and the Canadian Press. It exists in large agencies, such as Reuters. It also exists at the BBC. In fact, the BBC has fought the same fight that we're fighting right now. The BBC news service had to defend itself, not too long ago, in order to protect itself from political influence and the influence of lobbies. That, too, is a challenge for journalism.

Personally, I do not completely disagree with the motion before us today, but not for the same reasons as my Conservative friends. I quite agree that the committee should hear from CBC/Radio-Canada representatives, so that they can explain to us why things are the way they are and why there is a good reason for them being that way. It is not a matter of blaming them for something that has not been done, as has been reported, quite the contrary.

I think it's important to give the credibility that we owe to the newsrooms of CBC/Radio-Canada, but also to the major media outlets of the world that cover conflicts in extremely difficult contexts and situations. We have no idea of the challenges these people face on a daily basis. Instead of thanking them, congratulating them, honouring them and encouraging them, we are dragging them through the mud, impugning their motives and saying that they are engaging in reprehensible practices. I must say that I find that embarrassing.

Journalists' work is essential. It is extremely well done at the moment, in the current context. If we decide to adopt the motion, it will have to be amended. It contains elements on which I completely disagree. If the committee decided to invite CBC/Radio-Canada's senior management, it would be to give them an opportunity to explain in a clear and calm way why these directives are in place. I hope that, at that point, my Conservative friends will be open-minded enough to hear how things really work in a newsroom and how information is handled.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Champoux.

Ms. Gladu is next.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a few comments to make with respect to what's been said about the motion.

First of all, I want to address Mr. Julian's comments. He implied that my colleague was lying by saying what was in the directive. I have in front of me the email from George Achi that was provided, and I just want to read it into the record. It says:

Do not refer to militants, soldiers or anyone else as "terrorists." The notion of terrorism remains heavily politicized and is part of the story. Even when quoting/clipping a government or a source referring to fighters as "terrorists," we should add context to ensure the audience understands this is opinion, not fact. That includes statements from the Canadian government and Canadian politicians.

In light of the fact that Parliament has said that Hamas is a terrorist organization, it is not an opinion but a fact, so I find that objectionable.

That said, my greater concern here is that for a democracy, we have to have free and independent journalism. That's very important; "freedom of the press" is part of the charter. Therefore, when I see directives to journalists on how they ought to phrase things, I think that takes away their freedom to portray the situation. There are always differing views.

I'm also concerned about the inflammatory nature of how the inaccurate reporting may impact the situation.

The other thing that came to mind when I saw this directive is this: What other directives are being given about other stories that may bias or influence individual journalists' freedom to report them as they see them? I think it's important for the CBC to come here so that we can ask them some questions about it. I think the Canadian public wants to be assured that in fact we do have free and independent journalism and that we don't have the word police directing journalists on how they need to phrase things.

Thank you.

• (0905)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gladu.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll start by saying that what I agree with in this motion is that Hamas has been declared a terrorist organization by the Government of Canada. That is clear, and it has been constantly re-

flected in CBC coverage. I also agree that the horrific Hamas terrorist attack against Israel left thousands of innocent people dead and injured. I also agree, as my colleague Mr. Champoux said, that as part of our responsibility as a committee, it would be good to have Mr. Achi and Mr. Jack Nagler, the CBC ombudsman, come before the committee. That is where I agree.

Where I profoundly disagree is with the characterization in the Conservative motion that is not fact-based at all: the characterization that is saying that in some way the CBC was directed to downplay coverage of the horrific violence perpetrated by Hamas against innocent people in Israel. It is obvious to me that there is not a single Conservative at this table who actually watches CBC News, because CBC coverage throughout this conflict has exposed the incredibly sadistic nature of the terrorist attack that took place.

We have CBC journalists who are literally putting their lives on the line, and as a result of that—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Peter. There's a point of order.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I just want to correct the record.

If you can see my phone, you'll see that I have CBC News and CBC Gem, so there are actually some Conservatives who watch CBC.

Mr. Peter Julian: Why, then, did no Conservative say that the word "terrorist" has been used repeatedly in CBC coverage citing other individuals?

What Ms. Gladu neglected to read, of course, because they're trying to torque this, was the most important parts of the memo that went out. One is, "Our description should be fact-based, referring to the end of permanent Israeli military presence on the ground" in Gaza. That is a fact.

For those of us who have been to Israel and Palestine—as I have—we know that the Israeli military controls access to certain areas. Again, that's a fact.

As always, please use fact-based language, avoid loaded qualifiers and anything that sounds like opinion. The story, with its context, speaks for itself. There will obviously be a lot of external opinion to report as part of our coverage: it is important that those clips and quotes are very clearly attributed and not separated from fact-checking and context. This is not a story that comes out of the blue, but is deeply rooted in the political and military landscape of the past few years.

What the CBC is attempting to do, under difficult circumstances, is take a fact-based approach to coverage. As a result of that, you can see that the CBC is putting forward the same kinds of journalistic standards that we see from the BBC, from the AP, from the Agence France-Presse and Reuters, among many others. These are standard journalistic approaches that are fundamental for Canadians to understand the truth of the horrific violence of the terrorist attacks and the truth of the growing civilian casualties that we're seeing in Gaza.

We need to have a fact-based approach.

● (0910)

[*Translation*]

Often, CBC/Radio-Canada journalists put their lives on the line to do their job, to give Canadians answers and to ensure that they receive the information that matters. It's very important to be able to hear the facts, even though the environment is extremely difficult and the situation is often nebulous. That is what we expect from CBC/Radio-Canada, whose journalists have once again succeeded despite all these challenges in providing accurate and important information.

[*English*]

One other area on which I think Mrs. Thomas and I agree is the issue of the information that was put online around the bombing of the hospital in Gaza, or the rocket falling on it. It is very clear to me that we need that information. We need to know the sources of that information.

I think she's correct to point out that CBC went with a story that may well not have been true. As a result of that, it ran the retraction. That is extremely important. That is the kind of high journalistic standard that I think we all expect.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, let it be a point of order, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I know Peter Julian is interested in the facts. They actually didn't run a retraction; they just silently changed the title of the article.

The Chair: That's not a point of order. It's debate.

I'm sorry. Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm quoting Mrs. Thomas, who said they retracted it. I'm quoting her. If she was wrong on that, that's fine.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, this is not a point of order. It's a point of information or whatever. It's not a point of order.

What would you like to say, Ms. Thomas?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Chair, a point of information isn't a thing. There's only a point of order, and you're insinuating that you know the thoughts in my head. Is that what you're implying right now?

The Chair: No, I'm not. You just said what you said, and I told you it was not a point of order but debate.

Now, I hope what you're going to say is a point of order.

Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I would just like the honourable member to speak the truth and to not sling false accusations.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Thomas.

Mr. Julian, please go ahead.

Mr. Peter Julian: I wrote down the word as she used it and I think the record stands. People are seeing in the committee what she said and how I've responded.

There is a fundamental problem of disinformation. I think CBC endeavours to show the highest journalistic standards. I think it's important that we do bring both the CBC ombudsman and the director of journalistic standards before committee. As Mr. Champoux mentioned, it's important in a difficult, troubling time like this to have the CBC respond to us and answer those important questions, but there are broader concerns about rampant disinformation, and they don't come from the CBC. They come from the Meta corporation.

As you know, Madam Chair, both the European community and American lawmakers have cited Meta for rampant disinformation around the Israel-Hamas conflict. It is incumbent on us, I think, to subpoena Meta and bring Rachel Curran here to answer those questions.

I'll quote the following for the record before I offer my amendments.

U.S. Senator Michael Bennet has said in referring to Meta—and, of course, Google and X or Twitter—“In many cases, your platforms’ algorithms have amplified this content, contributing to a dangerous cycle of outrage, engagement, and redistribution.” The senator's comments and those from from U.S. lawmakers come after European Union industry chief Thierry Breton blasted those same companies, Meta particularly, demanding that they take stricter steps to battle disinformation amid the escalating conflict. What we have is the European Union and U.S. lawmakers bringing bearing down on Meta particularly. As we know, the EU has issued warnings demanding that Meta do something to combat illegal content and disinformation. If not, they could potentially face harsh regulatory penalties.

Madam Chair, that disinformation causes profound concerns. The reality is that both Meta and Google, as the parliamentary library and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have revealed, receive over a billion dollars in indirect taxpayer subsidies every year. The federal government pays the companies in order to advertise on Meta and Google. They have a public responsibility with that massive indirect subsidy that comes from taxpayers to combat disinformation.

What I offer as an amendment to the motion is the following.

The first paragraph would read as written, the second paragraph would read as written, the third bullet point would be replaced entirely by “That both the European Union and U.S. lawmakers have raised concerns about false and misleading content about the Israel-Hamas conflict being spread on Meta platforms”. The fourth bullet point would be amended in the following way: “The CBC receives \$1.4 billion in public funding, and Meta and Google receive over \$1 billion in indirect subsidies annually”, and then it would read “through taxpayer dollars annually, and that this committee has a mandate to review Government expenditures”.

