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Chair: Mr. Peter Fonseca



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• (1100)
[English]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 43 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is meeting on the subject matter of Bill C-19, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022, and other measures.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Chair—

The Chair: I'm in my remarks, MP Fast.

A voice: That's okay. He's entitled to put up his hand.

As per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask, except for members who are in their place during proceedings.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

There is interpretation for those on Zoom. You have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either “floor”, “English” or “French”. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I will give a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard. I request that members and witnesses mutually treat each other with respect and decorum.

In this first hour of committee business, the hands up right now that I see are MP Beech, then MP Ste-Marie, and then MP Stewart.

MP Beech, you have the floor.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): No, no. I have a point of order—

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, members.

I hope everyone—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Point of order. Point of order. I have a point of order over here.

Mr. Chair, MP Beech was not even online, let alone having his hand up, so his hand was not up first.

The Chair: MP Beech was—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mine was up first. No, no, let me speak—

The Chair: No, that is not a point of order.

I'm sorry, MP Stewart, but that is not a point of order.

Mr. Jake Stewart: It is a point of order.

The Chair: It is not a point of order.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Let me finish.

I was here first. They didn't show up. My hand was up first. It should be recognized first.

The Chair: MP Stewart, that is incorrect. You were not here first.

Mr. Jake Stewart: You are serving in poor faith right now. This is poor faith on behalf of the chair.

The Chair: MP Beech, you have the floor, and then MP Ste-Marie and MP Stewart.

Hon. Ed Fast: I have another point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Fast, on another point of order.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, could you seek some counsel from our officers here at the table as to whether you can actually recognize a hand that goes up before the meeting is even formally in session?

The only individual that I know had his or her hand up after the meeting was called by you right here at this table a couple of minutes ago was my colleague over here.

The Chair: MP Fast, I don't think you were looking at the screen. I was looking at the screen—

Hon. Ed Fast: I was looking at the screen.

The Chair: The first hand up, MP Fast.... This is how I saw it: MP Beech's hand was up, and then MP Ste-Marie—

Hon. Ed Fast: No.

Mr. Jake Stewart: I have a point of order.

The Chair: —and then MP Stewart and MP Blaikie.

Hon. Ed Fast: No, you're making that up, Mr. Chair, with respect.

The Chair: No, that is exactly what happened.

Hon. Ed Fast: I was looking at Mr. Beech the whole time. He did not have his—

The Chair: On the same point of order, MP Blaikie—

Hon. Ed Fast: Hold it. Could I finish my point of order?

The Chair: Yes, MP Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: You suggested that Mr. Beech had his hand up after you called the meeting. I was looking at him the whole time. What you're saying is patently false, and the evidence will show that.

The Chair: The evidence will show that MP Beech's hand had been up.

Hon. Ed Fast: No.

The Chair: It was up.

Hon. Ed Fast: It was not up after you called the meeting.

The Chair: It was up. It was up, MP Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: This is a disgrace. If this is how you're going to conduct yourself, Mr. Chair—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair—

• (1105)

Hon. Ed Fast: —it's shameful.

The Chair: I have a number of points of order.

MP Blaikie, please go ahead.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the same point of order, if some members are unhappy with the speaking order that you have proposed, the appropriate thing to do would be to challenge the chair. We'll have a vote on whether to sustain your ruling, and then we can move on. It's the way to resolve it.

The Chair: That's a good point, MP Blaikie. Thank you.

MP Chatel, please go ahead.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: On the same point of order, I'd like to echo what my colleague Mr. Blaikie just said and point to behaviour as a point of order. I'm just learning about proper committee meetings. Challenging the integrity of a member is a point of order, and that should not be allowed in committee, so I agree with...

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chatel.

Mr. Jake Stewart: I agree with—

The Chair: Is that a point of order?

Mr. Jake Stewart: It's a point of order, yes.

I'm going to challenge your decision and I would also petition the clerk to find out the time at which MP Beech actually logged on, because his face was not on the screen. If his hand was up, his face would have been in the middle of the screen, where it is now.

You yourself, as chair, said that it was MP Ste-Marie's hand that was up first and I was second. Then you changed your own opinion and put MP Beech in the number one spot, which means you are literally acting in poor faith—

The Chair: That is incorrect.

Mr. Jake Stewart: It's not incorrect, and it's going to be on the video. That's the best part of it.

The Chair: That is incorrect.

Mr. Jake Stewart: That's the best part of it, Mr. Chair, because everybody's going to watch it. It's going to be awesome.

The Chair: There's been a challenge of the chair.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Roger): The question is, shall the decision of the chair be sustained? If you're in favour of the chair, you vote yes. If you're against, you vote no.

Hon. Ed Fast: Could I get clarity specifically on the ruling that is being challenged here? Could you read it back?

The Clerk: My understanding, with the chair's prerogative, is that the chair's ruling was Mr. Beech was first, Mr. Ste-Marie second and Mr. Stewart third.

Is that correct?

The Chair: That is correct.

Mr. Jake Stewart: No, that's incorrect.

The Clerk: That was his ruling, not—

Mr. Jake Stewart: No, that's not what he said, though. He said Ste-Marie, then me, which was also incorrect.

The Chair: I actually clarified with the clerk that MP Beech was up first. I got clarification that MP Beech was up first.

Mr. Jake Stewart: No, you didn't. It's ridiculous.

The Chair: Yes, I did.

Mr. Jake Stewart: You'll be investigated too, like Trudeau. Maybe you can be investigated. There's lots of that going around.

The Clerk: The question is, shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 5)

Mr. Jake Stewart: How are the American politics going? [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: MP Stewart, please respect decorum.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Respect the members then, Mr. Chair. Respect the members.

The Chair: MP Stewart, we've had to call you out a number of times on your antics in meetings. Again, respect decorum for this committee, for the members and your colleagues.

We are moving to the floor. MP Beech, you have the floor.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, members. As I was saying before, I hope everyone had a tremendous Mother's Day.

As we all know, I circulated a motion last week with regard to our study on the budget implementation act. After speaking with members from all parties, I believe we have majority support to proceed in this matter.

I therefore move the motion as circulated.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Beech.

We have a point of order from MP Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): My understanding is we're not to refer to in camera sessions and the business that is done therein. I'd like you to consult with the clerk on that point, because my understanding is that when a motion or a conversation happens in camera, it is extremely rare for it to suddenly be the business of an open committee.

I would like to know, through you, Mr. Chair, and through consultation, about that. I don't believe the motion is in order.

• (1110)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Albas.

MP Beech, you can move it again as a motion.

I have MP Dzerowicz on a point of order.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Chair, I don't think that you referred to anything in the proceedings that were done in camera. I also think we should note that the motion that Mr. Beech is about to read has been distributed by the clerk.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, to be clear, I was speaking to MP Beech, not you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Albas.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Let me correct that, Mr. Chair. I was also referring to Mr. Beech. I'm sorry. He wasn't referring to anything that was in camera.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

The Chair: MP Beech, is that it? Okay.

I have hands up. I have MP Ste-Marie and then MP Stewart.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will speak to the motion. Bill C-19, which is the budget implementation bill, contains a whole host of measures and legislation and hundreds of pages. We have had discussions about this. My intention is to ask my committee colleagues that we take the time to consider the implications of each part of the motion.

During the pandemic, the House rushed through government bills, and often had to come back with other bills to correct deficiencies that had not been identified. This is because we did not have time to study every implication of the proposed legislation. The 10-day paid leave provision is reappearing in Bill C-19 today because it had been worded improperly.

There are a lot of items in this bill. One of my major concerns is the application of the luxury tax. As I have often said, I am very much in favour of it in principle, as I think most of my colleagues are, but I have serious concerns about the impact on the manufacturing sector that we would not have taken into account. There has been no impact assessment on that. My Conservative colleagues have talked about the impact of this tax on the shipbuilding industry, particularly with regard to ship maintenance. I have talked a lot about the impact on aircraft. I hope that the committee will eventually suggest amendments to the proposed bill to the minister so that the manufacturing sector is not overly affected by this new tax.

We understand the government's intention in terms of passing this bill by the end of the parliamentary session, but as there is a huge amount to consider, I would suggest two solutions. The first is to work overtime in committee to study each section in depth. In that case, I would ask my colleagues who are the spokespersons for their parties on different issues to appear before the committee, accompanied by their witnesses, so that everything is dealt with properly.

The alternative, which has often been used in the past, would be to divide the study of the bill among various committees in the following way.

The Standing Committee on International Trade could consider, among other things, division 9 of part 5.

The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, on the other hand, could consider divisions 15, 16 and 17 of part 5.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities would consider divisions 26, 27, 29 and 32 of part 5, which deal with various aspects of employment insurance.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration would deal with division 23 of part 5 relating to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Finally, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights would review divisions 18, 19, 21 and 22 of part 5.

I know that other committees have a lot of work and studies to do, but we are dealing with a major piece of legislation from the government here, and it deserves the full attention of members.

On Mr. Beech's motion, at this time, I am uncomfortable with setting a date for completion, as we have not had an exhaustive discussion and there are many implications related to the legislation being discussed in mammoth Bill C-19. I would therefore be in favour of removing this part. I would also be in favour of dividing the study between various committees. I understand what that means for the other committees, but I think it is necessary to get to where we want to go.

So I am proposing an amendment to the motion. I have not drafted it yet, but it is to divide the study of the bill among the committees that I named earlier.

If it is convenient for everyone, I can name them again, speaking slowly.

I suggest that we refer part 5, division 9 to the Standing Committee on International Trade for consideration; part 5, divisions 15, 16 and 17 to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology; to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, divisions 26, 27, 29 and 32 of part 5; to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, division 23 of part 5; and to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, divisions 18, 19, 21 and 22 of part 5.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*English*]

Now we have MP Stewart up, and then MP Fast and then MP Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: No, I'm not up.

Hon. Ed Fast: Is this on the amendment?

The Chair: Are you in on the discussion on the amendment? Is this what you wanted to speak to?

Hon. Ed Fast: No, it's on the motion that was tabled.

The Chair: Is anybody speaking to the amendment? Is there discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Dan Albas: I'll speak to the amendment, Mr. Chair, but my original raised hand was to speak about the main motion.

I'm going to ask MP Ste-Marie to repeat.

I totally sympathize when suddenly the parliamentary secretary puts forward a motion effectively programming the committee. A lot actually happens in my mind. Immediately I say, "What, isn't this the government that promised they were going to free up the independence of committees by removing parliamentary secretaries from their proceedings?"

Of course, we know that they actually don't like the outcomes that happen with many promises, so where we are today, Mr. Chair, is right back to a parliamentary secretary actually programming the who, what, when, where and why. We all know the "why": It's because he's in a mood, and so is his minister, to see this BIA study done in a way that fits their timetable, not with the proper scrutiny such a large piece of legislation deserves.

Again, to MP Ste-Marie, I concur that there are some concerns here with the government suddenly bulldozing in with this approach.

If he could please name the committees individually, and name the ones he would like it split out to, and then maybe give a few—

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mrs. Chatel.

Mrs. Sophie Chatel: Again, Mr. Albas just referred to what happened in camera. It's the same point of order you referred to earlier.

Mr. Dan Albas: What? I don't understand, Mr. Chair. Maybe you can rule on that. I made no mention of any in camera conversation.

The Chair: MP Chatel, we should not be speaking about what happens in camera.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To go back to my original point, the Liberals promised that committees would be independent. They have moved now to the point where parliamentary secretaries are actually pushing for it and programming the budget implementation act.

MP Ste-Marie is a very thoughtful member of Parliament. We come from different sides, Mr. Chair, and we don't always agree on everything, but I have to get back to his original point about the need to properly scrutinize a big bill. I understand completely that his constituents, particularly those in the aerospace sector, are going to have some concerns around the luxury tax components of this bill. He also raised some concerns around different parts of the bill, so maybe if the member...

I'm sorry to have to repeat myself, but I was interrupted earlier.

Could the member please list out which committees he would like to see study which parts of the bills, and his rationale for each one?

That would be helpful to my understanding.

The Chair: I'm not sure if MP Beech's hand was up or if MP Ste-Marie's hand went up first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, Mr. Beech raised his hand before I did, but the question was addressed to me.

[*English*]

The Chair: I didn't know if MP Beech was speaking to the amendment.

However, MP Ste-Marie, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I thank Mr. Albas for his comments.

As I have said before, at the moment I am against setting a limit on the committee consideration of this bill. However, this could be the subject of a second amendment.

With respect to this amendment, I suggest in it that different committees share the work, so that we can properly study the whole bill.

So I propose that division 9 of part 5 be assigned to the Standing Committee on International Trade. This division amends the Special Import Measures Act. Thus, we must ensure that the legislation does not have perverse effects on the act for the industrial sectors of Quebec and Canada and that all possible effects are fully studied. If it were the Standing Committee on Finance studying this division, it would have to spend a lot of time on it.

I also propose that divisions 15, 16 and 17 of part 5 be referred to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. Division 15 deals with amending the Competition Act. We know that the Competition Act is very weak in Canada, the weakest in the G7. I welcome the government's intention to amend it, but is what is being proposed enough to really change the game?

Then I propose that division 16 of part 5, which deals with the Copyright Act, be referred to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. This is the committee that has the expertise to extend the term of copyright. It could also study division 17 of part 5, which deals with the College of Patent Agents and Trademark Agents Act. In my view, this would save us several sittings.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities would be assigned all the divisions of part 5 that deal with employment insurance and paid leave. These include divisions 26 and 27, which amend the Employment Insurance Act, and division 29, which amends the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code to reduce the time limit for medical leave, and so on. The latter does not deal directly with employment insurance, but with paid leave days. There is also division 32, which establishes the Employment Insurance Board of Appeal.

In my view, the study of these divisions represents several weeks of work and will require several witnesses, as well as a great deal of expertise and study.

Then I propose that division 23 of part 5, which amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, be referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has a great deal of expertise in this area and it would save us time.

Finally, I propose that divisions 18, 19, 21 and 22 of part 5 be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice. Division 18 deals with the Civil Lunar Gateway Agreement Implementation Act. The implications of this division of the bill are the responsibility of the Standing Committee on Justice. Division 19 amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. In my opinion, the Standing Committee on Finance does not have the expertise to deal with body cavity x-rays, far from it, as I have already mentioned.

Division 21 of part 5 amends the Criminal Code to create the offence of wilfully promoting antisemitism. I believe that this division falls under the purview of the Standing Committee on Justice, as does division 22, which amends the Judges Act, the Federal Courts Act and the Tax Court of Canada Act and certain other acts.

So that is my motion. I hope I have answered my colleague Mr. Albas' question correctly.

Thank you.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*English*]

I have MP Beech and MP Albas on the amendment.

Go ahead, MP Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a quick question for my colleague Gabriel.

You expressed in your initial statement that you're uncomfortable with a deadline, but we are operating in an environment where we have deadlines and parliamentary procedures and constrained House resources.

Would you be open to setting a deadline for the response from committees of, say, May 20, and that those responses be in writing? Is that something that you'd be open to?

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Chair, may I answer the question now?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, MP Ste-Marie, and then I'll go to MP Albas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Beech, I understand the government's imperatives and I share the government's desire to pass the bill before Parliament breaks for the summer. That said, as I explained earlier, at the moment I am not prepared to set a deadline. We could set one for the other committees, though.

Since the House has still not voted on the bill at second reading, I find it hasty to decide on a cut-off date. In terms of other committees, the date could be late May or early June. I could accept that. Obviously, I prefer that the committee arrive at decisions by consensus.

As I said, I would have preferred to vote on the study limits in another amendment or in another part, but, if Mr. Beech wants to move a subamendment to set a deadline for the studies of other committees, I could support it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*English*]

I have on the list here MP Albas, MP Chambers and MP Fast on the amendment.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, since MP Ste-Marie did receive MP Beech's counter-proposal and then said he'd like to maybe look at June, perhaps we could have the parliamentary secretary respond to that, please, because that would have some bearing on my intervention here.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: How would we respond? We'd still be looking for a May 20 deadline.

Mr. Dan Albas: Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, the parliamentary secretary has now gone from trying to tell just this committee what to do to telling multiple House of Commons committees how to do their work.

