



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 089

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

Chair: Mr. John Brassard



Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

• (1630)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 89 of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Today's 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 will remind everyone about the interpretation and keeping ear-pieces away from the microphones.

I'm going to open up the meeting. There's only one order of business today, and that's to deal with the committee's request to have the documents related to ISED given to us by 5 p.m. yesterday. You'll recall that we did pass a motion to have those unredacted documents produced to the committee by 5 p.m. yesterday.

The deadline came and went yesterday. I asked the clerk several times to contact department officials to make sure we had the documents. I think it was shortly after five o'clock yesterday, Madam Clerk, when they said they needed more time. I gave them more time in good faith, until 10 o'clock this morning. This morning several requests were made to department officials to get the documents to us by 10 a.m. At 10:03 this morning, they said they needed more time, and, as far as I'm concerned, that wasn't acceptable.

We had passed a motion to have these documents produced for us by 5 p.m. yesterday. What I need is some direction from the committee as to where you want to go with this issue at this point. Right now, that's the only order of business we have. Unfortunately, because of this, I have had to cancel with the European group we were supposed to meet with, but this is pressing and it defies a committee motion, so I want to make sure we deal with it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead, please.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I have a motion I'd like to move. I just sent it to the clerk and have asked that it be sent to the interpreters. I want to check to make sure it has been sent before I read it, and then I'd like a quick chance to speak to it.

The Chair: Okay—

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): On a point of order, Chair, can you clarify something? We did get a redacted copy, which was distributed, but we didn't get the unredacted copy we asked for in the motion. Is that correct?

The Chair: That's correct.

The motion that was passed on Monday was that the—and you moved the motion, so—

Ms. Pam Damoff: Well, I edited it, but yes.

The Chair: You amended the motion that the unredacted copy of the report was to be in our hands by five o'clock yesterday afternoon. I spoke about the circumstances and the effort that was put into getting those documents to the committee. They weren't given to the committee. I actually, in good faith, as I said, Ms. Damoff, extended the deadline to 10 o'clock this morning. We still didn't receive them, and here we are.

• (1635)

Ms. Pam Damoff: No, that's fine, but we did get a redacted copy.

The Chair: We did.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Clerk, we do have a motion that came before us, right?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): We have a motion in English only, so the interpreters have the text and will provide interpretation.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'm going to move the motion as a matter at hand.

The Chair: Okay. On the matter at hand, Mr. Barrett, go ahead with your motion, please.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I move:

That the Committee, considering the government's unsatisfactory response to the order adopted on October 18, 2023, and its failure to respond to the order adopted on October 30, 2023, orders the Department of Industry to produce the unredacted version of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton's "Fact-Finding Exercise Report" for Sustainable Development Technology Canada, in both official languages, within 24 hours, provided that if this order is not satisfied, the Chair be instructed to present the following report to the House forthwith: Your Committee recommends that an Order of the House do issue for the unredacted version of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton's "Fact-Finding Exercise Report" for Sustainable Development Technology Canada, provided that it shall be laid upon the Table, in both official languages, no later than the sitting day following the adoption of this Order.

The Chair: Before I give you the floor, we're dealing with some ambiguity here, because it says "within 24 hours". I need you to specify that it's "within 24 hours of adoption of this motion", just to be clear, because that's not in there. If we go until 6:30, then.... We've done this before when we haven't been specific, so I want to be specific.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: My intent is that it's within 24 hours of the adoption.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Barrett: If the motion is in order, I'd like to speak to it.

The Chair: The motion is in order, and I'm going to give—

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Was the motion available in both official languages?

The Chair: I don't know.

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Can we suspend?

Personally, I read the motion very quickly, but it needs to be more comprehensible in French. There are two official languages in Canada.

The Chair: We will suspend for five minutes.

Is that enough time for you, Madam Clerk?

The Clerk: I am not translating the motion. I am not a translator, I'm a clerk. I put in a request with the translation service, and was told it had been accepted. However, I can't say how long it will take to translate the motion, as that is not my responsibility.

The Chair: All right.

Next time, we will need to have the text of motions in both official languages. It will be easier that way.

We will now start discussing the motion.

Mr. Barrett, you have the floor.

Hon. Mona Fortier: Mr. Chair, can we suspend for five minutes, like you said?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm going to grant the break, Madame Fortier. Hopefully we can get this in time, and then we're going to go to you, Mr. Barrett, when we return.