Then, the (a) and (b) of “The Committee” would be replaced with “That the Committee subpoena Rachel Curran, head of public policy of Meta Canada, to come before the Committee”, and then (c) and (d) would read in the following way: “Invite the CBC Director of Journalistic Standards, George Achi, and the CBC ombudsman, Mr. Jack Nagler, to appear before the committee to address the CBC's position on Journalistic Standards and Practices”.

• (0915)

The Chair: Now we have a very long amendment, and we have to deal with the amendment. There is no more discussion on the motion. We are into the amendment now.

I'm going to ask the clerk to read it for me, or if Peter has it in writing, I can read it out.

Mr. Julian, would you like to read it slowly so that we can note the places where the amendment is going to occur?

Mr. Peter Julian: The first bullet point stands. The second bullet point stands. The third bullet point would be replaced and would read, “That both the European Union and U.S. lawmakers have raised concerns about false and misleading content about the Israel-Hamas conflict being spread on Meta platforms.”

The fourth bullet point would read, “The CBC receives \$1.4 billion in public funding and that Meta and Google receive over \$1 billion in indirect subsidies through taxpayer dollars annually, and that this committee has a mandate to review government expenditures”, and then, “The committee (a) subpoena Rachel Curran, head of public policy, Meta Canada, to come before the committee”.

The new (b) would read, “Invite CBC Director of Journalistic Standards George Achi and CBC ombudsman Mr. Jack Nagler to appear before the committee to address the CBC's position on journalistic standards and practices.”

The Chair: Thank you.

We're on the amendment.

Ms. Gladu...?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I have two things.

First of all, Lisa Hepfner has her hand up and has had her hand up for a while. I don't know if she wants to speak to it.

The Chair: Ms. Hepfner had her hand up on the motion. We're dealing with the amendment.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Okay. I want to speak to the amendment, if that's okay.

The Chair: Martin, your hand was up for the amendment. Go ahead.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): It's a point of order.

For an amendment this long, I need a hard copy. We're just hearing it verbally. I need it in a hard copy.

• (0920)

Mr. Michael Coteau: Then let's recess for five minutes and get it printed.

The Chair: Do you have the hard copy now, Clerk?

What we will do is suspend until the clerk produces a hard copy. The committee is suspended.

• (0920)

(Pause)

• (1000)

The Chair: We are resuming the meeting.

Peter, you had the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I think this is something that—

An hon. member: On a point of order—

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I have a point of order.

The Chair: You have a point of order?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Yes, it's either one us. We're on the same point of order.

I think Martin asked for a hard copy. We were going to get a hard copy.

A voice: I can print that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thanks.

The Chair: Do you want to stay suspended until we get the hard copy?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

We are suspended.

[*The meeting was suspended at 10:03 a.m., Thursday, October 19*]

[*The meeting resumed at 11:04 a.m., Thursday, October 24*]

• (13100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. We will now resume the meeting and continue meeting number 93 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which was suspended last Thursday.

I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

• (13105)

[*English*]

This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, members are attending in person in the room and remotely by using the Zoom application. I don't think we have anyone using Zoom today.

While public health authorities and the Board of Internal Economy do not require mask-wearing indoors or in the precinct, masks and respirators are still excellent tools to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases. I'm encouraging their use, strongly.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that screenshots and taking photos of your screen are not permitted. I also remind you that this room is equipped with a powerful audio system, and feedback can occur. It does harm to the hearing of the interpreters, so please try to be careful not to have things sitting next to the microphone, as this can cause feedback.

We're resuming debate on the amendment of Peter Julian, which is an amendment moved by him on the original motion from Rachael Thomas.

Now, Peter, you have the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I tabled the amendment raising concerns about Meta's role. This is the role of Meta in disinformation. It's been flagged in the European Union and the United States. Meta has simply been appallingly bad in promoting disinformation and stoking, I would suggest, an amplification of hate.

I offered that amendment to subpoena Rachel Curran, who is head of public policy for Meta Canada, because of Meta's appalling role in disinformation. Subsequent to this, two other factors have come to mind.

First, we have a role to look at the CBC and its mandate. I understand that the president of the CBC, Catherine Tait, is coming before us on November 2. It's kind of superfluous to look into the CBC or have a motion on the CBC when they are already scheduled to appear in front of this committee.

Second, Madam Chair, I want to bring to your attention and the committee's attention an extraordinary piece of investigative reporting that appeared just this past weekend. It's by Jesse Brown and Karyn Pugliese from Canadaland. These are two very effective journalists. They went into what they saw as a major source of disinformation. The heading of the article was the "The anti-Trudeau hate farm based out of Cairo". This is a major source of disinformation in Canada.

The YouTube channel called Street Politics Canada, since April 2022, has published approximately 600 YouTube videos catering to an audience of Canadian conservatives. In the last 12 months, their videos have received more than 10 million views. Jesse Brown and Karyn Pugliese looked into this and showed real investigative reporting. It would be great to see Postmedia, which is heavily subsidized, actually do some investigative reporting.

It turns out that the journalists found that Street Politics Canada is actually run out of Egypt, specifically from the 11th floor office of a company called Geek Labs in the Cairo neighbourhood of Degla. The former Street Politics social media manager conceded that if they told people they were Egyptians talking in Canada, the company would not get the success that it has had.

This is a major source of misinformation. The social media manager goes on to say, "We knew that our audience were the conservatives in Canada." I certainly hope that the member for Carleton and Conservative MPs are not re-tweeting, or amplifying, this blatant disinformation that is foreign-based foreign interference. I find it appalling that this has played such a key role in the Conservatives' infrastructure.

The amendment that I offered is to look into the disinformation that we're seeing on Meta. It's fair to say that there's a broader problem of disinformation writ large. That is something that would be entirely appropriate for our committee to look at.

I'm sure my colleagues have comments on the amendment. I'm beginning to see from these two pieces of important information that what we probably actually need is a motion that allows this committee to undertake a study into misinformation and disinformation writ large, particularly at a time that is so troubling after the Hamas terrorist attacks. We now see the loss of civilian life in Gaza because of IDF bombing. This is a major concern to all Canadians, and we need to get good information.

It's fair to say that the CBC has done an exemplary job. It has been extraordinary. Its journalists have often laid their lives on the line, and continue to do so. An attack on the CBC and its independence is inappropriate. The fact that we have the president of the CBC coming forward means that Mrs. Thomas' original motion is kind of moot; we already have the CBC coming before us.

• (13110)

I think this committee should absolutely take on the broader issues of disinformation. I'm particularly interested in the comments from my colleagues to see what direction we should take. I'm beginning to think that my subamendment isn't the most appropriate way of doing that, given the surprising disinformation of foreign interference used by the conservative infrastructure and by Meta's appalling actions in fomenting and amplifying disinformation through the course of the last few weeks.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, go ahead on your point of order.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

I'm sorry. I was just curious. He just used the term "conservative infrastructure". Now, I'm familiar with infrastructure being used by Beijing, the Communist Party, in order to interfere on social media. I'm curious—

Mr. Peter Julian: This is debate.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: —as to whether he is then calling the Conservative Party of Canada—

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, it's—

The Chair: That's debate. It's not a point of order. I'm sorry.

Does everyone have Peter Julian's amendment in writing, as Mr. Shields had asked?

Okay. Thanks.

Are you finished, Peter?

Mr. Peter Julian: I have just a final comment. Again, this—

The Chair: We have a point of order from Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

On a point of order, I'm just hoping that the member can clarify what he means by “conservative”.

The Chair: A point of clarification is what you're asking for. It's not a point of order.

Mr. Julian, go ahead. You have the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes.

This Egyptian troll farm, heavily financed by the United States—rampant foreign interference—says that they have catered to “an audience of Canadian conservatives”, and that they know that their “audience were the conservatives in Canada”.

I'm just re-citing this Egyptian troll farm that has provided appalling levels of disinformation to the Canadian public. I raise concerns, of course, about to what extent it's being amplified here in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you.

If you have finished, I have a list for the amendment.

Go ahead, Ms. Gladu.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair.

First, let me start off by saying how continually offensive it is to me that Mr. Julian is always trying to spread disinformation and to slander the Conservative Party. I for one have never heard of the magazine he's talking about. I just wish he would stick to the motion.

I agree that his amendment is probably not what we need. We already have a study on big tech that will have Facebook and those folks come before us. Ms. Curran has been in front of committee before.

I'm glad to hear that Catherine Tait is coming. She did publish an opinion piece in the Toronto Star on how to rebuild trust in the news. Certainly she's recognizing that there's been an erosion of trust, with 40% of Canadians not trusting the media. I think we asked for her for two hours and she's coming for only one. We might be able to do something about that.