In fact, Mr. Chair, I think you out of all people would know, having worked so closely with the clerk, that everyone wants to come to finance. We're one of the busiest committees. There are other committees, such as industry, that are extremely seized as well. To suddenly say that you have 11 days to report back on major areas means members would have to stop what they're doing, immediately start a call for witnesses and then immediately start planning sessions. By the time they even got to the first meeting, we probably already would have hit that hard deadline of May 20. That is patently unfair to those other committees.

I totally understand that the member from the Bloc Québécois, MP Ste-Marie, is honourably trying to do his job, Mr. Chair, and trying to work with this and find a way so that he can have his concerns raised in front of those different committees, but you know what? Conservatives have been taking a different approach right from the start. You will know that we've been bringing in shadow ministers who have specific responsibilities to ask questions of the officials specifically on Bill C-19. We will continue to do that. Unfortunately for my friend from Quebec, MP Ste-Marie, even though his heart and his temperament are 100% in the right place, to have the parliamentary secretary now compound the damage that I think this government is doing to the independence....

Last week, Mr. Chair, as you will remember—you were there in question period—I asked specifically the Minister of National Revenue if she would support a Conservative motion, my colleague MP Stewart's motion, about the concerns of allegations around advance pricing arrangements at CRA. She said, "Oh, well, the member knows that we don't take opinions at all on who comes before committee." Well, I guess the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance certainly doesn't mind telling the finance committee what to do. Our parliamentary secretary sure doesn't seem to mind telling other committees what to do. I think that's a bit of a shameful process.

Look, I'm not going to make it personal. I know that Mr. Beech as a parliamentary secretary has a job that he is given. I would simply suggest to him to maybe reflect on the points, because it's a long way from when he was elected in 2015, when parliamentary secretaries could come into the room, listen to the debate and maybe have conversations on the sidelines with their other members of Parliament. They would not be voting members.

That changed in 2019. They became voting members.

Now it has changed yet again, Mr. Chair. Now we have the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance dictating not just what the finance committee will do but actually what multiple independent parliamentary committees will do, at the drop of a hat. I think it's not a good faith request that he's made of MP Ste-Marie. Not for one second would I hold it against Mr. Ste-Marie—not in any way, shape or form—that he would be as mad as heck at this government for how they are treating this parliamentary process, and particularly this budget implementation act in this committee, so I would—

• (1130)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I think Mr. Albas is no longer talking about the amendment that Mr. Ste-Marie is proposing. I think he's talking to how Mr. Beech has responded. I wonder if he could get back to speaking to the amendment.

The Chair: We are speaking to the amendment, Mr. Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I would ask you to rule on this, because I was clearly speaking to the amendment. It is the amendment that Mr. Ste-Marie put in good faith, only to receive a bad faith counter-offer. I think that is completely within committee business and completely germane to the conversation on the amendment put forward by honourable member MP Ste-Marie.

Maybe you could rule on that, please.

The Chair: MP Albas, I do allow for leeway. I think you were giving us, as I understood it, your historical perspective on what's happened over the last, I don't know, 10 to 15 years, but we'll stick to and focus on the amendment. I don't know—

Mr. Dan Albas: Ten to 15 years, Mr. Chair? I don't understand. I was speaking specifically to the motion to amend it—

The Chair: No, MP Albas; you brought up your history here, and the history of parliamentary secretaries, etc.

Mr. Dan Albas: In 2015, sir? We have a parliamentary secretary who put forward a motion, and I was speaking—

The Chair: We're speaking to MP Ste-Marie's amendment.

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes. Again, Mr. Chair, I was saying directly that I would not hold it against this member who is trying in his way to work toward having better scrutiny of the bill rather than have a non-good faith response back from the parliamentary secretary. As I said, I'm not holding it personally against MP Beech, but in this case you can tell that it's the minister's office that is pressuring him to do that.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to leave it here and say that Conservatives have a very straightforward approach. We won't necessarily be supporting the motion by my colleague, but I support him. I support him in his desire to see better transparency and better scrutiny of this government's bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Albas.

I have MP Chambers, MP Fast, MP Beech and MP Dzerowicz on my list.

MP Chambers, you have the floor.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't know if it's an appropriate point of order, but since I have the floor, it's more of a question.

In the fall or just before we rose for the winter break, we passed the bill at committee, which was then swiftly passed through Parliament. I guess my question is, what's the latest date on which we could pass the budget implementation bill—finish clause-by-clause study and still pass it? I'm looking at a calendar, and we're supposed to be here until June 23. If we could do what we did in the winter, why are we putting dates like the end of May or May 20 for having individuals or committees report back? That's a week and a bit from now.

Some of these changes to the Competition Act and to others are significant. What's the point of having a committee if we're going to hamstring us when we've shown before that we can study this and get something through right up to the end?

I'm looking at the calendar. I see June 23. It's more of a question for my colleagues, perhaps: What's the last day we can send this from the committee and see it get passed before we rise on June 23?

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chambers.

We are on the amendment and we're going to MP Fast, MP Beech, MP Dzerowicz and then MP Blaikie.

• (1135)

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by noting that it was Conservatives on this committee who actually supported efforts to do a pre-study on the budget, so any suggestion that somehow the efforts by us or by the Bloc are to delay the passage of the budget is false and ill-advised.

I note that Mr. Ste-Marie did preface his remarks, when he proposed splitting up elements of this bill and sending those elements to different committees, by saying that what he was opposed to, fundamentally, was putting limits on the bill. I think what I have to draw from that reference is that he opposes limiting the ability of parliamentarians to do their job when it comes to analyzing the budget and its different components, which are manifested in the different parts of the budget implementation legislation.

I note that he is referring to taking section 9 in part 5 and referring it to the trade committee; sections 15 to 17 to the industry committee; sections 26, 27, 29 and 32 to HUMA; section 23 to immigration; and sections 18, 19, 21 and 22 to the justice committee.

I understand why he wants to do that. For example, there is a reference in this bill to the establishment of a Criminal Code offence for activities created on the moon. How is that a money-related issue? That is the case for many pieces of this budget implementation

act, and I understand why he would want to refer elements to different committees that are better tasked to consider them.

Because the government has violated its promise not to introduce an omnibus bill, which this is, we now have a situation that is causing this committee significant scheduling problems, which the government is trying to resolve by simply ramming this stuff through without proper oversight. That is irresponsible.

I also note that the government actually promised not to put limitations on debate by not invoking closure, yet we have seen this government do it regularly. You understand why we, as the official opposition, would be incredibly frustrated by the sudden about-turn this government has taken after making these promises to become more transparent and accountable not only to parliamentarians but to Canadians.

I am pleading with the parliamentary secretary, who has already approached me on a number of occasions to see if there's a way of moving this through expeditiously, to come forward with realistic, fair solutions that can allow this legislation to pass in a manner that provides for proper oversight but is still timely in nature. I've not seen that from the parliamentary secretary. So far he's been crafty. He's been trying to propose solutions that he knows very well we as an opposition cannot accept because they interfere with our constitutional right to exercise oversight over what is, at the end of the day, \$57 billion of new spending in a budget.

Canadians will understand that this kind of new money being spent by a government should have proper oversight, and for all those reasons—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Ed Fast: —Mr. Chair, I will be opposing the main motion and—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Point of order.

• (1140)

The Chair: MP Dzerowicz has a point of order.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Chair, I would ask that Mr. Fast continue to talk to the topic of conversation right now, which is the amendment that Mr. Ste-Marie has put on the table.

Hon. Ed Fast: Well, Mr. Chair, I was just winding up.

I think most people watching would have noticed that I was trying to wind up, but now that she has raised this point of order—

The Chair: Well, we'd like to you to wind it up, MP Fast—

Hon. Ed Fast: —Mr. Chair, of course, it gives me the right to respond to that point of order.

All that is to simply say that I have continually referred back to Mr. Ste-Marie's efforts to spin out different elements of this budget implementation bill in order to make sure it goes to the committees that are best positioned to review those issues.

The reason that is the case is that this government has tabled an omnibus bill. This is not exclusively a spending and taxation bill, as most budgets are; this is an omnibus bill that is basically a grab bag of issues that the government has decided to push into a budget bill, and it's providing us with great frustration because we can't exercise the oversight we're supposed to.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Fast.

I have MP Beech, MP Dzerowicz and MP Blaikie.

Go ahead, Mr. Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all members for their comments.

I certainly have been working diligently with all members in various phone calls over time to take into account all the needs, wants and desires, including trying to get more study time than we've had on average over the previous five years. In listening to the debate now, I've been feverishly working on language that I hope will meet the majority of needs for the committee.

I'd like to move a subamendment, I guess, to Gabriel's amended motion, and I think it would be best if I read in the entire language of a revised motion. I have to get this over to the clerk as well. Let me read it and see if this meets the needs of members. It would be:

That:

(a) the Chair of the Committee write, as promptly as possible, to the Chairs of the following standing committees to invite them to study the subject matter of the following provisions of Bill C-19, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures.:

(i) the Standing Committee on International Trade, Part 5, divisions 9 of the Bill; (ii) the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, Part 5, divisions 15, 16 and 17 of the Bill;

(iii) the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Part 5, divisions 26, 27, 29 and 32 of the Bill;

(iv) the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, Part 5, division 23 of the Bill;

(v) the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Part 5, divisions 18, 19, 21 and 22 of the Bill;

(b) for the standing committees listed in (a),

(i) recommendations in relation to the provisions considered by them, in a letter to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, in both official languages, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 20, 2022;

(ii) if a standing committee listed in (a) chooses not consider the subject matter of the provisions, it advise the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance by letter, in both official languages, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 13, 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Beech. This is a subamendment to the amendment to the main motion.

Mr. Terry Beech: Indeed.

The Chair: Okay.

I have MP Dzerowicz, MP Blaikie, MP Chambers, MP Ste-Marie and MP Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: Is this on the subamendment?

The Chair: It's on the subamendment, yes.

To the members who first had their hands up, MP Dzerowicz, is this on the subamendment or the amendment?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I just wanted to make one small correction to what Mr. Beech mentioned. I think he said "2019". I think he meant to say "2022".

Hon. Ed Fast: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Yes, on a point of order, we have MP Fast.

• (1145)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, could we suspend temporarily and allow Mr. Beech to send his amendment to the clerk so that it could be distributed?

The Chair: MP Beech, have you sent your subamendment to the clerk already?

Mr. Terry Beech: I am literally sending it now.

The Chair: Okay. You're sending it right now.

We'll suspend for two minutes.

• (1145)

(Pause)

• (1145)

The Chair: Members, we are back. Has everybody received the distributed amendment and subamendment?

I have MP Dzerowicz up next. I then have MP Blaikie, MP Chambers, MP Ste-Marie and MP Albas.

Go ahead, MP Dzerowicz.

• (1150)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Chair, I'm not going to be speaking on the subamendment to the amendment to the original motion. I'm okay to pass it over to Mr. Blaikie.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It seems to me that there are at least two issues entangled here in our discussion about the study on the budget bill. On the one hand, there's the question of the timeline and how much time we're going to take to study the bill. Then there's the question of how we're going to proceed with the study, whether we're going to endeavour to study everything at this table or whether we're going to break it up and send some aspects to other committees, presumably where—and I take Mr. Ste-Marie's point—members have been immersed in a subset of issues that have to do with some of the things in the bill and may very well be able to conduct a more efficient study. I believe Mr. Albas made some comments to that effect as well, in terms of subject matter expertise. I think sometimes certain members' objections to the timeline of this study are maybe getting entangled with the question of how we study things.

I think Monsieur Ste-Marie does have.... If we understand ourselves to be working on an expedited timeline, and I think we are, then realistically, if the budget bill is going to pass by the end of June, it does need to make its way out of the House in order to have enough time to be studied in the other place.

Mr. Chambers earlier raised the example of Bill C-2, which did manage to pass relatively swiftly once it had come out of committee, but I would raise the example of the bill on the fall economic statement that just passed last week. We saw an incredible appetite on the part of the Conservative caucus to speak to that bill. It was part of the reason New Democrats worked to try to provide a mechanism for extended sittings in May. It was in order to have members of the opposition parties who wanted to say more on that bill and others to have the time to be able to do that, but I wouldn't say that the culture around here is one of expeditious passing of legislation once it comes out of committee. Bill C-8 certainly proved that, I think, beyond any shadow of a doubt.

Beyond any significant and demonstrable change in the culture, I think there is a legitimate concern that if this bill were to come out of committee late in the game, so to speak—and there's not that much left to go before summer, regardless of what we do at this table—then I think it does make sense to try to hasten the study of the bill while also providing for a lot of time to study it. If we look at the main motion, we see that the goal here is to have about 20 hours of study, which is on par with the last budget implementation bill and the study, frankly, of many budget implementation bills going back some time.

I see an attempt here to try to make sure that there's enough time to do the study of the bill well by having extra meetings, similar to processes that have unfolded for similar budget implementation bills in the past. I see this effort at trying to enable other committees to take a look at it, understanding that we're on a tight timeline, as an act of good faith to try to accommodate concerns that have been brought forward.

I think, if memory serves, that the subamendment even provides for other committees to let us know that they don't intend to study these provisions, which gives us enough time to try to arrange for some witnesses at this table so that there is still study of those provisions.

I'm also mindful of the fact that we're talking about.... Well, maybe I'll just leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

All that is to say that I think we have a proposal here to try to accommodate a concern by an opposition member that has been brought forward in order to try to access the expertise of other committees in order to try to help us do a better study in an expedited time frame. We do have an expedited time frame. It's hard to talk about that without making reference to the culture that has been unfolding in the House of Commons around the obstruction of legislation or members not feeling any need to let legislation pass or to allow us to come to a vote with debate collapsing, so I think the subamendment is reasonable.

I thank Monsieur Ste-Marie for the amendment itself as a way to try to have some back and forth and negotiation about how we can do a better study in the time we have, and I'm supportive of the

main motion, which I think is trying to recognize that for the budget bill to pass, it has to get out of committee with enough time for the House and then the Senate to deal with it. We're really talking about three weeks. A week and a half in each place before the end of June is what I would call a relatively tight timeline around here, unless people are of the view that the budget bill doesn't have to pass before summer and that we can drag it out the way the fall economic statement was dragged out.

• (1155)

I'm not of that view. I noticed what happened to teachers, for instance, when debate on Bill C-8 was prolonged. They were told by the CRA that they wouldn't get their tax filing back because there was still legislation pending, and a number of items will bear on a number of different industries in this bill. We're hearing from stakeholders that they want to know, one way or the other, how those things are going to land, whether it's the luxury tax or other items, so it does behoove us to try to deal with the bill swiftly.

That's why I'm supportive of the main motion and also supportive of the amendment and subamendment that have been proposed. That's what it looks like when parliamentarians try to take the concerns of all parties at the table seriously and find the best path forward in the difficult circumstances in which we often find ourselves working.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie. I think you captured what we are talking about—the main motion, the amendment and the subamendment—in terms of timelines and how we will study the bill.

Members, we're talking about why we're doing this. We're doing this for the stakeholders, for Canadians and for the witnesses.

We are coming up on the hour. I still have a number of speakers. I have MP Chambers, MP Ste-Marie, MP Albas and MP Fast, but we are coming up on the hour and we have witnesses from whom, I'm sure, we would all like to hear, because that's what we're here for.

MP Chambers, go ahead.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I noticed that the subamendment the parliamentary secretary has moved still keeps the May 20 date. I see that as incredibly aggressive. It's even more aggressive than the timelines we set through the main motion. We have a break week. It's unfortunate that the budget was tabled so late, but that wasn't a decision of this committee; it was a decision of the government on which date to pick for the budget.

That was also the last day before a two-week break period outside of the House. During the financial crisis, when the world was falling apart, the 2009 budget was delivered at the end of February. It seems to me that the calendar timing is driven primarily by the government at this point.

I find May 20 to be incredibly aggressive in asking other committees to set aside what they are doing and get all hands on deck to deal with the studies coming out of this committee. I think we ought to be saying, “What are the priority areas?” or “Where are the areas of most discomfort?”