• (1635) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, everyone, for your patience. We're going to resume the meeting.

I want to point out a couple of things.

Number one, when a motion is moved like this, it's much more helpful if we have it in both official languages.

The second thing is this: I know, Mr. Barrett, that when you were reading it, you were reading it as unredacted. However, the motion

itself said "redacted". That has been corrected in the motion, just so you know.

I am going to Mr. Barrett and then Ms. Damoff after that.

Go ahead on the motion.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The committee has twice asked for these documents. In the first instance, the committee was not furnished with them in a timely fashion. The version we received was a redacted version. We know it was prepared in both official languages, so it would have been one the department could have sent to us.

The availability of a minister to testify at the committee.... Though I would like a minister to attend when it best suits the committee, we heard the parliamentary secretary in the House today say that the minister is attending the committee on Monday. This document production was requested weeks ago, and now the availability of the minister is such that he's appearing at our next meeting. We haven't had the opportunity to get the documents in the format they were ordered in.

The committee has a lot of options when its powers are disregarded. This motion is not one that exaggerates the necessary response. I appreciate hearing from the chair that although the committee set a deadline for the department, he used his discretion to offer an extended deadline. It is regrettable that this deadline was not met.

The motion before committee provides the respondent for the department with, again, an extended deadline. Should they not furnish the committee with the document in an unredacted fashion, as was ordered, the committee has then exhausted its powers. It then becomes a matter for the House. The proposal on how this is referred to the House is not inflammatory or hyperbolic; it simply allows the House the opportunity to discharge its powers. It's very important that when the House of Commons standing committees order the production of papers or the appearance of people, and this is disrespected, it is important this be upheld. That's why this is proposed in this way.

The redactions in the document don't appear to simply be seven-digit phone numbers or first and last names. There appear to be redactions that go beyond that. I don't know the extent of commercially sensitive information that could be contained in the large sections that are redacted, but the committee issued its order. I think it is important that the committee have the full information available to it before having the minister and his officials attend the committee on Monday.

That's the spirit in which this motion was put forward. I hope we can have resolution to it quickly.

Thanks.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

Next we're going to Ms. Damoff on the motion. Everybody is receiving a paper copy of it right now.

Ms. Damoff, go ahead, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks a lot, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward and also for the way he has brought it forward. I think he's done it in a collegial way, which I personally really appreciate.

This is a serious matter, and the government does take it seriously. When these allegations came forward, the minister acted on them. From what I understand, we're going to have him here on Monday. It is a serious situation, and the committee asked for something....

Mr. Barrett enlightened me, when we were chatting during the break, that when you file an ATIP report, what comes back has comments as to why things are redacted. When that's not there, it's natural to assume that there was more taken out than there should be. We don't know, because all we have is a document that has some information with big blanks in it.

I don't think anybody on the committee wants to have personal information, such as people's names or phone numbers or anything that would identify the companies that were in this. I think we're all on the same page there. It's whether this document has only been redacted for that or whether there was additional information taken out of it.

My parliamentary intern—they are always particularly smart—printed out the “Access to Government Records” part of the Access to Information Act, which references “trade secrets of a third party”.

I think what we're facing right now is a department that has legal weight about what needs to be taken out and a committee that wants to have all of the information we should have to be able to look at this.

I was going to make a proposal that the committee send a strongly worded message from the chair that they review their redactions. It's not a motion yet; I just want to put the idea out there.

I see the clerk saying that she needs a motion.

The idea would be that the redactions be reviewed for their appropriateness, and for any redactions that are left in, an explanation is included with that redaction as to why. Whether it's personal information or corporate business information, they should also review whether they are appropriate. We would give them 24 hours to do that and get it back to us.

The only issue is that we have the minister coming on Monday. If we got that on Thursday by close of day and it's not satisfactory to members, I don't know what recourse we have to ensure that we have something for Monday.

I just wanted to put an idea out there to try to come to a compromise, because I think we all want the same thing with this.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

Oftentimes ideas, as much as they're in good faith, need to be in writing so that we are very clear.

I didn't hear you propose an amendment, but—

Ms. Pam Damoff: I didn't yet, but I can.

The Chair: The floor has been given up at this point.

Mr. Kurek had his hand up, so we're going to go to Mr. Kurek, and then I see Mr. Villemure.

