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Chair: Mr. John Brassard

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)):
Good morning, everyone.

I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome to meeting number 125 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, the committee is resuming its study on the compliance of a minister with the Conflict of Interest Act.

I've explained to the witnesses about the earpieces. I would remind all members to make sure that their earpieces are in the appropriate places on the table so that we're not causing damage to the interpreters. I want to thank you all for your co-operation on that.

Before we begin, I will go to Mr. Brock on a point of order.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Given the nature of the anticipated evidence and the controversy surrounding it, I will be requesting that both witnesses be sworn in or affirmed to tell the truth.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

You're moving a motion to have the witnesses swear an oath or affirm.

Is there any objection to that?

Mr. Naqvi, go ahead.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I will object to this. We've had this conversation before in other committees with Mr. Brock on the other side asking for something similar. I've always made the point that this is not the practice in parliamentary committees. It is assumed that all witnesses will be telling the truth. This is not required by the Standing Orders either. I think it sets a dangerous precedent.

I think it really undermines the witnesses, that they somehow will not be sharing the truth if they are not sworn in or affirmed, so I request that this motion be denied.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just for clarification's sake, Mr. Brock, you moved this on a point of order. You can't move it on a point of order. I've been notified of this by the clerk.

I see that we have no consensus on this.

I do see Mr. Fisher's hand. I also have Mr. Green and then Mr. Villemure.

Effectively, there's no discussion to be had on the motion at this point because it was moved on a point of order. I will not allow this to happen, so I don't see any further discussion on this.

I see that Mr. Villemure's hand is down.

Mr. Fisher, do you have...?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): I was going to say exactly what you said, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to our witnesses, who are here as individuals.

Mr. Anderson, I want to welcome you to the committee.

Welcome as well to Kirsten Poon, who is here by video conference.

Ms. Poon, you have up to five minutes to address the committee. Go ahead, please.

• (1110)

Ms. Kirsten Poon (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me today.

I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight. There has been considerable conjecture and innuendo in the media over the past couple of months. I understand why that is the case, but I'm here to provide you with the facts. I'm confident that a fair reading of those facts will confirm that the public conjecture is misplaced.

I have known the Honourable Randy Boissonnault since 2009. I count him as a close friend. Over the past 15 years, we have occasionally worked together. We did so before he was elected to public office. After the 2019 election, when Mr. Boissonnault was again a private citizen, we collaborated on projects in 2020 and 2021.

One of our clients included the Edmonton International Airport, whom I have acted for since 2018, before they'd even met Minister Boissonnault. Both Xennex and, later, Navis Group registered as lobbyists in compliance with the requirements of the federal Lobbying Act and the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct. Minister Boissonnault was a shareholder of Xennex, but it's important for this committee to understand that he was not involved in its lobbying activities. He did not help me engage or set up meetings with the federal government during his time as a private citizen, in compliance with his cooling-off period. The core of Xennex and the core of Navis Group is strategy consulting.

In the fall of 2021, Minister Boissonnault was re-elected to public office. At this time, Xennex ceased its day-to-day business operations. To address his compliance obligations under the Conflict of Interest Act, Mr. Boissonnault fully disclosed the Xennex operations. He appointed me as the director of Xennex to manage his business. This arrangement and my own lobbying activities have been regularly and thoroughly disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner. Since the fall of 2021, Xennex has been inactive and merely holds investments. Xennex has not lobbied the federal government. My responsibility as the director is limited to annual returns and tax filings.

I continued my work with the Edmonton International Airport. Here again I would note that my work with the airport predates the engagement of Xennex and Minister Boissonnault. This airport work is conducted through my own company, Navis Group. Minister Boissonnault has no financial interest in Navis Group, and has not done anything to advance the work of Navis Group. He has made no introductions and never intervened on our behalf or on behalf of our clients.

The media speculation has focused on two issues. I want to speak to them here.

First, in March and June 2022, I took meetings with the staff in Minister Freeland's office. During this time, Minister Boissonnault served as the tourism minister and the Associate Minister of Finance. The staff I met with reported to Minister Freeland and did not report to Minister Boissonnault in any way whatsoever. To use the language of the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct, these staff would have had no "sense of obligation" to me, even had they been aware of my connection to Minister Boissonnault. To be clear, I in no way told staff about this connection or otherwise used my connection to Minister Boissonnault to advance the file. I reported these meetings in the Registry of Lobbyists at the time. I'm confident that a fair review of the facts will conclude that I've complied with all of my obligations under the Lobbying Act.

Second, Minister Boissonnault has made public disclosures about outstanding business revenues from my company, Navis, to his company, Xennex. To be clear, the payments received by Xennex from Navis since Minister Boissonnault's re-election are related to contracts received while Minister Boissonnault was a private citi-

zen, before his re-election. He has no economic interest in, has not been involved in and has not received payments for any contracts following his re-election. The suggestion or innuendo that Minister Boissonnault somehow had an economic interest in the outcome of the work that was before the government while being a minister of that government is entirely without merit and factually incorrect. The amount owing to Xennex was an obligation entirely unconnected to the outcome of the engagement. No intervention that Minister Boissonnault made would have affected the amount he received.

I am proud of the business I have built. My success is due to my own hard work. The conjecture that Minister Boissonnault is the reason for any success I've had is frankly false and disheartening. I have never lobbied Minister Boissonnault, his staff or his associates, and he has not helped me in any of these matters. I take my compliance seriously, as does the minister, and I am proud of the work I have done.

I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Poon.

Mr. Anderson, you have up to five minutes to address the committee. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Stephen Anderson (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start by saying how daunting and difficult it is to have one's personal and professional reputation smeared and diminished by those in a position of power and authority, with little to no recourse for a response. While I deeply respect and appreciate the role that parliamentarians, and especially this parliamentary committee, play in holding governments to account and protecting our democratic values, much of what has gone on in relation to this file has felt far more political, personal and targeted than those noble goals. Reputation takes a lifetime to build and can be destroyed in seconds, certainly by people in this room.

I will be the first to admit that not all of my business ventures since 2006 have worked out, but as a handful of you know, that's the nature of being an entrepreneur. What's been 100% consistent across every business I've been part of is that we've been ethical, legal and completely above board. I resent...and will take every option at my disposal to defend myself accordingly.

This great country we call home is divided and made up on a solid foundation that we are all created equally and are all afforded the protections of being Canadian. We may come from different political backgrounds. We may live in a Conservative riding, Liberal, NDP, or Bloc. But one thing that's paramount is that Canadians of all walks of life, even in a Liberal riding, go to church, and that, yes, we have gay and transgender friends who live in a Conservative one, such as me in Alberta. That doesn't make any of us more powerful or inferior than another. We are all treated equally. I have a fundamental belief in equality, and equality for all.

As hard as this may seem for, or to be accepted by, certain members of the committee, we have to call this for what it is. It appears from the beginning of these proceedings that the only fault you are looking for is to blame a successful business person who has spent their life protecting and defending the disadvantages of visible minorities, as well as people of different backgrounds.

As many of you are aware, I have not, will not and have never communicated with any parliamentarian in relation to business. This is highly unethical and was not the case. The Ethics Commissioner has ruled on this in the past few weeks.

Canada has been a champion on the world stage, from open business to free enterprise to equal protections for all people regardless of their background. I resent any connection to the opposite.

When it comes to Global Health Imports, a company I founded with Minister Boissonnault during a time when he was neither in cabinet nor in the House of Commons, this was absolutely the case. I'm glad to see the Ethics Commissioner has reinforced those points.

To the members, let me reinforce the following.

The company was founded by us to provide clients, including government like the City of Edmonton, with access to personal protective equipment at a time when it was both critical and challenging. Mr. Boissonnault has not had anything to do with the business since he was re-elected to the House of Commons in 2021. Given the challenges we faced during COVID-19, we were introduced to a variety of clients in health care in Canada, the U.S. and overseas.

The ongoing litigation in the state of California, which has been recently publicized, while it is complicated and has ties to GHI, has nothing to do with Mr. Boissonnault. Mr. Boissonnault and I have been in touch a grand total of six times since he was re-elected, each time about birthday wishes or some trivial personal matter.

Finally, with regard to the infamous text message featured by a Global News story about “the other Randy”, I hope the members of the committee can understand that this was an unfortunate autocorrect suggesting it was Randy.

On a final point, I am happy to share those messages and the correct name of the individual in the text with the committee members in camera only. I ask this because, after the incredible turmoil I have endured as a result of this story, the person in question is in a personal situation where media exposure could cause even more serious effects to their lives and their family around them. I'm sure the members understand. I have lost not only family but also a long-term relationship due to what has come out.

With that, I am happy to take any questions.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

We now move to the first round of questioning, six-minute rounds, and start with Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead, please.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Anderson, who's Randy?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: As I said in my opening remarks, I would be delighted to share that information with you in camera only, simply based on the turmoil that I have gone through in my personal life.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Sir, that's not how this works. You're obligated to provide fulsome answers to the committee.