I do think we don't want to get too broad in this study. The whole idea was that there was this timely issue of one of the directors at CBC instructing the journalists on how they were to refer to Hamas. They were not to call them terrorists. We've seen the BBC come out since and say clearly that they're terrorists. They do come back to a position where they're going to report—

• (13115)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Madam Chair, Ms. Gladu mentioned that Catherine Tait was coming for only one hour. If I'm correct, the motion only asked for her for one hour. Mr. Shields' motion was to ask for one hour.

I just wanted to confirm that.

The Chair: I would have clarified that when Ms. Gladu finished. If the committee would like her to come for two, we could ask her, but at the moment, I'm letting Ms. Gladu finish her thoughts.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: To be clear, the amendment of Mr. Julian was to eliminate her altogether. The original motion that the amendment was made to called for her for two hours.

The other thing is just to make sure that we focus on trying to make sure we have free and independent journalism and not to extend the study so broadly. We do have our safe sport study. There is some urgency to getting back to that.

I don't like Mr. Julian's amendment, for sure, but those would be my points.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gladu.

Again, I will go back to the point that the original motion to ask Ms. Tait to come was for one hour only. If the committee feels it would like to expand that to two hours, I would instruct the clerk to do that.

Very quickly, how does the committee feel about that?

No? There's a shaking of heads. Okay. We will leave it at one hour.

Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am curious. The motion that was put forward and then the amendment that Mr. Julian has offered.... The amendment does change it quite substantially. The point of the motion is with regard to the CBC and holding it to account as a public broadcaster.

Peter Julian has offered an amendment to hold Meta and Google accountable, which is very different. I would ask the chair to confer with the clerk to determine whether or not this amendment is in order, based on the original intent of the motion.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk, but I think the amendment is in order. It says that your motion is not expanded enough and that Mr. Julian would like to expand this to other forms of misinformation, disinformation, etc.

Madam Clerk, his amendment is in order, yes?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Geneviève Desjardins): It's your ruling, so it depends. As you said, it expands the subject.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm sorry.

So—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I'd be interested in the clerk's answer. We saw you confer with her, but we didn't hear her answer as to whether Mr. Julian's amendment was admissible. I would like to know the outcome of that consultation, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: In the end, it is the chair's ruling. My advice was that the chair can determine if the additional information raises a completely different question or if it is irrelevant to the main motion. Then it would be out of order.

The Chair: Martin, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Chair, I would like to know something out of curiosity. Am I to understand that your verdict is that the proposed amendment, which suggests expanding to a large extent the scope of the motion proposed by Ms. Thomas, is consistent with the spirit of this motion?

As I read it, the purpose of Ms. Thomas' motion is to question the CBC about a memo that was sent to journalists in the newsroom. The scope of the motion seems to me to be quite limited and focused. However, the proposed amendment suggests conducting a broader study on journalistic independence and disinformation. That seems to me to be a slightly different topic from what is understood in the motion on the table.

I am listening to your ruling and I will respect it, of course.

• (13120)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

My reasoning is simply that in her motion, Mrs. Thomas doesn't only ask for the CBC to be summoned. She also wants to invite the ombudsman "to appear for a minimum of 2 hours to address the CBC's position on Journalistic Standards and Practices." Mr. Julian's amendment expands journalistic standards and practices, and that's exactly what he is trying to do, so I think it is in order.

Thank you.

Mrs. Thomas, have you finished your statement?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, I have not.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, on that point, I just would bring to your attention that the motion I moved has only to do with the CBC. It simply names three individuals from within the CBC who should be brought forward to this committee. It is within the jurisdiction of this committee to hold the CBC to account because it is a public broadcaster under the mandate of the heritage minister.

Peter Julian's amendment moves away from the CBC and in fact strikes from the record the invitation to bring Catherine Tait, the head of the CBC. His amendment actually moves into the private sphere that this committee actually doesn't have jurisdiction over, as it is pertaining to the news coverage of Google and Meta.

I would contend, respectfully, that the motion has in fact been changed quite substantially by this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you.

My ruling stands, however. Are you finished speaking to that? Can I go to Mr. Waugh?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, I am not.

The Chair: No, you're not finished. Okay. Go ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I would challenge your ruling.

The Chair: Would you like me to call the question?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I would challenge your ruling.

The Chair: Please, Clerk, call the question.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Thomas, would you have any further comments on Mr. Julian's amendment?

You do.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

I have a question for further clarification, then, for the chair, and I suppose that perhaps we could consult with the clerk.

In Mr. Julian's amendment, he uses the word "subpoena" and says, "That the committee subpoena Rachel Curran". I am wondering if, according to the Standing Orders, this committee does have the power to subpoena a witness.

The Chair: Yes, we do, if the witness lives in Canada, as far as I'm concerned, and is a Canadian.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*] means summons.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Yes. It's not "subpoena" but "summon", Peter, just for your information.

I think you understood what was meant.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you. The amendment does read “subpoena”, so I am asking a question having to do with this exact language. I understand that this committee has the ability to “summon”. That’s not the word used in this amendment, so my question is this. “Subpoena” has a legal framework attached to it: Does this committee have the power to subpoena Rachel Curran?

The Chair: Mr. Julian, obviously Ms. Thomas is debating or arguing that the term “summon” should be used instead of “subpoena”—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No. I—

The Chair: —but do you mean “subpoena”, which has a legal connotation?

Mr. Peter Julian: I agree with Ms. Thomas and I accept her offering, as a friendly amendment, “to summon”.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, that’s actually out of order. I wasn’t asking for Mr. Julian to weigh in, nor am I offering a subamendment, to be clear. I’m simply asking for the chair of this committee to make a determination as to whether or not we have the power to subpoena a witness.

Does this committee have the power to subpoena a witness?

• (13125)

The Chair: I actually have seen committees subpoena a witness before in extreme circumstances. I think the power to subpoena is here with committees on specific and extenuating circumstances, but in this instance, I did not think Mr. Julian meant subpoena when I read it, because of the context in which it was written. I thought he was talking about “summon”.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Chair, I’m hearing you say that you have seen in the past that committees here on Parliament Hill have subpoenaed witnesses.

The Chair: Yes, I have. I’ve seen them subpoena prime ministers and specific people who have some kind of legal authority. I’ve seen that happen, yes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: If you’re finished, Ms. Thomas, can I move on to the next person on the list?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I’ll just make this point.... No, I’ll let it stay there.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Waugh is next.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It’s a pleasure to speak on this.

I am surprised that Mr. Julian continues to defend the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation when in fact Canadians have lost trust in the CBC.

I looked at last Thursday’s article, which was from a contributor, Ms. Catherine Tait herself, the CEO of CBC/Radio Canada. Her first words were, “Do you trust the news?” Obviously she feels trust in news has waned, including for her organization, because she held

a summit in Toronto last Thursday in conjunction with the Toronto Star.

I’ll go on. When I read her contribution in the paper, “we have a problem”, yes, you have a big problem. Canadians are putting forth \$1.4 billion in a public news agency, and quite frankly, over the last two weeks we’ve lost faith in the CBC. If that faith has been lost with not calling Hamas a terrorist organization, we’ve now seen the BBC in Britain officially backtracking on that, and we still haven’t heard from the CBC whether or not they’re going to call Hamas what they are, a terrorist organization.

It’s especially troubling, Madam Chair, when I look at the Toronto Star. Some may ask, “Why would you look at that?” I get a general perspective from all media. I read a lot of newspapers. I read a lot of blogs, even Rosie DiManno, who did a Toronto Star opinion piece, published on the 23rd of this month, that said we should call Hamas what it is. That is coming from the same newspaper that joined with the CBC last Thursday night to talk about whether people have trust in media. Rosie DiManno is one of the Toronto Star’s own columnists, and even she is calling out the news media on how we should call Hamas what it is.

Hamas clearly is a terrorist organization, which wasn’t called out when the CBC first started, and they have not called Hamas what it is. It’s a terrorist organization, so we do have a problem.

I certainly would like to hear from the head of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, who feels that almost 60% of Canadians feel that the Canadian news sources are trustworthy, but that 40% are either unsure or don’t agree that they are trustworthy.

I would like to hear her conversation on what she is doing with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and how to gain back viewers and listeners on the lack of trust. She had admitted that there is a lack of trust in this country with news organizations.

I was a journalist for over 40 years. I can tell you that the scope has really changed, and it has not changed for the better, as Canadians are starting to question where they get their news and whether it is trustworthy.

On the furious response from many who believe CBC-Radio/Canada has let them down, yes, you have let us down, and we look forward, Ms. Tait, to your coming to committee, because we have a lot of questions.

Madam Chair, I also agree with The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, which last week sent a memo to many MPs. I don't know if it hit all 337 of us, but it referred to the ample evidence that has now been shared by Israeli authorities demonstrating that a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket was actually responsible for striking the Gaza hospital last Tuesday.