The government should be thinking about potentially splitting the bill. I would put that forward for consideration. If there are competition provisions people haven't seemed to be consulted on yet, we want the industry committee to look at that. Maybe they can look at it over the summer. However, to suggest that we need to do this and get it done because the government decided to introduce the budget at one of the latest possible dates.... I guess we could have not had a budget. We did have a year of that.

However, we need to be thinking about unique or special opportunities in order to make sure that some of these changes are actually tested. Typically, when you're going to amend the Competition Act or something, you do a consultation. You say, “Thanks very much” and put forward the draft proposals of the actual amendments you would like to make; you consult on that, and then you put them in a bill. I don't know why we couldn't consult on that over the summer and put that in the second budget bill, if the stakeholders feel there has been a lack of consultation. Asking the industry committee to do all that within a week and a bit seems incredibly ambitious, in my opinion.

The other point is, what are the other things this committee is working on that we ought to be focused on? There are some issues with CRA. There are some issues with an inflation study. Are we going to just pass this, and then...? My concern is that we're going to pass this motion and pass the budget through the committee, and then all of a sudden find ourselves with no more committee meetings to deal with some really important stuff. I'm just worried about the aggressive timeline we're asking of ourselves.

My question to the parliamentary secretary is this: Are you really held to the May 20 date, or is there some other, later date you would consider to keep us on a timeline you are comfortable with? If not, by virtue of the date alone, I cannot support the subamendment.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chambers.

I have MP Ste-Marie, MP Albas, and MP Fast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I thank Mr. Beech for providing us with the text of his subamendment in French; I am very pleased.

I apologize for not putting my proposed amendment in writing in both official languages. Incidentally, Mr. Chair, I thank you for accepting it.

With respect to the subamendment, I agree with the proposal to divide the bill among the various committees. However, I have reservations about the deadline, as I said before.

Politics is the art of compromise without surrendering principles. I can accept the subamendment, but I would have preferred, as

Mr. Chambers has just pointed out, that there be no deadline for the other committees or that there not be a later date. I am uncomfortable with that, but if that is the compromise we reach, I am prepared to accept it. However, I am not prepared to set a deadline today for the work of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-19.

I am prepared to vote on the subamendment and the amendment, and I will move another amendment to the main motion to remove paragraph (b), so that there is no limit to the committee's study at this time. We can come back to it if the work progresses well. After that, the other amendment could be put to the vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Yes, at a later time, but first we have to deal with the amendment and the subamendment to the main motion.

Mr. Terry Beech: I was going to raise a point of order on that, but that's okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ste-Marie, are you finished?

You are indicating that you are.

[*English*]

I'm going to MP Albas, MP Fast, and MP Dzerowicz.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of points I'd like to make.

Perhaps you can also clarify, in your reading of it, Mr. Chair, the latest subamendment by the parliamentary secretary.

Are we as a committee still able to hear testimony on those sections while those committees consider their choices? It seems to me that it's a little bit ambiguous. I would like to hear your opinion and have some sort of guidance.

We've arranged in good faith for witnesses from a whole collection of backgrounds. If a committee chooses not to do it, I don't want to be told, Mr. Chair, that we can't ask questions on that section, because we're still waiting to hear back—

The Chair: Let me interject really quickly. I just checked with the clerk. Of course, yes, you can. You can continue to hear from witnesses for any of those sections.

Mr. Dan Albas: That's excellent.

This is the next question I have, Mr. Chair. Obviously, the committee itself has chosen to do a prestudy of Bill C-19. Inevitably one may ask, particularly thanks to the confidence agreement and the supply agreement that the NDP has with the Liberals, whether, if they were in such a mood—because we know that when the Prime Minister gets into a mood, he gets what he wants—it is possible that the House might just send Bill C-19 in its entirety to us, and where does that put our committee?

Are we actually asking these committees to do clause-by-clause study, and what if that's in conflict with the order from the House? Maybe you and the clerk could speak to that.

I don't want to agree to do something, Mr. Chair, that ends up actually running against the House.

• (1205)

The Chair: We cannot ask another committee to do clause-by-clause study, only subject matter.

Mr. Dan Albas: In essence, ultimately all of us are going to have to monitor every single meeting that happens there, or hear from the testimony, and then draw in amendments. To me, that doesn't seem like a great process. If those committees had the ability to do clause-by-clause consideration, it would make a lot more sense.

Lastly, Mr. Chair, we have witnesses today. I believe that you, Mr. Chair, in good faith, worked with the clerk to arrange for them to be here. Can you perhaps arrange for a future committee business meeting and show some respect for those witnesses who are here to speak to Bill C-19 and are prepared for that?

I move that we adjourn this debate and allow you, Mr. Chair, to go to the witnesses.

The Chair: Members, it has been moved to adjourn debate.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: My understanding is that this is a dilatory motion that doesn't permit debate. We move right to a vote.

The Chair: We'll put the question. Is there a recorded vote?

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): I have a point of order, Chair. It's a point of clarification—

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm sorry. What are we voting on? Can you clarify that?

The Chair: We are voting on adjourning the debate and going to witnesses.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's to go to witnesses.

The Chair: Yes, we'll go to the second half of our meeting.

(Motion negatived: yeas 5; nays 6)

The Chair: The motion is defeated. We will continue with our committee business.

I still have MP Albas. You're up.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to thank the witnesses who came prepared to be here today. Please let them know that is no fault of their own that they received a request from the committee and that unfortu-

nately, due to the committee's internal affairs, were not able to speak today.

I would ask you, Mr. Chair, if there is going to be an opportunity for these witnesses to be reinvited to a future committee meeting. Should they be spending their time waiting online as we go through debate on the subamendment, amendment and motion?

The Chair: That's a good question, MP Albas. We will be releasing the witnesses.

Mr. Terry Beech: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: MP Beech has a point of order.

Mr. Terry Beech: I want to raise the idea with members.... I think there's a very clear path on the subamendment, the amendment and everything else. If we were all to agree to go to a vote, I think we could get those votes done in four minutes and see what the result is, and then we could go to our witnesses, who I know we were all hoping to hear from today.

As long as there's no obstruction, we could allow those witnesses to stay on and we could get to them today.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Beech.

Mr. Dan Albas: Would you like me to speak to it, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: MP Beech said if members are interested—

Mr. Dan Albas: I'd be happy to—

The Chair: —but I have MP Fast up next.

This is on the subamendment...the amendment to the main motion.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To respond to Mr. Beech, this is not about obstructing. This is about doing the job we're called to do as parliamentarians, to exercise oversight over many billions of dollars of spending and many billions of dollars in taxation that is being imposed on Canadians.

I want to add a few thoughts on both the subamendment and the amendment itself.

A number of colleagues have referred to an “expedited timeline”. The whole purpose for us having the space to be able to conduct our work here at committee is to make sure we get it right. There are many things here before us in the BIA that call for more probing. These are things like the way charities are being treated and the direction and control element that is now being discussed both in the House and here at this committee.

Unfortunately, we had witnesses available here today. Our Liberal friends, supported by our NDP coalition, decided they weren't going to hear from them and would carry on with their amendments and subamendments. Quite frankly, Mr. Chair, I think it sends a terrible message to those who rely on this committee and this Parliament to do its work properly. Inconveniencing witnesses the way we just did is highly inappropriate, and they have the right to complain.

That said, I did want to note also that notwithstanding complaints that somehow the process is being slowed down, the reality is that not only did we as a Conservative opposition agree with all of the other members at this committee to conduct a prestudy to expedite the process and get the budget implementation act moving forward, we supported that process. Not only has that happened, but the Senate itself is conducting a prestudy of the budget implementation act. In both Houses of Parliament, we have an avenue whereby all the parties have co-operated to move this legislation through in an expedited manner, yet can we get even an ounce of co-operation from the parliamentary secretary and his handlers? No, we cannot, which is really sad.

There's only so much compression of timelines that should take place before you start undermining our ability to do our job properly.

I mentioned the charitable sector. How about the wine industry that is crying foul against this government?

• (1210)

Mr. Dan Albas: Hear, hear.

Hon. Ed Fast: How about the boating sector? How about the aerospace industry? How about the car sector? They're all screaming foul because of how this government is implementing tax legislation.

It's not even the tax itself. It's how it's being implemented and the failure to do proper economic impact assessments for each industry before taxation is applied. We had the witnesses here at our committee, officials from the Department of Finance and other departments of government. They admitted that no economic impact assessment had been done for these taxes. That's a big fail, Mr. Chair. You should not be surprised that we are wanting to do this in a proper way. We want the time to do it properly.

The parliamentary secretary hasn't come forward with a realistic plan to properly do a review of this bill. If Mr. Beech can come forward with an accommodation that works for all parties at this table, we will look at it seriously and with good faith—that I can assure him, as the shadow minister for finance. We will look at it in good faith. He can't keep coming forward simply acting as a shield for the government, which wants to ram this legislation through. That's unacceptable.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Fast.

I have MP Dzerowicz, MP Blaikie, MP Albas and then MP Stewart.

Go ahead, MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thanks so much, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say, for those who might be listening at home, that the budget study is always an intensive period after the budget is introduced. There are always a number of hours that are proposed, and it's always very intensive, with additional meetings.

I'd like to reiterate this because I think it's important, and I think Mr. Beech mentioned this earlier: The number of hours that we're proposing to study the budget is equal to the highest number of hours in the last five years. It's important to say that there's no one who is trying to rush this through. Of course there's a lot that we need to study, but this committee has the capacity to do so. We want to ensure that we have an appropriate amount of time and that we do a really good job, and that is the intention of our side of the bench.

I want to thank Mr. Beech for offering that if we move right to a vote, we have the potential to be able to hear from our witnesses today. I know I wanted to hear from the witnesses today, and that was not accepted by some of our opposition members. I do lament that and I hope the witnesses come back.

Mr. Ste-Marie suggested that we move to a vote on the subamendment. I would like to see whether the committee would be willing to do so. I think we've had a sufficient amount of time to discuss the subamendment and I think it's the right time for us to move to a vote.

• (1215)

The Chair: Before we move to MP Blaikie, are we open to moving to a vote on the subamendment?

I'm not hearing consensus on that.

MP Dzerowicz, are you finished? Yes.

We have MP Blaikie, then MP Albas, then MP Stewart.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to note, as I said earlier, that if the goal is to have this legislation passed before summer, which is often a reasonable goal for a budget implementation bill, we are up against a difficult timeline no matter what.

For my part, I would like to spend the time that we have in studying the bill, and I think this motion allows for an amount of study comparable to we've seen on other budget implementation acts going back some way, but we need to have a program for how we're going to study it. We need to come to some kind of decision about how we're going to study the bill.

The committee can make that decision. I respect that not everyone is going to agree with the decision of the committee, but we have to be able to have a vote in order to make that decision. Then we can proceed with the time we have, which is limited, no matter what, to June 23 at the very latest. It has to be out of the House before that in order to allow it to have the time to get through the Senate. We're talking about the difference of maybe a week or two from what is suggested in the original motion. It's not that much of a difference in time. We need to decide how we're going to study it so we can do that to the greatest possible effect in the time we have.

That's why I would certainly support moving to a vote, so we can decide one way or the other on the subamendment, the amendment and the main motion, and we can get to studying the bill in the time that we have to do that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie.

I did check some historicals, and it is in keeping with the amount of time that we've allowed for the studies in the past. The hours are in keeping with what we have done in previous years.

MP Blaikie has asked to call for a vote.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm still on the list, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I have MP Albas and then MP Stewart.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I know you know the Standing Orders very well, and some members may or may not.

We have had you canvass the room twice now on whether or not we can move to the question. Members should know in this place that in committees Standing Order 116 applies, and I will read it right here, Mr. Chair:

(1) In a standing, special or legislative committee, the Standing Orders shall apply so far as may be applicable, except the standing orders as to the election of Speaker, seconding of motions, limiting the number of times speaking and the length of speeches.

Then specifically, we have subsection 2, which is regarding end of debate. Paragraph (2)(a) says,

Unless a time limit has been adopted by the committee or by the House, the Chair of a standing, special or legislative committee may not bring a debate to an end while there are members present who still wish to participate. A decision of the Chair in this regard may not be subject to an appeal to the committee.

Mr. Chair, I don't want to bring us into a process in which you are put in a position of having members who still want to say their piece, and then you go ahead and overrule that or see it go to a vote.

Now, I know you wouldn't do that, Mr. Chair, because paragraph (b) would lead to this:

A violation of paragraph (a) of this section may be brought to the attention of the Speaker by any member and the Speaker shall have the power to rule on the matter. If, in the opinion of the Speaker, such violation has occurred, the Speaker may order that all subsequent proceedings in relation to the said violation be nullified.

I don't want to put you in a situation, Mr. Chair, in which I as a member, for whatever reason—other members wanting to hurry through a process—have to raise a question of privilege in the House and have the Speaker rule on it, and we come back here and essentially nullify the point and go back to the beginning of debate. I think that would be a serious waste of everyone's time and I think it would not be conducive to your reputation, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to do my best to make sure that I raise my hand clearly so that I get your attention. When you canvassed the room, when he asked the first time, we said no because we had members on the list, and we would just simply let him continue.

Now, getting back to the motion here, Mr. Chair—

• (1220)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Before Mr. Albas carries on with the rest of his remarks, I just want to say that on that point, which was a procedural point, I agree completely. I was not appealing to the chair to try to have a vote. If there are members around the table who want to continue to speak, that is their right under the rules. I will certainly support that at this table. I was appealing to other members of the committee that we might have a vote, not to the chair.

What is important to recognize is that to the extent that we take more time to debate these matters as opposed to letting the committee come to a decision—whatever is going to emerge from the vote—that's time we're spending debating how to proceed with the study rather than proceeding with the study itself.

My preference is not to spend the time debating how we study, but to spend the time studying. If other members feel that it's important to continue with this debate, that, of course, is their right. I will be happy to support that right. I will be happy to hear their arguments, or at least I will hear them.

However, I think it is important that the committee come to a decision. If we're not allowed to have the vote because members want to continue to debate the point, what that means is that a decision is effectively being made. We're deciding to have less time to study the bill than to have more time to study the bill, or, through continuous debate, we're deciding not to deal with the bill at all.

If this conversation is going to last until the end of June, then we're going to have the situation of the bill not going through committee at all. If we're going to run this debate until May 20, then we're going to have used up a lot of valuable time that we could spend studying the bill by debating how we're going to study the bill.

To me, it is worthwhile to be able to decide these questions, by which I mean have a vote. Of course, I get it that other members may disagree, and they may want to use the time in other ways. They have every right to do that. No one's questioning their right to do that. I'm questioning whether it's the right thing to do, which is, of course, a very different thing.

I just want to be clear on that point. I thank Mr. Albas, and you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me the time to be clear on that point.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie. That was my interpretation.

MP Albas, you have the floor.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I always find it refreshing when someone comes to this place and wants to show deference to Parliament as an institution. Though part of me wanted to scream, “Debate, debate”, it’s important for us all to be mindful of our responsibilities to make sure that this institution is left as good as possible, if not better off. I do appreciate the member’s approach when it comes to this.

Mr. Chair, getting back to the subamendment, again I have to raise concerns about proper process and bad faith. While at first glance the parliamentary secretary has brought forward what appears to be a good faith effort to work with the Bloc Québécois member, MP Ste-Marie, the challenge we have here, Mr. Chair, is this: The timeline that has been given is overwhelmingly short.

Each one of these committees—and I’m a former member of IN-DU, for example—has its hands full with a great amount of its own business. Making the time so short means that what will legitimately happen is that a committee will say it has received a letter from the chair here, and in it he’s saying they have to respond within a very short period of time. Members on the individual committee, be it justice or industry, are going to say, “Well, we have already worked out this plan”, so one of two things will happen. Either they’re going to have to abandon other important work or they will try to load up with extra resources that we know just do not exist.

Why would I say that, Mr. Chair? It’s because we know that we need proper access to translators. In this area I support my colleagues from Quebec 100%. Francophones should be able to have that simultaneous translation in their first language.

As you know better than anyone, Mr. Chair, from working with the clerk, it can be very difficult. In fact, it wouldn’t surprise me if the clerk has had calls from resources saying that they cannot accommodate us any further. The finance committee, from my experience, has always been given a bit more deference than other ones, because it is considered one of the workhorses of this Parliament.