I'm going to ask you again, who's Randy?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: “Randy”, as I said in my opening statement, was an autocorrect.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okay.

Who are Shawna and Felix at Global Health Imports?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Shawna Parker was in our shipping department. Felix was the account manager for the Quebec government.

Mr. Michael Barrett: In 2022, who were the partners at GHI?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: The September 2021 federal corporate registries had me as being provincially registered. It was both me and Minister Boissonnault.

Mr. Michael Barrett: According to text messages we have from you, from September 6, 2022, Randy and Felix were to have a partner vote on a wire transfer to your business. It reads, “So we are game tomorrow? Or what do we expect will be the delay tomorrow. I am sending email to Randy and Felix right now, but I know if I send this and we miss tomorrow, it will be done, they will have a partner vote on this.”

It's a partner vote on a multi-million dollar deal. That “Randy” is not an autocorrect. That's Randy Boissonnault. Is that not correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No.

Mr. Chair, I respect the question; however, at Global Health, we had two companies: Global Health Imports and Global Health Care Solutions.

Mr. Michael Barrett: How many “Randys” at GHI have ever participated in partner votes?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: At Global Health Imports, up until September 2021, it was Mr. Boissonnault.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Then you replaced him with another Randy.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: As I told you, it was an autocorrect for another company. I would certainly share that with you if you would like to go in camera.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Then it's not Global Health Imports.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: If you're referring to an ongoing text message that was sent by Global News from the Ghaoui Group—which is where I'm assuming this is going—the Ghaoui Group had a contract in place with Global Health Imports and Global Health Care Solutions.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Another text message from you reads, “Sorry, I'm very confused. I updated Randy, Shawna, Felix and our CFO. Yikes, OMG, this lady has me crazy.” Was that an autocorrect or was that Randy Boissonnault?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Randy Boissonnault was never involved in operating the business of Global Health Imports after September 2021.

Mr. Michael Barrett: We have Randy, Shawna and Felix, and it's a partner call, but you maintain that it's not Randy Boissonnault, so—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chair, I respectfully say that—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Please don't interrupt, sir.

How many people work for Global Health Imports? What's the total staff complement?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It's 121.

Mr. Michael Barrett: How many are named Randy?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: At Global Health Imports, there was one up until September 2021: Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Anderson, what happened to the half a million dollars that was paid to GHI by the Ghaoui Group?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That is ongoing litigation. There was a decision, and it has been publicized by the courts. As of last—

The Chair: I've stopped the clock.

Go ahead, Mr. Green, on the point of order.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): I say this out of respect to the witness. It might be helpful, Mr. Chair, if you apprised the witness of what his privileges are in this committee—what can and can't be used against him—so that he can answer the committee in a full way without having to rely on civil litigation.

It's my understanding, through you, sir, to the clerk or whoever wants to clarify, that he also assumes privilege when testifying here. Therefore, as I understand it, anything that is said here cannot legally be used against him in a civil proceeding. Is that correct?

The Chair: Mr. Green, I was actually going to intervene shortly on this to remind Mr. Anderson that he is in front of a parliamentary committee and that the full parliamentary privileges apply to him as they apply to members. Mr. Anderson has an obligation to answer, to the best of his ability, the questions that are being asked by committee members.

Sir, I'm going to ask that you respect as equally the privileges of members to ask these questions and your obligation to answer them, with an understanding that you are protected by parliamentary privilege.

I am going to continue the clock.

I want to thank you, Mr. Green, for that intervention.

Mr. Barrett, you have two minutes and 31 seconds. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Did Randy Boissonnault receive any benefit from the \$500,000 payment from the Ghaoui Group to your company?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: The Ghaoui Group contract, Mr. Chairman, was entered into in September 2022. As we've reiterated, Minister Boissonnault was not involved with the company after September 2021.

Mr. Michael Barrett: In 2022, where was GHI's office? It was in Edmonton. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: We had two offices, yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Where were they?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Edmonton and Brossard, Quebec.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Texts from you on September 8, 2022, say, “Sorry to be an annoyance. I have them all on me. Everyone is in the office and asking.” “Everyone” is Randy, Shawna and Felix. Is that right?

Who was “everyone” who was on you in respect to that text message?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: In September 2022, we had vandalism, which the Edmonton city police was involved with, at 3:42 in the morning. There were a break and enter and an arson in our facility. We were—

Mr. Michael Barrett: I just need to know who “everyone” was. Was it Randy, Shawna and Felix?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No. It was all employees who worked in the building.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okay.

The text goes on to say, “I have Felix walking in, and Shawna every 15 minutes.” That's in this text message. Was Randy there in Edmonton?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No.

Mr. Michael Barrett: The text continues and says, “Calling Randy now to advise.” Was Randy the principal? Is that why Randy needed to be made aware?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: You're referring to a text message, Mr. Chairman, from 2022. Randy Boissonnault...I did not speak to him in 2022, nor did I send him a text message. He supplied his text messages to the Ethics Commissioner, who has ruled that we haven't spoken.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Let's put it this way. On September 6, 2022, you said you needed to update Randy on a wire transfer because the “west coast is closing in 7 minutes and Randy is in the Vancouver office”.

Do you know why Randy was in Vancouver on September 6, 2022? Liberal cabinet minister Randy Boissonnault was in Vancouver on a cabinet retreat.

You say it's an autocorrect. That's quite the autocorrect, sir.

• (1120)

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, I resent the fact that the member is making an accusation against me. As I said—

• (1125)

Mr. Michael Barrett: I'm not making an accusation. I'm showing you and reading your text—

The Chair: We're over time—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: If you're allowed to ask a question, I should be able to answer.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Just do so honestly.

The Chair: We're past the time, Mr. Barrett. Thank you.

We go to Mr. Fisher, who's online. Mr. Fisher, you have six minutes. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank our witnesses for being present today.

Before I begin my questions to Ms. Poon I will share a few thoughts on what brought us here today. Twice now Conservative members have run roughshod over reasonable process by calling committee meetings and calling witnesses, only to find out, after the passage of those motions, that the Ethics Commissioner looked into the issue and found no issue. We saw it reported in several media outlets that the Ethics Commissioner wrote to Minister Boissonnault to let him know that he reviewed the information twice. We saw this, and here we are. This is the second time the commissioner looked into this innuendo and found that there was no cause for concern. It's also the second time the Conservatives ignored the response from the Ethics Commissioner.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher—

Mr. Darren Fisher: Yes, sir.

The Chair: —I stopped your clock.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: I just remind you that a motion was passed by the committee—

Mr. Darren Fisher: I understand.

The Chair: —in order to have this meeting. A majority of the members voted to have this meeting. It wasn't the Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc or the Liberals, nor was it I who called this meeting. We are acting at the will of the committee. I remind you of that, Mr. Fisher.

You have five minutes and 10 seconds. Go ahead.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will say that, when we had those conversations on those, on our side of the bench we all said that we have an Ethics Commissioner, we provided the information to him, so let him do his work, rule on this on his own time frame and then come back to talk about it if there's an issue. We didn't decide to do that, so here we are today—again. After the second time the Ethics Commissioner said there's nothing to see here, we are still here.

Again, on our side, Mr. Chair, we do our best to stick to the facts.

Ms. Poon, we heard a great deal, as you put it, of innuendo, conjecture and, I want to add, maybe even pure exaggeration from some members on this committee in the past few months. I would like to give this opportunity to you, if you could, to go over some of the basic facts. Can you confirm you have never lobbied Minister Boissonnault?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Thank you for the opportunity to set the record straight.

I have never lobbied Minister Boissonnault or his staff.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you confirm that Minister Boissonnault has never set up a meeting, with federal officials or staff in other ministers' offices, on your behalf?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Minister Boissonnault has never helped me set up any meetings with any officials in any offices.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you confirm that the political staff you met with at Finance Canada reported to Minister Freeland, not to Minister Boissonnault?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: All the staff I met with reported to Minister Freeland. They in no way reported to Minister Boissonnault—not in any way whatsoever.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you confirm again that you did not in any way leverage your relationship with the minister to get those meetings?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I have never leveraged my relationship or connection to Minister Boissonnault to set up meetings.

Mr. Darren Fisher: As far as you know, to your knowledge did Mr. Boissonnault work fully with the Ethics Commissioner to arrange his business affairs after re-election, as the Ethics Commissioner said?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Yes, the minister regularly and thoroughly reports all his activities to the Ethics Commissioner, and he does this every year. He also did, from the very beginning, let the Ethics Commissioner know that I was registered as a lobbyist.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you confirm that your professional relationship with EIA predated its relationship with Minister Boissonnault?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Yes. I started working with the airport in 2018, which predates any relationship or work the minister has done with the airport.

