



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on International Trade

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 122

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Chair: The Honourable Judy A. Sgro



Standing Committee on International Trade

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: We are in public.

To those at home, this is meeting 122.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you have a motion. I'd like you to read that back, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Okay. I'll read the motion again, since we're now in public:

Given that:

(a) in its budget presented in March 2023, the government had announced its intention to introduce legislation by 2024 to eliminate forced labour from Canadian supply chains and to strengthen the ban on the importation of goods produced by forced labour (page 195 of the French version and page 171 of the English version);

(b) in its budget presented in March 2024, the government had announced that it would accomplish such a measure during the year 2024 (page 369 of the French version and page 320 of the English version);

(c) to date, the government has still not acted, and no bill has yet been tabled;

(d) following a unanimous motion adopted on November 28, 2023, the committee had sent a letter to the government, reminding it of its commitment and requesting a response to the committee's attention and explaining the reasons for this inaction, but that despite this nothing has yet been done by the government;

That the committee report back to the House to express that recourse to these practices, which undermine the fundamental rights of workers, vulnerable people and children, is totally inadmissible, and that it finds the government's inaction deplorable and unacceptable.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: That is a motion on the floor.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Thanks to the member opposite for bringing this important topic to the floor here today.

This is very important legislation. It's a very important priority for our government, but as you know, it's not straightforward. We have to consult with many different stakeholders. At this moment, that is what the government is undertaking. I think it's very important for those watching at home to know that this is a key priority for us.

Unfortunately, we all know what's happening in the House of Commons right now. The Conservatives continue to gum up the House. If Mr. Savard-Tremblay is truly serious about this legislation, will he commit right here and right now for the Bloc to vote

for closure, so we can bring this very important legislation to the floor of the House of Commons?

I think it's very important that people watching at home understand your commitment to this legislation.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Jeneroux.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): It's on the relevance of the Liberals'...and Mr. Sidhu saying that it's the Conservatives gumming up the House. The Liberals could very well table the documents, and we could get on with the business of the House.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Thank you. That's not quite a point of order, Mr. Jeneroux, but thank you very much.

Mr. Desjarlais, you're up.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my Bloc colleague for raising this incredibly important issue.

I know, as a representative of Canada's labour party, that this has been an outstanding issue for Canadians, for workers across the country and for our solidarity with workers of goods no matter where they are.

The provisions related to workers' rights are important for Canadians. They're important for workers across the country. Canada needs to take a serious role in achieving the means that this committee was unanimous toward. There's a timeline associated with the motion that was made in this committee to ensure that these workers had a piece of legislation that Canada could ensure we read, review and get done, so we can get to the point of better advancing the protection of rights for workers.

I totally understand my colleague Mr. Sidhu's situation related to the issues related to the House of Commons. The debate there is problematic for Canadians. It is slowing down the work of Parliament. I'd suggest to my honourable colleague from the Conservative bench that all three things can be true in this case.

First, the requirement for workers to have protections under legislation no matter where goods are produced is critical. It's important, and it's a matter of solidarity of workers across the world.

The second fact is that in the House of Commons right now, we have a very serious deadlock or gridlock related to the production of SDTC documents. To Mr. Jeneroux's point, I think the government could make a position more relevant to whether those documents would be tabled to end that.

The last fact is also still true, which is that it's an outstanding promise that's now owed to Canadians. This was something that could have been done before the privilege motion on SDTC, for example. It begs the question as to what the delay is.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Savard-Tremblay.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: First, I won't respond to this attempt to bring up the SDTC documents issue. This matter of privilege is already keeping us busy enough in the House. We won't start debating it here too. The member of Parliament is asking me to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. However, the Bloc Québécois's position on this matter of privilege is quite clear in both form and substance. Let's get serious for a minute.

If this matter were truly a priority for the government, it wouldn't have put the issue in last year's budget—tabled in the third month of the year—in order to state that there would be a bill by the end of the 12th month of that year. The 2023 budget didn't state that consultations would be launched. Not only did the consultations fail to start that year, but it's the only thing that we have now that 2024 is drawing to a close. Again, the 2024 budget, which was also tabled in the third month of the year, stated that we would have a bill by the end of the 12th month of this year.