We might be now loading up extra resources or having these committees say that there’s no way they can properly call witnesses by May 20. That’s 11 days, colleagues. Let’s just say that even if the clerk, on the instruction of the chair after a successful conclusion of today’s committee, were to send out a letter today, and those things were put to the next meeting, you would have to call witnesses. You would have to actually have a business meeting.

Pardon me, Mr. Chair; I’m not even doing things sequentially, and you deserve better than that.

Number one, you would need to call a business meeting, and then you would have to have a call for witnesses, and all those witnesses would have to be at hearings that would happen before May 20.

There’s a good question for MP Beech, or perhaps MP Ste-Marie. We’ve found out, through this process, that clause-by-clause consideration will not be done by these individual committees; it will be us. Again, are they supposed to write a report? Are we supposed to kind of tune in and listen to the concerns of those MPs?

The Conservatives have already planned for this. We’ve already said that the finance committee has decided to do a pre-study, so we’ll be bringing our critics here and we’ve put forward a number

of witnesses. I’m glad to hear that there will be flexibility granted by the chair, as confirmed by the clerk, to be able to ask questions even if a section has been designated out, but again there are going to be many coordination issues to be dealt with.

Mr. Chair, that is a summation on the subamendment, which I believe is what we’re debating here. This would be Mr. Beech’s amendment to the amendment. Is that correct?

• (1225)

The Chair: We are speaking to the subamendment to the amendment.

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes.

The subamendment to the amendment, to me, at the surface level, seems like it is a good faith exercise, but unfortunately, it’s not.

Again, that’s not on Mr. Beech. I know that he has a job to do. In fact, Mr. Chair, as a former parliamentary secretary I used to joke when people asked what I did. I’d say, “Well, there are really two types of parliamentary secretaries, and they both burn shoe leather. One shines the shoes of their minister, and the other one gets work done.” I’ll let Mr. Beech decide which one he is.

With regard to this, the good faith nature of Mr. Ste-Marie’s original amendment was to have a thoughtful scrutiny of several areas of Bill C-19.

On Bill C-19, I think it’s important to get something on the record, Mr. Chair, because I’ve been raising concerns right from the very beginning. You will remember better than anyone that in front of this committee, we had officials from the Department of Finance. I had asked specifically, because we had a technical briefing by the parliamentary secretary on the ways and means motion, whether everything that was covered in that technical briefing was in Bill C-19, and they said no, there were other additions. We have yet to hear back from Department of Finance, and that is raising some questions.

I’ll tell you what else concerns me. The copy that I have in this place is what I received as a courtesy copy. I went online, Mr. Chair, and found that there was a whole section from page 421 onward that simply cuts off. Here’s page 421 in my copy; notice that it just goes blank. I find out at this late juncture that there are a large number of clauses in here, and even some charts and some areas with regard to duties on vaping products and qualifying flights for remote communities, and then a whole schedule on a table of weeks of benefits for seasonal workers.

I have to say that this process by this government has not been a good one, and that's where I see a pattern. Nixon used to say something to the effect that he was paranoid but that people were actually going after him. I guess I'm paranoid, but I see a pattern here. We see time and time again that the government gives us a courtesy copy, but it's not the whole bill. The government does a technical briefing, and it's not the whole bill.

Now, the parliamentary secretary has made a subamendment to a good faith initiative by Ste-Marie, and it is not in good faith, Mr. Chair. These are all huge challenges that members of Parliament have faced in this process.

• (1230)

The Chair: Mr. Albas, I'm going to interject. The bill is complete online. I checked with the analysts—

Mr. Dan Albas: I recognize that—

The Chair: —and the bill is all there.

Mr. Dan Albas: This has no bearing on you, Mr. Chair, but again, I received a copy. There was a nice binding, and I started going through it. I went through page after page because I couldn't get a clear answer on whether the ways and means motion was the exact same as in Bill C-19. We know from finance officials that it wasn't.

Again, on the courtesy copy that MPs were given in the opposition lobby—and again it's not your fault, Mr. Chair, and not reflective of the clerk or anyone other than the government—I've actually looked into doing a question of privilege, but you know what, Mr. Chair? It's already been said by the Speaker that these are considered “courtesy copies”.

Well, I'll tell you what: When a courtesy copy is not the whole bill, when we find out that the technical briefing does not cover the whole bill, and then we have a subamendment that actually allows for no clause-by-clause consideration by these committees that are actually far more versed in these things, Mr. Chair, that's again why I think Conservatives have said that we will simply bring in our critics and we believe that we can do most of the work to hold this scrutiny to account.

But we object—and I will say categorically object, Mr. Chair—to a parliamentary secretary bringing in a motion on a good faith amendment exercise by our colleague MP Ste-Marie, only to then find out that they are going to add a subamendment that actually does not do what it is intended to do. It is simply a deflection by the government. This is another step in a bad faith process, and I'm sorry that I have to see it, because the finance committee is one of the finest committees I've served on.

We had multiple witnesses who were supposed to speak here today, and I do hope that they are not personally insulted. We had many members decide to do points of order or make certain references in their comments, Mr. Chair, so I hope I'm not going to get points of order or be interrupted by anyone when I say this: They said specifically that if we just stopped talking, we could go hear them, but that's not what occurred. Either we would have had to cut the time for them to be able to speak their minds in their presentations or we would have had members here who never would have had the chance. Had members supported my motion to adjourn the

debate, I think we all would have been better off by having heard those testimonies in full, and then we could have simply discussed the business of the committee, such as this particular amendment put forward by the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chair, I've said a number of times today that in the way this government operates, parliamentary secretaries again have started to move in what I feel is an interventionist way, and now we have the parliamentary secretary actually trying to push out work and trying to direct other committees so that he and his minister can look like they're making good faith efforts. I think it's a real shame, and they need to be called out for that.

Mr. Chair, I've made a number of points here. I do hope that Liberal members are right now pulling out their phones and are right now texting Terry Beech and saying: “MP Beech, this particular motion is not what we think it is. Maybe we should think about removing it.” Then maybe we should go back to MP Ste-Marie, who has already said that he has other amendments to try to make this process better from his viewpoint.

I do hope that members, especially those Liberal members, are reconsidering my arguments, are making their own arguments directed to the parliamentary secretary and are asking the parliamentary secretary to put them in charge. At one point this Liberal government was in its sunny ways approach. Now, as my colleague from Abbotsford has said, they're in the spendy ways approach, trying to boss around committees to push through billions of dollars of spending that quite honestly will not be reviewed in the proper way it should be.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to come to an end. I'm happy to answer any questions other members may have for me, but again, I have to say that the process has to be fair, and this particular deception by the parliamentary secretary..... He's been given a hard task. It's a hard task being the parliamentary secretary. It's a hard task being the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary, but we have to call it out as we see it.

Thank you.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Albas.

We have MP Stewart, MP Blaikie and MP Ste-Marie.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When you think of Mr. Ste-Marie's amendment, what he really wanted to do was drill down into the aspects of the bill that covered industry, international trade, human rights and immigration. I think he was certainly obviously caring about those issues in good faith and caring about the issues as they would face his constituents in his riding and across the country.

However, I think that when you look at the subamendment from the parliamentary secretary, it's very clear that it's just another distraction from the government. The government needs distractions, because there's a pending RCMP investigation of the Prime Minister for accepting a \$216,000 illegal trip from a lobbyist. There are also the CRA whistle-blowers, Mr. Chair, who obviously wanted to do their work honestly and nobody was protecting them—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead on a point of order.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Are we still not speaking to the subamendment? Are we speaking to something else now?

Mr. Jake Stewart: I'm on the subamendment. I was just making reference—

The Chair: Stay on the amendment, MP Stewart.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: It's nothing to do with the subamendment right now, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Dan Albas: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Albas, go ahead on a point of order.

Mr. Dan Albas: Do you know what, Mr. Chair? I find that you are the chair and you should be making the ruling, not other members.

The Chair: MP Stewart, just focus on the subamendment, please.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Yes, I will, Mr. Chair.

I was suggesting that I thought Mr. Ste-Marie's interest in the bill was legitimate. I think his ideas were in good faith in accordance with his constituents and with the issues that matter to him. In his original amendment, he was looking at industry, international trade, human rights and immigration, and dividing them up and looking at them separately in the committees that hold those priorities. I think his effort was responsible, for the most part.

I was indicating that I believe the subamendment from the parliamentary secretary is what my colleague Mr. Albas called a “deflection”; I use the word “distraction” on the subamendment. I'm speaking directly to the subamendment.

In order for me to do my job, Mr. Chair, when I was making a point on the subamendment about my belief that it's a distraction, I cited the \$216,000 illegal trip that the Prime Minister accepted—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead on your point of order.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: It has nothing to do with the subamendment.

The Chair: MP Stewart, please stick to the subamendment.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead on the point of order, Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I believe we are given a wide purview when we are talking in committee. He was referencing the reason that there might be a distraction technique, and it was within the scope there. With respect, Mr. Chair, I believe Mr. Stewart's comments were within his wide purview.

The Chair: Thank you for that—

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I've certainly been here for many Liberal filibusters when they have gone on wild tangents—

The Chair: I am listening. Within that wide scope, stick to the subamendment and the amendment.

Go ahead, MP Stewart.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll go back to my original idea.

Basically, Mr. Ste-Marie's motion was in accordance with his interests and the issues that matter to him. With regard to the subamendment that I'm referring to now, when a political party at a committee hearing puts forth a subamendment to an amendment, there's always a route for that manoeuvre. We all do it. With every political party, this is something that happens at committee. It's perfectly legal.

I was just stating that the government, in my opinion and in the opinions of many Canadians, would have legitimate reasons to implement deflection or distraction from the issues at hand. In my role as national revenue shadow minister for the opposition, obviously I have to be here at the finance committee. I have to look at this subamendment. I also have to know why it's coming out.

When the Prime Minister is potentially being investigated and when whistle-blowers are saying they're not protected—

• (1240)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead on your point of order.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: It has nothing to do with the amendment at all.

The Chair: Again, MP Stewart, stick to the subamendment to the amendment.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Yes, Mr. Chair—

The Chair: We're discussing timelines and the study.

Mr. Jake Stewart: I hear you.

The Chair: That's what it says: the timelines and the study. That is the subamendment and the amendment to the main motion.

Mr. Jake Stewart: I really appreciate that, Mr. Chair. It's great to get that settled. Obviously the subamendment is what I'm referring to, and I believe the subamendment—speaking directly to the subamendment—is a distraction from the obstacles faced by the government. I could continue to list that trip over and over, but it hurts a lot of feelings, so I'll leave that part out.

There was no economic impact assessment. We're rushing the bill through committee. May 20, which is the date I see in the email I received, is only 11 days away. Probably only seven or eight of those are business days. That's not a lot of time when you're talking about \$57 billion. There is \$57 billion in new spending, and several economists have said that no new spending in the country is necessary.

I was also, Mr. Chair, when studying the bill, looking at the direct-and-control aspects of it. Many charities were prohibited or obstructed from being able to fundraise during the pandemic. We've all dealt with charitable organizations, including some of these charities operating right now around the globe, although Canadian charities, because of the direct-and-control legislation we already have, are facing increased costs and increased timelines. The jobs and the projects they are working on are not getting done to code, and so they're taking longer and costing more. That is certainly something on which there is already a bill before the House.

There are also the Canadians for Tax Fairness. I believe they are coming here today. I know they liked my motion because they know the bill isn't cutting it. The NDP has pandered to them for years, but clearly threw them out the window when they decided to form a coalition with the government.

If you look at the subamendment—

The Chair: Please, MP Stewart, just focus on the subamendment—

Mr. Jake Stewart: Yes.

The Chair: —the amendment and the main motion. The subamendment, the amendment, speaks to the timelines and what we will be studying, MP Stewart.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Chair, I can't hear. There's a lot of verbiage from the NDP, because there are a lot of hurt feelings about that comment.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: There are no disparaging remarks, Mr. Chair, just a lot of encouragement. That's all.

Mr. Jake Stewart: I know they all go to caucus together and have to get along—I get it—but I have to get back to what I'm doing here, because the subamendment is the most important, isn't it?

When you go back to the beginning, you know, the wine producers are upset. You have direct-and-control issues around the country. You have an NDP-Liberal coalition. You have RCMP investigations for illegal trips paid for by lobbyists, and then you have this subamendment to poor Mr. Ste-Marie's.... Mr. Ste-Marie was literally trying to look at industry, international trade, human rights, and immigration issues that we are all facing in our constituency offices. Let's face it: If you are an MP in this country, you have immigration files that are seriously backed up. You have people trying to get a passport who have been waiting for it for three months. What we're dealing with in our constituency offices is unbelievable—unprecedented, actually.

I notice that regardless of—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, can we please speak to the subamendment and not to what is happening in

our passport offices or what is happening in our constituency offices?

Thank you.

• (1245)

The Chair: MP Stewart, again, speak to the subamendment, the amendment....

On a point of order, go ahead, MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: On the same point of order, I think Mr. Stewart is trying to make an argument. I have confidence that he will come back to the subamendment. I think we've seen multiple points of order today on relevance. I'm not sure that they are helping debate.

My hope is that we'll give Mr. Stewart his time and that eventually he will exhaust his point, and we will know better what that point is once he is done making it. I think we're still in the process of discovering his point. I look forward to hearing it and then proceeding to a vote once he is satisfied that he has made his point. I think that interrupting him will only serve to prolong the experience, something that I would rather not see done.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie. As we look to the subamendment and the amendment, we're in discovery mode here.

Go ahead, MP Stewart.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With respect to the subamendment, we have to look at the processes we're using here at committee, and I haven't felt that all of them were fair. That's my opinion, of course. I know I'm entitled to that, unless, of course, I get censored by Bill 11 or something.

Mr. Chair, with the subamendment, to go back to the root of all this, we're looking at May 20 as the date the coalition wants to put in the subamendment, and that is really soon. Part of our job here as members of Parliament and committee members is to put proper oversight into spending—obviously, since we're the finance committee—but we're talking about \$57 billion of new spending that the majority of economists in the country say is not necessary due to the influx of printed money over the past two years.

When I look at the subamendment, I think of what the original amendment intended to look at: immigration, human rights, international trade and industry. We all have in our constituency offices constituents who have issues with the Competition Act. I have issues with direct and control with certain charities, and I do have a small vineyard as well. I certainly wouldn't have as many as some of the members on the committee and in the House—

The Chair: Excuse me, MP Stewart.

MP Dzerowicz, did you just put your hand up to be on the list? Okay. I didn't see if that was a legacy on MP Stewart.

Continue, please.

Mr. Jake Stewart: I guess with respect to the subamendment, I think the Liberals certainly need a distraction from the many investigations, particularly the one on the trip paid by the lobbyist—

The Chair: Can we please stick to the subamendment and amendment?

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Chair, I just think it was like a billionaire on an island, and it was a lobbyist. It's quite a juicy story for the Canadian public. I have to believe that having a nice deflection is a pretty sweet deal for the Prime Minister right now.

Here at committee we're dealing with \$57 billion of new spending with no economic impact assessment, and several groups are clearly at odds with the government's economic plan. We know there's no monetary policy with this government. There never has been.

I just can't support the subamendment the way it is because it's too soon. May 20 is just too soon for us to put proper oversight on to this.

I'd be glad to answer any questions anybody else has, but that's all from me for today, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Stewart.

Go ahead, MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair; I didn't realize I was on your list.

The Chair: You are.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'd be happy to get to a vote sooner.

The Chair: Okay.

I have MP Ste-Marie, then MP Chambers, then MP Fast.

Go ahead, MP Ste-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To answer the question raised by Mr. Albas, if the bill is divided among the committees, each committee will have to report back to the Standing Committee on Finance before it goes to clause-by-clause. Yes, this means that it will be even more difficult to meet the already tight deadlines.

Also, I want to thank him for his intervention, because I also use the paper version, since it is difficult to consult so many pages on the screen. So my version too stops at page 421, whereas the electronic document has 440 pages. This is the first time I have seen that the two versions of a bill do not match, and that is very serious.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*English*]

I have MP Chambers and MP Fast.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think, in their initial purpose, the motion and subamendment... My biggest challenge is the timeline they're imposing. We're being asked as a committee to hold ourselves to a timeline before we've even had the opportunity to hear from any witnesses. All we have is what some people—stakeholders—are sending in. We know there's no economic study. That point has been raised here as well.