Go ahead, Mr. Kurek.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Thanks very much, Chair.

It is disappointing that it seems that we are once again finding out at a committee that we are left with fewer options to ensure Canadians are ultimately getting the answers that I certainly think they deserve.

Having now spent most of my time elected to Parliament at this committee, I understand the rules surrounding why redactions can be and sometimes are needed and the need for the protection of that sort of information, but I think, Chair, that we are, as a committee, now confronted with the larger challenge that exists in terms of the culture of secrecy that finds it optional within the government to provide information that has been requested to ensure that Parliament, which government is a function of, and committees being a part of our parliamentary structure....

Government doesn't rule the country, and it is accountable through acts to Parliament. I find it very frustrating—very disappointing—that there is not a more forthcoming nature in the way the government conducts itself in terms of providing information. I certainly would have been very amenable had there been a willingness of the department to have an honest, upfront conversation about why redactions were necessary and about releasing the report in a manner that would have satisfied the demands of this committee, but instead we now have a defiance of the will of Parliament in responding to what I believe was a unanimous motion that was put forward.

Asking for this information was supported by all political parties. It hasn't been provided. I think it's frustrating and certainly very disappointing that we are now forced.... With the revelation that the minister is coming on Monday, I think that's a good opportunity to ensure that we ask some of those important questions, but not providing the information leaves too many question marks.

The motion Mr. Barrett has put forward I think is entirely reasonable. It does exactly what our parliamentary system is designed to do in ensuring that government, as a function of Parliament, is able to be held accountable therein.

The time, I would suggest, has passed for the department. The clerk has reached out, as you've described, Chair, many times, asking for this reasonable conversation to take place, and the department seems to have been unwilling. I think ensuring that the department knows from this perspective, from this committee, that they are to be held accountable, and if they are not willing to abide by that.... I am more than happy to be as reasonable as possible when it comes to making sure that phone numbers, personal names—whatever the case is—are omitted, but Chair, this is now just affirming that culture of secrecy that seems to dominate every time a request is made for government to provide answers to parliamentarians on behalf of Canadians.

I think this motion is entirely reasonable. I hope it can garner the support of all members of this committee to ensure that we are in fact able to access the information that Parliament should be entitled to access. Very clearly, a department is defying a very clear request. There could have been more inflammatory ways to go about this. I think this is entirely reasonable, and I would hope that we can find support around this table to take that next step to say, "Look, this isn't a option. This is about Canadians getting the answers they deserve."

Thank you, Chair.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Information Commissioner testified twice before our committee, and I asked her the same question. When I asked her if the government had a culture of secrecy or transparency, she replied that it had a culture of secrecy. Obviously, I don't mean that as a definitive statement on her part, but that was her impression.

One thing is certain. Personally, I believe that, one way or another, we will receive the documents. At some point, they will show what's been redacted. The question is when. The minister is due to testify on Monday, which unfortunately leaves little time. As Ms. Damoff mentioned, when a document is redacted, the reasons for redaction are usually provided. It helps understand why.

The problem I see with that suggestion is that we have asked for the documents twice, and we have been denied access twice. I find it hard to believe in the good faith of the people we would ask to explain redaction. Having seen it elsewhere, I know that trade secrets and national security considerations have a wide berth. I have no problem asking someone I trust. The problem arises when I don't trust the individual.

In this case, I think we are incurring unnecessary delays and the lack of trust, which leads to mistrust, is not likely to make our work any easier. I'd like to be in a position to question the minister knowing all the facts. I don't want to say things I'm not sure of.

In my opinion, we need to get the unredacted documents as soon as possible.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

Ms. Fortier, you have the floor.

Hon. Mona Fortier: I need something clarified, Mr. Chair.

Have we in fact confirmed that the minister is going to testify on Monday? Will he instead testify sometime during the week? Someone said in the House that he would be testifying next week.

Mr. Chair or Madam Clerk, has the day he will testify been confirmed? Rumour has it that he will appear on Monday, but we need to have that confirmed.

[*English*]

The Chair: The clerk was told that the minister is available on Monday. Confirmation is still yet to come, but we are proceeding on the basis that he will make himself available to the committee, as will the deputy ministers and the ADM, as well as SDTC staff.

Thank you.

We need to proceed on the basis that we are going to have this meeting on Monday.