Mr. Darren Fisher: As was noted, during the time you were representing Edmonton International Airport, it received several grants from the federal government. Can you confirm that none of these grants came from departments that Minister Boissonnault was in charge of?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: The minister has never been part of the approval of any grants awarded to the Edmonton International Airport. No departments reporting to Minister Boissonnault have been involved with any of the grants related to the airport, and neither he nor his staff have ever been in any of the approval processes related to the airport.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you confirm that, during the time you worked together between 2019 and 2021, Minister Boissonnault did not participate in any lobbying activity, and never sat in on or arranged meetings with government officials at all during that period?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: The minister was never involved in any lobbying activity and never sat in on any meetings with officials.

• (1130)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can you confirm that you hadn't met Mr. Anderson before today and that you have no insight into the operations of the company Global Health Imports?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Yes. I've never met Mr. Anderson or spoken to Mr. Anderson. I have no insight into any of the operations of Global Health Imports.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Ms. Poon, some members of this committee have expressed concern about Minister Boissonnault's use of the legal name of your company in his ethics disclosure versus the trade name Navis Group. Can you talk a bit about that?

I understand you changed the name of your company to Navis after Minister Boissonnault's re-election. Can you give us the low-down on the timeline of that?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Yes. Actually, this is an important question, and it's one I would like to clarify.

When Minister Boissonnault and I worked together when he was a private citizen, I only used the numbered company as my legal name. My understanding is that when he makes his disclosures, he is supposed to register the legal name. I did not register the trade name until November 2021, which was after his re-election.

I did not tell the minister that I had registered that as my trade name, because I did not feel like that was information relevant to him. I registered the trade name to meet my requirements as a consultant lobbyist. That is also something I would certainly not have told him, as it related to my lobbying activity.

I don't think the minister actually knew about the trade name until a couple of months ago.

My understanding from the beginning was that he was required to disclose the legal name of my company, which is my numbered company name.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you for that clarity.

Much has been made about the fact that you were able to get meetings with officials. However, a significant reason for those meetings is that you were representing EIA. Is that true?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Yes—

The Chair: Give a quick response, please.

Ms. Kirsten Poon: The airport has its own existing relationships.

I'm sorry.

The Chair: That's okay. Thank you.

We're out of time, Mr. Fisher.

[*Translation*]

Next up is Mr. Villemure. He'll be speaking in French, so I would like to advise all witnesses that they'll need to put on their earpieces if they want to hear the interpretation.

Mr. Villemure, you have six minutes.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for that introduction and for the caveat that I'll be speaking in French.

For the benefit of the witnesses, I would like to point out that the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics is responsible for reviewing certain actions by elected officials. It's important to know that this isn't a court of law and that you aren't charged with anything. On the contrary, we're looking for information in response to a motion adopted by the committee. This committee does not replace the Ethics Commissioner either. These are different things.

Mr. Anderson, what is your relationship with Minister Randy Boissonnault?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Minister Boissonnault and I had met in 2019. That was our first time meeting. We started a business together. It was during COVID-19. We haven't had any interaction since.... I think a handful of times, six or seven times, we have communicated. We haven't met in person since he was elected back to office.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much.

How do you know Mr. Boissonnault? Were you friends? Did you have any mutual friends? Were you members of the same business circle?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No, I wouldn't classify Mr. Boissonnault as a friend. We actually met on an airplane from Montreal flying back to Edmonton.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay, thank you.

You know as well as we do that the Ethics Commissioner chose not to pursue this investigation into the allegations of conflict of interest. What do you think of the Commissioner's decision?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I support the decision. I am aware now, yes, since it has come out in the news cycle. I completely agree for the simple reason that we didn't have any communication and we haven't communicated with regard to business relationships since the end of 2021, the September prior to the election.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Why do you think you're here today?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I think I'm here today simply because of a civil litigation suit, which is happening in the province of Alberta, with a customer we had relations with. It has been a legal dispute since 2022, and it's been before the courts with legal counsel, and they have shared their side of the story with a news reporter at Global.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay, but the questions you've been asked so far have been more about your relationship with Mr. Boissonnault than about the ongoing litigation. Is it that relationship that you see as the problem, or is it the ongoing litigation?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I'm sorry, but what was that?

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: You mentioned that the reason you're here today is the litigation that has been going on since 2022 with a California company. However, the questions you've been asked so far have more to do with your relationship with Mr. Boissonnault.

So are we here because of litigation or because of some other reason?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I apologize, Mr. Chair, and thank you for the question.

I believe we're here simply because of a business relationship I had with Mr. Boissonnault from 2020 until 2021. The federal filing showed that he was removed from the organization. However, the legal counsel in Alberta didn't remove him from the provincial registries. I believe we're here simply because certain members of the committee believe that he was involved with Global Health Imports when he has had no operational role and no communication with regard to the company since that time.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Do you think you're here today for political reasons?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Again, I'm not a politician. However, I would answer yes. In my opinion, this has been—

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Ms. Poon, what is your relationship with Minister Boissonnault?

[English]

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Minister Boissonnault and I have been friends since 2009.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you for giving a brief answer.

I'm going to ask you more or less the same questions I asked Mr. Anderson.

The Ethics Commissioner chose to look at the facts and didn't find any evidence that would allow him to launch an investigation. What do you think of his decision?

[English]

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I read in the media reports that the Ethics Commissioner reviewed his business activities and expressed no concern with his compliance with the act and will not pursue the matter any further.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Okay.

I'm going to ask you this question that I also asked Mr. Anderson a few minutes ago: If the Ethics Commissioner didn't find any basis for an investigation, why are you here today?

[English]

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I'm here as a private citizen and I'm happy to answer questions and to assist the committee. Again, I take my obligations very seriously. The minister also takes his obligations very seriously. I have been very careful to meet all of my compliance obligations.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Do you think your presence here has anything to do with the political side of things?

[English]

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I'm a private citizen. Again, I take my compliance obligations seriously, and the minister did as well. In terms of the involvement, I confirm that he and I followed the rules and we worked hard—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Poon.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Villemure.

Mr. Green, you have six minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson, my questions are for you this round. I'm going to put them in a rather rapid-fire way. I may interject to take back the time. I'm not trying to be rude, but I would respect...if you just cut your answers short and allow me to ask the next question.

Take me back to the plane ride. You're on a plane with the minister—or a person who used to be an MP. You sit down, you get chatting, and then from that conversation you develop a multi-million dollar company.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Do you want me to walk you through it?

Mr. Matthew Green: No. Tell me, after that conversation, what happened next?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It was 2019. Private citizen Boissonnault was flying back from Bolivia, I believe. He was down for an election. There was an election and he was part of a coalition. I was flying back to Edmonton. I was in the import-and-export business for wholesale sports. I owned an import-and-export sporting goods equipment retail. COVID-19 was just starting out. I had an import-and-export licence, and we were talking about the needs that parts of the world were facing and that there was a potential that this virus could come to Canada. That was the initial—

Mr. Matthew Green: I respect that, and I understand that you had some involvement with hockey sales and hockey equipment as well—some things, some matters that had been resolved between you and an organization.

With Mr. Boissonnault, though, you had the experience in import-export and he had past experience in government. Together you saw this opportunity, seized upon it and formed a partnership. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

Mr. Matthew Green: Was it a fifty-fifty partnership?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

Mr. Matthew Green: He was not operational.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: He was operational in 2020 and 2021.

Mr. Matthew Green: In the structure of your organization, who reported to whom?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Neither—we reported to each other.

Mr. Matthew Green: Did you report to anybody at any given time?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No.

Mr. Matthew Green: Then you were a principal, he was a principal and it was fifty-fifty.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

• (1140)

Mr. Matthew Green: At the height of your operations, what was the revenue?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: At the height...\$35 million.

Mr. Matthew Green: Then out of that, what did the compensation look like in dividends between the two owners?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I can't speak to his compensation. You would have to ask him that—

Mr. Matthew Green: Well, I mean, respectfully, you can be because you're here as a principal officer—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I am a principal, but at the end of the day I would never, respectfully, disclose someone else's—

Mr. Matthew Green: What was yours? How about that?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It was \$220,000.

Mr. Matthew Green: At fifty-fifty, is it safe to assume his was the same?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay. Now, with that being said, you're in a situation.... You'll note that Mr. Boissonnault, at committee, actually testified that he wasn't really starting a new business but was resuming another business he'd had for 15 years prior, which is, to my understanding, in conflict with a recent *Le Devoir* article that stated he was in journalism—but that's probably for another conversation.

You brought the operational expertise of import-export, so you—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I hadn't been in the export but was [*Inaudible—Editor*]—

Mr. Matthew Green: —would have dealt with wire transfers, shipping and receiving and all of that stuff. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

Mr. Matthew Green: However, in the text messages—let's set aside what the person's name is—you seem to be reporting to somebody. You seem to be needing the direction from somebody who is ultimately making decisions. Who at that time would have been making decisions in your company?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: In 2022 it was solely me: I was the one making decisions. However, we were working with our accountants, as well as with our bankers and shipping and logistics.