At this point, I think that it's a useful motion to remind the government that 2024 is coming to an end. We just don't seem to have the same definition of a priority.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Thank you.

Mr. Sheehan, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this extremely important issue.

As Mr. Sidhu has already mentioned, we need to take a look and get these pieces of legislation dealt with through the House of Commons. The filibuster by the Conservatives needs to stop.

I would also support Mr. Sidhu's suggestion that both the NDP and Bloc work with us, so we can get the forced labour legislation onto the floor.

We have to deal with this. The government has taken action in supporting a private member's bill by John McKay, Marcus Powlowski and a senator from the other place. That is a good start, but we ought to build and we have to build on it.

The Prime Minister has placed this priority in four ministers' mandate letters. The Prime Minister recognizes it. The government recognizes it. The election is not until October 2025. We need to get this piece of legislation through Parliament and build on what was already unanimously voted on with the private member's bill from the Liberal member, John McKay.

I do agree we have to delve into this expeditiously.

Again, I thank everyone for the conversation on this important matter. It's important, as we take a look at how this trade committee is working with other countries, that we place not just labour issues, which are paramount, but environmental issues and a whole bunch of issues in the trade deals we delve into.

Thank you.

● (1755)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madame Fortier.

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I see that the motion calls for the government to follow through on its commitment. I want to take this opportunity to move an amendment to paragraph (c). I believe that it's a friendly amendment.

The text of the motion in this place currently states that “to date, the government has still not acted, and no bill has yet been tabled.” I would like to make an addition stating that “to date, the government has still not acted, we are still waiting for a government response in accordance with Standing Order 109, and no bill has yet been tabled.” It's simply a matter of adding that this motion does require a government response.

I have a second amendment to move, but I'll start with this one.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Thank you.

We have an amendment on the floor.

First of all, Mr. Clerk, is the amendment in order?

The Clerk: Could you repeat it?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Okay.

According to my proposed amendment, paragraph (c) would state that “to date, the government has still not acted, we are still waiting for a government response in accordance with Standing Order 109, and no bill has yet been tabled.”

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: There's an amendment on the floor.

Is there any discussion on that amendment?

Seeing none—

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I personally want to understand the ins and outs of this amendment.

Hon. Mona Fortier: It's quite simple. We want a government response one way or another.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: We can still report to the House before then, right?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Yes. However, we're still waiting for a government response.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I disagree with this, because it will be just another way to delay the matter. Personally, I'm opposed to this amendment.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Is there any more discussion before we go to a vote on this amendment?

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ryan Williams): The chair's vote breaks the tie. It is defeated.

Is there any more discussion on the original motion?

Mr. Baldinelli.

• (1800)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, colleagues.

One of my colleagues talked about mandate letters. Going back to 2021, our own international trade minister's mandate letter says:

To ensure that a whole-of-government approach is taken, support the Minister of Labour in introducing legislation to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains and ensure that Canadian businesses operating abroad do not contribute to human rights abuses.

That was in 2021.

Our committee, based on the government's budget of 2023, saying that it would introduce legislation in a year, wrote to them in November of last year. It's been a whole year, and the government has yet to proceed. They've had sufficient time to act on this.

I'm pleased to support my colleague's motion.

I want to make one friendly amendment. I think it's just in terms of wording in the translation. It would have to do with the last paragraph. I'll read what my change is.

It says, "That the committee report back to the House to express that recourse to these practices, which undermine the fundamental rights of workers, vulnerable people and children..." Instead of the word "inadmissible", which I think is incorrect, I think it should read, "is totally unacceptable, and that it finds the government's inaction deplorable."

Mr. Ryan Williams: Thank you, Mr. Baldinelli.

I have an amendment. Is there any discussion on that amendment?

Mr. Desjarlais.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I totally accept that. I think that's a really appropriate recommendation. You can even use both if you want. It's totally inadmissible and unacceptable. They're both true in this case.