They go on. It's a fairly in-depth letter that most of us received from CIJA. The letter said that all those who rushed to condemn Israel, without any evidence, have a responsibility to correct the record and apologize and that they also have a responsibility to condemn.

I go back to CNN when it first started and to the Gulf War. CNN was established, Madam Chair, on the back of the war from the Gulf War era where they went 24-7, 365 days a year. That was the world's first real look at war.

• (13130)

I'm upset when news agencies come out first and, in this case, describe how the hospital got hit and many were injured. War doesn't have to be about being first in line with breaking news. All news agencies in the world must step back, and instead of being the first to report it, get it right. How can they be trustworthy when we know, later, that the information was false? There is no rush in war to get it right first. Get it right, then get it out to the media, whether it's social media, as many have picked up on.

If you don't mind, Madam Chair, the CBC is very good on digital, but they made a major mistake that day: It did not hit the hospital. It hit the parking lot, and it took them a while to correct it.

On one hand, we have the president of the CBC, Catherine Tait, saying that Canadians have lost faith in media. On the other hand, we see the two examples I just brought out. She needs to answer for this. I feel for the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. I feel for them because, as they said, spreading unverified information has real-life consequences, including here in Canada.

After politicians and Canadian media promoted the Hamas narrative that Israel targeted the hospital, several emergency rallies were organized across the country, including one, Madam Chair, that we had right outside the Shaw Centre last week, where all the leaders were involved in anti-Semitism. We had a lot of organized rallies. We can speak from first-hand experience: All such rallies that claim to be protests against Israel in fact target Canadian Jews. According to the organizers, more than 1,000 individuals gathered outside their anti-Semitism conference, where calls for violence against Jews were made that night.

“Canadian elected officials”—that's all of us around the table and many more, but the second part I like even more—“the media, and other influencers have a responsibility to verify facts before commenting, particularly during times of war.” By promoting that Hamas lie, the lives of Canadian Jews were put at risk.

That sums it up from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. I think Ms. Tait, in her editorial in the Toronto Star last Thursday, hit it the nail right on the head, but I would say to her, “What are you doing as an organization to regain at least 40% of Canadians across the country who have lost faith in your newsrooms?”

I will say this and then I'll wrap up: I am disturbed by the fact that.... When I was a newsperson, we had a line in the newsroom you couldn't cross. We often had salesmen coming in to ask us to promote this or that. I'm sorry, but there's an editorial line in a newsroom. I fear, at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, that this line has been removed. I am concerned about the journalistic standards set by George Achi and his crew, and I would like to have him invited—I'm getting there in a second—plus the ombudsman Jack Nagler, who received hundreds of responses on the false narrative CBC has done twice: one, not calling Hamas a terrorist organization, and two, the bombing of the hospital that never took place. The ombudsman needs to come to committee to explain what he is hearing and what he is going to do to correct the narrative in Canadian news.

I know Mr. Julian, from time to time, has his picks on this newspaper and that newspaper, but I want the national broadcaster here. They are being subsidized by at least \$1.4 billion by the Canadian taxpayers, and I am disturbed by what I have seen and heard from the national broadcaster of this country in the last two weeks. Yes, they're over there in Israel dealing with delicate situations, but they have not handled this the way the professional standards of broadcasting say they should be handled. First is not always best. We have seen two massive errors by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

• (13135)

If I can, Madam Chair, I would like to move a subamendment to Mr. Julian's amendment.

It reads:

Given that,

Hamas has been a declared terrorist organization by the Government of Canada since 2002, and

The horrific Hamas terrorist attack against Israel left thousands of innocent people dead and injured, and

That both the European Union and us lawmakers have raised concerns about false and misleading content about the Israel-Hamas conflict being spread

Now, here we go with the changes. If you have Mr. Julian's amendment in front of you, the fourth point would read, “The CBC receives \$1.4 million in public funding and—”

An hon. member: Billion.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: We have a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I thought I said “billion”, not “million”. It's with a “b”.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: It's a request for clarification, Madam Chair.

My colleague Mr. Waugh says that his subamendment begins at the fourth point. However, when I read the third point, which talks about the conflict between Israel and Hamas, Mr. Julian's amendment referred to Meta platforms. I'm wondering if Mr. Waugh is keeping the words “on Meta platforms” in his subamendment.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the honourable member from the Bloc. He is correct. On the third bullet, I eliminated, on purpose, “on Meta platforms.” However, in the fourth bullet, I have what I think can bring everyone together, if you don't mind.

It reads, “The CBC receives \$1.4 billion in public funding and that Meta, Google and other media platforms receive over \$1 billion in indirect subsidies annually through taxpayer dollars, and that this committee has a mandate to review Government expenditures.

“a) That the committee invite”—

I know I've struck the word “subpoena”, and we've talked about it, but I just want to “invite”.

“—Rachel Curran, head of public policy, Meta Canada, to come before the committee, and summon the president of CBC, Catherine Tait, to appear for two hours”—

That's not for one hour, but two hours.

“—by herself, within the next seven days of the motion being adopted”.

I'm hearing rumours that in fact Ms. Tait is coming next Thursday, November 2. I would like it to be for two hours.

It then reads, “b) invite the CBC Director of Journalistic Standards, George Achi, and the CBC ombudsman, Jack Nagler, to appear separately for a minimum of an hour and a half each to address the CBC's position on journalistic standards and practices.”

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Does everyone have that subamendment?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Do you have it in writing, Kevin?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I have it in writing. Unfortunately—

The Chair: Is it in both...? It's not translated.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: It's not translated.

The Chair: Go ahead, Martin.

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Chair, we need it translated. It needs to be in both.

The Chair: We will have to suspend while that subamendment is written and translated.

I suspend the meeting.

● (13135)

(Pause)

● (13135)

The Chair: I call the committee back to order.

Peter, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thanks, Madam Chair.

In this subamendment from Mr. Waugh, for whom I have a lot of respect, I see that what he's actually doing is trying to reverse the subamendment I had put on the table.

I'm not convinced that it is in order. What Mr. Waugh should be doing, simply, is voting against my amendment to ensure we come back to the main motion, although, as I mentioned earlier, Madam Chair, I'm beginning to think we should withdraw all of this and start again with a fresh study.

That said, what he's trying to do is reverse an amendment. That's not something that would normally be in order, given the very clear intent of my amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Julian, in many ways, I agree with you, because the bit about asking Ms. Tait to come and to appear for two hours was not in your amendment. The subamendment is now adding something that's completely different.

Anyway, we are noting this.

Go ahead, Ms. Gladu.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: On the same point of order, the other difference is that two other representatives from the CBC are being asked to appear for an hour and half each. That is different from what was in the amendment.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I was going to simply say two things.

One is that I agree with Mr. Julian. I don't believe that it is in order. If it is in order, and we are indeed in this room with everyone having their views, perhaps we can move to a vote quickly and just see where we land on it and keep moving, because we have lots of important work to do.

The Chair: Are you asking to adjourn debate on this subamendment?

● (13200)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: If that is a way we can get to a vote on this important subamendment, it would be helpful.

The Chair: That's dilatory, so we can't debate it. Sorry.

Are you asking for a vote on this?

Go ahead, Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

Currently right now, we are discussing a point of order that was raised by Mr. Julian. You cannot move a motion on a point of order.

The Chair: I don't know if you actually moved a motion, Mr. Noormohamed. We're you asking that we go to vote?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: That's a motion.

The Chair: Was it in the form of a motion?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: No, it was not, Madam Chair. My comment was simply that the subamendment was out of order. That's my opinion. You are the chair. You get to decide these things, of course. Given the important work that the committee has, my request, or suggestion, to the committee was simply that we get on with the business if we know where we stand on this.

It was not, by any means, a motion. It was just a suggestion in the spirit of keeping the committee moving forward.

The Chair: All right. I shall actually rule that the subamendment is out of order, and therefore we can just move on.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order. I would ask for the chair to justify her ruling.

Look, Madam Chair, if I may, we had an amendment that asked for the CBC to be the only focus of the study. The chair then permitted an amendment to be brought forward to that original motion that expanded it to big tech, Meta, and Facebook. Then there is a subamendment that simply respects that massive expansion, and asks that an additional third CBC witness be brought forward. You already have two, and you're adding one. Does the addition of a third CBC witness now somehow make it out of line?

I would ask for the section in the green book, the Standing Orders, that would confirm the chair's ruling.

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

I'm just curious if Mrs. Thomas is challenging the ruling of the chair. If so, could we perhaps see what the will of the committee is and move forward?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm simply asking the chair to be respectful of this committee and give us the benefit of the reason for her ruling.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, it's fair enough for you to ask me to explain why I'm making the ruling, but I think the little drive-by thing that basically says to respect the committee.... I don't think these things are very.... When we have a meeting, we should be respectful of each other. You're presuming to know what I'm doing and what I'm saying, so please don't presume my intent. Thank you.