Mr. Matthew Green: The text reads, "I am telling you, we are not allocating like this, please reach out and see what the reason is now, you assured me this morning this was done first thing. Be available in 15 for a partner call."

You were being directed, I think it's safe to say, to join a partner call. Who would have been the partner at that time, sir?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I disagree with.... I agree with the context of what you're saying, but I would say that if you look at all communications—which I've offered to this committee—

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Anderson, I've had an accountant before, and an accountant would never, in a client-business relationship, speak to me that way in a text, sir. Who were you reporting to? Who was the other principal?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I was reporting to no one else.

Mr. Matthew Green: It reads, "Be available in 15 for a partner call." Do you agree that the text message is a valid text message, yes or no?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I agree. What you're saying, however, is you're insinuating that I was reporting to Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Matthew Green: I'm not insinuating; I'm stating, quite frankly, that the text, objectively.... I'm here, just objectively looking at this, and I don't find your testimony credible, sir, and I'll tell you why. It's because it reads, "Be available in 15 minutes for a partner call." Only a partner or a principal in a dynamic, in that kind of communication style, could demand you to be on a call. Is that not a safe, objective statement to make?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I would say from your question, yes, but Minister Boissonnault was never involved in 2022.

Mr. Matthew Green: Who was the other...? What partners did you have after that?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: In 2022, with Global Health Care Solutions, there were five that we were managing within the business.

Mr. Matthew Green: How many of them were named Randy?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: There was no Randy involved with Global Health Care Solutions.

Mr. Matthew Green: What about the other company?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Global Health Imports, there was a Randy; Randy Boissonnault was involved until September of 2021, when he stepped away—

Mr. Matthew Green: Did Mr. Boissonnault maintain his 50% share? I've heard you use very specific language. You said he was not operational in his role. Was he still a fiduciary on the company? Was he still receiving dividends?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No.

Mr. Matthew Green: He didn't receive a penny after that?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: After 2021, no.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay.

It's your testimony today that an autocorrect was the cause of all this confusion. Is that what you're...?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I am saying that, yes, I will certainly give the information and the person's name, if the committee wants it, in camera. It is—

Mr. Matthew Green: You seemed to know pretty clearly where Mr. Barrett was going with his line of questioning. I would put it to you that, to me, objectively, it would seem that you are validating the legitimacy of those text messages. Those are real text messages, correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Broken sporadically, but they are text messages to Malvina Ghaoui, yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Right.

The Chair: Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Is that it? Oh, I was just getting started. Okay.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

We'll move to our second round now. We'll go back to Mr. Barrett for five minutes.

Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Minister Randy Boissonnault's office is quoted in media reports as saying that Minister Boissonnault was at a cabinet retreat in Vancouver. The Liberal cabinet retreat was in Vancouver on September 6 to September 8, 2022.

Mr. Anderson, you have said that you had offices in Edmonton. You said today that you had offices in Edmonton and Quebec. But there are text messages from you, from September 6, 2022, where you say you need to update Randy on the wire transfer, because the

west coast is closing in seven minutes and Randy is in the Vancouver office.

Do you know what Randy was in Vancouver on that date?

• (1145)

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No. I did not know that he was in Vancouver on this date.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Well, who was the Randy that was in Vancouver?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: As I have told you, Mr. Chairman, Randy was not involved after September of 2021, and it was an autocorrect.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I don't think I want to get into asking you what you think an autocorrect is, but I can tell you that this isn't that. This isn't that.

It was Randy Boissonnault. It was Randy Boissonnault. There's only one Randy who's been involved in your company. You have said his name is Randy Boissonnault. You, sir, are the person who said Randy's name.

Is it your testimony today that in your nine references to Randy, every one of those nine is an autocorrect?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Yes. Randy Boissonnault was not involved with our operation or in any business relation after September of 2021.

Mr. Michael Barrett: You certainly have said two different things. Were you lying then or are you lying now?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I am not lying in regard to Randy not being involved with the business after September of 2021.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I don't believe you—we'll just get that out of the way—because your story doesn't add up.

We have the reference in the text message of your 121-person company, and you talk about Shawna, Felix and Randy. You can tell us who Shawna is. You can tell us who Felix is. But you can't tell us who Randy is, or you won't tell us who Randy is. That's because it's Randy Boissonnault. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, no, it is not correct.

I will go on to say that I will not tell the person's name simply because Shawna Parker and Felix Papineau, after everything that has happened, are in the same litigation that we are involved in, as employees of the organization, by this particular individual.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Sir, just so you're aware, it's not your choice whether or not to answer the question. You must answer the question fully and truthfully, or you are—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Barrett, I am being truthful. I'm simply—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Not answering the question...which you are not doing, is a contempt of this committee, and there are consequences for contempt. You have an opportunity today to clear the air and to say who the other Randy is. The reason you're not saying it is because it's Randy Boissonnault. Is that right?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, no, that is not correct. As I have said, I will fulsomely give this committee all the information in regard to Randy when we are in camera.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Sir, you had a deadline in June to provide us with communication records. You didn't do it. The reason you didn't do it was that we would have seen these text messages, text messages that implicate the only Randy who's worked at your 121-person company, Randy Boissonnault.

Who bought the interest in the business that was held by a numbered company owned by Randy Boissonnault?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No one did.

Mr. Michael Barrett: There were media reports about how, in June, Randy Boissonnault's numbered company sold his interest in GHI. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, I found out about that yesterday when there was an update to the Global story about how Randy had dissolved his shares. We have not had communication, and I contacted my lawyers this morning to find out if that was the case.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Okay.

Now, is the Randy that you're talking about Randy Boissonnault?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, I didn't bring up Randy's name that time.

You asked whether I knew that Randy had sold his shares in the company—

Mr. Michael Barrett: Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: —and I did not know that he had sold his shares in the numbered company.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I just have to recap for you here.

You talked about Randy in the Vancouver office. With your words, you talked about Randy on the partner call. Multiple times, nine separate times, your words were that there was only one Randy who's worked at the 121-person company and your claim today is that it wasn't Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, that's correct.

Mr. Michael Barrett: That's just not credible.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barrett.

We're going to go to Mr. Bains now for five minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Bains.

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today.

Ms. Poon, I think you indicated that you worked together and that between 2019 and 2021 Minister Boissonnault did not participate in any lobbying activity. Can you confirm that?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: In 2020 and 2021 Minister Boissonnault was a private citizen. He complied with his cooling-off period and he has never been involved in any of my lobbying activities.

• (1150)

Mr. Parm Bains: So the minister never sat in or arranged meetings with government officials at all during that period?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: He never sat in on any meetings, and he has never helped me set up or engage in any meetings with any government officials.

Mr. Parm Bains: What about Mr. Anderson? Can you confirm that you hadn't met Mr. Anderson before today?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I never met Mr. Anderson before today.

Mr. Parm Bains: You have no insight into operations of the company Global Health Imports?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I have no insight into any of the operations of Global Health Imports.

Mr. Parm Bains: Just on the name use, some members have expressed concern about Minister Boissonnault's use of the legal name of your company in the ethics disclosure. I think you spoke about that versus the trade name Navis Group. You changed the name of your company to Navis Group after the election.

How about the grant process? Can you talk a little bit about the grant process? We've heard also in media reports that the government is just handing out grants willy-nilly here, but based on single meetings could you talk in a general sense about the grant application process and how detailed and thorough it is when you're looking to apply for any grants?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: Yes. I'm happy to answer the question. Thank you. This is very important.

The grant application process is very rigorous. It requires a lot of detailed information, and it's reviewed by many eyes. All grant programs have a set of criteria that need to be met before any of the approvals, and this review and approval process takes a long time. It's not just meeting with officials and then receiving a cheque. There is a very arduous grant application process that needs to happen.

Mr. Parm Bains: How long does it take?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: I think it varies. I don't have a lot of experience in this area, but I think it can take months, a year or even longer, depending on what's needed.

Mr. Parm Bains: So for your company, who was putting the grant application forward?

Ms. Kirsten Poon: The Edmonton International Airport put together their grant application.

Mr. Parm Bains: I'm going to move on to Mr. Anderson.

You've confirmed already, I believe, that Minister Boissonnault stepped down as director of GHI following his election. Can you confirm that Minister Boissonnault is not named in any outstanding lawsuits GHI may be dealing with?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

The Chair: I don't think your microphone was on. I don't know, Mr. Bains, whether you got that answer, but he did answer, "That's correct," just so you're aware.

Mr. Parm Bains: That's correct. Okay. Yes, I wasn't sure.

On June 4 Global News reported on a text you had with a representative of a company called the Ghaoui Group, and an exchange. Even though you made the statement to Global, saying the individual, named Randy, mentioned in the exchange was not the minister, can you confirm again...? You indicated that you can provide this information—maybe in camera—but can you maybe provide that in writing at some point?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I'm sorry, but provide what in writing...?

