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Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

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• (1630)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC)): We are in public now, and we are on committee business.

I have a list. I have Matt Green, Michael Barrett and Iqra Khalid. I'm going to start with Mr. Green.

Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to table the motion that I put on notice yesterday:

That in relation to media reports that privacy breaches of more than 31,000 accounts at the Canada Revenue Agency have gone unreported and resulted in the loss of millions of dollars, the committee commence a study of at least two meetings and invite to appear the Minister of National Revenue, Marie-Claude Bibeau; the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Philippe Dufresne; and representatives from H&R Block, and that the committee report its findings to the House.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

The motion was put on notice, and we are in committee business, so the motion is in order.

Go ahead, Ms. Khalid, on the motion, please.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

First, I'd like to thank Mr. Green for bringing forward this very important issue. I think it is absolutely in the right of the ethics committee to be delving into issues such as this, and they mean a lot in maintaining the public trust in our agencies and our democratic institutions.

I do have a couple of amendments to make to this motion, with unanimous consent, possibly, or the will of the committee.

First and foremost, I will ask that we restrict the timeline that we are going to study. Where it says, "That in relation to media reports that privacy breaches of more than 31,000 accounts at the Canada Revenue Agency", I would like to add "between 2020 and 2023" to contextualize exactly what it is that we're talking about.

Then, I would also propose that we delete, right after that, "have gone unreported and resulted in the loss of millions of dollars", because I think that is something that would be in the report, in what comes after or based on what we hear from witnesses. I don't think we should pre-empt any of the testimony.

I would also like to add a couple of witnesses to this. In addition to the Minister of National Revenue, Marie-Claude Bibeau, I think we should also add the commissioner, Bob Hamilton, and representatives from the Canada Revenue Agency to come to talk about this because, oftentimes, the way things are structured, this is not just a ministerial problem or issue that needs to be resolved. I think this is also an agency issue that they need to come to speak to as well.

I have copies of my amended motion that I can circulate, Chair, if that's okay, for members to look at while we discuss this.

The Chair: I will need an electronic copy for Monsieur Ville-mure.

There's one bit of confusion that I had. Hopefully this will clear it up. It's about breaches that were reported at the Canada Revenue Agency between 2020 and 2023, so that puts a timeline on the study for those four years, effectively.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Chair, I'm sorry. I'm having trouble hearing you. There's a lot of chit-chat.

The Chair: We have translation looking for a copy of the amendment.

Let's keep the chatter down while we discuss this.

"Between 2020 and 2023" is effectively a four-year timeline, and then you're looking to strike, in your amendment, "have gone unreported and resulted in the loss of millions of dollars". You're looking to strike that part.

You're then adding a couple of witnesses, and that includes Commissioner Bob Hamilton and representatives from the Canada Revenue Agency. I suspect that you'll leave it for us to determine, through the analysts, who those representatives are.

That clarifies that. We're on the proposed amendment.

[Translation]

Does Mr. Villemure have a copy?

We don't seem to have an electronic copy for Mr. Villemure.

Mr. Villemure, I'll read the motion as amended by Ms. Khalid:

That, in relation to media reports that privacy breaches affected more than 31,000 accounts at the Canada Revenue Agency between 2020 and 2023, the committee commence a study of at least two meetings and invite to appear the Minister of National Revenue, Marie-Claude Bibeau, the commissioner, Bob Hamilton, and representatives of the Canada Revenue Agency.

Ms. Khalid is proposing three amendments to the motion. We will send them out electronically.

[*English*]

Mr. Green, I see your hand up on the amendment proposed by Ms. Khalid. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Matthew Green: One of the things that occurred to me is this. We still don't quite know the extent of the payouts. The one consideration I would ask for is that we say "since 2020", because there's a very real likelihood that breaches that happened in 2023 could have resulted in fraudulent payouts in 2024.

It's not material. We just want to go for the entirety of... I don't want to cut this year out because, if there are material impacts, then...

• (1635)

The Chair: I don't see that being an unreasonable demand, but I'll go to Ms. Khalid at this point.

Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thanks, Chair.

That is what my understanding is. Based on the article, we're talking about 31,000 accounts reported between these years. I don't think what happened in between that is impacted by these timelines. We're not looking at accounts beyond what you're asking for in this motion. We're not looking at accounts, say, in 2024, where something may have happened. We're looking at the timeline of what was reported.

Is that correct?

Mr. Matthew Green: We don't know what we don't know. What was reported came after deep research by the investigators. I don't see what the material issue is in extending it to encapsulate that, should there be some issues that happened in 2024.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I don't see any issue with that.