Mr. Chair, I'm always short, but I'll try to be brief in my comments.

Previously, when the House was asked to push through legislation quickly, we had some mistakes—fairly significant mistakes. Things went a bit unnoticed for some time, including the SNC issue that was raised, because it was put into a budget bill and not really combed through as properly as it could have been, since that Parliament was on a tight timeline. We've spent time in the main chamber debating and fixing legislation that came out of the pandemic. A good example is GIS benefits. That mistake was not caught by the committee or by any stakeholders before it was passed. It wasn't until the NDP, to their credit, realized there was a problem after the budget bill passed.

I'm wondering what it's going to be this time. I suspect there will be some issues around the competition law policy. I mentioned earlier that typically what you would see is a consultation, and then a consultation on the proposed amendments, but we're just skipping right through it.

I will quote a law firm that has some experience in competition policy. It says:

Despite the significance of the proposed amendments and the deliberate policy choices they entail, it is notable that these proposals have not been developed through public consultation with stakeholders—a process that has been used before and has been requested again by members of the Canadian competition law bar.

Just last week, representatives from Industry Canada indicated that the competition law bar or the CBA was not consulted on these draft rules.

Now, I am interested in—

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Were you trying to get in?

The Chair: It looks like the bells have started, so I am going to ask members for unanimous consent to continue.

Some hon. members: No.

We do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Adam Chambers: I was just getting started, but I was going to be brief, I promise.

The Chair: We will suspend.

[*The meeting was suspended at 12:53 p.m., Monday, May 9*]

[*The meeting resumed at 4:13 p.m., Thursday, May 12*]

● (8810)

The Chair: I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to the continuation of meeting 43 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is meeting today to discuss committee business.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely, using the Zoom application. Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during proceedings.

I'd like to make a few comments for the benefit of witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please mute it when you are not speaking. For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I would remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair. For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

I request that members and witnesses mutually treat each other with respect and decorum.

We are on the subamendment. We'll start with Mr. Chambers, who I believe had the floor at the end of the last meeting.

● (8815)

Mr. Adam Chambers: You have an excellent memory, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chambers.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Since I'm new to this, I have a couple of questions, or maybe points of order.

I cannot move an amendment to a subamendment, correct? It's not like the movie *Inception*. You can't keep going down and down. Okay.

Next, there are no motions. If I do have an amendment, I can do that after I get back on the speaking list. Okay.

As we start, I'd like to mention that I did pass an orange drink to my NDP colleague. If I'm unpersuasive in my comments, perhaps a bribe will work here this afternoon.

I miss a lot of my Liberal colleagues across the way. It reminds me of a joke my former boss used to make. There are all these people in an auditorium, and as you're giving a speech they all start slowly going out, one by one, until there's one person left in the auditorium. You say to him, "Thank you very much for staying." The gentleman replies, "Don't thank me. I'm the next speaker."

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Adam Chambers: Hopefully, we keep a relatively full room here this afternoon.

Mr. Chair, I did say last time that I am always short but I will be brief. Today I'll be at least one of those, and hopefully maybe two.

The political climate we're in isn't really lending itself well to some collaboration. I don't think that's a surprise to anybody. There are obviously things happening outside of this committee room that are affecting our ability to get some work done. I do find that regrettable, because I think we've actually done some really nice work together as a committee. If you think back to Bill C-2, we did have an amendment that was passed. Although it was on recorded division, it was an amendment that was agreed to in principle by all members of this committee. Frankly, I thought it was a success that we were able to collaborate to get that done.

On Bill C-8 we talked about a potential amendment on banning non-resident purchasers of real estate. Again, there was a recorded division and it was unsuccessful, but I believe it was that discussion that led to its being included in the budget. As I understand it, it was a late amendment to the budget. That was work that this committee did.

It does look like we're on a bit of a collision course now, which makes it a bit of an unfortunate situation where we may look to a House instruction to have this committee report the bill back to the House. I'd like to avoid that.

This is also some of my favourite work in Ottawa. Of course, I enjoy very much being in my constituency speaking to my constituents, but as work in Ottawa goes, this is my favourite part of the job—and seeing you, Mr. Chair, all the time. You might say, "Gee, Adam, life is short. You'd better get one," but I do truly enjoy being here.

On the amendment and the subamendment, I think Mr. Ste-Marie was on the right path with respect to engaging other committees. They should be bearing some of the brunt of review of the legislation, because it does touch on a lot of other committee work, potentially, or other committee legislation. I'd like to thank him for his suggestion. Perhaps it was inspired by, or maybe it inspired, the Senate committee, because they are also doing a similar proposal with respect to separating out the bill and sending it to other committees.

On May 4 the Senate committee adopted a resolution. I won't read it word for word, but I will go through some of the highlights. The Senate committee adopted to engage the committee on aboriginal peoples to look at divisions 2 and 3 in part 5; the banking trade and commerce committee to look at divisions 5, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 30 of part 5; foreign affairs and international trade to look at divisions 9, 18 and 31; legal and constitutional affairs to look at divisions 1, 21 and 22 of part 5; national security and defence to look at divisions 19 and 20; and the standing committee on social affairs, science and technology to look at divisions 23, 24, 26, 27, 29 and 32.

This is clearly a fairly substantive bill. We all know that. It's one of the larger bills we've seen. It's not the largest ever, but it is very large. I do think it would be worthy for us to continue to consider that.

• (8820)

The point I would make on the Senate committee motion is that the reports from the other committees need to respond by “no later than June 10”. June 10 is far later than the date that is proposed in the subamendment of, I think, May 20, which is substantially less time than June 10.

I'm not obviously permitted to move an amendment to the subamendment but June 10 sounds like a great day to me, Mr. Chair, for perhaps consideration by my government colleagues. That's where we are with respect to some of the dates. I do think June 10 would give us plenty of time to have the House review the legislation. By the way, the government still holds, in its power, some additional options with respect to House instruction and closure, etc.

I just think I have some challenges in accepting May 20 as the date, in addition to the date of May 30 in the main motion. The issue is that I just feel uncomfortable about agreeing to a set timetable before we've had the benefit of listening to some witnesses. Yes, I know we are delaying getting to some witnesses now, but I don't think we can agree to set a timeline before we hear some of the concerns.

Just in case we don't hear from witnesses, I heard from a few already, stakeholders who are concerned about the bill.

Today representatives from the charity sector visited me. I know we have MP Lawrence here, who is instrumental in a private member's bill, and I'm sure he will speak to that later, so I won't steal much of his thunder other than to say the budget indicated that the budget implementation bill would include the spirit and substance of the private member's bill that had been considered in the House. The view of the charitable sector is that it does not, and in fact it creates some additional concerns that they have. I hope these stakeholders have the ear of our government colleagues and can make some representations to them about how the budget bill would need to be changed. We have some proposed amendments, which, of course, we would be happy to bring forward, but I don't believe the timeline that we've set for ourselves would enable some of these changes to be fully considered, and even put on the floor to amend the budget bill. I think we all know what happens when we get into a situation where we pass legislation very quickly.

I'll let MP Lawrence speak to maybe some other issues in the charitable sector later.

There are proposed amendments with the Competition Act and I did speak about this last meeting, but we're paraphrasing or just summing up that there's a wide view within the competition bar and those impacted by the Competition Act that they were not consulted. In fact, the Senate committee heard from some of them yesterday. Professor Quaid from the University of Ottawa, I believe, said, “It is important to modernize the act. But if we do it poorly and without consideration of the bigger picture as well as the technical issues, we risk simply changing the law without making competition policy any better”.

Benjamin Dachis from the C.D. Howe Institute, a very reputable organization and a reputable fellow, says, “I would say that the government skipped a couple of key steps when the consultation the senator conducted went right to legislation.” That's the consultation that Senator Wetston completed.

There's a lot in between in terms of talking to potentially affected stakeholders, stakeholders who knew they would be affected, but also others who are only going to find out when they start getting class action lawsuits sent their way. There are a lot of implications across the overall economy in areas we know and in areas that we don't have a clue about in the future, and I think many of us agree that the Competition Act, at its base level, needs to be changed.

Oligopolies affect our daily life in many key industries. I think it's welcome to consider how we can change our competition policy to make it better, but those proposed amendments, I think, ought to be consulted on. The benefit is that we have a budget implementation bill coming in the fall. We should consider consulting on those in the summer—not this committee, of course, because we have much other great work to do—but industry, led by Minister Champagne, should be leading a consultation on those proposed amendments before they become law.

• (8825)

Because I'm an equal opportunity offender, it is not the first time that the Competition Act was changed in omnibus legislation without consultation. It happened in 2009 under the previous government. However, there were some slight differences in the context. At the time, that was the largest budget deficit ever brought forward, but that was in the midst of the global economic recession. It was also in the midst of the coalition crisis in 2009. Some may not call it a crisis, but at the time it felt that way. The budget bill was the only opportunity to pass legislation because it was clear that almost no legislation was going to pass the House.

Now we have a little bit of additional time and some certainty. We have a supply and confidence agreement between two parties in the House, which almost guarantees the passing of certain pieces of legislation. It would also guarantee a House instruction.

With respect to the luxury tax, we've already heard witnesses both publicly and privately express some concerns about no economic impact study. The government's admitted it hasn't done as much. It will affect jobs and have some lost revenues. I think we need to figure out how that balances off against what the projected revenue savings are or increase in revenues for the government.

As it goes back to the subamendment of this date of May 20 and also the amendment of the date of May 30, we went back and checked the report stages from previous budget bills. Last year, the budget bill was reported back to the House on June 21. That didn't leave very many days to pass the budget bill, but it did get passed before the House rose. In 2019, the budget bill was reported back on June 5. In 2018, it was reported back on June 4. In 2017, it was reported back on June 6. That's not much longer, but a little bit longer than what we're proposing here.

We're agreeing to a programming motion that's just going to set us on autopilot, regardless of being able to uncover some challenges. It also raises for me that what we are proposing to do is probably not the most efficient way. I think we're probably failing stakeholders and Canadians to some degree.

I don't think it's a surprise to most people, but the pre-budget process that we do has little influence on the actual budget. I mean, we got the pre-budget submission to the Minister of Finance maybe a few weeks before the budget. Most budgets are kind of done and in the can well into January, so I'm not sure much changes then.

Perhaps over the summer, a team-building event would be to figure out how the calendar could work next year, where we perhaps shorten our pre-budget consultation period and figure out how we can devote a significant amount of time to the study of the budget bill, if we're not going to be able to get away from omnibus budget bills. I don't think we are. That's just not the climate we're in now.

I think it was the good suggestion of, I believe, the NDP to support a pre-budget study. I think maybe that should become the norm. We know that these bills are not getting any smaller despite the fact that it was a direct promise of this government not to do omnibus legislation. Maybe we should consider making that commonplace and devote a set amount of time to studying the budget bill, which could be extended on the consent of the committee or by passing an amendment.

There's probably some meeting organization and hygiene we could do to make this place run a little bit better. I'd be in favour of that. I'm not necessarily in favour of fettering all kinds of discretion, but I do think we could come together to do that, perhaps on a consensus basis.

I would point out a quote on omnibus bills: "I'd like to say that I wouldn't use [omnibus bills], period. There will always be big bills, but they need to be thematically and substantively linked in all their different pieces so that they form a piece of legislation. The kitchen-sink approach here is a real worry to me." For those of you

following at home, that was then-member of Parliament for Papeineau, Mr. Trudeau, who said he would not use omnibus bills.

• (8830)

In another quote, we have, "This is yet another massive omnibus budget bill, which is 414 pages in length with 516 separate clauses". Well, this budget bill is 500 pages in length. I don't know how many different clauses there are, but it's significantly larger. It continues, "It is simply too big for Parliament to consider properly in just a short period of time. The [government's] counting on us rushing this through at record speed and they are trying to avoid real scrutiny in this Parliament." That, my friends, was Scott Brison, excellent member of Parliament Scott Brison. He was responsible for—I see I'm losing some people already, but I think they will return because it's going so well—the SNC scandal, as I understand, but he was right on the money with respect to omnibus legislation.

You know, if we can't get away from omnibus budget bills—and it doesn't look like we can—then maybe we should have more of a rigorous process, or a set agreed-upon process, that would allow committee members to fully scrutinize the bill, to bring forward reasonable amendments and to work with technical stakeholders, especially with respect to some of the tax laws, competition laws—those who live this stuff every day—to help educate us in making sure there are no mistakes.

In fact, this current budget bill we're looking at is fixing some mistakes from previous budget bills, especially with respect to some of the issues around CERB. That's a significant challenge for us. We're being asked to rush something through. At the same time, we know what happens when we don't give ourselves enough time; we end up with some mistakes.

It wasn't until July, from the good work of the NDP in the summer, that we realized we made a mistake with respect to GIS clawbacks. However, it was too late. I submit that had we had a longer time to review that budget legislation last year, the NDP probably would have been able to bring forward their concern sooner. The result and the consequence of that rushed legislation meant we had to spend time, in this committee and in the House of Commons, debating a separate piece of legislation to fix that inequity.

Those are my primary concerns with the dates in the motion. I know there will be some objections to my intervention that will come, obviously, that we are delaying hearing from witnesses. However, we moved last meeting, and I would offer to do so again if it is appropriate, to adjourn this debate to a later time. We can have this discussion later. The government, which has a lot more tools at its disposal, can bring forward other motions at any time or an instruction from the House, if they feel we're not moving it along.

We would welcome moving into witness testimony. I believe it's restrictive on rights of parliamentarians to have such an aggressive timeline without seeing any witnesses and hearing some testimony first.

I know that some will say that a delay will result in a harm to taxpayers because the carbon tax or climate-incentive payments will be delayed. I would caution my government members before they make that assertion, as they did, along with CRA, on the delaying of Bill C-8 as it related to teachers receiving rebates on their taxes. There was a significant amount of misinformation, and dare I say disinformation, because it was knowingly false for government members, and even the CRA, to tell Canadians that they could not administer their taxes because they were waiting for the bill to pass Parliament.

As evidence of that, I would like to point out a couple of points from the CRA directly in recent years.

In 2017, the government made some changes to GST treatment of supplies of naloxone. The CRA responded, "suppliers [could] stop charging GST/HST on supplies of naloxone in accordance with the proposed amendment as of March 22, 2017", and that the proposed measure was subject to parliamentary approval.

● (8835)

It further advised that "consistent with its standard practice," it would administer "this measure on the basis of the proposed amendment." That is, they would administer the tax code on the basis that it was proposed and not passed by Parliament.

Even further, just last year, CRA, I believe in a response to a question in the Senate, responded that, for their part, taxpayers usually chose to self-assess tax and claim benefits on proposed legislation because it might offer more favourable treatment, avoid negative consequences such as liability for interest, ease their compliance burden or any number of other reasons.

In any other words, even though there is no legal requirement to do so, there are good reasons why both taxpayers and the CRA choose to act on the assumption that proposed legislation will eventually be enacted. Any assertion that any delay of either this bill or even C-8 delays the ability for taxpayers to get their money isn't just false. It's intentionally misleading, and there is significant precedent for CRA to administer tax changes before they receive royal assent.

Mr. Chair, as I come to nearing a close, some items I hope the government considers or some things that I would find persuasive would be to align the dates with the Senate study of June 10. Since we have significant changes to the CBCA and the Competition Act,

we should invite Minister Champagne to appear before this committee just for an hour. I know he's a busy man, but these are significant changes. I think we should test with him, either at this committee or perhaps at the industry committee, as to why consultation wasn't done, why they feel comfortable this is the right approach, so that he may be held accountable for any of these changes if there are challenges with them in the future.

Finally, I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister would return to this committee and fulfill the inflation study requirement for her to come for three hours to talk about inflation. It is one of the most important issues facing Canadians today. Certainly as a domestic issue it is the most important.

I respect the minister very much. I think we all benefit from having her here at committee. Her presence is always welcome, as well as that of ministers from other departments. I think it helps us do our jobs appropriately. It says lots of great things about ministerial accountability. I will not move a motion, but as inflation is well outside the control range, it might be appropriate to have the minister and the governor return to committee on a very regular basis until we get inflation back under control.