Mr. Parm Bains: The name of the other Randy, the individual you're talking about when you said it was an autocorrect and it was not the minister. You indicated today that you're willing to share that in camera. Can you share that in writing to the committee?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I would share it with the committee, just as the last member asked about.... In June you asked me for records. I did reply back to the clerk and offered to provide the text messages and call logs. I did ask that private information about my health and family be held in camera and not—

Mr. Parm Bains: I'm sorry, Mr. Anderson, but you indicated that you're willing to provide that information in camera. I'm just asking, will you provide the correct information, the correct name, the un-autocorrected name, to the committee in writing in some capacity? Can you submit that to us?

The Chair: Give a quick response, please.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bains.

[Translation]

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to give my time to my NDP colleague.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Green, you have five minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you very much.

Thank you to my friend from the Bloc.

It was reported, in the original reports, that the other Randy was the head of logistics. Do you recall that? You ambiguously admitted to working with another Randy, identified only as the head of logistics. Is that correct?

• (1155)

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That is the story. That is what was published, yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: "That is the story," is that what you said?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I was contacted by a blocked phone number. This was probably in June—I'm not sure of the exact date—I was contacted by someone calling and asking me, "Is Randy there?" I said, "No". They went on to say, "Does Randy

Boissonnault work at the operation?" I said, "No, they don't". They identified themselves as Kristen Poon—or, sorry, not Kristen Poon, but as "Krista Hessey" from Global News. I admit that I did panic when she said, "Is there another Randy?"

Mr. Matthew Green: So you lied....

Mr. Stephen Anderson: To the reporter, I did, yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: I appreciate that; I actually do. Maybe it's the first truth I heard today. I say this because that is a far leap from an autocorrect. You're now admitting, on the record—and it's important you do that, by the way, because you do have to respect the Standing Orders of the House of Commons when asked direct questions—that, in fact, there was no other Randy in logistics. Now your testimony has changed. Now your testimony is that it was an autocorrect. Is the autocorrect still listing a head of logistics or have we determined that, in fact, there is no head of logistics or that they weren't involved in that conversation?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: So, if you're referring to, was I talking about Randy Boissonnault at first—

Mr. Matthew Green: That's not what I asked. I ask you directly: Who's responsible for the head of logistics?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Edward.

Mr. Matthew Green: "Edward". That's a far cry from "Randy".

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Yes.

Mr. Matthew Green: Okay.

When you flip back and forth between GHI.... GHI was the fifty-fifty partnership that you had with Mr. Boissonnault. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

Mr. Matthew Green: The nature of that corporation.... Was it broken down into shares?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It was.

Mr. Matthew Green: When it dissolved it, how did that dissolution of the corporation or of Mr. Boissonnault's shares happen?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: The company is not dissolved.

Mr. Matthew Green: How did Mr. Boissonnault step away financially from the organization? Did you pay him out?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No.

Mr. Matthew Green: This is a company with \$35-million in revenue. He was making \$225,000 a year. Is it your testimony that he walked without any financial compensation?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No. Randy Boissonnault's involvement in Global Health Imports, to my understanding, is that his portion of his ownership was moved into a trust or—

Mr. Matthew Green: He still owns—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Randy is not operational in the business.

Mr. Matthew Green: —but he still owns.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I did not buy him out, if that's what your testimony is.

Mr. Matthew Green: That's correct, yes, because you would know that there would be filings for this. Is that not right?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I didn't buy him out.

Mr. Matthew Green: That's fair enough.

It's a \$35-million company. You're each making \$225,000 a year. Randy steps away because he's elected. His investments are now in trust. In that trust, as the owner, is it still the case that you annually receive \$250,000? Is that salary or dividends?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: There have been no payments since 2022, since the incident that occurred in Edmonton.

Mr. Matthew Green: Is that because there has been no business?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: The business hasn't been operating since 2022.

Mr. Matthew Green: What was left in the bank prior to that?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Prior to what date?

Mr. Matthew Green: Prior to the one you just gave.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: We have been non-operational as we are trying to restart it.

Mr. Matthew Green: Is there money in a holding account somewhere, pending civil litigation?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: There is money in court—

Mr. Matthew Green: Being held....

Mr. Stephen Anderson: —that is being held in court, pending the outcome of the litigation.

Mr. Matthew Green: So you also haven't been paid out. It's frozen. Is that correct?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That is correct.

Mr. Matthew Green: Who are the other five partners at Global Health Solutions?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It was managing employees who were there—

Mr. Matthew Green: The question is, who are the other five partners?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: There were no other partners listed on the registry, just me.

Mr. Matthew Green: For GHS...no other partners?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Listed on the filings, no.

Mr. Matthew Green: There were no other partners in GH and in GHI. You have a partner call. You've only ever had one partner on the record, and that was Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: We had managing directors in the company who were not owners.

Mr. Matthew Green: But a director is not a partner—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Agreed.

Mr. Matthew Green: —so who joins your partner call? You're not going on a call by yourself. Come on, Stephen.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No. There were five individuals who would be involved in any decision or deal that we were making.

Mr. Matthew Green: Who are they?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: One was Shawna Parker. One was Felix Papineau. One was Edward, and the last one I won't name. I simply will not name them, just based on the turmoil that I have gone through, which I don't want them going through.

• (1200)

Mr. Matthew Green: I put to you that your turmoil is becoming more complicated with your testimony. You have the opportunity to put this to rest right now. You could have done it three months ago. I don't want to be here. You could have brought out the other Randy and just laid all of this to rest, but here we are.

The Chair: Mr. Green, you're over time.

Mr. Lloyd, you have five minutes. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Anderson, you expect this committee to believe that you autocorrected at least eight times. We have text message evidence that you used the term "Randy" at least eight times, and you expect us to believe that you autocorrected eight times without correcting yourself even once.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That is the truth, yes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Now, do you think that the Ghaoui Group would be wondering to themselves who this Randy fellow is if there were no Randy involved in your company? You're sending all these text messages referencing a "Randy". Why didn't the Ghaoui Group ever ask who this "Randy" person they're dealing with if it was an autocorrect?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: The Ghaoui Group, in our entire relation from...I think we started communicating in August 2022 right up until just this past Friday with the Ghaoui Group. They were not involved with any communication or linkage to Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: However, it was their understanding that this Randy Boissonnault was a public official. This other Randy you're referencing, the person you won't name, are they a public official?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: They are not, no.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Okay.

Now, you already admitted to this committee, to the country, that you lied to Global News when you told them that there was a Randy who was the head of logistics, and you expect this committee to believe that you had eight autocorrects that went uncorrected. Why should we believe you now?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I'm a private citizen. I have nothing to hide or protect. I'm not...I don't.... I consider Randy Boissonnault a friend, a colleague of mine I met a handful of times. We never hung out publicly. If Randy Boissonnault were involved, I would tell you. He has not been involved since September.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: However, we have been here for three months. As my colleague said, you could have quite easily put this to rest three months ago and told us it was an autocorrect. This turmoil you speak of, which you have gone through and you do not want to put this unnamed individual through, is entirely a creation of your obfuscation of the facts and of your hiding the identity of this person. If you had said the name of this person a couple of months ago there would have been no turmoil, so why did you hide this?

You said you panicked on the phone when you got the call from Global News saying, “Who’s the other Randy?” What did you have to panic about if you had nothing to hide? You just said you had nothing to hide. You would tell us. Why didn’t you tell Global News, then, the truth? What did you have to hide? Why did you panic?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chair, it wasn’t panicking about Global News. I had been told and contacted by Global News previously that Global News was working on a story in relation to ongoing litigation with Global Health Imports, that the linkage between Minister Boissonnault...he was still listed as a partner within the Alberta filings and it had not been removed, but it was removed from the federal filings. Based on the litigation that was going on with the Ghaoui Group, on our advice of counsel we were instructed not to speak to them.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: You panicked, but you could have just as easily given the media an easy answer. “It’s not Randy Boissonnault. It’s not anyone named Randy. In fact, it’s this other person.” However, you led us on this merry chase for three months. It was not merry for you, unfortunately, but you’re the cause of your own misfortune here, sir.

With that, I will give my last minute to Mr. Brock.

Thank you.

The Chair: You have a minute and 45 seconds, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Anderson, you are a self-admitted liar. You lack any credibility whatsoever. It really begs the question how much Minister Boissonnault paid you for your silence.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, I have—

Mr. Larry Brock: How much did he pay you?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I have not had any communication with Minister Boissonnault.

Mr. Larry Brock: You’ve had only one other partner in your entire operation with GHI and GHS. You’ve confirmed that is Randy Boissonnault.

The word “partner” in all of these email exchanges was never autocorrected, was it?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: There was no email communication.