Mrs. Rachel Thomas: Madam Chair—

The Chair: It's not a debate, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: It's not a debate, Ms. Thomas—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It's a point of order. It's a point of order.

The Chair: You just implied that I was disrespectful.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It's a point of order. It's a point of order.

The Chair: I hope it is.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It's a point of order.

Madam Chair, I just asked you.... I gave you the opportunity. I'm inviting you to help us understand your ruling. That is far from assuming—

The Chair: You said it was—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I am inviting your voice. I am inviting the chair to give a reason for her ruling.

The Chair: I intend to do that, Ms. Thomas, but you also had to add the spurious piece that said I'm disrespecting the committee. I don't think that we need to do these things at committees, in the House or anywhere. Let's treat each other with some respect. You are presuming that I am intending to disrespect the way—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: You modelled that so well.

The Chair: Don't. Please don't.

Now, for me, I think that I agree with Mr. Julian's and Mr. Noormohamed's comments that what we have done here.... What has been put in this that I didn't think was fitting or was appropriate was that it removed Meta platforms, first and foremost, and it did not—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No, it didn't.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, we are not having debate, you and I.

I am speaking. Please allow me to finish.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm not debating. I'm (*Inaudible—Editor*)

The Chair: Thank you.

In the second one, it removed Meta platforms. In the third bullet, it just mentioned Meta and Google receive money, but it does not say that Meta should be summoned, which was in Mr. Julian's amendment, so I think it changes the whole tone and meaning of the amendment that Mr. Julian made, and that was my reasoning for suggesting that he was out of order.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm sorry; I think Kevin Waugh has a point of order first.

The Chair: Go ahead, Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but it clearly states that the committee invite Rachel Curran. It's right there, the head of public policy for Meta Canada. I disagree with your ruling here. I have it right here that the committee invite Rachel Curran, head of public policy, Meta Canada, to come before the committee. Then I go on to talk about the CBC, but it's right there.

• (13205)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I have a point of order.

The Chair: All right, go ahead, Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Chair, the decision of the chair is not debatable. They are welcome, Madam Chair, to challenge the ruling. Chapter 20 of the green book states that the decisions of the chair are not debatable. They can, however, be appealed to the committee. The member knows the process to appeal a decision by the chair: Inform the committee of the intent, and the chair calls the question. That is the process.

If that is indeed the desire, I think the committee should entertain that request, but we are right now doing something that is entirely wasting the valuable time of this committee.

The Chair: Inappropriate debating....

Do you have a comment, Martin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Yes, Madam Chair.

I find the discussions we are currently having interesting, but I would like us to tone it down a bit. It's obvious that you and Ms. Thomas will probably not be at the same Christmas party this year.

Some hon. members: Ha, ha!

Mr. Martin Champoux: The fact remains that the issues raised by Ms. Thomas and Mr. Waugh are entirely legitimate, Madam Chair. I am also curious as to why you are ruling the subamendment out of order. With all due respect, I am also a bit confused.

What was in Mr. Julian's amendment is also in Mr. Waugh's subamendment. Earlier, I asked you a question about the admissibility of Mr. Julian's amendment, as that amendment greatly broadened the scope of Ms. Thomas' motion. You replied that it respected the spirit of the motion and that it simply broadened the scope of the study.

We now have exactly the same parameters. Yes, some information has been changed, but I don't think that's enough to rule the subamendment out of order. I must admit that I do not understand. I am not taking a position on the subamendment; I am simply saying that, in addition to the ongoing tensions in this committee, there may be a bit of education to be done. I would find it interesting to hear the arguments on this without us going for each others' throats.

I think that, in this case, the arguments that Mr. Waugh presented to you deserve to have you reconsider your decision or to explain it a little more specifically. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Martin.

I was just responding to the way in which Ms. Thomas posed her question for me to explain. She decided that I was disrespectful of the committee without having allowed me to even explain.

I made my explanation, as you heard. Mr. Waugh disagreed, and pointed out to me that he had in fact wanted Meta to come in and didn't completely remove it, so I think I will pay attention to what Mr. Waugh said and agree with him on that. What I would ask is that we then go to Mr. Noormohamed, who I think was asking us to vote on the subamendment.

I have Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, there has been no motion moved to go to a vote on this, and we do have a speaking list. I am one of the individuals on it.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Yes, Mrs. Thomas, go ahead. You're speaking on the subamendment. Then Ms. Gladu is.

Is there anyone else who wants to speak on the subamendment? No? Martin, or Peter Julian...?

All right. We'll go to Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for listening to the voices around this table and for taking them into consideration and reconsideration. Thank you for allowing this subamendment to stand.

The truth is that my colleague Mr. Waugh moved the subamendment, and therefore I believe that by default the floor is his, because all of the points that have been stated so far have been points of order. We have not actually returned to debate on the subamendment.

Out of respect for my colleague Kevin Waugh, I would cede the floor to him, and I would just note that I am next on the speaking list.

The Chair: All right. That's after Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Waugh, we're going to the subamendment. You have the floor.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Tensions can be high on any committee, but I am going to give you praise for allowing me to speak first and saying that I did have Meta involved. You did see that and you reconsidered, which I appreciate very much.

All I'm trying to do with this subamendment is bring everybody together. Some people want social media here, and I hear that. Some want CBC, some want the ombudsman and some want journalistic standards: I agree with everybody. That was my effort today: to listen to others around the table and to compromise. That's what I was trying to do, whether it's going to be successful or not.

I used the analogy of the CBC because of the \$1.4-billion subsidy they are getting yearly. Then I used Meta and others, because they are receiving over \$1 billion in ads from several parties and several government agencies. That was the intent, Madam Chair, if you don't mind, of my subamendment: to bring everyone together. Let's hear all of them.

I thank you for reconsidering and bringing my subamendment forward, because that's all I was trying to do. We've heard CBC and social media—Meta—and we're trying to bring them here to have a full understanding of what is going on in the news agencies in our country.

Thank you.

• (13210)

The Chair: Thank you, Kevin.

Ms. Thomas is next.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

With regard to my colleague Kevin Waugh and the subamendment that has been offered, notably the big change here, of course, by this point in the game, is that we have Peter Julian in his amendment, Meta, and—

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, Madam Chair, Mrs. Thomas is a very experienced committee member. I let her be degrading twice, but the correct characterization, as for any member around this table, would be “Mr. Julian”. I would hold Mrs. Thomas to being respectful to all members of this committee.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I didn't.... Okay.

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, please refer to Mr. Julian.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Yes. My apologies. I was certainly not meaning any ill intent. I'm happy to call him Mr. Julian.

Mr. Julian, would you forgive me for that?

An hon. member: Yes, he will.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Genuinely, I'm sorry. I wasn't meaning to....

Through the chair, I'm happy to take responsibility for that. That certainly wasn't my intent.

The Chair: Yes, but please remember to speak through the chair.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: For sure.

Again, through the chair, I would ask Mr. Julian if he would be willing to extend forgiveness because it was certainly not my intent to cause any harm.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Of course, Madame Chair.

I appreciate....

The Chair: Thank you.

Now go ahead, Mrs. Thomas. Finish your thought.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Mr. Julian moved an amendment to the original motion. His amendment expanded it to include Meta and Google, and now we have subamended it to put the head of the CBC, Catherine Tait, back into it.

Arguably, we've now expanded the scope of this study quite significantly. The chair has ruled it in order, and so it's the motion as amended, and then as subamended, that we're discussing, and it has been permitted to stand.

My concern is that this committee is overstepping its boundaries in terms of what its scope of study should be. We have the ability, and even the mandate, to hold the CBC to account because it is the public broadcaster of Canada. It is paid for solely by public dollars, and it is the responsibility of the House, then, to hold the CBC to account.

To hold the CBC to account is different from telling the CBC what to report. Those are very different. The way we hold it to account is by inviting witnesses to come to this committee and asking them questions, and for those individuals to then provide responses.

To bring Ms. Tait is absolutely essential, because she is the head of that organization. In fact, she just recently had her contract extended for an additional 18 months. Clearly, then, some confidence has been demonstrated toward Ms. Tait, and her organization, in the news broadcast, is making some decisions that are quite alarming to a number of members here at this table and, more importantly, to members of the Canadian public.

I would like to highlight my main concern in all of this when it comes Ms. Tait and the way that she is choosing to lead the CBC, because I do think that there are some things that deserve the utmost consideration here at this committee. That is why it is so important that she not be omitted from this need for study.

Ms. Tait, the head of the CBC, recently published an article, on October 18, talking about how trust in journalism is diminishing, and therefore it is incumbent upon journalists to report in a way that is fact-based. In this article, she uses the phrase, “fact-based reporting” over and over and over again. She talks about how the news needs to be accurately reported.