Ms. Damoff, go ahead, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I have wording now. I don't know the best way to do this, because it's fairly extensive, Mr. Chair. Do you want me to read it here?

The Chair: We need it in French, as well.

Ms. Pam Damoff: To amend a motion...?

The Chair: It would be preferable to have it in both official languages.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Most of this is deletion. The words are not that substantial.

The Chair: I'll get you to go ahead.

[*Translation*]

We will hear Ms. Damoff's words.

If we need to draft the motion in both official languages, we will suspend the meeting, but it may not be a very complicated amendment.

Mr. René Villemure: Mr. Chair, I would echo Ms. Damoff's words that the changes weren't very significant.

The Chair: We will hear what Ms. Damoff is proposing.

[*English*]

Ms. Damoff, go ahead, please.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When I say it's not substantive, it's because I'm deleting half of it.

It would read:

"That the committee, considering the government's unsatisfactory response to the order adopted on October 18, 2023, and its failure to respond to the order adopted on October 30, 2023, orders the Department of Industry to..."

I haven't changed anything yet.

Now it would say, “take every available effort to provide an unredacted version of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton’s “Fact-Finding Exercise Report” for Sustainable Development Technology Canada, in both official languages, review the appropriateness of any redactions, and that an explanation be provided for each redaction and the reason for the redaction within 24 hours.”

It might be awkwardly worded.

I can send that to you, Mr. Chair, if you like.

The Chair: You’re going to have to.

I would deem that a substantive amendment, considering that we need it in both official languages. That’s to accommodate Mr. Villemure here.

[*Translation*]

That’s without forgetting Ms. Fortier and the chair.

[*English*]

Hopefully, we can get this done in five minutes. Let’s see what we can come up with.

I’m going to suspend again, because I want this to work out for the betterment of everyone. I’m going to suspend for five minutes. Let’s get this in both official languages, and we can proceed from there on the amendment.

• (1720) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1745)

The Chair: I’m going to call the meeting back to order.

An amended version of the motion by Ms. Damoff has been sent by email. We are waiting for the printed copy. You all have a copy of the amended version of the motion.

Before I turn the floor back to you, if you can, just read the amended version for the benefit of the committee.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks a lot, Chair, and thank you, colleagues, for your patience in trying to get this right.

This is slightly different from what I originally read. Because it’s asking for an unredacted copy, I want to get on the record that all of us want to protect the identity of private individuals and anything that would identify sensitive business information and make them identifiable. I think we’re all agreed on that.

The motion would now read, “That the Committee, considering the government’s unsatisfactory response to the order adopted on October 18, 2023, and its failure to respond to the order adopted on October 30, 2023, orders the Department of Industry to provide an unredacted version of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton’s “Fact-Finding Exercise Report” for Sustainable Development Technology Canada, in both official languages; review the appropriateness of any redactions; and where redactions are deemed necessary, an explanation be provided for each redaction, within 24 hours.”

I think the wording may still be a little awkward, so if someone has an idea, the intent is that we get this within 24 hours.

The Chair: Is that from the adoption of the motion?

Ms. Pam Damoff: It’s after the adoption of the motion.

We’ve asked for an unredacted version. If they have to redact it, they have to tell us why. That’s the intent of it, Chair.

Yes, it’s within 24 hours after adoption.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor.

Mr. René Villemure: Thanks for the revision. I just have one question to ask.

The French says “*examiner la pertinence*” or “review the need”. Something is either needed, or it is not. Then we ask that an explanation be provided, but I just want to make sure we will get one. I agree with the content, but I think it’s slightly vague here and I’d like to clarify that. Redaction is either needed or not needed, and I want to make sure that an explanation is provided if redaction is needed.

There are two parts to this motion, one about necessity and one about explanation. I just want to make sure they go hand in hand.

• (1750)

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you want to address that?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I agree, Mr. Villemure. If there is wording that’s more appropriate, that’s the intent of what I’m trying to say.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: I could specify the wording in French without changing the meaning. I would write that the need to redact should be reviewed when redaction is needed, and when it’s needed, an explanation must be provided. That doesn’t change the meaning, but it does remove any potential loopholes.

The Chair: Mr. Villemure, if you could write it out as you would like it written, it would be clearer for me. We don’t need to suspend the meeting for that.

[*English*]

Mr. Kurek, you have the floor. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Thanks, Chair.