Mr. Larry Brock: In the text messages. In those text messages, the word “partner” was never autocorrected, was it?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It was not referring to Randy Boissonnault.

• (1205)

Mr. Larry Brock: You’ve had unusual contract wins. You’ve had half a dozen lawsuits, nearly \$8 million in court-ordered debts, civil

allegations of fraud and a fire 16 days after at a warehouse by three arsonists. Yesterday, we learned you got into business with a Dominican drug dealer.

Nobody believes you. No one at this committee believes you. Canadians don’t believe you. Fess up. The jig is up.

The only other “Randy” that was, according to you, autocorrected nine times, was in fact Minister Randy Boissonnault. Admit it.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Mr. Chairman, it was not Randy Boissonnault.

Mr. Larry Brock: Who was it?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: As I said in my opening statement, I am happy to provide the name of the individual in question—

Mr. Larry Brock: That’s not good enough.

Ghaoui’s understanding, according to their communications—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: —with you—

The Chair: Mr. Brock, your time’s up.

We’ll go to Mr. Naqvi for five. Go ahead. I’ll then have two and two left, and then we’ll call it a day.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Chair. I appreciate the time.

There are a lot of different facts going around, and I think that’s creating some confusion. I just want to make sure that I put this on the record again.

It’s clear that Minister Boissonnault has provided his text messages to this committee, and they showed no phone calls, no text messages and no WhatsApp messages to Mr. Anderson. Those are before this committee.

I also understand that when it comes to GHI, reading the media reports, the minister has unconditionally surrendered for cancellation his shares in the business. In other words, he’s not sold them. There was no monetary gain from the disposal of his shares in the company, and that’s been reported in the media as well. I think it’s really important that we have that clarified.

I will go to Mr. Anderson. Sir, I agree with some of my colleagues’ assertions that you’re creating a bit more confusion than is necessary in answering the questions. You have testified again and again that the Randy mentioned in the text messages in question is not Randy Boissonnault. That relationship ended in September 2021.

The question, then, is who are you talking about?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I've said over and over it is not Randy Boissonnault. It is actually a female who worked in our organization and was heavily involved in managing the day-to-day business.

She is going through her own ordeals and she has asked us not to reveal this, based on the assertions of what she has seen me and Shawna go through. That is why I have said I would be happy to give that information in camera, knowing that person is not going to go through the same thing we've all endured.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Okay, so you are willing to share that information. You're trying to protect, for personal reasons, an individual who you are now saying is a female. Thank you for sharing that information.

In an answer to my colleague Mr. Bains, you agreed to provide that information in writing. Would you confirm that you will provide the name of that individual in writing to this committee?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I will provide the information if it's in camera, yes. For sure.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: You earlier agreed to provide that information in writing. Are you agreeing to provide that information, the name of that person, in writing to this committee?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I'm not sure if I would.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: You're not sure. So the only way you will provide this information is in camera. That's what you've suggested.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I think that's what's creating so much—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: I can certainly talk to the—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It would provide definitely clarity—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: A hundred per cent.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: —that your business relationship ended with Randy Boissonnault in September of 2021 and that the Randy that you claim is an autocorrect is actually some other individual.

That name, in order to protect that individual, you are unable to provide right now.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Correct.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I just want to get this again, one more time. You have had no business or personal relationship with Mr. Boissonnault since September of 2021, just before he was elected.

• (1210)

Mr. Stephen Anderson: That's correct.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have time for two and two. I haven't got anybody on the list.

Mr. Brock, am I going to you? Okay.

Mr. Naqvi will be after that.

You have two minutes.

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Anderson, it's time to stop playing games. It's time for your come-to-Jesus moment and to be honest. It was very difficult for you to admit that you lied to Global News.

You panicked. I don't know why you would panic at that earliest opportunity other than to suggest that you were protecting your friend Randy Boissonnault—Minister Randy Boissonnault.

At all material times, pursuant to emails and other documentation reviewed by Global News—that you lied to—it was always Ghaoui's understanding that when you referenced Randy, it was a reference to Minister Boissonnault. You had told Ghaoui on a number of occasions that Randy Boissonnault was a partner in GHI and a public official. This was confirmed by Ghaoui to Global News. Now, clearly you're not going to say that they are lying, because this is information that Ghaoui received from you. The only one who's lying right now is you.

I'm trying to understand why you insist on continuing to lie to protect Minister Boissonnault other than some perhaps financial arrangement between the two of you. On that \$500,000 you pocketed, you had no intention of delivering the goods. You gave back, what, \$10,000 of that? You've never paid back that \$500,000, have you?

Answer the question: Did you pay it back?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: No, you're mistaken when you say—

Mr. Larry Brock: Did you pay it back—

Mr. Stephen Anderson: You're mistaken when you say—

Mr. Larry Brock: —yes or no?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It's not a yes-or-no answer.

Mr. Larry Brock: Then I'll move on.

How much of that \$500,000 went to Randy Boissonnault?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Zero.

Mr. Larry Brock: Zero.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: Yes.

Mr. Larry Brock: On the autocorrect, whose name were you trying to say that either your Apple device or your Samsung device was changing to Randy? Who were you trying to say that was a partner?

Mr. Stephen Anderson: You are referring to an individual that worked in our office—

Mr. Larry Brock: No, sir. No. You referenced a partner.

The Chair: Okay—

Mr. Larry Brock: You've identified already that you had only one partner in your lifetime with GHI.

The Chair: Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: That is Boissonnault. Who were you trying to say? Who was the other partner named Randy?

The Chair: Please answer quickly, Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Stephen Anderson: It was not Randy Boissonnault.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

I have two more minutes. I'm going to Mr. Naqvi, I think.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yes.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Chair, I was just going to say that I think for the next part of the meeting, the committee was going in camera anyway. Why don't we just go in camera and hear the name?

The Chair: I'll need a motion to do that, Mr. Naqvi.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Barrett, on your point of order.

Mr. Michael Barrett: This will stop Mr. Naqvi's time and give him a moment there for his motion.

The Chair: His time has been stopped, yes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: If the committee does elect to go in camera, are you able to provide the committee with an update on whether or not the previous information requested from the witness has been provided to the committee with respect to his phone records? Has he provided those?

The Chair: I can inform the committee that that information has not been provided up to this point. Mr. Barrett, there have in fact been multiple requests made by the clerk for Mr. Anderson to provide that information.

On a point of order....

Mr. Naqvi has the floor, Mr. Brock.

Are you done with your point of order? Okay. Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Naqvi.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Chair, I move:

That the committee proceed to sit in camera; and that Mr. Anderson share the name of the individual referred to with the committee.

The Chair: Okay. We have a motion from Mr. Naqvi. It's been duly moved to move in camera to have Mr. Anderson provide the name of the "Randy". Do I have consensus for that?

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: We do not have consensus to move in camera, so I am going to call the vote.

Go ahead, Madam Clerk.

An hon. member: It's not a dilatory motion. Shouldn't we have debate on it?

The Chair: Let me clarify that.

I'm going to ask Mr. Naqvi to state his motion one more time for me, please.

• (1215)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yes. I simply moved that we move in camera and have Mr. Anderson share the name.

The Chair: Okay. That's not a dilatory motion. It's debatable, because you're making a specific request to have Mr. Anderson provide the name. If it were simply to move in camera, that would be a non-debatable motion.

So, we will have debate. I'm going to open it up to Mr. Barrett.

Go ahead.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, the reason I asked.... I'm keenly interested in getting the name of this other Randy.

The testimony from the witness is not credible.

Mr. Anderson said he'll offer the information in camera. He had a June deadline to provide the text, instant messaging and phone call logs for the dates outlined by the committee. He missed the deadline. He then said he would only do so if the committee agreed to the protection of personal information, and the Chair provided that assurance. He knew he was coming today, and he didn't provide it. That's operating in bad faith.

We have answers that are just not credible, and I challenge anyone around the table to say they believe his responses with respect to who the other Randy is or that what was in those text messages was an autocorrect. That's absurd.

His answers aren't credible. He has not been a good-faith actor in providing the information requested by this committee or meeting his obligations when he said he would provide it.

We're left really having to weigh what the value is of closing a public meeting, because we have a motion we would like to move with respect to the testimony we've heard today, and that opportunity will be lost should we move in camera.

Now, if the decision of the committee is to simply move in camera to hear the response from Mr. Anderson.... Frankly, Chair, he could write the name on a piece of paper and hand it to the clerk. The clerk could then confirm that she's received the name and that it will be shared with members confidentially. That would negate the need for us to move in camera.

I'm not comfortable with us shutting down a public hearing when we have a witness who has refused to answer questions, which is in contempt of this committee. He's refused to answer—and he does not have the privilege to refuse to answer—so we can't support moving in camera.

I would just say quite simply that the witness could write the supposed individual's name and provide it to the clerk. The clerk could walk over there and pick it up. It requires no translation. It could be treated confidentially and circulated to members with an understanding that it is confidential.