What I find interesting, though, is that she came out with that article only after the CBC actually ran with a number of falsehoods in their articles, so I would have to ask, what about these facts? What about the fact that hundreds of people were slaughtered in the night? What about the fact that 40 babies were beheaded? What about the fact that women were killed, raped and paraded through the streets? What about those facts? What about the fact that since 2002, Canada has listed Hamas as a terrorist organization?

• (13215)

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, I think we would remember that we're speaking to Mr. Waugh's subamendment and not to the main motion. I think Mr. Waugh's subamendment has asked Ms. Tait to come and appear before us and I think Mr. Waugh's subamendment has said that Meta and Google should appear because this committee has a mandate to review government expenditures, so are you speaking to the subamendment—for the subamendment, against the subamendment—or are you speaking to the main motion?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but what was the nature of the subamendment that we moved?

The Chair: I don't know. It's in front of you, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I understand it, according to my perception, but I'm curious as to how you, the chair, might interpret it.

The Chair: I am trying to understand, Ms. Thomas, whether you are debating the subamendment or whether you are speaking to the main motion, because the subamendment is pretty clear on its reasons for wanting to look at Meta. It talks about reviewing government expenditures. It's pretty clear about and having Ms. Tait arrive and speak to us for two hours instead of one. It's pretty clear about asking George Achi and the ombudsman to come. It's pretty clear on all of those things, so I don't understand your points.

Are you speaking for or against the subamendment? I would like us to focus, please, on the subamendment. Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, the main focus of the subamendment that has been moved by Mr. Waugh is to add Ms. Tait as a witness.

The Chair: So you're agreeing with the subamendment? Is that it?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, my entire statement had to do with Ms. Tait and the importance of bringing her to this committee, so I'm baffled as to the confusion.

Could you please help me understand so that I can clarify?

• (13220)

The Chair: I'm sorry, but I did not understand your points. I'm sorry.

Go ahead, Ms. Thomas, and be mindful that we're speaking to the subamendment and not the main motion. That's all I'm reminding you. Keep that in mind. Remember that.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I do feel a bit berated by you, and so I am confused. I was speaking specifically about bringing Ms. Catherine Tait, the head of the CBC, to this committee and why that is important, and yet I feel corrected by you, that I'm somehow not speaking to the subamendment, so can you please clarify for me how I am in the wrong?

The Chair: I did not say you were in the wrong, Ms. Thomas. I'm asking you to focus, because you made these comments when you spoke to your main motion many times, and so I didn't know where you were going with them.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Generally when someone is interrupted and told to stay focused, it means that they're somehow not focused—

The Chair: It does not necessarily—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: —so I'm hoping that you can help me understand so that I can respect you, Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, please, with respect for the committee, can you continue? Just remember to focus on the subamendment. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

Again, you're issuing a correction, asking me to focus on the subamendment, so I'm curious as to where I was going wrong and how

I might better be able to focus on the subamendment, which is to bring Ms. Tait to this committee.

The Chair: It would be up to you to decide how to do that.

Focus, Ms. Thomas. I was just listening to you continue the same statements you made when you were speaking to the main motion, and I wondered if you wanted to speak to the subamendments specifically, which are, as you can see, to invite the president for two hours, within seven days of the motion being adopted and to add, to appear separately, Jack Nagler and George Achi to address the CBC's position on journalistic standards and practices.

Those are the new things that have been added. Meta has been added as well. If you want to speak to those issues, that's fine, but I just think one can continue to reiterate the same points over and over. Let's be mindful of the fact that we need to move on in this committee and be efficient.

Thank you, Ms. Thomas. Would you speak to the subamendment? Begin your arguments. Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair—

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, I really don't want to engage in a debate with you. Would you continue your debate on the subamendment? Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I would love to discuss the subamendment. I just want to make sure, though. The subamendment doesn't say anything about Meta or Google being included, and you just stated that it did, so I just want to make sure that we're clear as to what the subamendment is.

The Chair: I don't know if you have it in front of you.

It says, "The CBC received—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Yes, Madam Chair, I do. That's the amendment. It's not the subamendment.

The Chair: Now I'm looking at the subamendment where Mr. Waugh in fact explained that he did in fact want Rachel Curran to come to speak about Meta. It did say that.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: That was part of the amendment.

The Chair: That's why I allowed it. He did continue with that. I had thought he had removed it completely and he pointed out to me that in his next bullet, he did not.

Now, Ms. Thomas, I really do not wish to indulge in debate with you. You have the floor. Please speak to the subamendment.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I don't wish to debate either—

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, you do wish to debate me and I don't wish to debate you anymore. I've ruled that you should continue to speak. You have the floor. Please speak to the subamendment.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

I do just—

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, please speak or I will remove you from the floor and give it to someone else.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Wow. That would be quite something.

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, please speak to the subamendment and be respectful of everyone in this room who wants to move on here.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: For the benefit of those who might be watching this committee, I could not have been more on point with the subamendment. The subamendment adds Ms. Catherine Tait in to the amended version, and I was speaking exactly about Catherine Tait, as the head of the CBC, coming to this committee.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Can we just take a pause for five minutes? Is that possible?

• (13225)

The Chair: Why?

Mr. Michael Coteau: This is pointless. What we're doing here is pointless. Eighty percent of the time for this meeting has been taken by the member opposite, and we're getting nowhere. Maybe a small break would just change the environment at this point, because it just doesn't seem productive.

The Chair: I think I have explained to Mrs. Thomas that I wish for her to continue to speak to the subamendment and that I do not wish to engage in any debate, but Mrs. Thomas insists on continuing with a debate against my ruling on speaking to the subamendment.

I cannot stop because she has the floor. I could ask her, on a point of order, to go back to the topic at hand, but I don't know that Mrs. Thomas wishes to do that.

I would like to hear from this committee if they wish Mrs. Thomas to continue to speak on the subamendment and not continue to try to make a point and debate the chair, which is what she continues to do.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'll make a point of order that the member stick to the subamendment.

The Chair: Mrs. Thomas, please continue to speak to the subamendment.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: The main focus of the subamendment brought forward to this committee that we are currently considering is on Ms. Catherine Tait, the head of the CBC, appearing at this committee for two hours.

The reason this is important is that Ms. Catherine Tait, who is the focus of the subamendment before this committee, is the head or chief of this broadcasting organization, which is fully funded by the Canadian public to the tune of more than \$1.4 billion annually. It is appropriate, then, for Ms. Catherine Tait to come and answer ques-

tions that members of this committee might have with regard to her conduct, the decisions she has made and the decisions those under her watch have also made.

The purpose of the subamendment brought forward is for her to come for those two hours. We would then have an opportunity to gain clarity or understanding as to what her intentions are with the public broadcaster. More specifically, you'll recall that the purpose would be to ask Ms. Catherine Tait—the focus of this subamendment—questions with regard to her decisions pertaining to coverage around the conflict currently taking place in Gaza. That is the purpose of this subamendment.

The reason this subamendment is so crucial is that Ms. Tait wrote an article for the Toronto Star that was published on October 18. In it, she calls for trust in media to be restored. She says that the best way to do this is by being “fact-based”. She uses that term over and over again in this article.

My question for Ms. Tait would be this: What about the facts her bureau decided to redraft or the facts her bureau omitted altogether? What about the fact that hundreds of Israelis were attacked and slaughtered in the night? What about the fact that women were raped, murdered and paraded through the streets? What about the fact that 40 babies had their heads cut off? What about those facts? What about the fact that the hospital bombing wasn't actually a hospital, but a parking lot? What about the fact that it wasn't an Israeli air strike, as the CBC reported, but actually a missile from Jihad? What about the fact that Hamas is a terrorist organization and has been listed as such since 2002 by the Government of Canada?

These are the facts the CBC has the responsibility to put out to the public, but these are the facts it has determined to omit or rewrite. Therefore it is absolutely incumbent upon this committee to hear from Ms. Tait. The reason this is important is that she is the lead of this organization, and therefore responsible for the decisions they have made and the so-called journalistic standards—

• (13230)

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Isn't Ms. Tait scheduled to come here?

The Chair: She is, for an hour. This one asks for her to come for two hours, I think.

Mr. Michael Coteau: No one is disputing that she... We all... It's scheduled already.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, it's scheduled.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Yes, I don't understand. We all know that.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: This is not a point of order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a point of order.

Madam Chair, be consistent in your ruling. This is not a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, please continue. Go ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I was interrupted by my colleague, who raised what he called a point of order, but it actually isn't. It's a point of debate.

He raises the point that Ms. Tait is scheduled to come on November 2 for one hour. I wonder whether the chair might help us understand the reason Ms. Tait is coming on November 2. Perhaps the clerk could read the text of the original motion and help us understand the purpose—

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

The Chair: Ms. Thomas...

Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Noormohamed.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I'm not clear at all on how this has anything to do with the subamendment currently being discussed.

Perhaps I'm slow, but I thought the direction and expectation... We're specifically discussing the subamendment, not providing philosophical points of view on other motions that are already before this committee or that have been passed by this committee.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I believe we are on a point of order from Mr. Coteau, and—

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, I'm chairing this committee, please. Mr. Coteau made a point of order that I allowed to stand. Now I would ask you to continue.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

I was commenting on his point of order.

The Chair: I didn't ask you to do that. Go ahead and continue. I rule on points of order, not you, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do believe that it is in the Standing Orders—if you seek it, you will find it—that when a member raises a point of order, another member can comment on that point of order, can engage in further discussion.

The Chair: Go ahead, then, Ms. Thomas, engage in further discussion. You obviously seem determined to continue to speak for the rest of this committee meeting and not allow your colleagues or others to have a say.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a point of order.

I think there was another point of order made, so that was the last point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Noormohamed's point of order was clear.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Therefore I think that's exhausted my point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Noormohamed's point of order is clear. It was to stick to the subamendment, a point that I have been trying to make for quite a long time now.

Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, just a moment ago, you asked me to be respectful of this committee. I wonder if the com-

ment you just made with regard to assuming my intentions was respectful toward this committee.

The Chair: Yes, I think it was.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: I think the committee is waiting to speak—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

The Chair: —and they are asking you in their points of order to continue to focus on the subamendment and move on.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I appreciate your clarity with regard to the definition of “respect”, because I think you and I have very different definitions, but now that I understand yours, I have zero problem adhering to that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Thomas.

Go ahead and speak to the amendment.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Yes, it's the subamendment that Ms. Catherine Tait would come to this committee because she is the head of the public broadcaster in our country and she is receiving \$1.4 billion annually of taxpayers' money to pay for—

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: She is coming next week. She is coming in nine days. I don't understand the relevance.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a comment on this point of order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Maybe we should ask for clarity on that. Is she coming?

The Chair: Yes. I think the clerk said she was contacted and she said that she would come. She was asked originally, in the first motion, to come for an hour. We are now, in this subamendment, asking her to come for two hours, so there you go. That's it. We have not had a response because this subamendment has not yet been voted on and passed—or not.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I have a comment on that point of order.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Based on that point of order, then, I would just ask if the clerk could confirm for us the reason for Ms. Tait coming on November 2.

The Chair: Clerk, go ahead, please.

The Clerk: The committee adopted a motion to invite Ms. Tait regarding her reappointment, for one hour. I reached out to ask for her availability, and her office came back and gave November 2.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Thomas, would you continue speaking to the subamendment?

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Further to the point of order, I wonder if the clerk would then clarify as to whether the reason we are asking for Ms. Tait to come is based on the subamendment.

• (13235)

The Chair: I think it's pretty clear in the subamendment, Ms. Thomas, that Mr. Waugh put forward. It's pretty clear.

If I go back and read it, it was clear in the original amendment that Mr. Julian made, and then Mr. Waugh clarified that a little bit by adding that “and summon the president of the CBC, Catherine Tait, to appear for two hours by herself within seven days of the motion being adopted”.

That is pretty clear on what Mr. Waugh was saying.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

I just want to clarify, then, that my understanding.... I'm speaking to the subamendment now. The subamendment reads that we would be asking Ms. Tait to come to this committee to answer questions specific to the CBC's coverage of the Israel-Hamas conflict—

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: —and the misinformation that has been spread there. That is the phrase that is used within the now subamended and amended motion.

I want to be clear, then, that it is a very different purpose than appearing at this committee regarding her reappointment for an additional 18 months.

I agree with Mr. Julian that this is important, and I look forward to having Ms. Tait here and having the opportunity to ask her questions with regard to her general mandate as the head of the CBC, certainly, but the subamendment, which I have been given the opportunity to speak to, has to do with Ms. Tait's coming and answering questions specific to the CBC's coverage of what's going on in Gaza and Hamas' attack against Israel.

Having clarified that and hopefully bringing some understanding there, I would just state this: It is important to hear her on this issue because, as we are all more than keenly aware, it is taking centre stage—rightly so—across the world. It is a matter that it is so important for us to get right as Canadians.

When the public broadcaster is supported by Canadians, they need to see themselves reflected in that space, and I think that the Jewish population within Canada would be hard-pressed to feel advocated for or even accurately represented by the CBC. I think it is extremely sad when the CBC, a public broadcaster, has made the determination to put out false information and to release stories with great speed but lacking accuracy, as my colleague Mr. Waugh so aptly explained.

Ms. Tait has a lot to answer for. The reason it's so important for her to be the one is that she's the one getting paid the big bucks. She's the one who has been put in that seat. She's the one who has been entrusted with being the lead of that organization, the public broadcaster.

If we were to omit that, as Mr. Julian's amendment tried to prescribe, this committee would not be doing its work. It would not be doing the work that it is intended to do. It would not be holding her to account or giving her the opportunity to—

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes. Can you clarify again, Madame Chair, that Ms. Tait is coming next Thursday?

I find the debating point that somehow she is not coming to committee or that we're not able to her ask questions is a bit disingenuous.

Can you confirm that she is coming next Thursday?

The Chair: Is she coming next Thursday, Clerk?

The Clerk: That's correct, yes.

The Chair: She's coming. I have confirmed that. Thank you, Mr. Julian.

It's very clear that Ms. Tait is coming, and she's coming to answer questions from this committee. When someone comes to answer questions of the committee, the committee is free to ask them whatever questions they choose with regard to their job description.

Ms. Thomas, you still have the floor.

• (13240)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Yes, as I mentioned, Ms. Tait is coming to this committee on November 2 for one hour. That is correct. She is coming to speak to us with regard to her general overall mandate.

The subamendment that has been moved, as the chair has asked me to stay focused on, has to do with Ms. Tait coming specifically with regard to the CBC's coverage of the conflict taking place in Gaza. That is the purpose of the subamendment that has been put forward.

It also asks that Ms. Tait come for two hours, which would give us, hopefully, enough time to ask very important questions on behalf of Canadians—in particular, very important questions on behalf of the Jewish community in Canada, which has very much been underserved by the CBC.

With that being the case and with that being the subamendment that my colleague Mr. Waugh has moved, it is very important to note that this is distinctly different from the motion that was previously moved at this committee quite some time ago to bring in Ms. Tait with regard to her general mandate.

No doubt, I think, we look forward to having her here on November 2. Mr. Julian, of course, has indicated that he wishes to praise her for the type of coverage that the CBC has been providing. Of course, my Conservative colleagues and I have indicated that we have some tougher questions to ask her. We're looking for clarification on behalf of the Canadian public. We believe in the role of the official opposition and the accountability mechanism that is in place there, because that is what sustains a strong democracy.

Speaking of which, in the article she wrote as a guest columnist for the Toronto Star, Ms. Catherine Tait actually wrote about what democracy requires. Interestingly enough—the committee might desire to know this—she said, “It’s essential that all news organizations tackle these challenges together.” She’s talking about the challenges of being truthful and being credible. She’s talking about the challenges of gaining trust.

She goes on to say, “We need to make sure that Canadians know where they can access verified, reliable news and information about their neighbourhoods, their communities, and their country.”

I would agree with Ms. Tait on that statement. There’s no doubt that we do need to know where we can go for verified, reliable news and information. Given that the CBC has misreported numerous times over the last number of weeks, and given that the CBC is outright refusing to call Hamas a terrorist organization, I do have to wonder if she would count herself into the classification of “verified, reliable news and information”.

I think Canadians deserve to know what her thought process is in that regard and what she is hoping to convey through her news coverage, which is currently lacking.

We were talking about democracy and, of course, the role that the official opposition plays in that. She goes on to say, “It’s what Canadians deserve—and it’s what our democracy requires.”

Again I would agree with her. I would say that she is absolutely correct that Canadians do deserve verified and reliable news and information and that Canadians do, in fact, require this in order for our democracy to thrive. Those things are true.

Further to that, in this article, she outlines the importance of building trust. I would agree with that as well. I would say that there is an opportunity for our news sources across the nation to restore trust with the Canadian public.

Where she and I might deviate is that my perception is that in order to restore trust, you have to tell the truth. She would probably argue that actually you can do your best to restore trust by just retelling or remaking the truth. I would disagree.

With that said, there is an opportunity to hear directly from her, to understand the intent that she functions with and to understand the intent that the others within the CBC function with.

• (13245)

Whether that’s the ombudsman or Mr. Achi, who is responsible for journalistic standards, there is an opportunity for all three of them to come to this committee, be asked good questions, and be given the opportunity to express to us the strategy they employ within our public broadcasting system.