To highlight what I shared before, I think the time has passed—in light of the precedent of the government and the department that is meant to be held accountable—for us to demand anything other than answers. I think the key here is that had the government been forthright and willing to work with this committee and responsive to the body of which it is a function, we wouldn’t be here.

I understand the nuances in the discussions around redactions. However, the point we've come to is that I am unable to trust that the government will do anything but continue to hide behind any mechanism possible to keep this information from coming forward. We hear time and time again before this committee about the culture of secrecy that exists and that there's a refusal on behalf of the government to acknowledge that it is a function of Parliament. I'm certainly unwilling to do anything but ensure that we use the tools available to us to get the answers Canadians deserve.

When it comes to the information that is being talked about and the sensitivity around it, Mr. Chair, the government could have been forthcoming in the beginning, but they weren't. This lays at the feet of the department and ultimately the minister who is responsible: that they failed to heed an order, the consequence of which is that they very well could be putting Canadians' privacy and whatnot at risk. They failed time and time again.

Forwarding this to Parliament, which the department is meant to be a function of, is a reasonable step, and I think it is entirely reasonable to send the message from this committee, for which there are now, I believe, both the previous motions that were supported unanimously by all parties. This is a chance for us to ensure that we put our words into action and not simply allow the government to skirt around a very forthright and important issue that needs to be discussed.

I think we need to see that document. With the minister coming on what sounds like will be Monday, we don't have the time to allow them to equivocate or hide behind some declaration that we don't have a chance to litigate further before the minister comes.

Chair, through you, I urge all members of this committee that the time has passed for anything but for this committee to demand what I believe it deserves—the answers that the department seems to be hiding.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kurek.

I don't have any other speakers on the list, but I know that Mr. Villemure is going to come up with a suggestion....

Ms. Fortier, I'm going to go to you quickly. Hopefully, we can go back to Mr. Villemure soon.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: I think the proposed amendment is good, especially because we need to cover the whole issue of the Access to Information Act, protecting personal information and protecting corporate data. They can make the effort to explain which parts were redacted. With this amendment, the redacted content will be explained to us within 24 hours.

Also, if I'm not mistaken, the minister was quick to agree to appear before the committee. So he will be available. I believe that also shows that he is taking this seriously. One thing we've heard in the media is that the minister is concerned about this issue, and he himself has confirmed it. We will be able to ask him the hard questions we want to ask him, and which the committee is very concerned about at the moment.

Moreover, I feel we should announce to the public and at some point address the fact that the Auditor General has decided to investigate as well. That's another issue the committee might want to look into eventually. It's not possible at the moment, given that the Auditor General has just begun her investigation. With this amendment—I hope it will be adopted—individuals' personal data and corporate data will be protected. We will also be able to meet the minister next week. That's what I wanted to say, for the record.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Fortier.

Mr. Villemure has the floor.

Mr. René Villemure: I've sent the document.

I made an amendment to change certain terms. I'll let you translate it rather than read it out. It's the same in both languages.

I can explain it, if you like.

We changed the language in the part I was talking about.

Ms. Damoff, as per what we had discussed, I simply added the content from the original motion.

The Chair: When I read the amendment, I don't see many changes, it's just—

Mr. René Villemure: I made a very minor change to the wording of the motion.

The Chair: All right.

Can you provide more details on the amendment you are proposing, Mr. Villemure?

Mr. René Villemure: Yes.

The Chair: First, the clerk is going to email the changes to all members, in French only.

Mr. René Villemure: It's about reviewing the need—

The Chair: We'll send the amendment to the interpreters. Then we'll know the wording in English.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have a question.

[*English*]

I haven't seen it, but are just a few words changed? It would be easier if we just amended it to remove the word, whatever it was, and replaced it with....

The Chair: The clerk is looking at it now.

We're just trying to work this out right now.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Villemure, I'll ask the clerk to read the amended motion. We don't have the English translation, but the interpreters can give us the English translation so that we understand what's on the table.

Madam Clerk, you may now read the amended motion.

The Clerk: Mr. Villemure is moving that we amend the whole part of Ms. Damoff's amendment that starts with "review the appropriateness of any redactions".

The Chair: Please slow down.

The Clerk: Okay.