There's no other information to solicit from the witness in camera that's been proposed by Mr. Naqvi. That would then allow us to move a motion that's germane to the proceedings today, because the way the witness has conducted himself is absolutely unacceptable.

Canadians deserve answers, and that's why the committee chose to meet today. It was to get answers.

The Chair: I appreciate that, Mr. Barrett.

I have a speakers list on the motion by Mr. Naqvi to move in camera so that Mr. Anderson can provide the name. Next on the list, I have Mr. Brock.

Mr. Brock.

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Chair.

I don't want to belabour the point. I concur wholly with the commentary by my colleague, Mr. Barrett. The danger I see—and this is my opinion only—with disclosing the identity of this mysterious Randy in camera is that it denies Canadians, who have been dealing with this ethical issue, this potential breach and this potential act of criminality from Minister Randy Boissonnault for the better part of two months the ability...

Given that this particular witness had every opportunity to give us that information, not only today, but a month and a half prior to today, pursuant to a ruling of this particular committee, it concerns me. In my view, it concerns Canadians, who are watching this and who want to know, finally, who the Randy is who was referenced in these very damning text messages.

Their interest is even more piqued, I would suggest, because we have Mr. Anderson now as a self-admitted liar. It really goes full circle on my request, which I made incorrectly, and I apologize to the committee. I should have brought the motion simply as a motion, not as a point of order, because there is absolute merit. It is not a signal at all of the veracity or ethical position taken by witnesses, but it is a standard practice that has been adopted in numerous committees when we have very important ethical issues to be debated and discussed. This is a commonplace issue that is happening across numerous committees. I dare say there's probably some reference in our green book to the ability to ask for this.

I find it ironic that my Liberal colleague Mr. Naqvi, a former attorney general of Ontario, would take the position that we should just presume that witnesses who testify at committee are telling the truth, without that ambit of scrutiny, the honest oath made on a bible or some other religious instrument, or an affirmation to tell the truth. It binds the conscience of individuals to give us the straight facts, without holding anything back and without embellishing. In this particular case, he admits that he lies.

In the former environment that Mr. Naqvi and I participated in, it happens every day in thousands of hearings in Ontario. It does not presume a lack of credibility with any witness. It's just a requirement that binds the conscience.

I think Canadians, given all of these circumstances, and now that we're hearing this witness is adamant that there is so much secrecy surrounding this particular surname of another Randy—if it is even Randy, because we don't even know if the first name of this individual is Randy.... I heard the evidence that it's perhaps a female, so

was it autocorrected to "Randy" spelled with a "y" instead of with an "i"? Who knows? Maybe it's a completely different surname altogether.

These are questions that not only parliamentarians are grappling with, but the nation is grappling with. The nation deserves to know the identity of this other person today, full stop.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

Just before I go to Mr. Lloyd, who's next, I am going to ask the witnesses to remain in place until the committee disposes of this motion.

I have Mr. Lloyd on the list. Go ahead, Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I have nothing further to say.

Thank you.

The Chair: The motion presented by Mr. Naqvi is that the committee move in camera to have Mr. Anderson reveal who the other Randy is. Do we have consensus on that? We do not have consensus.

We're going to vote on the motion as presented.

We have a tie; my vote is "no".

(Motion negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: Mr. Brock, you have the floor.

• (1225)

Mr. Larry Brock: I'm prepared to move a motion, Mr. Chair. I understand it has been delivered to Madam Clerk in both official languages. I wish to read it into the record at this time:

That the Chair prepare a report to the House outlining the questions that Stephen Anderson refused to answer, including the identity of Randy that is referenced in Global News reporting and text messages and the committee call Minister Boissonnault to testify for 2 hours within 21 days of this motion being adopted.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brock.

The motion has been moved.

Give me a second, Mr. Green. I want to make sure the clerk is in receipt of the motion.

Madam Clerk, has it been distributed in both official languages?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Nancy Vohl): Yes.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Brock, do you have any other things to say before I go to Mr. Green on the motion?

Mr. Larry Brock: No, I have nothing further to say on the motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Green, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move an amendment, that the committee commence the study at the resumption of the regular sitting of the House of Commons.

I'll speak to it for a moment, sir.

The Chair: Give me a second here. I want to make sure the clerk has the amendment.

I haven't seen the actual motion yet; I know it has been sent, but I haven't had time to view it. Basically, what you're looking to do is to replace "within 21 days of this motion being adopted", if I'm to understand Mr. Brock correctly, to say the study will commence at the resumption of Parliament.

Mr. Matthew Green: Yes. Where it says, in the last line, "testify for 2 hours", I'm fine with that, but we will strike out "within 21 days of this motion being adopted", and we'll replace it with "at the resumption of the regular sitting of the House of Commons."

The Chair: That would be the resumption of Parliament. Is that correct?

Mr. Matthew Green: Correct.

The Chair: Okay. That is September 16.

Okay, and that—

Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know that there are lots of people watching with interest who have all types of theories about how these committee dynamics go, some grounded through their experience in watching procedures and others completely disconnected from reality in terms of how they view these things going.

As I've said at other committees, I view the time in my constituency as incredibly valuable to hear from Canadians, to reconnect with the people of Hamilton Centre, to help with casework and to help with my office. Quite frankly, this sordid tale that we've watched unfold over the last three months is an important issue for Canadians. I think anybody watching this committee would agree that the position in the line of questioning I took was to get to the truth. It was to fully understand what's at hand here. I support a further investigation. However, in terms of urgency and importance, I don't think this is so urgent that it needs to be dealt with within 21 days, given the fact that many members of the House have very committed schedules within our communities.

You know, Mr. Chair, I take exception to.... Maybe not "exception", but I do find it amazing the way that some of my colleagues define "work". I would put it to you that this is my job. This is a parliamentary job. We do it. I supported this meeting today, because I was very keen to hear testimony from Mr. Anderson and Ms. Poon on their schedule, but our work is back in the constituencies. Our work does involve hearing from residents, having those meetings and being there. We sit a very extended schedule in our regular hours.

For those reasons, Mr. Chair, I think this would be better suited for when we resume. This is not a cover-up. This is not whatever. The point I was trying to make in previous committees was that committees are at the direction of the members. This is why I appreciate Standing Order 106, which requires members to find another partner, another party, to support what they want to do, absent of which, in a minority in particular, we shouldn't just be setting a schedule without the full participation of the committee.

All of that is to say that 21 days is not necessary for me. Given the information that's come out over the last week, I will be very keenly interested to see what comes out over the next three weeks, given the revelations that happened here at committee. I think that would give us a better line of questioning to the minister and allow us to more substantively engage with what's before us today.

So before anybody wants to get all riled up with these pseudo-fake-rage-machine click farms and the degenerate emails that you get from people, threatening you for treason and everything else, just touch grass, people. Touch grass. Realize that we're here. We're sent to do a job. We're going to do the job. We're going to do it on our terms. We're going to get to the bottom of this.

Thank you.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

[*Translation*]

We have three members who want to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Villemure, you have the floor first.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As my colleague just said, we're assessing something that's very important. However, I fully support the amendment because, in my opinion, the emergency criterion hasn't been met. The facts will remain the same and won't change over time. Mr. Anderson's answer won't change, nor will that of many others. There may also be other revelations, between now and later.

Also, the time we spend in our ridings isn't time when we do nothing, nor is it something to be devalued.

So the main reason I support the amendment is that it's not urgent. However, I still remember that it is important. So one of the two criteria is met, but not both. For that reason, I will be supporting the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd, go ahead, please, on the amendment.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Thank you.

I appreciate the spirit in which the amendment by my colleague Mr. Green was brought forward, but I have to say that I couldn't disagree more.

There is a cloud of suspicion hanging over this Liberal government. There is a cloud of suspicion over this minister. I think after today's meeting, where I think Canadians were hoping to get some light and some answers, there are even more questions to be asked. For us to wait until September 16, two months from now, to get the answers to these questions I think would undermine the credibility of our government. It would undermine the credibility of this cabinet minister, who I'm sure, if he truly is innocent, would like the truth to get out as quickly as possible.

It would be my hope that committee members would support our original motion by voting against this amendment so that we can get this meeting within the next 21 days, deal with the very important questions that have been raised at this committee today and truly get to the bottom of this very suspicious affair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lloyd.

Next up are Mr. Fisher, Mr. Naqvi and Mr. Green.

I go now to Mr. Fisher on the amendment.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was going to speak to the main motion, but I will speak shortly to the amendment.

I agree with Mr. Green that this isn't something that has to happen within 21 days. However, what I do find just a bit ironic is that, in the original motion, the main question is to get the answer, which we just tried to go in camera to get. It just shows that some members aren't necessarily interested in knowing what the name is: they want to know the name, be able to share the name and use the clips. Of course, in camera you can't use the clips, so that's not going to be the result they, maybe, hoped to get. However, on the amendment, I think Mr. Green is right.