These are some of the concerns I have with the subamendment. If we're open to moving the May 20 date, which is less than two weeks away, to June 10, I could be persuaded to feel comfortable, or more comfortable. The clause-by-clause ending by May 30 is just too aggressive in my view.

Mr. Chair, I am an eternal optimist. Hope springs eternal. I'm hoping for a miracle. I think we can do some great work here. Just in case, I was prepared. My socks have flying pigs on them, so it can happen.

I think we can get to a collaborative approach. I think we could punt this discussion on the timing to a future date. We can hear some witnesses now, and then we can all decide with a little bit more information whether we feel the timeline is too aggressive. I think the government has within its power a lot more flexibility and optionality, especially with the supply and confidence agreement. If it felt that we were not doing proper work or that we were intentionally delaying a bill leaving committee, it could figure out a way to get the bill out of committee. The kind of collision course we're on now is that we're not going to hear from any witnesses despite our liking, at least on this side, to move to that now.

● (8840)

I welcome some of the comments from the government members. I've had a wonderful experience so far in collaboration with them, and we have done some great work.

Even on the Emergencies Act, where other committees got significantly more heated and tense, I thought we kept to the facts very well. I think we could do some great work with stakeholders here.

Mr. Chair, I've gone on almost as long as it seems. Perhaps if the folks outside of this committee could work and collaborate, like we have done in the past, this place might be a bit better for everybody. I have full faith that we can make some progress, and I'm waiting for that to happen. We're here to move on, and hopefully, hear from some witnesses.

I understand these games sometimes get played from time to time. Hearing from some witnesses, doing this right and maybe punting this more difficult discussion for a week for two, might be the best thing for everybody.

Mr. Chair, I'll yield my time to the next speaker on the list. I see a couple of hands up there. I appreciate your allowing me to start again here. That was very kind of you.

If you want to adjourn the debate, we'd be open to that, of course. If not, I'll yield to the next speaker.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Chambers.

We have MP Dzerowicz, MP Albas and MP Lawrence. I had MP Fast, but I think he has exited the room.

MP Dzerowicz, please go ahead.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I want to make a few short points.

During the last meeting, and this one, thus far, we're hearing very clearly from our Conservative colleagues who have expressed their concerns over the amount of time we have to study this BIA. Unfortunately, as my colleague, Mr. Chambers, just mentioned, we had to cancel our witnesses during the last session, many of whom we were very much looking forward to hearing. We've also had to cancel any witnesses that might have been able to be booked in for this meeting. That's very sad, because we could have already been moving on this BIA study.

We have put forward a proposal that would have seen us have 20 hours of witness testimony. This is in line with our previous study of the BIA, and it's also in line with the amount of time we've spent in the last five years on a BIA study. It allows us for a sufficient amount of time for us to conduct a very full clause-by-clause review.

Monsieur Ste-Marie, our Bloc Québécois colleague, has put forward a really great and thoughtful amendment to give other committees the opportunity to study certain sections of the bill, and we have agreed to it. I believe someone said in our last meeting that politics is the art of compromise. It was a wonderful and thoughtful proposal. It was a much-needed one, given the timing impacts that we have for May and June every single year.

So far, our committee is not able to study this important legislation. These other committees that might already get going, studying different parts of the budget implementation act, are also delayed in getting started in terms of studying the different key sections.

We've made our points. We don't want to keep repeating them. I also believe that the Bloc and the NDP have done an excellent job in making their points.

I really love hearing some of the wonderful suggestions that are coming out. I love the team building event over the summer that Mr. Chambers proposed. I would really like to encourage Conservatives to make their points and to allow this to go to a vote.

We have to vote on a subamendment and a motion. I would encourage us, if we could adjourn debate, to go straight to a vote, so we can get started on this BIA study.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Dzerowicz.

I now have MP Albas and MP Lawrence.

• (8845)

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to say that I know how difficult these conversations can sometimes be, and I do like the tenor, the tone, that we have all embraced as members of Parliament. We are all sent here to try to work together.

I will disagree with some of the things my honourable colleague MP Dzerowicz said earlier, but I'll save that for a moment other than to say that I appreciate that these meetings are not only important to our constituents, but they can be long because you can't put a price on democracy. There are rules that have been enshrined in this place to allow committees to function as independently as possible, as MP Chambers said earlier.

There are obviously other tools the government can use such as a House order. It, in fact, directed the study of Bill C-19 to this committee. Ultimately this committee was created to serve the House, but without having further instructions, we have a responsibility to set our own sail.

While the original programming motion that was put forward by MP Beech as the parliamentary secretary was received in good faith by MP Ste-Marie, who I admire very much for his passion for his constituents, for the questioning he's had and the lack of answers he's been able to receive when it comes to the luxury tax and the occasional intervention by my honourable colleague from the NDP, what has happened is that he put that forward, and now we've had a further subamendment to his amendment, which was to try to make sure that there was a proper process.

The government—let's be mindful, Mr. Chair—at the very beginning tried to apply its direction to what is supposed to be an independent committee. Right off the bat, I believe I made it known that it was an issue. I believe I made some arguments about how there were promises by this government to not have parliamentary secretaries on committee. They would occasionally sit down in the corner and listen in thoughtfully so that they could report back to their ministers the goings of this committee, which is a very august body, and I've always enjoyed being on it.

Again, this is a bill, 468 pages, I believe, because when I put it to the minister when she came in for the hour, I said 421. Again, Mr. Chair, you might be mindful that there are a number of pages we did not know about. The government didn't even give us the courtesy in their courtesy copies to say that there's more on the website, even just a note to go along with it, so there are missing pages, which I raised earlier.

As I open my comments today, I go back to the tone that Mr. Chambers presented earlier. In fact, he made a little bit of a joke saying someone had to listen to him, and when he said thank you for staying, they said, "No, I'm the next speaker." That was very funny. It reminds me of a very similar joke I used to give when I first set out in politics. I said that my goal in any speech or presentation was three things: to be bold, to be brief and then to be gone. Actually, I think it wasn't to be bold. I think it was to be brilliant.

I'm going to let everyone now know that I used to joke that at least you'll get two out of three. I have become a little bit more of a realist, so I'm going to let everyone know not to expect any of the three today.

I'd like to start with why we should be concerned about the programming motion put forward by the parliamentary secretary, and I have already touched on it. Governments are tethered to this institution. They are not the ones who tell us as members of Parliament to have confidence. They're the ones who have to put forward bills that show confidence. In this case, we have a motion that is directly telling us how many presentations we can have. I guess it just gives us a time limit, and it also puts in when we should have clause-by-clause.

● (8850)

The very thoughtful motion by MP Ste-Marie does actually propose that we divide this up, because in those 460-odd pages there are many clauses that pertain to areas of expertise in other committees, and committees like international trade, industry and technology, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights—all very important bodies.

When we send something to them, the very premise should be that we are in good faith seeking their responses. Now if you harken back to our last meeting, Mr. Chair, I believe it was confirmed that clause-by-clause would be done only by this committee. Regardless of what those members on those other committees think, ultimately they will not be able to substantially do what we do, which is to put forward amendments and to debate them. I don't think that is fair.

I should also point out that there is going to be a bit of a challenge, because I don't think independent members are being taken into account under this particular motion by the parliamentary secretary, or even in his amendment. Don't worry, though. I'll save that for closer to the end.

What I think is important to note is that when you offer someone something in good faith, the idea is that it's a legitimate offer. Now for those committees to suddenly decide whether or not they can

meet at the time that has been listed here by the parliamentary secretary...and let's note that it is today, Thursday, May 12. When this was first tabled, obviously it was earlier in the week. Already days have slipped by, and while I do understand that MP Baker and MP Dzerowicz had both raised the idea that politics is the art of compromise, compromise means thoughtful discussion and give and take. It does not necessarily mean overriding other members without having some sort of thoughtful process.

As you can see, Mr. Chair, that leaves the Conservatives with very few options other than to say that we do not believe that this particular motion or its amendment.... Actually, I should say that the amendment seems to improve upon it, but the subamendment by the parliamentary secretary is not being done in good faith. Why? Because time has already been whittled away.

We already had to say no to those witnesses who came here on Monday ready to present. I presented a motion to try to see if we could speed that up. The importance of having witnesses cannot be overstated. Why? It's because obviously this is a very large omnibus bill and I find it lamentable that the Minister of Finance, the deputy prime minister, spent only an hour with the committee. I would have preferred a second hour, because I would have asked several other questions that pertained directly to Bill C-19.

I don't see any provision here in the subamendment for having the minister come back. In fact MP Chambers had expressed his desire to have the Minister of Industry come and speak to the competition components, the Competition Act amendments. I do enjoy Minister Champagne. I think he's a very thoughtful individual. If it is the will of the committee to have him come in for an hour, I would certainly make the time in my schedule for that. I think this particular subamendment that Mr. Beech has put forward has neither the Minister of Industry nor the Minister of Finance.

What worries me as time cuts away at this is that ultimately we're going to have less and less time, because the Liberals have not tried to work co-operatively with all members. I think that's really at the heart of this. I don't blame the Bloc or the NDP for playing ball because maybe their preferences have been met.

● (8855)

Maybe they see a different reality from the one I do, but this particular subamendment of Mr. Beech does not necessarily meet those needs from our perspective. Again, while we know the saying that politics is all about compromise, it's usually referred to as the art of the possible.

Do you know what, Mr. Chair? What's possible isn't always probable.

What's probable is where you make.... You don't think you should speak to other members and try to get them on board. Instead, we have motions, amendments and subamendments that do not have the consent of each and every party or member. Obviously, there's a way to have a democratic debate about this and, eventually, a vote, but I am not going to be keen to give that until we have had a thorough venting of some of the issues with this particular motion.

Let me go into some of my concerns.

In the last Parliament—I'm going to give a personal example—I was on the environment and sustainable development committee. It's a very good committee. Much like in this body, I got a chance to work within a group where we may have had distinct views on policy. I felt that the people around the table were generally respectful and understood that we were all here to represent our constituents and to have an exchange of views. Where we might have disagreements, we would talk them out until either we found some consensus or compromise, or we put it to a democratic vote.

We went to a bill called C-12, and there's something very similar between Bill C-12, the net-zero bill presented by the minister of the environment—at that time, it was MP Wilkinson of North Vancouver, a fellow British Columbian.... Similarly, in that particular bill and study, the parliamentary secretary put forward a programming motion. Unfortunately, the member of Parliament for the NDP at the time decided that they would opt into that programming motion. Again, I don't want to prejudice or call into question anyone's character, including the previous member of Parliament or the current NDP representative at this table, who I'm sure is here in good faith.

What ended up happening was, in my mind, remarkable. We had witnesses come forward and we listened to the testimony. All parties, the Bloc, even the Green individual.... My colleague MP May from Saanich—Gulf Islands brought amendments, as did the Liberals, the New Democrats and the Conservatives. We brought forward a number of meaningful amendments that we felt would have improved the bill, even though we opposed the bill in the House due to some issues over the net-zero advisory committee. I will not get into that discussion of what happened in the House. I will say it was rather unfortunate how that shut down.

What ended up happening was that they jammed through such a tight process that we were literally hearing witnesses when the period for submitting amendments to the bill had already expired.

Think of this. You get a call from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. You have dedicated your professional career or your voluntary hours and expertise to writing up a brief. In fact, one witness told me that the moment he got the letter, he started furiously typing up his presentation, but by the time he got on the schedule, all of the suggestions that he had presented in his report and in his remarks were moot.

Why were they moot? It certainly wasn't because of bad faith by that individual, but because of the way the committee had jump-started the process and programmed in that there was only going to be a certain amount of time to get amendments in. That person was deeply disappointed, as were others.

The government probably never heard from those individuals in person, but I can say that MP May attested at committee that she heard the same thing. Why? Many groups want to be invited back and they want to keep the government, at least, in a somewhat neutral, positive state.

- (8900)

In that case, I have to say that the environment committee process—a committee ably chaired by one of your colleagues, MP

Scarpaleggia—was so bad that we ended up jamming through witnesses after the period for amendments had already closed. People felt that process was not in good faith. I see many of the same hallmarks—many of the same markers—in this process, in fact, and I will say that I did speak up at the time. I did very much what I'm doing today. I said to other members, “If we adopt this process, we are jamming witnesses.” We are going to end up with a process that does not lead to a better outcome than Bill C-12 did.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what transpired. In fact, when we look at the amendments, it was such a bad process. Some amendments were supported by certain witnesses, but others, effectively.... The NDP joined up with the Liberal members and voted down pretty much every single amendment, except for a Bloc Québécois motion that established a five-year review. There are some real parallels that I'm starting to see between that process and now. Where did we end up? We ended up where committee members were at each other's throat. It wasn't very good. Witnesses felt bad and, at the end of the day, the government got what it wanted. I see many of the same things happening here.

I would say that it probably wasn't a lot of fun for Mr. Scarpaleggia, but let me tell you what was even worse. Your former colleague, Mr. Scott Simms, said publicly.... He was on Michael Geist's podcast, Law Bytes, where he talked about what was known as Bill C-10 and the shenanigans that ended up happening there.

Why? Well, there is a direct connection with what has happened here with MP Beech's subamendment. The process and timelines were so tight in the original programming motion that, at one point, during clause-by-clause, because of a programming motion, the committee members, in many cases, did not know what they were voting on. In order to meet the programming motion set out by the government, which happens to be the same government here, they ended up voting on amendments without even knowing what they were voting on. The chair would call out a number, and what's even worse, for the people.... There were stakeholders there, obviously, from industry and cultural groups—artists, etc.—who all had a real concern about this. These were people who study the Internet and freedom of expression—those kinds of legal constitutional concerns. All of them were horrified because they didn't even know what the members were voting on. They just heard numbers being shouted out, and that brought the whole committee process into disrepute.

What's even worse is that Conservatives had to appeal to the Speaker in the chamber regarding such a bad process. Do you know what ended up happening? The Speaker said that was not how Parliament was intended to work and ordered the committee to restart the process. The government did end up getting its way, but, for the people who were following along, the parliamentary committee process was in question.

I would say to all members here that the same issues the environment and sustainable development committee had, and the standing committee on heritage had with Bill C-10.... There are certainly parallels with what we have here today—a large omnibus bill, where the witness time is being dictated by the government.

● (8905)

Again, this particular bill is much larger than traditional ones, Mr. Chair.

On one of the things that MP Chambers pointed out—because there will be some arguments that say, if the Conservatives are so serious about not proceeding on this side, there are tax measures that can affect Canadians and that they will not be able to take advantage of—was that for the ways and means process, actually, the government can table ways and means motion tax measures and the CRA will treat those as having been passed, even if that is not the case. Many Canadians, as I was explaining to one of my constituents the other day on Bill C-8, would be quite surprised.

Now, obviously, during a minority, I would surely hope that they would be very careful around those measures. I know, for example, that Bill C-208 in the last Parliament, Larry Maguire's bill, was a change in law. That was actually passed by Parliament, and they still have not put out the regulations. Most people would say, wait a second, when Parliament passes an actual law that allows that if you're a farmer or you have a fish operation, you could transfer that intergenerationally to your family without having to pay extra costs associated with it.... If CRA and the Department of Finance can hold back on those provisions, how in heck...? Pardon the language. I'll repeat: How on earth, Mr. Chair, can it be that CRA can take a proposed law and start acting like it is a law?

An hon. member: I don't know.

Mr. Dan Albas: In the 41st Parliament, of which I was a part, we actually had a miscellaneous tax amendment bill. It encompassed all of the tax changes that had happened under, I believe, the Chrétien government, into the Martin government and into some of the minority times with the Harper government, and wrapped it up. It was around 800 pages. Do you know what? The NDP, as the official opposition, wanted to study the bill because they knew there was a process whereby they wanted to see it all done. They knew already that these particular tax measures were already being treated as bona fide and that they were already in place.