Mr. Matthew Green: Perfect.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: However, 2024 is not finished yet.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Our taxes come out in 2025.

Mr. Matthew Green: That's where the fraud is taking place. It's on the payouts, not the filing dates.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Would it be okay if, for now, we talk about these fiscal years? Then, if something material comes out of the witness testimony—we added more witnesses as opposed to taking some away—we can expand the scope of the motion.

Mr. Matthew Green: I'm open to debate.

The Chair: I see both sides of the issue.

I see what you're saying, Mr. Green. I don't think yours is an unreasonable request.

I think Ms. Khalid's proposition that perhaps, over the course of the testimony... I mean, it would be a very simple question to ask: Are we seeing this occur in the year 2024? If that's the case, it may open it up for the committee to further investigate 2024 and expand the scope of this.

I think there's an easy solution here, Mr. Green, one that we can figure out once we get the witnesses in front of us.

Go ahead.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Chair, I am happy to defer to your wisdom.

The Chair: Okay.

Why don't we leave it as is, and later on, if we need to, we can do that?

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Green.

Go ahead, Mr. Villemure.

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

I just received the amended motion.

I agree with the terms we discussed, but I would like to propose a friendly amendment to add the name of one witness, André Lareau from Université Laval. It was through him that we found out about all this.

The Chair: All right. What you're proposing is a subamendment.

[*English*]

That would be to add André Lareau's name to the list.

[*Translation*]

I believe he was the one mentioned in the article.

Mr. René Villemure: Yes, exactly.

The Chair: All right.

[*English*]

Mr. Caputo, I saw that your hand was up. We're dealing with a subamendment right now from Mr. Villemure. Did you want to speak to that?

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): No, I'll get on the list.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I'm sorry, Chair. Are we still on the amendment?

The Chair: No. Mr. Villemure has proposed a subamendment to add a witness to the list.

Again, I think that's a reasonable request. André Lareau is from Université Laval. He's a tax expert, I assume, as a tax professor.

I don't see any objection to the subamendment. I will assume that we have consensus on the subamendment. Is that correct?

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

The Chair: Okay. That takes care of that.

We are now on the amendment as amended with the addition of Mr. André Lareau.

Mr. Caputo, your hand was up on the amendment. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all for indulging my tardiness. I was speaking in the House.

I apologize if this was addressed as I was sitting down. It's in reference to the breaches between 2020 and 2023. I am curious about "have gone unreported" and "the loss of millions of dollars". I mean, to me that seems fairly trite. I'm not sure why we need to have an amendment to address it.

In terms of the witnesses, they all sound fine to me. I believe Mr. Villemure just proposed another witness. I've always known him to be fairly straightforward. I trust that the person he's putting forward will be an expert of assistance to us. Hopefully, we can come to a consensus.

I apologize again if these issues have already been addressed. I just wanted to make sure those things were addressed.

Thank you.

• (1640)

The Chair: To be frank, if we strike "have gone unreported and resulted in the loss of millions of dollars", I have no doubt that during the course of this testimony the information will come up.

An hon. member: Exactly.

The Chair: One of the challenges when you deal with motions is that sometimes there's too much information in the motion. During the course of the testimony, I'm sure the issue of the loss of millions of dollars will be asked about, and it will be answered just how much it is.

I appreciate that, Mr. Caputo.

We are on the amendment as amended. I don't see any other discussion on this. Do we have consensus on the amendment?

(Amendment as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Okay. We've done that.

Now for the last part, we're on the main motion as amended twice.

I don't see any further discussion on that.

Do we have consensus on the motion as amended?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Just one moment, please, Mr. Chair.

I see that Mr. Barrett isn't here. I just wanted to ensure that we could get his input.

The Chair: We're in the process of debating this. I have quorum, so I'm going to continue.

We're on the main motion as amended twice.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Can we have a recorded vote, please?

The Chair: We'll have a recorded division on the main motion as amended twice.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: I want to update the committee in terms of scheduling. On the 4th, we have the Information Commissioner and the Commissioner of Lobbying scheduled to come before us to answer questions about their reappointment. It's a statutory requirement, I believe. That's why we're having them here on the 4th. We will try to get witnesses here on November 6 to commence this study. I'll leave it to the clerk and the analyst to attempt to do that.

Mr. Barrett, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Can I ask for a brief suspension, Mr. Chair, to expedite the proceedings?

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Barrett has asked for a suspension, and I'm going to grant that.

We are suspended.

• (1640)

(Pause)

• (1650)

The Chair: Welcome back, everyone.

When we last left our heroes, Mr. Barrett had the floor.

Mr. Barrett, you have the floor.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I yield the floor back, thanks.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Khalid, go ahead, please.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Chair.