Further to that, there’s an opportunity for them to tell us how they intend to use that strategy to best serve Canadians and restore the trust that Ms. Tait discusses in this article and outlines as being incredibly important as we continue to function in a democratic system and want to protect it.

This is why it is so important that Mr. Waugh moved this subamendment and that it not be disregarded.

I know that Mr. Julian tried to take the CBC, and Ms. Tait in particular, out of the original motion. I recognize that he for some reason doesn’t wish for her—

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, we are speaking to the subamendment—

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order.

The Chair: —and not to Mr. Julian’s amendment.

Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, Madam Chair, yet again, can I ask you to confirm that Ms. Tait is coming before the committee next week?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: This is not a point of order, and if you are not consistent, I will make this hell.

Mr. Peter Julian: We have repeated comments that are—

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

The Chair: Excuse me.

Order, please, Ms. Thomas. Mr. Julian has the floor.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It is not a point of order.

The Chair: Ms. Thomas—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It is not a point of order.

The Chair: You do not chair this committee, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It is not a point of order.

The Chair: I’m allowing the point of order.

I’m sorry, Mr. Julian. You were asking...?

Mr. Peter Julian: Could you confirm, once again, that Ms. Tait is coming next week before committee?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It is not a point of order. If you’re not going to be [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: I would like to say, for the ninth time, that Ms. Tait is coming next week, on November 2.

Thank you.

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

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: I would like to simply point out that the threat issued by Ms. Thomas towards the chair, that she “will make this hell”, is incendiary and inappropriate.

I would ask that Ms. Thomas apologize to the committee and the chair, and, if not, that the chair take whatever action she feels appropriate. That is not the environment that any of us need to be working in, and certainly not in this current climate.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I’ll wait for you to give me the floor.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Point taken. It was inappropriate for me to say that. I extend my absolute, unreserved apology to this committee.

The Chair: To the chair as well.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Madam Chair—to you as well. I apologize.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Thomas.

Do you still want to debate the subamendment? I want to ask you not to verge into being repetitive and redundant. You are making the points that you have been making over and over now. Perhaps we can recognize, as Mr. Noormohamed talked about, that respect to the committee means that I have three of your colleagues here lining up to speak on this subamendment. I have five other people on the committee lining up to speak on the subamendment—

Ms. Thomas, I'm speaking. Thank you.

We have a lot of people wishing to speak. Being respectful of the committee means that you acknowledge that everyone else has a right to speak. If you choose to filibuster this committee, Ms. Thomas, then remember that I can ask you not to be repetitive and not to be redundant.

Thank you.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Is there a list, Chair?

The Chair: I have a list.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Can I put my name on it, if that's possible?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau.

The speakers who are lined up, in order, are Ms. Gladu, Mr. Shields, Mr. Julian, Mr. Champoux and Mr. Coteau. They're waiting patiently to be able to speak once Ms. Thomas has made her points that are not repetitive and redundant.

Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I would just raise a point of order before I continue.

I'm just curious; can you clarify the reason for Ms. Tait being brought in for two hours, according to the subamendment currently being discussed?

The Chair: It's very clear in the subamendment that it was asked for Ms. Tait to come for two hours. It's pretty clear. I don't understand what your question is.

• (13250)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Sure. My colleague Mr. Julian was able to raise a point of order and ask you, for I believe the fourth or fifth time, to state whether or not Ms. Tait is scheduled to come on November 2.

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I felt that it was my equal opportunity and right as a member of this committee to ask a similar question.

I'm wondering if you can clarify for this committee why Ms. Tait is being invited to come for two hours within the framework of this subamendment.

The Chair: I can clarify it, because you are speaking to the subamendment. Mr. Waugh clarified it, but he spoke to his own subamendment. I don't understand what your question is. Ms. Tait is being asked. Until the subamendment is passed, Ms. Tait is coming for only one hour to speak to her appointment, and until this subamendment is allowed to be voted on and passed or declined, we still don't have a question that I can answer for you, Ms. Thomas.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Can I ask a point of order?

The Chair: You have a point of information?

Mr. Michael Coteau: On a point of order, if a member had the floor and the member asked for a point of order, does that mean she's released her opportunity to hold the floor because she brought up a new point of order?

The Chair: I don't think so. She has the floor. As Ms. Thomas well knows, she can speak for as long as she wants unless she's, as I said, redundant or repetitive, in which case I will ask her to cede the floor. Ms. Thomas asked a question a couple of times. We cannot decide whether Ms. Tait is coming for two hours until we can finish discussing the subamendment and voting for or against it.

In theory I cannot answer that question, Ms. Thomas, because I cannot presume what the outcome of this will be.

Thank you.

Ms. Thomas, go ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: The point I was making before Mr. Julian raised his point of order was that the reason this subamendment is so important is that it would be irresponsible for us as a committee to hear from Mr. Achi and the CBC ombudsman but not hear from the CBC's CEO or executive. It is incumbent upon us, and I believe it is very important, to hear from Ms. Tait, as the head of the organization and therefore the individual who is responsible for answering for its decisions.

Again, I would draw attention to the fact that this subamendment, to answer my own question, has to do with Ms. Tait's coming in regard to the CBC's coverage of the conflict in Gaza. That is the purpose of this subamendment. It is not to be confused with Ms. Tait's general mandate.

With that—

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, Madam Chair, can you clarify whether, when Ms. Tait comes before the committee next Thursday, you will be restricting questions in any way, or will members around this table be free to ask whatever questions we would like to ask the head of CBC?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

I would like to clarify. I think I already did this earlier when Ms. Thomas was speaking to the subamendment, but in fact when Ms. Tait arrives here.... Originally the motion that was passed by this committee was to have her come in and discuss as CBC's CEO, in which instance you can ask her anything about her mandate or about her intention. There is no restriction on what you can ask her in that one hour.

Thank you, Mr. Julian. I hope that's clear now to everyone on the committee.

Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

It's easy in these scenarios to say that one day this will happen or that will happen and that this opportunity will be given or that opportunity will be given. Again, Ms. Tait has indicated that she is going to come to this committee on November 2 and will be here for one hour, which will give some members at this table an opportunity to ask questions but certainly not all members at this table the opportunity, because time will not permit that. Again, those will have to do with her general mandate, but there's something actually really—

• (13255)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: On a point of order, Madam Chair, as the meeting grinds on to an end, I would like to point out that we are now in the realm of Ms. Thomas being repetitive. The use of her own word “again” is a clear indication that we are hearing the same point again over and over and over and over. Perhaps, Madam Chair, we might be able to find a way to move on to the other voices, including those from her own party, who have been trying to speak to this for some time, but we really are now in the realm of being repetitive.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Noormohamed.

We have three more minutes left in committee, and no one else waiting on the list has had an opportunity to speak to the subamendment.

Ms. Thomas, have you finished with your points?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: No.

The Chair: You have not.

I would advise you not to be repetitive and redundant, as you are coming close to being both.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, when I use the term “again”, it's in reference to my colleague Mr. Julian raising points of order again and again and again—

The Chair: Ms. Thomas, Mr. Julian is free, as is every member here, to raise a point of order any time they wish. The chair listens

to it—and has to—before the chair can rule on whether it is a point of order or not. I first must listen to what the member is asking.

I don't know why, Ms. Thomas, you try to continue to tell the chair that the chair.... If you'd like to chair this committee, Ms. Thomas, I would ask you to apply for yourself to chair the committee, but I'm chairing it.

I wish you to continue to speak. Whatever you have to say, you have two minutes to finish your discussion on the subamendment brought forward by Mr. Waugh. I would ask you again to not be redundant or repetitive, and you are getting very close to being both.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Chair, I'm not entirely sure, I guess, what.... It's interesting, because I'm getting my hand slapped in a few different ways here. As a member of this committee, I believe that I have the freedom and the ability to speak to the subamendment that is being discussed and to raise the points that I feel need to be raised on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of Canadians.

The fact that I am being directed in such a way and that I'm being berated for responding to my colleague Mr. Julian and his repetitive points of order—

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a point of order.

The Chair: I have Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Again, the member is repeating a point that has been made many times. I just want to say for the record in this point of order that we've done some great work together on this report on safe sport. We've worked hard to really sit down with a lot of folks who went through some really awful moments. We have a job to do as a committee, and we've done great work together. I would just appeal to the members opposite, on the Conservative side, to speak to your colleague.

We just spent an hour and a half on the same issue. We really need to get this report done. We went through 165 points the first day. At the last meeting, we did nothing. At this meeting, we've done nothing.

I would just appeal to the other members to please talk to the member, who has really wasted a lot of our time today, so that we can actually get this work done and we can make recommendations to create a safer environment in Canada when it comes to the protection of a lot of young people and adults when it comes to sport.

Thank you very much.

I move a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you. The meeting is now adjourned—

• (13300)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: You can't do a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: There is... It now being 1 p.m. and the committee being scheduled to end its meeting at 1 p.m., I adjourn the meeting.

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