For anyone to say that somehow, by demanding that this parliamentary committee complete its functions, complete its duties.... Again, this was reiterated to me in the House by the Minister of National Revenue. She didn't care which witnesses we have—committees are independent. I should say, Mr. Chair, that maybe she meant committees are independent when it comes to Conservative motions to have the CRA commissioner.... They're not independent when it comes to getting what they want on their omnibus legislation, as we see in this subamendment.

Now, on the issue of the subamendment and the timing, it is I think very interesting that the Senate, through its banking committee and through other various committees, adopted on May 4 a motion allowing for a pre-committee study, and spreading it all around. They're giving senators until May 10—

Mr. Adam Chambers: It's June 10.

Mr. Dan Albas: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I'm glad that Mr. Chambers is here to keep some of us in line. They're giving themselves until June 10.

Why? It's because as independent and regionally or conservatively minded senators, they have decided among themselves that the best way for them to balance between presenting legislation promised by an elected government to properly scrutinizing bills.... I'd be really interested to see how many ministers and how many hours ministers are required for in the other place versus the simple one hour that we got here.

By the way, I do think we can improve that process. If a minister is going to come for one hour, we should only be giving them a five-minute introduction, because that really did cut down the amount of time the rest of us had to really do what our focus is, which is holding the government to account.

● (8910)

I know you'll take that, Mr. Chair, and you and the clerk will try to work on that, or at least I'm hoping.

I'm looking to see, Mr. Chair, that you're listening. Okay, there's a dutiful nod. Anyway, I'll take what I can get. Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me that nod so I know that I'm not just speaking into the ether.

I've talked a little bit so far about previous experiences, whether it be the miscellaneous tax amendment bill of close to 700 or maybe 800 pages that in the 41st Parliament the NDP wanted to look through, even though most of those laws had already been through the ways and means motion process or acted like it was....

I've talked a little bit about Bill C-12 and how that really strained what was really a well-functioning committee, and the absolute gong show that happened. Again, if you listened to Michael Geist interview the former heritage chair, Liberal member Scott Simms, you'd know that the process did not do anyone right.

I would like us to avoid those issues, Mr. Chair. I would like us to actually see better communication and for the government to start saying, maybe we have to make the committee process work for everyone and not just simply for a few members here and there. They should actually say, perhaps...and if they don't want to agree with me, then they can maybe agree with Mr. Chambers. I can understand not wanting to say that they agree with the member of Parliament for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola because that might be publicly frowned upon, but at least I would hope they would say that they would agree with MP Chambers.

Again, I have talked about how this process could be improved. I've been speaking with some of my Conservative colleagues. We're not at a stage where we can talk about that because right now we're discussing a subamendment to MP Ste-Marie's amendment, but I just have to say again that the process the government is pursuing here is not the right way to do it.

I would hope that the government is getting the drift of where Conservatives are coming from. I think that a reasonable timeline would allow us to get back on track. Unfortunately, the unreasonable timeline that we have, the programming in the original motion and the subamendment that we have here have created a sense of bad faith among members of the committee.

What we've seen with the passage of just the short time between our Monday meeting and today is that this schedule, again, which looked ambitious then, right now is just looking like Bill C-10 or Bill C-12 from the last Parliament waiting to happen.

We pitched over 46 witnesses, from right across this great country, and we want to hear from them. That's where I think the government members need to just simply back off of the process we have ahead, table the motion, get committee witnesses in and let's go through them all. They can always come back with a motion.

We actually have some ideas about a much more reasonable timeline, but unfortunately at this stage of debate we can't do that.

Let's be mindful that we didn't really have to put out a call for witnesses. They were coming to us. I'm sure that MP Ste-Marie's phone is going off the hook with people wanting to speak with him and wanting to come here. In fact, I saw that the clerk had sent out, to all committee members, other witnesses who have suggested that they want to appear before the committee outside of the usual process of speaking to individual members. Why? It is because they want to be heard by this government.

● (8915)

I'm not going to claim that all of our witnesses are the right ones. There might be others who other members might have heard from who right now we can't hear from because this government has chosen to start with a programming motion rather than letting a process evolve.

There is always a time, Mr. Chair, when either the compromises that MP Dzerowicz spoke of need to come together or there needs to be a democratic vote, but we are not at that time right now.

I would also say that one thing that is missing from Mr. Beech's subamendment is any reference to our being able to hear from the Parliamentary Budget Officer in addition to hearing from the Minister of Industry or having the Minister of Finance come back. I know the PBO pays particularly close attention to the tax-related measures and financial figures put out by the government. I think that would be a much better improvement to the subamendment that MP Beech has put out here.

Again, I should disassociate that. It's not fair to MP Beech to always make this program motion his, because really at the end of the day he's a parliamentary secretary, and this was written by someone else. At least I hope he would clarify if I'm mistaken on that point, Mr. Chair.

I say that because the Minister of Finance is a busy minister. In fact I think she's too busy.

I'm just going to talk quickly about this, because I think that is the direct reason she's not here in the subamendment by MP Beech. I think she'd be cross with him if she were in here, but I think it's

worth pointing out that the job of being finance minister is busy enough as it is. A deputy prime minister, Mr. Chair, I can only imagine is so much more, and again it's not up to the Deputy Prime Minister in her function as that, or as the Minister of Finance, to decide what her job is. That is the Prime Minister's job.

The Prime Minister by putting those two roles together, despite the talents of any individual, Mr. Chair... I think this is a point that needs to be made: She doesn't have the time. She doesn't have the time to stay more than an hour at this committee. She doesn't have the time to answer conclusively questions by members. In fact, again, the process of giving her 10 minutes... Look, I'd love to give every minister 20 minutes if we had three hours. To me that would be fair, but, again, for a minister to have only 50 minutes spread among all these members here, I just don't think that is a very good process.

I do think that the Prime Minister should be looking into that, because if the Prime Minister wants to have a finance minister who is on top of her file, who is able to come and spend the time with the finance committee to defend her bill, to be able to spend the time, it obviously is not here.

From what I've heard from member of Parliament Mr. Ste-Marie, the luxury tax is not properly designed. We have heard that there wasn't even an economic impact study. There were no jobs and whatnot, and that may reflect that the Department of Finance is not getting enough attention. I do know from speaking to people who worked with former finance minister Jim Flaherty, who is no longer with us, that when you had someone who was completely concentrating on that file, they would ask every question of every proposal that came forward.

Then they would have to bear the scrutiny of members of Parliament whether in the minority years or later in the Harper majority from 2011 to 2015. Not having a finance minister who is also the deputy prime minister would probably also improve this process. Again, this particular motion doesn't include having her come back. I would simply suggest that is something we should all consider. I'm not satisfied with the amount of time that's there.

● (8920)

I saw that president for the wine growers was here on Monday. I'm sure he wanted to give an earful because, when I asked the Minister of Finance about some of the provisions in regard to this government's treatment of their industry, I was deeply disappointed that they were just surface answers when there are so many issues going on here.

To members of the government, if this is a serious discussion we're having and you're truly saying that politics should be about compromise, I do hope that right now you're taking the time to text, to message or to email one another. Again, you don't have to say that you agree with Dan Albas, but you could certainly say that you agree with MP Chambers that we could make a much better process.

I know they've already done that for MP Ste-Marie because he put forward the amendment that they said they, in essence, support.

Time is incredibly important in this place. We have until June 23 where we could actually be discussing legislation. The government has a lot of time, especially now with motion 11 that was passed with the NDP, which gives them the opportunity to extend midnight sittings. Those sittings certainly can have more debate. I'm really upset that I wasn't able to speak to C-19 in the House. I think there are a lot of provisions in here that Canadians largely need to know about.

That's not your fault, Mr. Chair, because a lot of people, believe it or not, don't actually watch the committee work. In fact, I get more responses from people on speeches in the House of Commons because they watch CPAC. They see the chamber functioning, but they don't always get a chance to see us here at committee.

This is really the only place I'm going to get a chance to talk about C-19. I can't talk about C-19 until we have a process that will work for this committee. I will not allow this committee.... At least, I will do my utmost to make sure that this committee fully understands that if we go along with this programming motion—even if it's slightly improved by MP Ste-Marie—to where suddenly we have “recommendations in relation to the provisions considered by them, in a letter to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, in both official languages, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday May 20, 2022”, those other committees won't have a chance. That is literally eight days from now and we're still talking about this because that's an unreasonable time frame.

The parliamentary secretary, even though he didn't write this motion that someone in the minister's office.... Maybe it was the minister, but probably it wasn't. Why? You're right, Mr. Chair. She's too busy with too many things. For us to be considering these, I have to say that I don't believe the government has given this committee adequate time. It's certainly not giving other committees adequate time when it comes to consideration of C-19.

Do you know what, Mr. Chair?

If a standing committee listed in (a) chooses not to consider the subject matter of the provisions, it advise the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance by letter, in both official languages, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 13, 2022.

May 13 seems to me a bit of a problem. Why? May 13 is tomorrow. If a committee chooses to say that it's too busy, it's supposed to let you know in formal writing that it is not possible. They won't even have the opportunity to do that, so either we're forcing them to do that or we're forcing them to not respond.

• (8925)

To me, Mr. Chair, as I said, it's time, time, time. This government is too short with the time of others, and rather than letting the parliamentary calendar settle this, and to have all reasonable parties come together by the 23rd, they are pushing not just this committee into a terrible process but other committees into a worse one.

On my point on that, Mr. Chair, if they can't write to you under this motion by tomorrow, what then? Are they obliged to now study it? Are we going to have, because of the M-11 motion, extended sittings where some committees are being cancelled? How are they supposed to get the resources? Is the government going to give us more translators, along with Mr. Beech's motion, or I should say the Minister of Finance's office's motion...?

These are things that they are not commenting on. Again, if they don't reply to you in writing by tomorrow, then they're obliged. When do they call their meetings? Are they supposed to attach committee business? I guess there are just so many unanswered questions here that, obviously, it comes back to my original premise that this is not really a good-faith process. Do you know what? We can simply sit back and be told by a government, by its parliamentary secretary on committee, what we're going to do and what other committees are going to do. It's just not healthy.

It's not what the Liberals promised in 2015. They promised many things. Omnibus legislation, that was out. It didn't happen. Parliamentary secretaries would be non-voting members. That's out. They've always said that the committees are independent. That's out.

I say there needs to be a few things in. One of them is that you have to get Conservatives in a process that we feel is fair. It doesn't mean that we agree with everything in that process, but that we believe the process is fair.

The second thing is that we want to see those witnesses. We want to have them here. We want to ask them questions. We want to see the PBO. We want to see the Minister of Industry. We want to see the Minister of Finance come back and actually show some ministerial accountability for what was, I think.... This is how bad inflation is now. I thought at the start of this it was a 423-page bill. Actually, it's 468. That's the inflation under this government.

I kid, but I would much rather that we be studying that bill and having the Minister of Finance come for a second hour, or having her come here and talk for three hours as was set out by the previous motion on the inflation study. I even think that my colleague, MP Stewart, put forward a very good motion on studying advance pricing arrangements. The decisions made by CRA that have been in the news of late.... We haven't even been able to get to that, because this government is again putting forward a programming motion that has been amended by a Bloc member, or at least may be amended by a Bloc member. That is now being further amended, because the government ultimately wants to control the process. The process itself is not connected to a proper process, the proper scrutiny of it.

I have sat on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights—one of the best committees we have, very important. I would hate to put that committee in a position where they do not have proper process. Because for goodness' sake, if we can't have that at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights so that they can look over some of the issues that are in this bill....

The judges' quadrennial pay review is in this bill. There are Criminal Code amendments, ones even relating to the moon and extending Canada's Criminal Code jurisdiction outside of its waters. In fact, I hear there is water on the moon, so maybe we can argue that there is Canadian water on the moon somehow. I don't know how that will work. I don't think we can apply maritime law to that.

• (8930)

Pardon me, Mr. Chair. I have to read that into the record, because one of our members said specifically that he should be asking former astronaut Marc Garneau, our former transport minister. Do you know what? I wish this government consulted a bit more widely with members of Parliament, even its former ministers. Bring him as a witness, someone says.

That's the thing. There could be other witnesses who have similar experiences. We can ask MPs to come. We can't summon them. It would be quite a meeting to hear about that at the justice and human rights committee.

Again, whether they can schedule all of the hearings to talk about many of these matters.... They can't. I don't think it's feasible. I don't think it's reasonable. I don't think it's possible at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, because what are they studying? They're studying Bill C-5, which is making major changes to our Criminal Code.

The government is essentially saying, yes, we will send these things, but they won't be able to do clause-by-clause and we won't give them any time, and then somehow.... I don't understand how the government thought it would be. Again, I don't blame MP Beech, because I don't think he wrote this, unless he wants to make that point clearer, but May 13 is not doable.

That is a big issue. Other committees will have other things that they are studying. Given that M-11 and the late-night sittings won't allow for many of these committees to happen, they can't possibly meet, or if they do, they can't do clause-by-clause. I guess they could do what the member of Parliament for Saanich—Gulf Islands has to do and come here as an independent member and table those amendments that way, but they are going to have get started very quickly. Right now, many of them, like the justice committee, are studying Bill C-5.

I don't understand why the government is so firm on these timelines. Why not let us start having witnesses? Do you know what? We have lots of time between June 23 and today. With the right spirit, the spirit that this member here—MP Chambers, an eternal optimist—has had, maybe we can reward some of those people who believe that reasonable minds can set aside some divisions and that we can start moving forward.

Do you know what, Mr. Chair? After this particular subamendment is debated by other members, perhaps we can have a vote and it will get defeated. We will then have another motion come forward that is more in line with what MP Chambers was discussing in his intervention. I hope so, because the world needs optimism. We have so many things that are not going well.

I know that the government wants what it wants, but it should also want to have members of Parliament feel that they are doing their jobs. The government should try to empower MPs, because that is what many members of Parliament came here to do. They came here to get a sense that they could ask questions, they could move amendments and they could have a process where they feel that they are part of something. I'm sorry to say that the programming motion and the subsequent subamendment by MP Beech,

which may not be from MP Beech himself, doesn't allow for that. It doesn't make us feel like we are in and part of that process.

Again, there are so many things we could be doing here. I would like for us to again be bringing in the CRA commissioner. I would like for us to be talking about competition when it comes to open banking. I would like for us to be talking about.... MP Dzerowicz has talked a bit about the effects that getting rid of trade barriers would have, but, no, we're stuck here because MP Beech and the person who wrote this felt this was the best thing to come forward right now.

• (8935)

To try to somehow jerry-rig a committee, as dignified as the finance committee, is not in the best interests of this committee, and I will not be going forward with my support.

I've mentioned a few things that might have my support. I really do hope that other members have listened to my intervention and that perhaps they are moved. Perhaps they are moved and will move at the appropriate time an amendment. Maybe we could just say, "No, cancel it. This is over. We're not doing this motion." Maybe MP Beech, himself, realizes now that having a program motion that literally says, "No later than 4 p.m. on Friday, May 13"...I don't even know.

Mr. Chair, can I ask you, through the clerk, how fast could you get a letter out if you needed to? Do you have these letters already prepared? Do you have the letters ready?

The Chair: They're on standby. It's been done in the past. I guess there's a formatted letter.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I'm not going to put you on the spot because obviously you didn't know that at first there, because you seemed a little shocked. It does speak, though, to the professionalism of the House of Commons staff, including our clerk, because clearly they need to be able to read the will of Parliament and parliamentarians. If they can type it up on a screen in black and white, then they might be able to see that.... Again, as the former clerk of the Privy Council said, when the Prime Minister gets in a mood, he gets what he wants.

If certain members feel in a mood, I guess the clerk would want to be ready to do his job so that we can invite other committee members to participate. That, to me, again stems.... While the clerk may be ready to send out those letters, maybe I'll just simply ask again, Mr. Chair, to the clerk: Have other committees...? Are they aware that this request will be coming to them? Have we, through any means, informed them? No, so we will be hitting them on a Friday, most likely. They'll probably open their mail tomorrow, because I assume we'll use internal mail, maybe email, maybe late tonight. Then, suddenly, their chair is expected to write back.

Mr. Chair, I would look to you, because I have not had the good favour of the support of my colleagues to ever be a chair of anything. Do you know what? After listening to myself, I understand exactly why. Despite that shortcoming, Mr. Chair, would you, if you received an email from a fellow chair outlining a parameter similar to this late Thursday night that said, "Oh, by the way, you have to let us know by four o'clock tomorrow".