Over the course of the year, we had spent a significant amount of time studying social media and its impacts on Canadians. We had gotten to the point where a draft report was drafted. I would like to move that we resume the study, basically to complete the report and to table it in the House.

The Chair: That motion was put on notice. Every member should have received that.

The motion has been moved by Ms. Khalid. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Ms. Khalid, the analyst does have a question on the motion.

Go ahead.

Ms. Alexandra Savoie (Committee Researcher): As you will recall, we had actually started the consideration. I just wanted to ask if you wanted a V2 with some of the changes that were already made to be distributed as part of it.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Yes, please. I think we should have a V2, just so that everybody can have a refresher as to where we're at with the study. That would be great.

The Chair: Fair enough.

Thank you for asking that question.

Go ahead, Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Chair, I have another motion to move once we've dealt with this one, if that's okay.

The Chair: On this particular motion, do we have consensus?

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

The Chair: Okay. I see that we do.

Go ahead, Ms. Khalid. You still have the floor.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you very much, Chair.

Before I move this other motion, I will say that I am just so pleased with how amazingly things are working today. I just want to say thank you to all of our colleagues for their amazing work on this committee, always. I know that their hearts are in the right place, even if their mouths are not.

I want to move this motion, as we are in committee business.

Given that there are concerns with transparency around the pricing of delivery services such as Uber, Lyft, Skip the Dishes, DoorDash and other companies providing similar services, including concerns about surcharges and service fees charged to customers, the safety and privacy of Canadians' personal data collected by them, and there are questions about whether delivery personnel who are gig workers have equitable changes.

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics undertake a study on the impacts of Uber's operations in Canada, including: companies pricing structure, including surcharges and fees; personal data collected by delivery services; gig workers and their retention of any of the profits made.

And that the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the House.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khalid.

The motion has been duly moved.

Are there any comments on the motion?

Mr. Matthew Green: How many days?

The Chair: It doesn't say. That was one of my questions. I'm glad you brought that up.

There's no timeline on this motion. Do we want up to three meetings?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Can I speak to that, Chair?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I was thinking more that once we have a witness list put together from all parties, we would be better able to gauge how many meetings and how much interest on this study there would be from everybody.

The Chair: Okay.

We can certainly do it that way. My preference is, similar to what we've done in the past, that we put a timeline on it to have up to three meetings, and then, if there's any desire of the committee to

go beyond the three-meeting scope, we can certainly move a motion to extend the study. We can base that on not just the number of witnesses, but also the information that we're receiving.

That's my preference.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: I take your discretion, Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Michael Barrett: I won't move an amendment to that effect, if it finds general consensus that it's for three meetings.

I think the motion seems fine.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm going to look for consensus on this. I'm not going to look for some big debate on it.

Typically, we've started at three meetings. If we need to extend, we can do that.

Do we have consensus on having three meetings, adding that to the motion? Okay, I see consensus.

Are there any other comments on the motion? I see none.

Do we have consensus to agree to this motion?

Mr. Michael Barrett: In exchange for future consideration of my motion, yes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I appreciate that comment, Mr. Barrett. Some day, when I write my book, maybe somebody will understand what that meant.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): The eight people who read it.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Yes. Maybe I'll go on your Facebook page with 1,000 followers. You seem to have a lot of success with that.

Okay. The motion has been approved on consensus.

[*Translation*]

Oh, no, there isn't consensus. All right. Sorry, Mr. Villemure. I didn't see your hand up.

If you'd like to comment on the motion, the floor is yours.

Mr. René Villemure: There may be another problem. Sorry, it's my fault.

Although the motion does have merit, I think it falls outside the committee's mandate. It seems inconsistent with our usual work. Considering everything we have on our plate right now, I think the motion should be defeated.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Villemure.

The motion covers a lot of elements. It deals with Canadians' privacy and personal data. I think it's in line with the committee's work, and for that reason, I find the motion to be in order. That said, thank you for your comment.

[*English*]

I don't see any other discussion.

We don't have consensus on this, so I'm going to ask the clerk for a recorded vote on this motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I don't have any other business in front of me.

I will tell the committee again that on Thursday.... We're in a bit of a transition period. I just talked to the analyst. I'm hoping we can perhaps get the study in front of the committee so that we can have it for consideration in camera on Thursday.

Next Tuesday, we have the Information Commissioner and the Commissioner of Lobbying coming before the committee, and then I'm going to try to get witnesses on the motion by Mr. Green that was passed for November 6. Hopefully, that sets us up for the next three meetings, so the next week and a half.

Not having any other business, this meeting is adjourned. Have a good night, everyone.

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