However, in relation to another word, where it says, "That the committee report back to the House to express that recourse to these practices..." I think that's a translation issue. I'm not sure.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: It's the use of these practices.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Oh, you mean "to express that the use of these practices".

Mr. Ryan Williams: For procedure, we have to deal with the amendment that's on the table first.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I'm sorry.

Can we do them together? We might as well do them together.

Mr. Ryan Williams: There's an amendment on the floor that we're debating. It's hard to amend an amendment. I think we're dealing with the amendment. It's already been placed, unfortunately.

Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Can I move a subamendment, Clerk, at this time?

Mr. Ryan Williams: The subamendment has to be related to the amendment, not to the motion. If you're moving an amendment to the amendment, you can do that, but just not an amendment to the motion.

Mr. Sidhu, go ahead.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: As Mr. Baldinelli is adding "unacceptable", I'd like to remove "deplorable" from that same paragraph.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Your amendment is to remove "deplorable". Is that correct?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Yes.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Now we have a discussion on the amendment to the amendment.

Are there any questions on the subamendment?

Seeing none, is anyone against that?

Mr. Baldinelli, go ahead.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: It doesn't finish the sentence. We're going to be criticizing the government's inaction. If I take out "deplorable", there is no further word.

• (1805)

Mr. Ryan Williams: Mr. Sidhu, your amendment as we've read it would end with, "is totally unacceptable and that it finds the government's inaction."

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: If we leave it "is totally inadmissible and that it finds the government's inaction unacceptable"....

Mr. Ryan Williams: That's why I'm saying we're dealing with the amendment right now and you have a subamendment to the amendment.

The amendment was, instead of having "inadmissible", to have "unacceptable and that...the government's inaction deplorable" and eliminate "and unacceptable". You're making an amendment to the amendment, which would say that you're going to remove "deplorable" and add "unacceptable" back.

Is that correct?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Yes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Let's use all three.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Then he wants to go back to the use of “inadmissible”, so it's “totally inadmissible and that it finds the government's action unacceptable”.

Mr. Ryan Williams: You're amending the amendment back, basically, so I think we—

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: I'm taking out a word.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: You're taking out the plural.

Mr. Maninder Sidhu: Yes.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Okay, we have an amendment to the amendment.

Is everyone in agreement with this subamendment to the amendment? Is anyone against that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I'm against the subamendment.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams: With that, I'm going to have a vote, Mr. Clerk, on this subamendment to the amendment.

The Clerk: Could you maybe just repeat exactly what it is, so that everyone knows what they're voting on?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Okay.

Is the subamendment, Mr. Sidhu, keeping the word “inadmissible” or removing that word?

Hon. Mona Fortier: That's not the amendment.

Mr. Ryan Williams: The subamendment is getting rid of “deplorable” and keeping “unacceptable”, so that's what we're voting on.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: As a matter of clarification, is the subamendment my Liberal colleagues are making right now to remove the word “deplorable” from this motion to deal with forced labour?

Mr. Ryan Williams: That's correct, and it adds the word “unacceptable” back.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I understand.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Is there any more discussion? Is everyone in agreement or do we want to vote?

(Subamendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ryan Williams): The chair's vote broke the tie, so it's defeated. We're going back to the original amendment.

Is there any more discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Baldinelli.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: I'll just repeat what my friendly amendment would read.

It says, “That the committee report back to the House to express that recourse to these practices, which undermine the fundamental rights of workers, vulnerable people and children, is totally unacceptable, and that it finds the government's inaction deplorable.”

Mr. Ryan Williams: We have the amendment. Is there any more discussion on this?

Is everyone in agreement? Does anyone disagree?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Of course I disagree.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Would you like a vote?

• (1810)

Hon. Mona Fortier: Yes.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Okay, we'll have a vote, Mr. Clerk.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ryan Williams): Once again, the chair's vote broke the tie. We are now at the main motion.

Is there any more discussion on the main motion as amended?

At that point, Mr. Clerk, I'll ask for a vote, please.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

Mr. Ryan Williams: Again, the chair's vote breaks the tie. The motion is adopted.

Seeing no other committee business today, I declare the meeting adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>