I have a sense that most chairs would immediately say back, “Do you know what? This can't be done.” If it can't be done, why would we put on the show for the people who are here and pretend that this is proper due process? I reject that because, do you know what? Politics.... This is really what gets to me sometimes. People say that politicians are too concerned about image. They're right.

If this was a business environment, you wouldn't hit a colleague from another department with a request that you know they can't meet. You don't do that, yet somehow, because they want to be able to support or have the image that they're supporting MP Ste-Marie's amendment, which I think was made in good faith, they are basically saying, “Okay, we don't want to look bad, so we'll make it look like it's a real bona fide attempt.”

Now, just from reading the motion, we know that it's not. I know that, if I was a chair of the committee, I would immediately say, “Are you joking? I can't consult my members today. Many of them are travelling.” Perhaps many of them are going to be sitting late tomorrow night, if the government wants to, because of that early extended session.

There are so many things here, but I go back to MP Chambers. I go back to his consistency in that he would like to see cooler heads prevail, that he would like to see a little bit more optimism and that he's an eternal optimist. Do you know what? I think he's changing even me by his presence here today. Maybe we can have...or MP Beech would be texting with whoever wrote this motion. I hope he's not berating that individual because, obviously, maybe, the chief of staff or deputy chief of staff said to get something out there. Maybe he's texting that individual and saying, “Perhaps we need a rethink of this, because this isn't looking good for us, and it's not working well for Parliament.”

I don't know. I don't have that insight. I would just hope in good faith that is exactly what is happening right now. As it stands, this particular amendment....

That reminds me, Mr. Chair. I mentioned that we had some witnesses coming, some in person and some online. Most of them took it really well.

● (8940)

I go back to some of the concerns that I'm hearing. The members of Parliament for North Okanagan—Shuswap, Kelowna—Lake Country, and those in Ontario have significant manufacturing issues around the luxury tax. They want those witnesses to come here. They told me that. Industry should not be punished because we were unable to come to a proper process here.

Mr. Chambers has said that he's an eternal optimist. I certainly want to be one. I certainly hope that my interventions today have had some effect on some of the other members here, and that they recognize that we have to go back to the drawing board. As much as I'd like to have the Minister of Finance for another hour, maybe that's not up there, but they should be trying to do something.

First of all, it should not be the subamendment. The subamendment itself, Mr. Chair.... The programming motion is terrible. I'd love to scrap all of that. Maybe we should at least look at the suba-

ment, and maybe decide to withdraw it, because it's just unworkable.

Maybe what I should do, Mr. Chair, is just finish up with a few more thoughts here for other members who have had time to digest what I've had to say, some who are possibly chewing on it right now. There are many counting on us. There are many people right now seeing gas prices, home prices...and uncertainty on the world stage. They just want to see us do something.

The finger can be pointed at me, Mr. Chair. They could say, “You're part of the problem; you're holding back.” Well, no, Mr. Chair, what I'm doing is actually holding on. I'm holding on to a process that, if we can all get around this, this committee will be better off. This bill might actually be properly studied, and then we can send it over to the other place. If the other place can define for itself that June 10 is when all its committees should reply back, why are we not telling committees until this particular subamendment gets passed? Why are we waiting until the last moment and saying, “Oh, by the way, Friday, May 13”, when other committees in the other place have until June 10?

I probably stood on my high horse too much today, but it concerns me. Why? Because I've grown to love this place. There's no greater compliment to members of Parliament, when they are considered a House of Commons woman or a House of Commons man, where they believe in the institution regardless of their position. I met ministers who show reverence for this place and understand that.

Your predecessor, Mr. Chair, the honourable Wayne Easter, he was a House of Commons man. He knew that in this place ministers needed to be accountable. He was critical of his own government when it would try to play games that excluded Parliament or diminished Parliament's light.

Do you know what, Mr. Chair? I've heard many Liberals cite over the past x number of years, populism this, democracy dies in darkness, and all that stuff. Well, guess what. Here we are. Should we actually start doing things together and listening to one another? This is a great opportunity to start. I would really hope that government members can appreciate that. I really hope my colleagues in the Bloc and the NDP don't feel that I have taken my time here inappropriately, because I'm here to defend their rights, and I would hope the government members would say the same of mine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the time and, again, I thank everyone for listening. Perhaps we can have some more discussion about the withdrawal of this particular motion.

MP Beech, please, give us back our committee.

● (8945)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Albas.

Next, we have MP Lawrence.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

While I certainly did appreciate the commentary of my colleagues, I must apologize. I do not have their same gift of brevity.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I'm going to focus a lot of my remarks on direction and control, because I think it's an incredibly important topic in terms of how it's holding back Canadian charities. I want to start with the text of the subamendment that is in front of us. A couple of dates really stood out to me. As you know, I'm not a regular member of this committee, so I came to this a little bit later, but I was just shocked at some of the dates contained in here.

Look at Friday, May 20, to have all of these other committees report back to us. I think it's almost unfair, and certainly undemocratic, to give them a little bit more than a week to report. Then, on whether they want to participate or not, the Friday, May 13 date is just not workable or doable. Then, to be pushing us into clause-by-clause within an incredibly short period of time...which I hopefully will demonstrate.

I'm going to talk about one small section of this omnibus bill. I might add, as my colleague's pointed out, that the Prime Minister did say, and actually campaigned heavily on back in 2015, back in the "sunny ways" days, that these wouldn't exist underneath his government. I think it's fair to say that he has backslid on this as well as several other commitments to democracy. I certainly do not want to be in any way part of or party to declining democracy here in Canada.

Just so the committee can fully understand the relevance of what I want to talk about, this is just one small section of the legislation, which is a huge, massive, 400-plus page omnibus bill. I was enlightened by my colleague that evidently inflation is actually increasing the size of this bill, initially at 423 pages and I believe now at over 450 pages.

One small section, I think less than five pages of amendments, is with respect to direction and control and own activities. Let me sort of explain and understand this. Our Income Tax Act is now at well over 3,000 pages. One thing it governs in those 3,000 pages is in fact charities. I might mention that this committee has called for a review of the Income Tax Act for many years. Our Income Tax Act now is a competitive disadvantage for us. Many countries have completed white papers in the last decade to bring their income tax acts up to modernity.

As the Income Tax Act has an incredible impact on our society, I think as government we owe it to Canadians to keep it at least current and modern, and to reflect the preferences of Canadians. The fact that we haven't done that and that this government hasn't responded to the finance committee's multiple calls through multiple years is disappointing. Unfortunately, it is of course hurting Canadians.

• (8950)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I am sorry to interrupt.

On a quick point of order, Mr. Chair, I had my hand up at one point to get on the speakers list. I was hoping to respond to Mr. Chambers' opening remarks. I wasn't sure if I caught your eye at that time or not.

The Chair: I did not catch your hand.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Perhaps you could put me on the list.

The Chair: I have MP Lawrence, MP McLean and then I have MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Very well.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: I'm happy to have Mr. Blaikie take some of my time, if I can come back after he speaks. If he would like to do that, it's okay with me.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm happy to do that, Mr. Chair, if that's acceptable to the committee.

The Chair: Members...?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I certainly appreciate Mr. Chambers' spirit of compromise and have been trying to think how we might split the difference. What I wanted to propose was that we might find our way, if we could, to agreeing unanimously that we change some of the dates that are in the motions here, and if we could agree to those date changes and to pass these motions, we might be able to get on with our study as early as Monday.

You'll see in the subamendment, in item (b)(i), it was proposing a date of May 20, 2022. I would propose that we change that to May 27, and in item (b)(ii), there's a date of May 13 that was referenced earlier by Mr. Albas. I would propose changing that to May 20, and then I don't believe there are any dates in the amendment that was moved by Monsieur Ste-Marie, but in the main motion there are some dates that I think we would need to change in order to make this work.

I propose changing the date in item (b)(i) from May 20, 2022, to May 30, 2022, and the date in item (b)(iii) from May 30, 2022, to June 3, 2022. I respect that it doesn't quite get us to the June 10 date that Mr. Chambers was talking about, but I also think that, given that the Senate will hopefully be ready by June 10 to debate the bill, we might expect that the House would pass the bill out of the House and deliver it to the Senate so that it's ready to go by its June 10 date.

I hope in the spirit of compromise that's been offered up at the table that this might work and allow us to recapture some of the time that's already been lost and still devote ourselves to a thorough study of the bill, leaving enough time to get it to the Senate in time for when they have determined they would like to do their own study.

I'm happy to repeat those dates one more time if folks would like.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order, and I refer to O'Brien and Bosc, page 1067, which says:

In most cases, there is no limit on the number of amendments that can be moved; however, only one amendment and one subamendment may be considered by a committee at one time.

While I totally understand the good-faith presence here of my colleague, we actually have our own suggestion. Perhaps either MP Beech can remove the discussion altogether by withdrawing the motion or—

The Chair: It can be done as a unanimous consent friendly amendment, just for clarification.

Mr. Dan Albas: Maybe in that case, Mr. Chair, you should suspend for a few minutes so we can have a discussion, because right now we have our own amendment to the timeline that I think maybe we can get some agreement on.

The Chair: Maybe, MP Blaikie, you could just go over this so that we can get the dates, the exact dates.

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, that's fine.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I'm happy to re-offer those dates and then if folks would then like to have a brief suspension, that's also fine by me.

What I'm proposing is that, in the subamendment, we would change the date in item (b)(ii) from May 13 to May 20 and we would change the date in item (b)(i) from May 20 to May 27. Then, in the main motion, we would change the date in item (b)(i) from May 20 to May 30, and change the date in item (b)(iii) from May 30 to June 3.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I recognize.... I didn't say this in the beginning of my remarks, but I certainly recognize Mr. Albas's point of order on the rules and that's why I opened with a suggestion that this is something the committee might find its way to doing by unanimous consent, as a way to try to wrap up this bit of business quickly and leave us in a position to properly continue our study on Monday.

Thank you.

• (8955)

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie.

Do all members have those dates that are being proposed?

Right, so we'll suspend for five minutes.

• (8955)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (9005)

The Chair: We're back.

We have MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

There has been consultation among the parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: —unanimous consent for the following motion: That the subamendment be amended to replace “May 20” with “May 27” and replace “May 13” with “May 20”; that the main motion be amended to change “May 20” in item (b)(i) from “May 20” to “May 30”; that item (b)(iii) be amended to add at the beginning of (b)(iii) that clause-by-clause consideration of the bill will commence Monday, May 30; and if the committee is not completed,

etc., and then that the May 30 date in the current iteration of the motion be changed to “June 3”.

I hope you won't ask me to repeat that, because I probably will use some different wording if I have to say it again.

The Chair: Did everybody capture that? Yes?

Was there any change from before we suspended in terms of those dates? I think they're—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: No, those are the dates that I read out before.

The Chair: Those are the same, right? They are the same.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: The salient difference is adding a phrase at the beginning of (b)(iii) in respect of when clause-by-clause study will commence so that it commences on May 30 and would end by June 3, as per the language of the motion.

The Chair: Okay. Everybody has that.

Thank you, MP Blaikie.

Go ahead, Clerk.

The Clerk: Mr. Blaikie, I have a question.

Point (b) of the main motion starts with “moving to clause-by-clause review of the bill, provided that no later than Thursday, May 26...” Are we talking of changing that to May 30?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I see...moving to clause-by-clause, “provided that the bill is referred to committee on or before May 19”. Okay, that has happened.

Maybe what we actually need to do, instead of adding anything to (b)(iii), is simply change “Thursday, May 26” at the top of item (b) to “May 30”, and add whatever day of the week corresponds to that. That works for me. I think the intention is sufficiently clear.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Blaikie.

Is it this, MP Albas?

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, I am just a little concerned. Obviously it's a unanimous consent motion, so there is usually not a lot of debate, but I am a little concerned about the clause-by-clause section and whether or not there will be enough resources for us to be able to have a proper process.

As I said, from seeing how terrible Bill C-10 was in the last Parliament, when people literally were voting on things without knowing it, I would just ask to see if maybe we should suspend so that we can have confirmation from someone. Maybe the clerk can look into that to see if we will have enough resources at that time, because if there are not enough resources for us to have clause-by-clause in a proper process, I won't be able to give unanimous consent.

• (9010)

The Chair: I think that in all good faith all whips would work together if we did have unanimous consent, but go ahead, Clerk.

The Clerk: I am looking at the week of May 30. So far, we would have a meeting on Monday, May 30, at 11, and we would have a meeting on June 2, so that would be two meetings for clause-by-clause. That would be four hours for clause-by-clause.

Mr. Dan Albas: The one thing that has been raised is that resources are not just for us but for other committees as well. If we're going to be voiding out other committee work.... Is there any willingness for us to allow...?

Maybe what I'll do, Mr. Chair, is just ask you to suspend again for five minutes while all parties quickly confer with one another, because, quite honestly, we shouldn't be debating a unanimous consent motion, and that's the one sticking point that we have. We just don't want to be in a position where we have multiple committees being cancelled or where we can't even do the process ourselves.

The Chair: Members, we will suspend for a couple of minutes, really quickly.

Thank you, MP Albas.

● (9010) _____ (Pause) _____

● (9015)

The Chair: We're back. Go ahead, MP Albas.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you for giving us that bit of extra time so we could have conversations about it.

As I stated earlier, Mr. Chair, I want to make sure we don't get into the situation that former MP Simms did. He was chairing a meeting where there weren't adequate resources and adequate time to have a thorough debate.

I want to thank MP Blaikie for his perseverance through my comments, and also in trying to find a path. Thank you.

The Chair: I was listening to your comments. I think you said "the art of the possible", or the art of the...what? I was listening, just so everybody is aware of that. I caught the "flying pigs" and all of those references to making it happen.

Go ahead, MP Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I would just ask that you test the floor for unanimous consent to the previous motion.

The Chair: MP McLean, you have your hand up.

An hon. member: Is he on the speakers list?

The Chair: Was that just to get on? I don't see him.

MP McLean, go ahead.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): I am just waiting. I had my hand up to get recognized to speak.

The Chair: I had you there to speak. Okay, thank you.

MP Beech, go ahead.

Mr. Terry Beech: Can everybody hear me?

The Chair: Yes, we can.

Mr. Terry Beech: Excellent.

I think we're very close. I just need another, I would say, 60-second suspension to clarify one point.

If the committee could do one minute, that would be quite helpful.

The Chair: Okay, we'll do one minute. I think we've—

Mr. Terry Beech: Thank you.

The Chair: We will have a one-minute suspension.

● (9015) _____ (Pause) _____

● (9020)

The Chair: We're back.

We're asking for MP Blaikie to clarify, one more time, exactly what we are looking to get unanimous consent on.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Sure. We are looking for unanimous consent on the motion that I articulated earlier.

The Chair: Okay, and those are the....

If we could just—

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I can run through it all again, I suppose, if you like, but I think we're all on the same page.

The Chair: Could you read through it one more time for the members?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Very well.

For the pleasure of the members, I propose to change, in the sub-amendment, in item (b)(i), the date "May 20" to the date "May 27", and in (b)(ii), the date "May 13" to "May 20".

In the main motion, I propose changing the date in (b)(i) from "May 20" to "May 30" and the date in (b)(iii) from "May 30" to "June 3".

In addition, I propose changing the date for the commencement of clause-by-clause, in the heading for item (b), from "May 26" to "May 30".

The Chair: Are all members clear?

I see a hand up. Go ahead, MP Beech.

Mr. Terry Beech: I think we're almost there. On point (b)(i), instead of "May 30", make it "May 27", to make sure we have resources for clause-by-clause study.

The Chair: It looks as though we have unanimous consent on that.

Members, I think we are all in agreement. The motion as amended is carried.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, I will just say thank you to the members of the committee and Mr. Blaikie, who I think has a perfect batting average on moving some logjams in this place.

Maybe it's lucky socks with flying pigs on them, but hopefully we can have the Leafs win tonight.

The Chair: Go, Leafs, go.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Thanks for the co-operation. We'll see you next time.

The Chair: Okay.

Shall we adjourn? All right.

Thanks, members. The meeting is adjourned.

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