Mr. Villemure is moving that the part of Ms. Damoff's amendment that begins with "review the appropriateness of any redactions; and where redactions are deemed necessary, an explanation be provided for each redaction, within 24 hours" be replaced with "review the need for redaction; and (c) when deemed necessary"—

The Chair: All right.

To help the interpreters, can you please read the amendment and the proposed change more slowly? Can you read it all out, please?

The Clerk: Here are the text with the changes and the amendment proposed by Mr. Villemure, which I received in French:

That the Committee, considering that the government's unsatisfactory response to the order adopted on October 18, 2023, and its failure to respond to the order adopted on October 30, 2023, orders the Department of Industry to provide an unredacted version of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton's "Fact-Finding Exercise Report" for Sustainable Development Technology Canada, in both official languages;

That would be followed by this amendment proposed by Mr. Villemure to Ms. Damoff's amendment:

review the need for redaction; and (c) when deemed necessary ensure that explanations are provided to justify the redaction of each of the redacted portions; and that this is provided to the committee within 24 hours of the adoption of the motion.

• (1805)

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Madam Clerk.

With respect to the amendment proposed by Mr. Villemure, Ms. Damoff has the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm going to be quick.

I think the amendments he has put forward are absolutely acceptable and honour the intent of what I was trying to say. He said it far better *en français* than I did in English.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Damoff.

We have the amendment as proposed by Mr. Villemure.

Is there any other discussion on the amendment?

I don't see any, so I'm going to ask whether we have unanimous consent on the amendment.

We don't.

I'm going to ask for a vote, please, on the amendment.

I'm sorry. Ms. Idlout, did you have anything to add?

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): No. I'm just asking for a copy of it.

The Chair: The challenge is that we don't have a copy of it. We read the amendment as proposed through the translators. We can only make a copy in French right now. If you require it in English, we're going to have to translate and likely suspend again. If that's what you want to do, let me know.

All right. We will suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1805)

(Pause)

• (1815)

The Chair: Okay, we're back. The amended version of the motion has been sent out. Everybody should have it.

Is there any discussion on this?

I don't see any.

On the motion as amended, we don't have agreement, so we're going to have a vote.

Madam Clerk, if you want to—

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Chair, for clarity, are we voting on the subamendment or is it the whole thing as amended? I support it. I just want to get clarity on what we're doing.

The Chair: I think what we're going to do is vote on the amendment and then we're going to vote on the motion as amended.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Mr. René Villemure: I have a subamendment that would really—

The Chair: You'll have to move it after we finish with this.

On the amendment of Monsieur Villemure, we will call the vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The amendment carries.

We're open to discussion on the main motion now. Is there any further discussion on the main motion?

Go ahead, Monsieur Villemure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Is this is an appropriate time to move a subamendment?

The Chair: Do you have a subamendment to the motion?

Mr. René Villemure: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Hold on a moment, please.

The clerk would like to explain some things to all committee members.

The Clerk: I'd like to make something clear before things get too complicated.

Mr. Villemure, you mentioned a subamendment, but that would mean an amendment to Ms. Damoff's amendment. However, we're not there anymore.

It's important to use the right term so as not to get mixed up in the votes. What Mr. Villemure emailed me is not a subamendment, but simply an amendment to the part of Mr. Barrett's motion that begins with the words "if this order is not satisfied".

• (1820)

Hon. Mona Fortier: That part would be related to what we just did.

The Clerk: We had Mr. Barrett's motion, then we debated it. Next, Ms. Damoff moved something, and that was followed by another debate. Then we discussed an amendment with Mr. Villemure and adopted it.

So we resumed debate on the motion as amended, and now Mr. Villemure is going to move an amendment to another part of Mr. Barrett's original motion. Therefore, it's not a subamendment because the amendment was adopted. It's an amendment to the motion as amended.

The Chair: It's another amendment to the motion as amended.

Mr. Villemure, you may now move your amendment to the motion.

Mr. René Villemure: The amendment comes in after the words "if this order is not satisfied". It reads as follows: "the Chair be instructed to present the following report to the House forthwith: Your Committee recommends that an Order of the House do issue for the unredacted version of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton's 'Fact-Finding Exercise Report' for Sustainable Development Technology Canada"

The Chair: The amendment is in order.

Do you have any comments?

[*English*]

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks, Chair.

I'd like to propose a subamendment to Mr. Villemure—

The Chair: You'll have to hang on for a second. The clerk is dealing with one thing at a time.