I will go to other speakers, and I will speak, probably, on the main motion after we get off the amendment.

● (1235)

The Chair: Mr. Naqvi, go ahead on the amendment, please.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Chair, I ask whether you could suspend the meeting for a moment, just for us to contemplate the main motion.

On the amendment, I agree with Mr. Green's assertion that there's a lot of work that needs to be done during the weeks we have in our constituencies. I'm subbing in this meeting, but it's taken, now, at least two hours away from constituency meetings, which I had to reschedule. This is an important and sacred time for all of us to work with our constituents, so it would be better that this committee continue its work when the House is back.

The Chair: I'm not going to suspend for that, Mr. Naqvi. The motion is fairly clear. I think the amendment is fairly clear—

Mr. Matthew Green: I want back on the list now.

The Chair: Well, you're on the amendment, Mr. Green, so I'm not going to suspend the meeting. We'll deal with the amendment first and then go to the main motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Green.

Mr. Matthew Green: Thank you.

To go back to the process as it stands, particularly given the refusal to answer direct questions. For those of you who follow, you will know that it is often the case that the NDP consistently demands documents and evidence, and is supportive of having witnesses provide testimony. Although we're not judicial or even quasi-judicial in nature, I think it's important that we recognize the powers Parliament has.

Having said that, if there were questions related to the refusal, they couldn't be dealt with procedurally until the House rises, anyway. That's just a fact. I'm of the mind that we use that timeline, which gives us the parliamentary processes and procedures when we are sitting again. As it relates to the Speaker and as we were going to, potentially, report back to the House, it's in keeping with the work that we're doing rather than getting ahead of it. That's my position.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

Mr. Naqvi, I have you back on the list here. Go ahead on the amendment, please.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Chair.

The reason I asked for a suspension is that I want to move a slightly variation to the motion, make an amendment to the motion, which I think there will be room for understanding for among the members. However, we will need that time during that suspension period, which will allow for the committee to actually fulfill its purpose.

I can read that draft motion—

The Chair: Just so I'm clear, are you moving an amendment to the amendment, or are you moving an amendment to the main motion?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's an amendment to the main motion.

The Chair: Okay, so why don't we dispose of Mr. Green's amendment first; then you can have the floor and can move your amendment to the motion whether it's been amended or not?

I don't see any other discussion.

Oh, Mr. Fisher, I see your hand now. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher: It's an interesting meeting: usually we have most of our members, or all of them, in person, and of course today we have more here virtually.

Mr. Chair, you very often agree to suspend when discussion can happen, so I ask again that you honour Mr. Naqvi's request for a short suspension so that we can have a quick chat about this and see if we can get to a place at which the committee's happy.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher, I already said I'm going to deal with Mr. Green's amendment first. Mr. Naqvi indicated that he's going to move a further amendment to the main motion. So I can determine that after I hear the amendment.

I'm going to ask the committee...and I need some frankness on this. My understanding is that Mr. Anderson has a flight he needs to catch, and Ms. Poon is also busy. I asked them to stay. Is there any need for these witnesses to remain at this point, understanding that there is a logistical...? I'm hearing noes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Villemure doesn't agree either.

[*English*]

Ms. Poon and Mr. Anderson, I'm going to dismiss you as witnesses. I appreciate your time in front of the committee today. Safe travels. Thank you for being here.

Let's continue.

I have no further discussion on the amendment by Mr. Green. I think the amendment is fairly clear.

Do we have consensus on the amendment? We do not. Okay.

We're going to take a vote on the amendment.

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

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

I'm going to go to Mr. Naqvi.

I know that you wanted to speak on it, Mr. Fisher, but I think Mr. Naqvi wants to speak first.

Go ahead, Mr. Naqvi.

• (1240)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Chair. I sincerely appreciate this.

I'll read what I want to capture, and this is where we would want a suspension so that I can work with my colleagues to see if we can turn it into an amendment or a stand-alone motion, if it's agreed upon by the members. I'll read what I have in mind.

I move:

That, the committee order Stephen Anderson to produce all of the previously requested documents, in addition to the name referenced in today's testimony, and if those documents are not received by Friday, July 19 at 12:00 p.m., the Chair prepare a report to the House outlining the questions that Stephen Anderson refused to answer in writing and during testimony.

The rationale is that, as noted, there are still outstanding documents—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Naqvi. Have you submitted the text? Is there anything in writing on that? I think we—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I can do that. I just wanted to share the gist of what I'm suggesting that we do.

The Chair: On that issue, I am going to suspend to make sure that all other members have it.

Is that a problem for you? No. Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to suspend for a couple of minutes. I want to make sure that all members have it in front of them and that the clerk has it, so she can distribute it.

Before I suspend, I'm going to remind all members that we need to deal with an issue in camera on an access to information request, and there's a deadline coming up. I need time for that. Okay?

We're going to suspend for a couple of minutes.

• (1240)

(Pause)

• (1310)

The Chair: I want to thank everyone for their patience. The meeting is resuming.

I am going to start with Mr. Brock.

Mr. Brock, you had a motion that you moved. What would you like to do, sir?

Mr. Larry Brock: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Given the discussions that took place during our stand-down, I think at this point it is productive for me to withdraw the motion. I'll be seeking unanimous consent from the committee to do that.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to withdraw the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion withdrawn)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Naqvi, I'm going to go to you. I understand, sir, that you are going to move a motion you were speaking about before the suspension.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to Mr. Brock for withdrawing his motion, and to all the members for the conversations.

Based on the conversation, I'm moving the following:

That, the committee order Stephen Anderson to produce all of the previously requested documents, in addition to the name referenced in today's testimony, and if those documents are not received by Friday, July 19 at 12:00 p.m., the Chair prepare a report to the House outlining the questions that Stephen Anderson refused to answer in writing and during testimony.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Naqvi.

The motion is in order. It has been distributed in both official languages to all members of the committee.

Do you have anything you want to say on it, sir?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: No, thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Villemure, the floor is yours.

Mr. René Villemure: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I've just received the motion. I don't have a problem with it, but I would like some clarification from Mr. Naqvi.

The information that will be received, including the name of the person we're seeking to obtain, won't be kept secret and can be publicly disclosed, correct?

The Chair: Yes, I think that all the committee members here agree that the name should be made public.

Mr. René Villemure: Okay. It's because, earlier, when we asked Mr. Anderson to send the name in writing, it wasn't clear whether the information was public. I want to be sure that everything will be made public.

The Chair: Yes. It will certainly be public, Mr. Villemure.

[*English*]

I don't see any other hands or any other discussion on the motion, so I'm going to ask if we have consensus on the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I want to thank members of the committee for their work on coming to an agreement on that.

I'm going to Mr. Barrett now.

Mr. Barrett, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Chair, I move:

That, in relation to the study of the compliance of a minister with the Conflict of Interest Act, Minister Randy Boissonnault be called to appear before the committee during a regular meeting on the week of September 16, 2024, for two hours.

The Chair: The motion has been moved by Mr. Barrett, and it's in order.

Do we have any discussion on the motion?

Go ahead, Mr. Naqvi.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: There are two things I want to say.

One, Minister Boissonnault has been at this committee, and he has testified in detail and provided documents, etc. I appreciate that the request is for when the House is back.

If I could maybe seek a friendly amendment, I would suggest that one hour should be sufficient given the time that he has already spent at this committee, and it would probably work best for scheduling. He could be made available for one hour.

The Chair: If you're going to move an amendment, I need you to move it officially, Mr. Naqvi, because friendly amendments don't work around here.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I move an amendment that the minister come for one hour.

The Chair: The amendment that it be for one hour has been moved by Mr. Naqvi.

On the amendment, is there any other discussion? I don't see any.

Do we have consensus on the amendment?

We do not. We will call the vote on the amendment to reduce the time from two hours in the motion to one hour.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: We're on the main motion as amended right now.

Is there any other discussion on that? I see none.

Do we have consensus on the main motion as amended?

Mr. Villemure and Mr. Naqvi, I haven't seen any indication.

We are now on the main motion as amended. Is there consensus?

(Motion as amended agreed to on division [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

• (1315)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I have no other business—well, we do have other business, don't worry, I am going to say that—in relation to this issue, Madam Clerk.

We have a study budget that needs to be approved, in the amount of....

Madam Clerk, can you just remind me of what the study budget was for this study?

I'm sorry, members of the committee. I did have it here. I don't know where it went.

The study amount is \$3,450, which takes care of airfare, headsets and other issues.

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you.

I don't have any other public business.

We are going to move in camera to deal with an access to information request—just give us a couple of minutes.

Thank you to our clerk for organizing this, to our analysts and our technicians for being here in the middle of summer. To our guest clerk today, thank you for your advice as well. To our interpreters as well, thank you.

The meeting is suspended for a couple of minutes.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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