We've heard the terms of the amendment by Monsieur Villemure. Ms. Damoff is proposing an amendment to the amendment.

Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It is just adding "That, if the committee is not satisfied" before that amendment begins. The committee will have to decide if what it receives is satisfactory. If we determine as a committee that it is not, then you send the order to the House.

The change would just be that if the committee is not satisfied, you send the order to the House, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. I guess my question would be one of process. If the committee is not satisfied, how would we handle that?

Ms. Pam Damoff: You send the order to the House, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, but my point is that we need to have a process in order to do that. I called this meeting today because we didn't receive the documents. I was looking for direction. I'm receiving some direction. Who will determine that on behalf of the committee? Will it be the chair who determines that or will it be the committee?

Ms. Pam Damoff: It will be the committee.

The Chair: What's the mechanism, then, for the committee to advise the chair that they're not satisfied with the documents? That's my question.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I guess you'd have to call another meeting, Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I don't know if there's another process that we can do. If there is, if it can be done by an email vote, Chair, I'd be fine with that, but I think it should be up to the committee as a whole to decide whether or not what we get is satisfactory.

The Chair: Playing the cynic here, if this means that we need to call another meeting, if I'm a department official, then I'm just sort of ragging the puck on this. Then we have to have another meeting to determine where we're going to go.

At some point there has to be a final issue that lets the department know that they're not fulfilling the request of this committee. If we have an understanding...or I don't even think I can put it as an understanding; I'll need it to be specific. If the department officials don't do what we're asking them to do, I don't want to have another meeting about it. I want some final decisions. If that means that we can deal with it by email to say that we're not satisfied...

I'm not even sure we can do that procedurally. Give me a second here. I have to consult with the clerk on this.

You understand my concern. If I'm a department official and I know that they're going to have another meeting, then I'm ragging the puck on this and I'm not giving them what they want.

• (1825)

Ms. Pam Damoff: In fairness, Chair, we don't know that. With the first deadline, I put some of the blame on us for not putting a date on it. They didn't respond in what the committee felt was a timely manner, but we didn't put a date on the first one. You've brought up, and quite rightly, that in the future we need to be more specific on timing.

I'm new to this committee. I'm going to go on good faith that we can do this. From my side, the Liberal side, I certainly will be pushing to make sure that we do get something, but I think it should be a committee decision on whether or not it goes back to the House, Chair.

The Chair: I appreciate the amendment. The amendment is on the floor. I've shared my concerns with respect to it. We may not be able to dispose of it or deal with it as quickly as we might if they do come back and don't give us the information, but the amendment's on the floor.

Is there any further discussion on Ms. Damoff's amendment to the amendment?

Do we have agreement on that? Let's take a vote on Ms. Damoff's subamendment.

(Subamendment agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're now on the amendment by Mr. Villemure, as amended.

Is there any further discussion on that? We don't have agreement, so we're going to go to a vote on Mr. Villemure's amendment as amended.

(Amendment as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We are now on the main motion as amended.

Do we have agreement?

Mr. Barrett, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'm just looking at the time, Chair. I hope that we can get it to a vote, so I'll be very brief.

Mr. Kurek said very well, earlier, that the good faith the government could have been afforded cannot be afforded to them because they have missed deadlines twice for a document that was already prepared and available in both official languages. It should have been furnished to the committee by end of business on the day that the motion was passed or on the first day by which the ministry would have been aware of it, which would have been the next day.

My concern is that the information that's being kept redacted is not personally sensitive information. It's politically sensitive information. We'll be voting against it.

The Chair: Mr. Barrett, the purpose for calling today's meeting was to receive direction from the committee. Two hours later, I think we do have direction.

On the main motion as amended, I'm going to refer to the clerk to call the vote, please.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 7; nays 3 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

• (1830)

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have just a very quick question, Chair.

Can you just clarify that it is 24 hours from the adoption being...? Is that 6:30 tomorrow?

The Chair: I'm going to proceed on the basis that it's 6:30 p.m. tomorrow, 24 hours after the motion has been adopted. Thank you for clarifying that.

That's all the business we have today.

Again, I want to thank all the members for making themselves available, with apologies to the European delegation we were supposed to meet with informally today. We had important business before us that I felt needed to take precedence over that meeting.

Thanks again to all the committee.

The meeting is 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>